

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Writing the World



EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
PAMELA L. CAUGHIE AND DIANA L. SWANSON

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY PRESS

VIRGINIA WOOLF WRITING THE WORLD:

*Selected Papers from the Twenty-fourth
Annual International Conference on
Virginia Woolf*

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Introduction

by Pamela L. Caughie and Diana L. Swanson

In early June, 2014, over 230 students, professors, independent scholars, and common readers from around the world came together in Chicago for the 24th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf. Chicago, an international hub, was an ideal location for a conference entitled “Woolf Writing the World”; two years earlier, in 2012, Chicago set a visitation record, hosting over 46 million visitors from around the world (Wikipedia). These figures may dwarf our own, but the conference created its own international hub. On a world map displayed in the conference lounge, using pins (with points!), conference participants reported coming from eighteen countries, listed below (see Fig. 1).

Argentina
Australia
Brazil
Canada
Colombia
France

Japan
Mexico
The Netherland
Norway
Poland
Qatar

South Korea
Sweden
Taiwan
Turkey
United Kingdom
United States

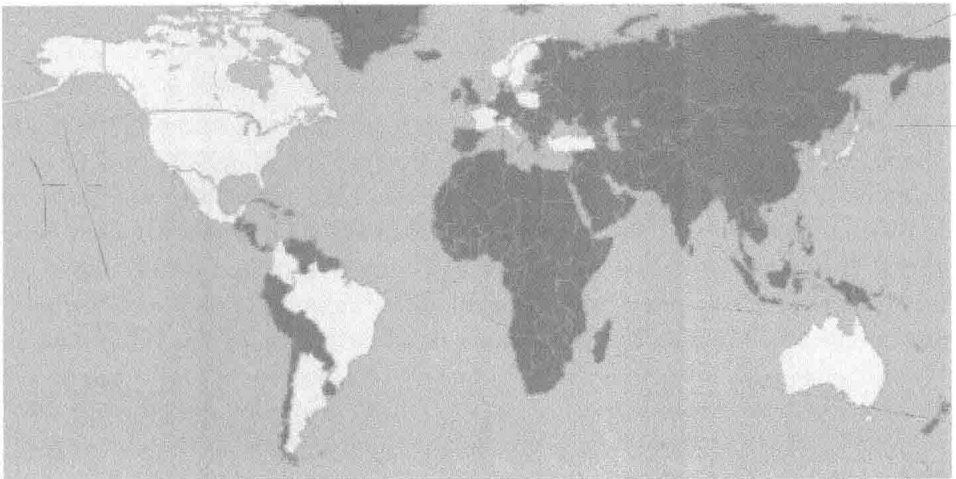


Figure 1: COUNTRIES FROM WHICH PARTICIPANTS TRAVELED TO THE 2014 WOOLF CONFERENCE (SHADED IN LIGHT GRAY). TRAVEL MAP GENERATOR ([HTTP://WWW.29TRAVELS.COM/TRAVELMAP/INDEX.PHP](http://www.29travels.com/travelmap/index.php))

Co-sponsored by Loyola University Chicago and Northern Illinois University, Woolf Writing the World took place on Loyola’s beautiful lakeshore campus in a

meticulously restored art deco skyscraper, The Mundelein Center, built by nuns during the Great Depression, a history memorialized by Prudence Moylan, Professor Emerita of Loyola, at the opening reception. The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed



Figure 2: THE MUNDELEIN CENTER, LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

Virgin Mary (BVMs), in response to a call by Cardinal George Mundelein for a Catholic women's college in Chicago, raised the funds to build the iconic skyscraper in 1929, the first self-contained skyscraper college for women. Rejecting the Cardinal's wish for a building in the classical style, the nuns chose the art deco design, with its striking main entrance flanked by two guardian angels, Uriel and Jophiel (see Fig. 2). A fitting setting for a Virginia Woolf conference, The Mundelein Center allowed us to experience a woman's college from the *inside*.

