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INTO THE ORCHID HOUSE WITH VIRGINIA WOOLF

We also went into the orchid house where these sinister reptiles live in a tropical heat, so that they come out in all their spotted & streaked flesh even now in the cold. They always make me anxious to bring them into a novel. (Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, 26 November 1917)¹

Not exotic plants but ominous cold-blooded creatures is how Virginia Woolf views orchids when she records in her diary a Sunday afternoon visit to Kew Gardens, London, with her husband Leonard Woolf, in November 1917. Perhaps the unnerving folds, lips and spurs of orchids resemble for Woolf the scaly contours of lizards. But what is it about 'their spotted & streaked flesh' that makes her so 'anxious to bring them into a novel'? Why the anxiety? She was indeed as good as her word. Here is a hot and steamy scene from Chapter 25 of her second novel, *Night and Day* (1919), set in Edwardian London, where Ralph Denham's courtship of Katharine Hilbery seems to suffer a setback as he glimpses her engagement ring (she is engaged to William Rodney) while watching her silently unglove herself among orchids in the Orchid House at Kew:

For him there was safety in the direction which the talk had taken. His emphasis might come from feelings more personal than those science roused in him, but it was disguised, and naturally he found it easy to expound and explain. Nevertheless, when he saw Katharine among the orchids, her beauty strangely emphasized by the fantastic plants, which seemed to peer and gape at her from striped hoods and fleshy throats, his ardor for botany waned, and a more complex feeling replaced it. She fell silent. The orchids seemed to suggest absorbing reflections. In defiance of the rules she stretched her ungloved hand and touched one. The sight of the rubies upon her finger

affected him so disagreeably that he started and turned away. But next moment he controlled himself; he looked at her taking in one strange shape after another with the contemplative, considering gaze of a person who sees not exactly what is before him, but gropes in regions that lie beyond it. The far-away look entirely lacked self-consciousness. Denham doubted whether she remembered his presence. He could recall himself, of course, by a word or a movement—but why? She was happier thus. She needed nothing that he could give her. And for him, too, perhaps, it was best to keep aloof, only to know that she existed, to preserve what he already had—perfect, remote, and unbroken. Further, her still look, standing among the orchids in that hot atmosphere, strangely illustrated some scene that he had imagined in his room at home. The sight, mingling with his recollection, kept him silent when the door was shut and they were walking on again.²

The voyeuristic narrator watches Denham as he watches Katharine fingering orchids in a complicated set of sentences in which he and or the narrator understand Katherine herself to be in turn apparently lewdly peered and gaped at by the orchids themselves 'from striped hoods and fleshy throats'. How lewd is the juxtaposing of these unmistakably erotic images of protuberances and orifices with the saucily euphemistic observation (the narrator's or his own, we cannot be sure) that 'his ardor for botany waned, and a more complex feeling replaced it'. This innuendo is further strengthened not only by the observation that 'next moment he controlled himself' but also by the observation a little further on that the sight of Katharine's 'standing among the orchids in that hot atmosphere, strangely illustrated some scene that he had imagined in his room at home'. The orchid's notorious association with the testicle (because of its testicle-like tubers)³ might well suggest to the reader that this young man is absorbed in this public place in a masturbatory fantasy already familiar to his overheating imagination. We cannot be sure from this if 'his room at home' is the locus of the

imagined 'scene', or the locus of his imagining of the 'scene' now being illustrated by the 'remote' and inaccessible Katherine fingering orchids in the Orchid House with a ruby-ringed finger suggesting her betrothal to another man which in turn may contribute to his further arousal, as suggested by that semi-colon (where a full-stop might be more convincing) that follows and therefore undermines the assertion of Ralph's self-control.

