

## Summary

Incorporated in Americanism:  
Virginia Woolf in American Magazines around 1923-40

Yuzu Uchida

## 1. Purpose, research questions, and objects of my research

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the relationship between Woolf and American magazines of her time. The fundamental question about the “relationship” is twofold: first, what roles Woolf played in the discourse of various American magazines, and, second, what roles the American magazines performed in Woolf’s activity as a writer. To answer these questions, this dissertation examines the divergent “Woolfs” that were produced through various processes in the magazines to which she contributed over two decades. I discuss how “Woolf” was susceptible to the circumstances surrounding her, once her work, and her representation as a writer, was out of her—and the Hogarth Press’s—hands. Thus, the analysis concludes that there was never a single established “Woolf” in America in the nineteen twenties and the thirties but rather that divergent and fluid images of the author and her work existed at the same time, sometimes contradicting each other. Furthermore, as my analysis of the texts and their bibliographical codes will demonstrate, such images of “Woolf” were quite dependent on the magazines’ attitude toward the question of Americanism, one of the most discussed issues of the time. At the same time, as the latter part of this dissertation will show, the American magazines also presented Woolf with arenas in which to experiment with new ideas, and where she could also attain a broader range of readers.

The main objects of my research are the sixteen American magazines (*The Arts, The Atlantic Monthly, The Bookman, Broom, The Dial, Forum, Friend, Harper’s Bazaar, Harper’s Magazine, Hearst’s International Combined with Cosmopolitan, The Literary Review, The Living Age, The New Republic, The Saturday Review of Literature, Vogue, The Yale Review*) to which Woolf contributed her works in her lifetime. I focus especially on the twenty years of the nineteen twenties and the thirties when she was most actively involved in publishing work in America. In addition to her own works such as short fiction and literary reviews, she was frequently referred to and discussed in these magazines in other contemporary writers’ works such as reviews, criticism, and discussions of English and American literature; reference also featured in advertisements. Considering this pervasive presence, there is a clear need to

examine Woolf's relationship to American magazines since they played a substantial role in providing American readers with the experience of reading her work.

As a complement to previous studies on Woolf and periodicals, I examine how she was ideologically involved in the American magazines of her time. Periodical studies in the field of Woolf scholarship have tended to be preliminaries to research on her longer works such as her novels. Even though there are a small number of dedicated studies on Woolf and periodicals, it is generally the case that these studies mainly focus on such texts within the context of Woolf's oeuvre. Thus, the issue of how her works actually appeared—and were appropriated—in the pages of the magazines in America, especially within the context of the magazines as a whole, still needs to be fully analyzed. This dissertation explores this rather neglected phase of her literary career and seeks to complement Woolf studies and periodical studies.

It should be stressed here that the significance of magazine articles is often to be found in their correlation with other factors. Magazine articles are always surrounded by other influential materials, and it is thus impossible for them to exist alone, unlike monographs which are printed and supplied as isolated texts. Therefore, to focus on a specific literary work which was carried in a magazine, uprooting it from its original context, involves “dehistoricizing”, in the term used by George Bornstein. Bornstein, author of *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* criticizes particularly the literature anthology, claiming that it is “a dehistoricizing field that obscures the social embedding of its own contents” (Bornstein 14); clearly, the same can be said of book-form collections of essays and short stories, texts that were originally published in periodicals.

Through interpretive representation, Woolf was given particular roles, and became interpolated into the particular discourse of each magazine, a process of representation which was sometimes incompatible with her actual views. In fact, the representation of Woolf in magazines was sometimes quite manipulative; editors' arbitrary revisions to texts, especially in cutting and pasting her words and adding interpretive comments on them, produced unique “Woolfs” in each magazine. Therefore, we should not focus only on the texts published in

magazines but should pay due attention to the context of each magazine; namely, the other literary works with which her works coexisted, the ways in which her texts were reconstructed through editors' revisions, their editorial principles, their introductory comments on her works, other contributors' references to her, and the overall atmosphere of the magazines in which her work appeared.