The conference officially began on June 4th with a Bloomsbury Exhibit at The Newberry Library, an internationally recognized independent humanities research library located in the heart of Chicago's Gold Coast. The exhibit, displaying the Newberry's extensive collection of Woolf and Bloomsbury materials, was curated

by modernist scholar and Newberry staff member Liesl Olson, who was joined by Mark Hussey, Distinguished Professor of English at Pace University in New York, at the opening presentation. As Olson and Hussey provided details about the materials on display, many connecting Bloomsbury and Chicago, we borrowed one another's cell phones to snap pictures of a first edition of *The Voyage Out*; of Woolf's signature on the title page of a first-edition *A Room of One's Own* or in a limited edition of "Street Haunting"; of Clive Bell's introduction to the *Catalog of An Exhibition of Original Drawings by Pablo Picasso, 1923*; or of Katherine Mansfield's desk blotter. That evening The Poetry Foundation—which publishes *Poetry* magazine, founded by Harriet Monroe in 1912—welcomed participants to its auditorium for "Off the Shelf: A Woolf-Inspired Poetry Reading" by Canadian poet Sina Queyras, author of *Unleashed* and *Lemon Hound*, among other collections. Other special events over the next four days included a lunchtime presentation of *The Glass Inward*, an fascinating multi-media performance inspired by Orlando

and created by Anna Henson, a visual and performance artist formerly of DePaul University and now living in New York; an enchanting performance of Woolf's story "A Mark on the Wall" by Adrianne Krstansky (Brandeis University) and Abigail Killeen (Bowdoin College) that brought Woolf's story to life and demonstrated how we can come to know Woolf's writings through our bodies as well as our minds; guided tours of The Art Institute of Chicago's Modern Wing by Paula Wisotzki, Fine Arts professor at Loyola University Chicago, who introduced us to its many treasures, the well-known and the obscure, such as *Exquisite Corpse* (1928), a drawing made in pen, pencils and crayons by Man Ray, Joan Miró, Yves Tanguy, and Max Morise in the form of the parlor game played in *The Years* (http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/119117?search_no=2&index=3); and a brilliant, uproarious performance of Sarah Ruhl's *Orlando* directed by Ann Shanahan of Loyola's Department of Fine and Performing Arts (see Fig. 3). Performances were followed by talkbacks with Professor Shanahan, co-host Diana Swanson (Northern Illinois University), Jaime Hovey (DePaul University), Anna Henson, and the student actors from Loyola. Christine Froula enthused afterwards, "with its magical flow of bodies and voices, Sarah Ruhl's *Orlando* seems to me especially enhanced when young actors perform it." These special events allowed us to move through the city, across the campus, and into the community as well as to virtually travel the world through the conference presentations.



Figure 3: *ORLANDO* (CREDIT: JULIA EBERHARDT, PHOTOGRAPHER AND DESIGNER)

Fifty-eight panels with 181 papers, seven seminars, and three keynote events made up the bulk of the conference. Twenty-seven papers and two of the three keynote events are included here. Mark Hussey organized the first keynote event, an inspiring

and thought-provoking roundtable on Woolf and Violence, and a most fitting opening as we observed that month the 100th anniversary of the start of the Great War. Presenting to a standing-room-only audience in a hall overlooking Lake Michigan, Hussey and his co-presenters—Sarah Cole, Ashley Foster, Christine Froula, and Jean Mills—made us all confront the ethical and political implications not just of Woolf's writings but of our own writing and teaching on Woolf. Maud Ellmann (University of Chicago) presented the second keynote address with a highly engaging lecture on how war—specifically World War II—resonates in the fiction of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Townsend Warner. Ellmann's lecture took an atmospheric perspective, focusing on what their fiction tells us about "*war in the air*, where words and weapons, wireless and weather coincide." Tuzyline Jita Allan (Baruch College, CUNY) gave the final, provocative keynote address, "The Voyage In, Out, and Beyond: Virginia Woolf and Postcolonialism," in which she revisited the impact of postcolonial criticism on Woolf studies and feminist criticism more generally. Arguing that postcolonial Woolf criticism is an unfinished project, Allan challenged us to accept the responsibility of unearthing "Woolf's racial knowledge that lies in her historical subtexts," a challenge that demands we confront our "knowledge deficit" of the black Atlantic. Unfortunately, Professor Allan was unable to contribute to this volume.