And precisely what rules does Katharine defy with her 'ungloved hand'? Presumably visitors, gloved and ungloved, are formally prohibited from handling the plants at Kew, but Denham is imagining, the reader may well find suggested, other more sensational, lubricious breaches of personal etiquette. And what follows that semi-colon suggests a complicated set of desires and erotics, given the shift in gender as it expands on the qualities Denham observes in Katharine's observing of the orchids: 'he looked at her taking in one strange shape after another with the contemplative, considering gaze of a person who sees not exactly what is before him, but gropes in regions that lie beyond it'. There are a number of ways to construe this with regard to agency: is it Katharine or Denham or the narrator who is 'taking in one strange shape after another' with the 'gaze of a person who sees not exactly what is before him, but gropes in regions beyond it'? The reader too is left groping for what is beyond this scopophilic *mise-en-abîme*, this heady compression of lookers who are looking at lookers. It is also possible that the words 'with the contemplative, considering gaze' assign that gaze to 'one strange shape after another' - that is, to the shapely orchids themselves which we already know 'seemed to peer and gape at her'. If it is Katharine who is doing the 'taking in', then Denham's analogy for her as 'a person who sees not exactly what is before him' is open to further complex construal, including that Katharine, the object of Denham's gaze has been reassigned as masculine in his fantasy. The orchid, while notoriously testicular, also has renowned feminine associations too, so the ambivalently gendered Katherine stands ungloved among these ambivalently gendered peering and gaping polymorphously perverse plants.

Queer triangulations are at work here in which Katharine may be the vehicle for an expression of desire between men, and simultaneously may also be rapt in autonomous self-pleasure amongst the orchids—'She needed nothing that he could give her.' Furthermore, 'before him' may not be referring to the imaginary person of the analogy for Katharine but to Denham himself. If so what is the 'what' that 'is before him'? Something is now 'before him'. What is that something 'in regions beyond which' Katherine or a person without exact vision is obliged to 'grope'? An erection perhaps? Groping behind 'what is before him', would we (or he himself) find orchids?

To whom, then, do the orchids seem to 'suggest' such 'absorbing reflections' as these? Katharine who has fallen silent may seem to Ralph to be absorbed by them, but they may not be what captivates her at all; and Ralph himself seems to the reader to be absorbed in orchid prompted reflections which indeed are made available to us by this very sentence, which might itself be construed as accessing his interior thoughts. Katharine's interior thoughts are entirely withheld. But this free indirect narrative also allows for the utterance to be that of the third person narrator who, in observing Ralph observing Katherine, may be making an observation with broader application — that in general these highly suggestive orchids in Kew 'seemed to suggest absorbing reflections' to anyone who cares to look at them. And indeed they did, and do.

Jim Endersby supplies numerous literary and cultural examples of sexually voracious women figured thus as orchids at the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth. Compare Arnold Bennett's novel *The Pretty Lady* (1918), for example, in which the narrator fantasises over a *femme-fatale* as 'orchidised'.⁴ Is Katherine one such 'repellent and seductive'⁵ woman? 'Predatory orchids who became female and predatory women who became orchids', Endersby demonstrates, are cultural correspondences with rising political anxiety over threats to manly imperialism perceived in women's sexuality and in women's

demands for political change, suggesting that the rise of the 'New Woman' is behind this particular orchid trope in the patriarchal imaginary.⁶ But how did women themselves respond to such stereotyping in the same era? And what of Katharine's response? Compare the episode prior to Kew, in Chapter 23, where Denham begins to disclose his feelings for her on a walk along the Embankment. The free indirect narration shifts to Katherine's interior, and while Denham is declaring himself as a "a person who feels",⁷ Katharine too reverses traditional binary gender expectations by demonstrating herself as one who thinks, and harbours intellectual ambitions in mathematics and astronomy:

She listened to all this, so that she could have passed an examination in it by the time Waterloo Bridge was in sight; and yet she was no more listening to it than she was counting the paving-stones at her feet. She was feeling happier than she had felt in her life. If Denham could have seen how visibly books of algebraic symbols, pages all speckled with dots and dashes and twisted bars, came before her eyes as they trod the Embankment, his secret joy in her attention might have been dispersed. She went on, saying, "Yes, I see. . . . But how would that help you? . . . Your brother has passed his examination?" so sensibly, that he had constantly to keep his brain in check; and all the time she was in fancy looking up through a telescope at white shadow-cleft disks which were other worlds, until she felt herself possessed of two bodies, one walking by the river with Denham, the other concentrated to a silver globe aloft in the fine blue space above the scum of vapours that was covering the visible world.⁸

Katharine's secret intellectual life makes her a kind of New Woman. The 'speckled' symbols and 'shadow-cleft disks' that absorb her while Denham is perorating on his prospects may prefigure the 'striped hoods and fleshy throats' of the orchids he understands to be absorbing her reflections when they next meet at Kew where he hopes to restage their Embankment discussion: "There's only one place to discuss things satisfactorily that I know of," he said

quickly; “that’s Kew.”⁹ But, what is the significance of Woolf’s choosing Kew for Denham’s choice of venue? Is there something ‘before him’ that is not visible to him yet somehow available to Woolf’s readers if we were to grope into the beyond of this scene? Elisa Sparks, in her compelling essay on Woolf’s garden settings, finds the scene affirms the marital compatibility of Denham and Katharine because he is able to look beyond his initial comparison of her with the orchids ‘to appreciate Katherine’s [*sic*] autonomy’.¹⁰ But I wonder if those possible queer triangulations among the orchids are already undermining the heteronormativity inscribed in the novel’s conventional ending in which Denham and Katharine seem to be united, yet are precariously poised on a threshold where they remain mysteriously and ominously occluded from one another: ‘From the heart of his darkness he spoke his thanksgiving; from a region as far, as hidden, she answered him.’¹¹

Night and Day, written during the Great War, and published in the first year of the Peace, looks back to the Edwardian era which came to a cataclysmic close in 1910 when the death of the King coincided with a period of deep political unrest marked by the collapse of the Liberal government, industrial unrest verging on a national strike, agitation for Irish Home Rule, and the escalation of suffragette activism to a campaign of incendiary violence following the wide scale police brutality meted out against hundreds of peaceful demonstrators on what became known as Black Friday (18 November 1910).¹² There is no evidence that Woolf herself was present at the latter, but she had attended the advance mass rally of suffragists at the Albert Hall on 12 November 1910, which struck her as dull and ineffectual, the speakers’ voices ‘like the tollings of a bell’, and she also despaired that her ‘time has been wasted a good deal upon Suffrage’.¹³ This period of political crisis was later encapsulated by Woolf in her much-cited aperçu: ‘On or about December 1910 human character changed.’¹⁴ While these events are in a future unknown to Woolf’s Edwardian protagonists, her Georgian readers would be all too aware of them in 1919. So readers of

Night and Day have the vantage of such hindsight when Katharine, in a Chapter 6, well prior to the visit to Kew, visits her friend Mary Datchet in a Suffrage Office and encounters Denham there, and again when Denham, in Chapter 10, calls on Mary to confess his love for Katharine only to be regaled with feminist politics:

Don't you think Mr. Asquith deserves to be hanged?" she called back into the sitting-room, and when she joined him, drying her hands, she began to tell him about the latest evasion on the part of the Government with respect to the Women's Suffrage Bill. Ralph did not want to talk about politics, but he could not help respecting Mary for taking such an interest in public questions.¹⁵