There is no literary work which is independent from its unique history. To fully understand a literary work, a reader should keep in mind the fact that there are numerous other versions than the one s/he is holding right now. One version has characteristics peculiar to it. However, as both Peter Shillingsburg and John Bryant observe, a reader tends to take one version of a literary work and assume that it represents the only true version of the work (Shillingsburg 50; Bryant 142), although, in fact, "the texts we read cannot be 'definitive' but are nothing more than an editorial version of a writer's work." (Bryant 142)

## 2. Background: Americanism from the 1920s to 1940s

The identity of America was a major preoccupation of writers and intellectuals, and indeed of American society as a whole, around the 1920s to 1940s, especially under the perception of the pressure of increasing immigration. In this climate, many means to define and secure a "pure" American identity were taken. For example, the essence of the term "American" was pursued as if there could be a firm idea of what "American" meant, for example under the slogan of "100 percent Americanism". However, such a definition was impossible to settle, as it was particularly dependent on how America saw itself in relation to other countries, especially Europe. For example, one tendency seen in the 1920s was an attempt to redefine the essence of the nation by attempting to free itself from old Europe's dominance over America (Sales and Nelson). On the other hand, there was a contrary tendency to secure America's rightful status by seeing itself as a successor to the great traditions of Europe. The same issues were present from around the beginning of the Spanish Civil War to the beginning of the Second World War. America's identity had been repeatedly defined and redefined based on how they located

themselves in relationship to Europe, namely, whether seeing themselves as a totally different country free from old world or as an extension of Europe and sharing the same cultural roots. This contradiction was frequently to be found in the American magazines of the time.

This trend significantly coincided with Woolf's many contributions to American magazines, and it is noticeable that Woolf was most active when the fierce debates on Americanness were held in periodicals. In these circumstances, editors and other contributors to discussions repeatedly mentioned Woolf as pertaining to Americanness. For example, she was often associated with her English background, in which case, her work was regarded as a prototype of the national literature that America should achieve, or of an English literature to which America should be opposed. In other cases, Woolf was regarded as a writer who exemplified new perspectives on modern life, and such views which were thought to be free from the old European traditions. Moreover, towards the end of the 1930s, Woolf's pacifism came to be considered from a particularly American standpoint in relation to contemporary discussions of war and isolationism. Such varying receptions of Woolf in American magazines reflects America's contradictory attitudes toward Europe in the period.

Analysis of Woolf's works in American magazines is thus important not only because it brings to light several less recognized of her publications, and shows how their reception in magazines in her lifetime reflected the American perspectives on English literature, modernism, female writers, but also because such an analysis reveals some aspects of the key developmental phases of Americanism.

### 3. Contents of "Incorporated in Americanism: Virginia Woolf in American Magazines around 1923-40"

General Introduction

Chapter 1. American Magazines' Reception of Woolf's "America"

Introduction to Chapter 1

1.1 Transplanted "American Fiction" from *Saturday Review of Literature* to *Harper's*

*Magazine*: H. L. Mencken's Unfaithful Quotation

1.2 America, Which Woolf Had Never Seen, Interested Her Most: A Conversation between Virginia Woolf and Writers in *Cosmopolitan*

1.3 Americanism and Two Virginia Woolfs in *The New Republic*

Conclusion for Chapter 1

Chapter 2. Woolf involved in American Magazines' Attempts to Orient Their Own Literature

Introduction to Chapter 2

2.1 Appropriating Virginia Woolf for the New Humanism: Seward Collins and *The Bookman*, 1927-1933

2.2 "Battle of the Brows" between Woolf and J. B. Priestley

2.3 Invited to "Symposium" in *Forum*

2.4 Making of Literary America: *Broom*

Conclusion for Chapter 2

Chapter 3. American Magazines as Channels through Which Woolf Reached Broader Readership

Introduction to Chapter 3

3.1 Virginia Woolf's "Jane Austen at Sixty" in *The New Republic*

3.2 Forum in Woolf's Literary Career: "Women and Fiction" and *A Room of One's Own*

3.3 Woolf's Direct Message for American Readers

Conclusion for Chapter 3

Final Conclusion

Works Cited

Appendix: Timeline

## ◆ General Introduction

In the General Introduction, I state purpose of my dissertation, research questions, and objects of my research. I locate my study among the previous studies and state how it can complement

the interdisciplinary field where studies of Woolf, periodicals, and American nationalism are combined.