Although themes of war and peace prevailed at the conference given its commemorative year, panel and paper topics ranged widely, from the perennially interesting (trauma, feminism, nature, cinema, Bloomsbury homosexuality) to emerging critical concerns (animal studies, ecology, queer studies, object oriented ontology) to the delightfully quirky (with panels entitled "Propaganda, Codebreakers, and Spies," "Ghosts and Hauntings," and "Horses, Donkeys, and Dogs, Oh My!"). Given the conference theme, many papers placed Woolf in the context of European, African, Asian, and Middle Eastern writers, histories, and classrooms. Panel presentations took us to Brazil, Canada, France, Greece, India, Qatar, Sweden, Taiwan as well as the US and the UK. We sat in various classrooms, literally, of course, but also figuratively—a feminist theory classroom in the Middle East, a community college classroom, a composition classroom, a global citizenship classroom—and learned about teaching Woolf in these contexts. We investigated various kinds of worlds created by Woolf: natural worlds and animal worlds; worlds of forests and flowers, butterflies and moths; ethical and philosophical worlds; homosexual and queer worlds; and the world of two world wars. Between sessions, as we moved through the spaces of that 1930 architectural feat of the Mundelein skyscraper, we heard the constant buzz of conversation, outbursts of laughter, and the din of camaraderie that are the signs of a successful party. Had there been curtains hanging, we would have beaten them back!

The diversity of participants and topics at this conference made us wonder how far Woolf's reach extends. To get a sense of where Woolf scholarship is being read

across the globe, we ran a search of one scholar's (and by no means the most well-known or well-published Woolf scholar) publications on Woolf that are available on her university's eCommons. In one 30-day period, her work was downloaded 297 times in 51 countries across six continents. The countries are listed below:

Algeria	Indonesia	Norway
Australia	Iran	Pakistan
Bangladesh	Ireland	Portugal
Brazil	Israel	Romania
Canada	Italy	Russian Federation
China	Jamaica	Rwanda
Croatia	Japan	Saudi Arabia
Cyprus	Jordan	Slovakia
Czech Republic	Kenya	Slovenia
Egypt	Lebanon	South Korea
France	Luxemburg	Spain
Georgia	Malta	Sweden
Germany	Mauritania	Turkey
Hong Kong	Mexico	Ukraine
Hungary	Morocco	United Kingdom
Iceland	Nepal	United States
India	The Netherlands	Zambia

The next month brought 386 downloads of her Woolf scholarship. And in a year's time, between March 2014 and March 2015, she had well over 3,000 downloads in 78 countries (see Fig. 4). We cite these examples as evidence of the continued, and it seems growing, interest in Virginia Woolf around the world. Our conference title, "Woolf writing the world," might also have been phrased "the world reading, and writing, Woolf."



Figure 4: MAP OF eCOMMONS DOWNLOADS: THE DARKER THE SHADING, THE HIGHER THE NUMBER OF DOWNLOADS (CREDIT: MARGARET HELLER)

The conference theme, *Writing the World*, was motivated by our desire to see what kinds of answers people—scholars, teachers, students, common readers, artists—would have to the question of whether and how Woolf still matters in the world. We, two white American women scholars of English literature, believe that Woolf still matters—we spend and have spent much of our scholarly and teacherly time and energy with Woolf in one way or another. But did other people from around the world, from different social and geographical locations and from different generations, believe that Woolf matters, that Woolf speaks to them or to their students or to questions that resonate deeply today around the globe? The answers we received from Canada, the UK, the US, from Turkey, Taiwan, and Qatar, were many and insightful. You will find some of them here in this book.

Several major themes run through the papers people presented about how Woolf matters in the world today: violence, war, and the quest for peace; Woolf as a world writer; Woolf's writing of animal and natural worlds; and how writing itself is world-making. Laced throughout these papers are messages about how Woolf's writing is a rich resource for thinking, feeling, writing about, and acting upon urgent questions of meaning, community, and justice.