On or about December 1910 many peaceable suffragists like Mary and her colleagues, frustrated by Herbert Asquith's government's betrayal over the Conciliation Bill, angered by the mounting state violence against protesters, joined with the suffragettes whose truce suspending violent action during the passage of the Bill ended after the 'police's heavy-handed tactics' on Black Friday.¹⁶ A fresh campaign of window-smashing, picture slashing, and arson ensued. And on 8 February 1913 suffragettes attacked the Orchid Houses at Kew, smashing window panes, and systematically ripping out and destroying the orchids. The culprits escaped and were never identified. Twelve days later, on 20 February 1913 suffragettes burned down the tea-room at Kew. Both attacks made headlines around the world. The tea-room arsonists, Olive Wharry and Lilian Lenton, were arrested, and a 'search of the grounds revealed several cards reading "Two voteless women", and "Peace on earth and good will when women get the vote".¹⁷

In his report to the government, Kew's Director, Sir David Prain speculated that the 'housebreakers' assumed the orchids which for 'special reasons connected with culture must be grown under bell jars' must therefore 'be of particular value took off the bell-jars and placed them on the floor [...] without breaking them, and confined their attention to the plants

under the jars which they wantonly destroyed.’¹⁸ Sparks offers a more nuanced reading of this feminist targetting of the orchids, which ‘rated banner headlines in *The Daily Express* — “Mad women raid Kew Gardens” — and drew heated rhetoric from the *Gardener’s Magazine*: “An attack on plants is as cold and cruel as one upon domestic animals or those in captivity” (both quoted by Desmond 306). In less frantic tones, *The Times* presented an even more provocative analogy: “It is said that in one of the houses was found a piece of paper saying that orchids could be destroyed, but not woman’s honor,” evidence suggesting that some feminists saw the flowers as symbols of male power to collect and display the feminine (“Attack” 8).¹⁹ Sparks’ argument may serve to point up a motive of feminist rebellion against patriarchy’s orchidising of women as high-maintenance, decorative, objects of beauty or as monstrous sexually voracious predators. Yet it is also possible that it was the testicular aspect of orchids’ symbolism that spurred the suffragettes to target them—a kick in the balls delivered to patriarchy before the tea-table is torched. The perpetrators themselves left no such explication, but by then the motto of the suffragette Women’s Social and Political Union, coined in 1903, was well established — ‘Deeds Not Words’. Sparks also makes perceptive observations on the resonances of the arson attack on Kew’s tea-room for Woolf’s frequent satire on the misogyny of tea-table politics across her oeuvre, and which is indeed the topic that opens *Night and Day*:

It was a Sunday evening in October, and in common with many other young ladies of her class, Katharine Hilbery was pouring out tea. Perhaps a fifth part of her mind was thus occupied, and the remaining parts leapt over the little barrier of day which interposed between Monday morning and this rather subdued moment, and played with the things one does voluntarily and normally in the daylight. But although she was silent, she was evidently mistress of a situation which was familiar enough to her, and inclined to let it take its way for the six hundredth time, perhaps, without bringing

into play any of her unoccupied faculties. A single glance was enough to show that Mrs. Hilbery was so rich in the gifts which make tea-parties of elderly distinguished people successful, that she scarcely needed any help from her daughter, provided that the tiresome business of teacups and bread and butter was discharged for her.²⁰

With the arson at Kew's tea-rooms visible to the reader on the horizon of the novel's time-frame, we might well read such scenes with close attention to the increasing toll that tea-parties are taking on women's patience. Sparks points out the possible joke hidden, among the flower beds in the short story 'Kew Gardens' (1921), behind the 'queer, sly look' exchanged by the 'two elderly women of the lower middle class, one stout and ponderous, the other rosy cheeked and nimble',²¹ which takes on 'a new significance in light of the two women who were arrested for setting fire to the tea pavilion, which is perhaps why no one ever seems to actually find their way to tea in the story.'²² And the same ironical hindsight on the absent tea-house applies to *Night and Day* when Denham and Katharine end their visit to Kew's Orchid Houses, 'both convinced that something of profound importance had been settled, and could now give their attention to their tea and the Gardens'.²³

So, how might knowledge of the suffragette assaults on Kew's orchids, still in the future for the characters in *Night and Day*, affect our reading of the Orchid House scene? 'Ralph's insistence on meeting at Kew and his and Katherine's declaration of mutual independent friendship in the beech glade surrounded by paths angling off in different directions [...] take on', for Sparks, 'new resonance knowing that the garden had long been a battleground for the rights of women and the working classes. When Ralph's moment of possessive jealousy with Katherine in the orchid house is followed by a vision of her independence from him [...] it becomes a repudiation of colonial exploitation and an affirmation of the possibility of female autonomy'.²⁴ So is Katharine's fingering of the orchids proleptic, a kind of early casing for the militant feminist assault to come?