## ◆ Chapter 1

This chapter attempts to reveal the diverse roles given to Woolf. I begin by considering how the reception of Virginia Woolf, the writer and her work, was used in developing the ideology of Americanism in three magazines: *Harper's*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *The New Republic*. In discussing the reception of Woolf's essay on "American Fiction" and the controversy it engendered, I show how a practice of selective quotation, omission, and intentional misreading was employed by readers and critics to situate Woolf within a discourse of opposition between American and British. In contrast, the essay on America by Woolf printed by *Cosmopolitan* was portrayed positively, but again this was in part the result of the editorial placement of a large illustration which emphasized the modern and essentially "American" aspects that were the subjects of Woolf's essay. The publication in *The New Republic* of two essays by Woolf became part of a discourse of specific Americanism, while the implication of Woolf within this Americanist discourse is clearly exhibited by the divergent response to the essays. One of the essays was the subject of vituperative criticism from readers and critics, while the other essay was taken as evidence of Woolf approving of a specifically American field of art. Overall, in this chapter, the magazines' insistence on viewing Woolf's texts through the prism of nationalism is shown to have obscured her actual purposes within modernism and literature.

Overall, in *Harper's*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *The New Republic*, by stressing only certain points, lack of attention to the whole text, and partial quotation, the media came to present Woolf's essays effectively undermining their rhetorical importance. The essays were determined by the readers', editors', and other writers' contemporary consciousness of Americanness. They rendered the "America" that Woolf wrote with visual and concrete meanings, and in certain cases, with different stresses on her text. The parts editors picked out and that readers responded to reflect multiple aspects of their imagined nation—what they

wanted to see and what they wished to negate.

## ◆ Chapter 2

In this chapter, I claim that for *The Bookman*, *Forum* and *Broom*, in the period when American magazines were in search for their own literature, Woolf might have been a rather convenient and “plastic” writer who could be presented either way—as a leading representative of a modern writers or, on the other hand, a great writer within a great tradition. What traits of Woolf would be presented to readers with emphasis was dependent on each magazine’s principles as the most extreme examples in *The Bookman* show. In *The Bookman*, Woolf was referred to both as a despised modernist and as a respectable traditionalist; her image was produced through the editors’ manipulative editing in order to support New Humanism. Woolf’s essays on America were produced and received within the magazines’ discourse of Americanness and played roles in encouraging or stimulating American patriotic sentiments. These American magazines and their readers could have, to a certain extent, oriented themselves by measuring the distance between Woolf and themselves.

The ways in which Collins, *The Bookman*’s editor, presented Woolf suggest how traditionalist American readers, and writers responded to Woolf as a symbol of the modernism they feared and despised, and simultaneously as a great writer who inherited the European great tradition. The battle of the brows between Priestley and Woolf can be found in magazines like *The Bookman*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Magazine*; there, the battle was discussed as an issue within Americans’ struggle to achieve their own identity. In *Forum*’s essays that sought to establish American literature, Woolf was treated as a symbol of English and English literature without any definition of Englishness or detailed examination of Woolf’s works. Woolf’s Englishness is simultaneously regarded as a nationality against which America should construct Americanness, and as nationality on which America should model her own national identity. Woolf’s works were presented as by one of the ideal “modern writers of English” in *Broom* since her works might have attained a quality (“plastic” quality) that *Broom*



aimed for. *Broom's* unsettling idea of “English” prose secured a foothold for the editors to appreciate Woolf’s works. There might have been a conspiratorial feeling amongst the *Broom* editors toward Woolf, such as a revolt against old forms of English literature. Woolf, to a certain extent, contributed to nurturing the literary America that *Broom* eagerly aimed for.

Whether Woolf noticed it or not, she acted as a “reference point” in American magazines when they attempted to orient their own literature and themselves. Representation and presentation of Woolf were never totally free from the magazines’ consciousness of Americanness. Woolf was almost always presented in relation to American literature in American magazines; that is, she was not just plainly introduced as an English writer, but the ways of presentation or discussion of Woolf were loaded with the magazines’ consciousness of Americanness.

### ◆ Chapter 3

While the previous chapters discuss the roles Woolf played in the various discourses of American magazines in the 1920s and 30s, Chapter 3 examines the other side of relationship between the author and periodical media; namely, the roles American magazines played in the dissemination and representation of Woolf as a writer. American magazines were not just a source of additional income for Woolf, though, as observed in the general introduction, they irrefutably made money for Woolf. Nor were the works published in American magazines mere extensions or reproductions of their earlier publication in England. To uncover the significance and unique status of such transatlantic publications in Woolf’s career, this chapter examines the texts and contexts of how such works were published. I analyze not only differences between various versions of the texts but also historical issues that surrounded their appearance in the magazines.