Most striking to us are the connections that appear again and again throughout these papers. So much of the received wisdom and scholarly consensus about everything from modernism to globalization emphasizes breaks and gaps, conflicts and irresolvable—even incommensurable—differences. As Erica Gene Delsandro points out, for example, the common narrative of modernism is that of “generation gaps” between the Victorians and the modernists (such as Woolf) and between the modernists and the “Younger Generation” (such as Auden and Isherwood). But Delsandro sees important continuities between Woolf and Isherwood, shared values about war and peace, and some similar literary strategies. And over and over again, writers in this volume (and speakers at the conference) reveal continuities and connections between generations, between the social and political landscapes in Woolf's day and in ours, and they find Woolf's writings making connections across classes, genders, nations, and the arts and sciences.

This is to say, the connections are there despite the differences threading through them. Throughout her writing life, Woolf continued to ring changes on central questions of war and peace, imperialism and community, human and nonhuman nature, and the power of art, and her writing continues to inform and inspire diverse critical and creative work.

As Mark Hussey says in his introduction to the keynote roundtable on Woolf and violence, “it is a long time since it has been possible to think of Woolf in isolation from her contemporaries or as a voice disconnected from the political currents of her time” (2). He, Sarah Cole, J. Ashley Foster, Christine Froula, and Jean Mills approach Woolf's connections to “political currents” from a fruitful diversity of perspectives—pedagogy, literary form, modernism's pacifist history,

the long history of Western cultural traditions, and social activism. They find that war and violence are constantly at hand and relevant, and that Woolf's writing and praxis continue to inform the search to delineate sources of violence and to form peace-making practices and movements. As Ashley Foster writes, "fighting for Woolf is a 'habit,' something cultivated and taught, and therefore can be either socially encouraged or sublimated" (8). All five of these scholars connect not only Woolf but also modernism to pacifism and situate Woolf's interest in violence, war, and peace-making in material historical contexts. In various ways, they each answer "yes" to Mark Hussey's question "Does Woolf's 'thinking is my fighting' (D5 285) really make a difference now?"

Judith Allen and Charles Andrews, in different ways, assert Woolf's relevance to current political controversies regarding government surveillance, propaganda, justifications of war, and peace activism. Paula Maggio argues both sides in the debate about whether or not Woolf should be considered pacifist or feminist, undermining the division between the "sides." Christine Haskill demonstrates connections between the "sex war" and the Great War and shows that Woolf's arguments in *Three Guineas* draw upon rather than deny late-19th-century New Woman feminism. David Deutsch and Ann Martin connect culture and industry, respectively, to Woolf's writings on war and peace, enriching our understanding of Woolf's engagement with contemporary developments in both music and manufacturing. Eleanor McNeas shows that Woolf's early drafts of *The Years*, prior to Woolf's heavy editing, weave connections as well as reveal distinctions among the social classes in their responses to World War I. Many of these threads are lost when Woolf deletes a big "chunk" from the novel. Finally, in her keynote lecture, Maud Ellmann connects the now-canonical Woolf with the non-canonical Sylvia Townsend Warner, tracing the themes of war (in the air) and news (on the air) in their public and private writing during the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Warner, unlike Woolf, supported the use of war against fascism; however, both "Woolf and Warner," Ellmann notes, "remind us of the atmosphere of war—an atmosphere in which the thunder and lightning of the bombing raids can scarcely be distinguished from the weather" (77).

Ever-present questions about war, violence, and feminism thread their ways through the essays about Woolf as/and "World Writer(s)." Erin Amann Holliday-Karre's approach to the question of whether and how Woolf matters in the world today is pedagogical; she offers an account of her experience teaching *Three Guineas* to women students in Qatar. Holliday-Karre contrasts Woolf's feminism with that of the International Women's Alliance (IWA), which embarked on a world-wide campaign in the 1930s and whose liberal humanist feminism led to an all-too-common insistence on the oppression of Middle Eastern women. Resisting such a claim, her students from various Middle-Eastern cultures connect with but also question Woolf's ideas about feminism as regards education, religion,

and the sociopolitical significance of clothing. David J. Fine discusses teaching in the Global Citizenship Program at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, using *Three Guineas* to unsettle his students and challenge them to more rigorously interrogate their own privileges. Both Holliday-Karre and Fine critique intellectual and political “fads” and Western truisms about “feminism,” “globalization,” and “global citizenship.”