And further questions are begged—not least, how come Katharine is able to touch one of the orchids without apparently having to lift off the protective bell-jar we are given to understand the suffragettes so carefully removed without breakage before desecrating the plants? Is there a feminist slogan written on the 'certain paper' in the handbag she temporarily loses at Kew 'so folded that Denham could not judge what it contained'?²⁵ And, *pace* Sparks, the queer triangulations among the orchids and the novel's closing scene of hesitancy on the threshold of compulsory heterosexuality, informed by hindsight access to the trajectory towards the violent militancy of suffragette campaigns, might combine to 'suggest absorbing reflections' on a less conventional fate than the compulsory heterosexuality for Katharine and Denham that Sparks envisages in such resonances. For orchids, simultaneously testicular, labial and vulvic, sporting myriad protuberances and orifices, presenting themselves in 'one strange shape after another', cannot be reduced to simplistic signifiers of femininity or masculinity or of any one sexual orientation, as Endersby compellingly illustrates. One example he cites is Oscar Wilde's engagement with orchid tropes, not unexpectedly in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), but also in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891), where the discourse of public repudiation of art is examined:

Within the last few years two other adjectives, it may be mentioned, have been added to the very limited vocabulary of art-abuse that is at the disposal of the public. One is the word 'unhealthy,' the other is the word 'exotic.' The latter merely expresses the rage of the momentary mushroom against the immortal, entrancing, and exquisitely lovely orchid. It is a tribute, but a tribute of no importance.²⁶

The exotic orchid becomes here the emblem of a visionary Wildean queer socialist politics, and the 'momentary mushroom' an emblem of all that opposes it. Perhaps the orchids in *Night and Day* allude too to this Wildean trope? (And Woolf was partial to Wilde.)²⁷ Mary Datchet, furthermore, not only furnishes a suffragist (or proto-suffragette) link to the occluded history

of feminist activism in the Orchid House scene, she is also simultaneously a queering presence in the courtship of Denham and Katharine. For while she is at the beginning of *Night and Day* in love with Denham and hurt by his interest in Katharine, she clearly becomes, by Chapter 21, erotically attracted to Katharine:

Her hand went down to the hem of Katharine's skirt, and, fingering a line of fur, she bent her head as if to examine it.

"I like this fur," she said, "I like your clothes. And you mustn't think that I'm going to marry Ralph," she continued, in the same tone, "because he doesn't care for me at all. He cares for some one else." Her head remained bent, and her hand still rested upon the skirt. [...] Mary had no wish to speak. In the silence she seemed to have lost her isolation; she was at once the sufferer and the pitiful spectator of suffering; she was happier than she had ever been; she was more bereft; she was rejected, and she was immensely beloved. Attempt to express these sensations was vain, and, moreover, she could not help believing that, without any words on her side, they were shared. Thus for some time longer they sat silent, side by side, while Mary fingered the fur on the skirt of the old dress.²⁸

Mary's erotically charged fingering of the fur on the hem of Katharine's dress surely continues its queer resonance in the scene in the Orchid House two chapters later where Ralph watches Katharine fingering orchids, and surely 'suggests absorbing reflections' on the fingered orchid's transgressively capacious and polymorphous gendering. Mary Datchet's window shines on Denham and Katharine at the close of *Night and Day* as they reflect on the 'queer combination' of people in their lives who appear to Ralph 'to be more than individuals; to be made up of many different things in cohesion'.²⁹ The word 'queer' peppers *Night and Day*, and its deployment as sexual innuendo climaxes in Katherine's exchange with her cousin Cassandra who clearly loves Katharine's fiancé William Rodney more than she does:

“D’you know, you’re extraordinarily queer,” she said. “Every one seems to me a little queer. Perhaps it’s the effect of London.”