To begin the analysis, the first two sections of Chapter 3 attempt to find the roles American magazines might have played in Woolf’s literary career, by questioning the well known “facts” about such works as “Jane Austen at Sixty”, and “Women and Fiction”. The last

section examines how “The Cinema”, “Women Must Weep” and “Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid” are targeted at a certain set of readers in America.

When the history of works such as these has been discussed, the focus has tended to be limited to the reception in England. More attention to the historical contexts that surrounded her work is, however, necessary in order to reveal what her contemporary American readers read. As Bryant claims, versions of a literary work are produced and determined by differences. According to him, “one version distinguishes itself from another by its attempt to manipulate a readership differently, or by its embracing of new readerships.” (Bryant 90) By shifting the focus on Woolf’s works from England to America, the significance of each independent publication will be recognized, and the importance of the channels and readership the American magazines provided Woolf will be clarified.

This chapter also discusses the ways in which American magazines gave Woolf space to develop her ideas on literature and gender, and arenas in which to engage in dialogue with, rebut, and petition a broader range of readers than she had in Britain. By comparing three independent versions of “Jane Austen at Sixty”, I point out that considering only one version to be the authoritative text might lead Woolf’s significant declaration of her own position and the conversation between Woolf and Forster to be neglected as if it had never happened. The study of “Women and Fiction” carried in *Forum* reveals that the magazine was a place for Woolf to refute the authority of male writers on women. The last section claims that Woolf reached specifically American readership, such as film artists and readers who were fervently debating joining the war, through American magazines. American magazines were thus channels through which Woolf could speak exclusively and directly to a different and broader American readership.

#### ◆ Final Conclusion

In the final conclusion, first I briefly summarize the importance of examining existing versions of Woolf’s works. I stress that numerous versions of a work exist simultaneously, and each

version has its own unique meaning. I state that if readers are indifferent to what version they are holding, and to the possibility that other versions exist, they may have only an oversimplified and partial image of the work and its author.

I summarize the materials I have examined in the previous three chapters, and state my claim. By examining the ways the American magazines treated Woolf, I reveal that Woolf and her works were presented and received in particular American contexts. American magazines gave Woolf spaces to experiment and develop her ideas and arenas in which to engage in dialogue with a broader range of readers. Also in many cases Woolf worked as a reference point in their attempts to orient themselves. They kept trying to figure out America's identity and its literature by measuring the distance between Woolf and themselves. America's multifaceted sentiment that consists of, for example, anxiety, unstableness, fear, pride, dream, and ideal image of its own was reflected in the way they represented Woolf. Their changeable and somewhat arbitrary presentation of Woolf suggests, in turn, that the Americanism they were pursuing was never monolithic but ever-changing. Woolf was both the role model and a negative example for American writers. She was regarded as a writer who appreciated the latest American culture and also who represented a British heritage. Presentation of Woolf was never totally free from the magazines' consciousness of Americanness. To trace the history of her publication in magazines provides literary scholarship with a new perspective on Woolf and her role in the construction of Americanness in the 1920s and 30s.

As mentioned in the introduction, Shillingsburg laments that textual critics have not been successful in persuading scholars and general readers to accept that a reader's response to a literary work may be different from others based on what version the reader is holding (76-7). This dissertation, I hope, gives my readers explanations and examples of how and why one version of a certain literary work may be radically different from another and why it is necessary to be aware of the version they are holding.

## Works Cited

- Bornstein, George. *Material Modernism: the Politics of the Page*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.
- Bryant, John. *The Fluid Text: a Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002. Print.
- McGann, Jerome J. *The Textual Condition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991. Print.
- Nelson, Raymond. "Babylonian Frolics: H. L. Mencken and the American Language." *American Literary History* 11.4 (1999): 668-98. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 July 2010.
- Sales, Raoul De Roussy De. "What Makes an American." *The Atlantic Monthly* Mar. 1939: 295-304. Print.
- Shillingsburg, Peter L. *From Gutenberg to Google: Electronic Representations of Literary Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.