Taking a different approach to Woolf as a world writer, Matthew Beeber and Alan Chih-chien Hsieh engage closely with Woolf’s fiction to demonstrate Woolf’s own “global” engagement. Beeber offers an analysis of *Orlando* as a knowing satire of Orientalism that challenges academic and popular views of Constantinople/the Ottoman Empire/the East as androgynous and feminized. Hsieh refers to the scenes of reading and of cultural contact in *The Voyage Out* to argue for a “post-colonial Woolf.” Responding in part to “the ethical turn/return proposed by the postcolonial scholar Simon Gikandi,” Hsieh argues that Rachel is moved by the gaze of the colonial Other and that *The Voyage Out* “registers a planetary love that entails an ethical reading of alterity” (118). Departing from the focus on a single novel in the context of global issues, Shao-Hua Wang analyzes Woolf’s influence on another world writer—one of the most famous post-1949 Taiwanese writers, Hsien-yung Pai. Noting that Pai himself attested to the influence of *Mrs. Dalloway* on his “Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream” (1968), Wang traces Woolf’s influence on technique and theme in “Wandering in the Garden,” showing that the novel’s representation of the lived moment was one inspiration for Pai’s story.

Susan Stanford Friedman makes a different kind of world connection in her “‘Shakespeare’s Sister’: Woolf in the World before *A Room of One’s Own*.” Friedman suggests reading Woolf’s tropic/iconic theories (a room of one’s own, killing the angel in the house, as a woman I have no country, Shakespeare’s sister) as travelling through distance and time as “part of a wider, even potentially worldwide discourse for which she remains central, but only as part of the story” (124). Friedman argues for a transnational literary genealogy independent of direct influences. Like Holliday-Karre, Friedman critiques the narrative of knowledge-creation, including that of feminism, that places the West at its center, and as its origin, and the rest of the globe as periphery. Finally, Steven Putzel returns to the topic of war and peace, analyzing Leonard Woolf’s rigorous and evolving assessments of the political and ethical matters at stake in Palestine and Israel from WWI onwards. Putzel argues that “the evolution of Woolf’s thoughts on Palestine, Zionism, and the State of Israel can help us navigate this international, national, and educational controversy in a broader historical context, and can increase our appreciation for the ways Woolf’s essays, letters, Labour Party white papers, and his autobiography helped to ‘write the world’” (129). As the essays in

the "War and Peace" section do with regard to Virginia's writings, Putzel's essay connects Leonard's writings to political currents today.

The third section extends the connections beyond the human world to animal and natural worlds. As animal studies and ecocriticism have been burgeoning in literary studies in general, Woolf's works are proving fertile ground for such approaches. Elizabeth Hanna Hanson's and Vicki Tromanhauser's essays focus on the significance of animals in Woolf's fiction and nonfiction. Hanson singles out the trope of the donkey and connects it to themes of feminism, class, social justice, art, propaganda, and the writing process. "The donkey has its place in the literary tradition," writes Hanson, "but it can also make us aware of the power relations that have made that tradition possible" (141). Tromanhauser evokes the literary and ideological work of the dog in *Three Guineas*, comparing the sensory and cognitive worlds of dogs and women. Woolf "endows her narrator with canine aptitudes in order better to navigate the fraught terrain of contemporary social life and sniff out its repressive structures" (143). Moving to inanimate nature, Elisa Kay Sparks turns to an aspect of nature generally considered far from the human and cultural, forests. Forests, as Sparks points out, are usually considered wild and thus the opposite of gardens as places of cultivation and civilization. In contrast, Sparks shows that in Woolf's works, "while a few basic patterns for forest associations can be mapped, in many cases forests are endowed with a variety of meanings so diverse as to seem to purposefully dissolve preconceived generalities, a practice of complicating and undercutting dichotomies" (173). Kim Sigouin, Elsa Högborg, Michael Tratner, and Joyce E. Kelley sustain this theme of undercutting dichotomies and blurring categories. Sigouin, for example, argues that in *To the Lighthouse* Woolf's language "erodes sharp distinctions between human and nonhuman nature" (167), arguing that cultural and natural rhythms are constantly at play with each other throughout the novel. In her analysis of "Kew Gardens," Kelley finds that Woolf shows the large in the small, the macrocosm in the microcosm, and connects "the worlds of the seen and the unseen" (161). Högborg brings object-oriented ontology as a form of posthumanism to bear on Woolf's writing of inanimate objects (e.g., teacups, rocks). She argues that the way Woolf imagines an object world independent of human thought or action highlights the objectification and vulnerability of human beings as well as the need for human humility and responsibility. Tratner offers a new reading of *The Waves* in light of early 20th-century neuroscience; Woolf's contemporaries in physiology and psychology were proposing that the body and the mind were not two, but rather one. "Woolf's essays and novels," Tratner suggests, "seek to develop ways of understanding this new vision of the body [as outside civilization] and in particular to counter the type of masculinity being proposed as the only way to control such a body" (158). This type of masculinity, imperial and dominating, is represented by Percival and was promulgated by Mussolini and Hitler.