“Is William queer, too?” Katharine asked.

“Well, I think he is a little,” Cassandra replied. “Queer, but very fascinating”.³⁰

In 1932 Woolf 'got a handful of wild anemones & orchids' on a hillside in Hymettus, Greece.³¹ In 1933 she remarks of Henry James's *The Sacred Fount* (1901), 'how could anyone, outside of an orchid in a greenhouse, fabricate such an orchid's dream!'³² And she was overwhelmed in 1934 when her translator sent her orchids, writing to her lover, Vita Sackville-West 'I have had to stop Victoria Okampo from sending me orchids. I opened the letter to say this, in the hope of annoying you'.³³ Aside from their sapphic and queer connotations, she also elsewhere associates them with a femme-fatale, and with aristocratic excess.³⁴ The words 'orchid' and 'orchis' make infrequent but provocative appearances in Woolf's fiction, suggestive perhaps of further 'absorbing reflections' on the convergence of queer sexualities and militant feminism.³⁵ One such appearance, in a soliloquy by Susan in *The Waves* (1931), her seventh novel, for example, seems to refer back to *Night and Day*'s Orchid House scene at Kew as well as to Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*:

I feel through the grass for the white-domed mushroom; and break its stalk and pick the purple orchid that grows beside it and lay the orchid by the mushroom with the earth at its root, and so home to make the kettle boil for my father among the just reddened roses on the tea-table.³⁶

This deeply subversive sentence, ostensibly recounts a dutiful daughter's foraging in nature (and not a glass-house) for tributes with which submissively to adorn patriarchy's tea-table. Yet this sentence is simultaneously shot through with queer feminist portent. Woolf has the speaker menacingly cutting the white-domed mushroom to lay beside the uprooted purple orchid, 'the earth at its root' suggesting transplantation or extirpation, but either way

prompting the reader to ponder from what ground have these figures been plundered. If one recognises the careful arrangement of purple and white as an elliptical signifier of feminist colours (purple, white and green), then the uprooted purple orchid may be read further as an allusion to the suffragette assault on Kew's Orchid House, as well as to Wilde's queer, exotic orchid defiant against the raging abuse of the adjacent mushroom ignoramus—quite a centre piece for any patriarch's tea-table.

And when we encounter the lush green terrace in Woolf's final novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), published posthumously following Woolf's suicide at a low point in WW2, perhaps a glimmer of queer feminist hope becomes likewise available. Here on patriarchy's terrace, the roots of trees 'broke the turf, and among those bones were green waterfalls and cushions of grass in which violets grew in spring or in summer the wild purple orchis',³⁷ the latter we might note unaccompanied by mushrooms of ignorance. Among these feminist greens and purples we might find ourselves tentatively groping 'in regions that lie beyond' for an implicitly queering 'e' silently appended to the 'wild' of this Woolf's last 'wild(e) purple orchis'.

Jane Goldman, University of Glasgow

¹ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, 5 Vols, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth, 1977–1984), Vol. 1, p.82.

² Woolf, *Night and Day*, ed. Michael H. Whitworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 351.

³ Jim Endersby, *Orchid: A Cultural History* (London: Kew Publishing), p.35.

⁴ Endersby, *Orchid: A Cultural History*, p.169, citing Arnold Bennett, *The Pretty Lady* (1918).

⁵ Endersby, *Orchid: A Cultural History*, p.169.

⁶ Endersby, *Orchid: A Cultural History*, p.169.

⁷ Woolf, *Night and Day*, p. 316.

⁸ Woolf, *Night and Day*, pp. 316-317.

⁹ Woolf, *Night and Day*, p. 319.

¹⁰ Elisa Kay Sparks, "“Everything tended to set itself in a garden”: Virginia Woolf's Literary and Quotidian Flowers A Bar-Graphical Approach", *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World* ed. Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman (Clemson: Clemson UP), p.46: 'While visiting the Orchid House, Denham has a momentary vision in

which Katherine's beauty is "strangely emphasized by the fantastic plants, which seemed to peer and gape at her from striped hoods and fleshy throats" (331), but instead of indulging in the comparison, he looks beyond it to appreciate Katherine's autonomy, her "contemplative, considering gaze," her lack of need of anything he could give her (332). It is this ability to grant Katherine her independence that lays the foundation for their agreement to have a "perfectly sincere and perfectly straight forward friendship" (337), which of course opens up the possibility of their eventual union.'

¹¹ Woolf, *Night and Day*, p. 538.

¹² See Diane Atkinson, "'Black Friday': The Mood of the WSPU Grows Darker", *Rise Up, Women! The Remarkable Lives of the Suffragettes*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp.219-239. See also George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (London: Constable, 1936); Jane Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism, and the Politics of the Visual*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), pp. 117-122.

¹³ Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 Vols (London: Hogarth, 1975-80), Vol. 1, p. 438.

¹⁴ Woolf, 'Character in Fiction', *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, 6 Vols., ed. Andrew McNeillie (1-4), and Stuart Clarke (5-6) (London: Hogarth, 1986-2011), Vol. 3, p.421. AKA 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown', published as a pamphlet by the Hogarth Press in 1924 and in the same year, in the *Criterion*, with minor variants, under the title 'Character in Fiction'. The version cited here is the latter. See also, Makiko Minow-Pinkney (ed), *Virginia Woolf and December 1910* (London: Illuminati Press, 2013).

¹⁵ Woolf, *Night and Day*, p. 133. See Whitworth's note p.606: 'Asquith's broken promises were the subject of the NUWSS pamphlet Unfulfilled Pledges: Our Case Against Mr Asquith (pamphlet A103) (April 1914)'.

¹⁶ Atkinson, *Rise Up, Women! The Remarkable Lives of the Suffragettes*, p. 224.

¹⁷ Atkinson, *Rise Up, Women! The Remarkable Lives of the Suffragettes*, p. 378.

¹⁸ (RBGK Metropolitan Police, Misc. Papers Volume 1845-1920, f. 51) <https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/fire-and-broken-petals-how-the-suffragettes-made-their-mark-on-kew>

¹⁹ Sparks, '(No) "Loopholes of Retreat": The Cultural Context of Parks and Gardens in Woolf's Life and Work', *Woolf: Across the Generations Selected Papers from the Twelfth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Merry M. Pawlowski And Eileen Barrett (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2003), p. 40, citing Ray Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens* (London: The Harvill P with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 1995); and [Anon.], 'Attack on Kew Orchid House', *The Times*, 10 February 1913, p. 9.

²⁰ Woolf, *Night and Day*, p. 1.

²¹ Woolf, 'Kew Gardens' (1921), *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick (London: Hogarth, 1989), p.93.

²² Sparks, '(No) "Loopholes of Retreat": The Cultural Context of Parks and Gardens in Woolf's Life and Work', p. 41.

²³ Woolf, *Night and Day*, p. 359.

²⁴ Sparks, '(No) "Loopholes of Retreat": The Cultural Context of Parks and Gardens in Woolf's Life and Work', p.40,

²⁵ Woolf, *Night and Day*, p. 352.

²⁶ Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891), cited Endersby, p. 169.

²⁷ See Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 2, p.119, boasting in 1916 that a feminist friend 'always assumes that I think what Oscar Wilde thought in the 80ties'.

²⁸ Woolf, *Night and Day*, pp.289-290, 293.

²⁹ Woolf, *Night and Day*, p. 536.

³⁰ Woolf, *Night and Day*, pp. 384-385 . By 1919 the term queer was in usage with reference to sexual orientation. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites Arnold Bennett, no less, famed pantomime rival of Bloomsbury, as the earliest source in Britain of queer's modern 'chiefly derogatory' usage in a diary entry of 26 March 1915 (published in 1932) —although it is difficult to assess how derogatory, if at all, Bennett's usage in fact is: 'An immense reunion of art students, painters, and queer people. Girls in fancy male costume, queer dancing, etc.'. Bennett's evening with 'queer people' and 'queer dancing' was a Bloomsbury pacifist party hosted by Lady Ottoline Morrell where Bennett encounters amongst others 'Lowes Dickinson, Bertrand Russell, Whitehouse. All these very much upset by the war, convinced that the war and government both wrong, etc.' (Arnold Bennett, *The Journals* (London: Cassell, 1932-1933), p.¹_{SEP}127). Woolf and her sister Vanessa Bell were regulars at these weekly gatherings during the Great War. See Jane Goldman, 'Queer Woolf/Queer Bloomsbury: A Poem': *Queer Bloomsbury and queer poetic effects*, *Virginia Woolf and the World of Books*, ed. Nicola Wilson and Claire Battershill (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2018), p. 172.

³¹ Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 4, p.93.

³² Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 4, p.157.

³³ Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 5, p.359. See also pp. 348, 350, 351, 358, 359, and *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 4, p.264.

³⁴ See Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 2, p.425, writing to her sister, Vanessa Bell, in 1920, of her brother-in-law, Clive Bell's mistress, Mary Hutchinson: 'who should trip from her taxi but the blue one, with plovers' eggs and orchids of course, all dressed in yellow with purple spots and as daring and devilish as I was muffled and discreet'; and, p.66, to Lady Robert Cecil in 1915: 'I shall smuggle into your Receptions and hide behind the vast pyramids of orchids and peaches.'

³⁵ See Septimus Smith's homoerotic vision of his war dead comrade Evans, in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), ed. Anne Fernald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 63: 'The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids.' In the same novel Richard Dalloway thinks of buying his wife 'any number of flowers, roses, orchids' yet settles on 'red and white roses'; and Clarissa Dalloway's old Aunt Miss Helena Parry, who 'could not resist recalling what Charles Darwin had said about her little book about Orchids in Burma' that 'went into three editions before 1870', ascends the staircases at the Dalloways' party, 'beheld, not human beings — she had no tender memories, no proud illusions about Viceroy, Generals, Mutinies — it was orchids she saw, and mountain passes and herself carried on the backs of coolies in the 'sixties over solitary peaks; or descending to uproot orchids (startling blossoms, never beheld before) which she painted in water-colour; an indomitable Englishwoman, fretful if disturbed by the War, say, which dropped a bomb at her very door, from her deep meditation over orchids and her own figure journeying in the 'sixties in India — but here was Peter.' (pp. 159-160). Miss Parry owes something to Lady Dorothy Nevill (1826-1913) who 'made a hobby of growing orchids, and thus got in touch with "the great naturalist"' (Woolf, *Essays* Vol. 4, p.202), referring to Charles Darwin, himself author of the *Fertilisation of Orchids* (1862). Compare the presumed patriarchal hetero-normativity associated with the orchid in Sara's description, in Woolf's penultimate novel *The Years* (1937), of looking for office work from a "'stout man with red cheeks. On his table three orchids in a vase. Pressed into your hand, I thought, as the car crunches the gravel by your wife at parting. And over the fireplace the usual picture —"See Woolf, *The Years*, ed. Anna Snaith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.308.

³⁶ Woolf, *The Waves* [1931], ed. Michael Herbert and Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.78.

³⁷ Woolf, *Between the Acts* [1941], ed. Mark Hussey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 8.