Thus Tratner, through an analysis based in sciences contemporary to Woolf, brings us back to themes of feminism, war, and justice. The final section of this volume, on "Writing and Worldmaking," begins with an essay that treats feminism in a manner counter to the expected, specifically, the progressive narrative of women's development into self-defined and self-sufficient agents-in-the-world. Anne Cunningham argues that Rachel Vinrace in *The Voyage Out* can be read as an example of "negative feminism," feminism as refusal. Cunningham sees Woolf creating a "modernist aesthetics of failure" and, like the other essays in this final section of the book, discusses how Woolf's writing directs our attention to writing itself. Maayan P. Dauber argues that Woolf creates a modernist form of pathos in *To the Lighthouse*, a pathos which functions to create characters and relations in a world where to know another is impossible. In "The Reconciliations of Poetry in Woolf's *Between the Acts*; or Why It's 'perfectly ridiculous to call it a novel'," Amy Huseby delves into the texture, rhythm, and form of Woolf's prose itself, showing how she developed a new kind of writing—"euphonic prose." Kelle Sills Mullineaux, in "Virginia Woolf, Composition Theorist," demonstrates how Woolf's reflections on the writing process, in her essays and novels, constitute an enabling composition theory that can help students "write without fear" (202). Finally, Madelyn Detloff's essay, "The Precarity of 'Civilization' in Woolf's Creative Worldmaking," returns us to the question with which we began: does Woolf's writing matter in the world today and, if so, how? As Detloff says, "to contemplate how and why an aesthetically complex and intellectually challenging artist such as Woolf still matters today for her artistry is to open up a more fundamental conversation about why and how the life of the mind matters. This pursuit is no less trivial today than it was seventy-three years ago when Woolf, in her last novel, *Between the Acts* (written between 1938 and 1941—some very dark years in European history), depicted a community coming together to rebuild '[c]ivilization [...] in ruins [...] by human effort' in the course of an ordinary village pageant (BTA 181)" (207).

We will let you read Detloff's answers for yourself. Let us just say that, *au fond*, Detloff's essay, and all the essays in this book, reconfirm the creative power of writing, and Woolf's writing in particular, to make and re-make meaning and community. Woolf's writing does matter to how violence and peace-making continue around the world today; how literature circulates globally; how, at least in the "First World," we continue to struggle to redefine our relationship to other animals and to the "environment"; and how writing powerfully worlds and re-worlds us.



Acknowledgments

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VIRGINIA WOOLF
STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS

(as established by *Woolf Studies Annual*)

AHH	<i>A Haunted House</i>
AROO	<i>A Room of One's Own</i>
AWD	<i>A Writer's Diary</i> , ed. Leonard Woolf
BP	<i>Books and Portraits</i>
BTA	<i>Between the Acts</i>
CDB	<i>The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays</i>
CE	<i>Collected Essays</i> (ed. Leonard Woolf, 4 vols.: CE1, CE2, CE3, CE4)
CR1	<i>The Common Reader</i>
CR2	<i>The Common Reader, Second Series</i>
CSF	<i>The Complete Shorter Fiction</i> (ed. Susan Dick)
D	<i>The Diary of Virginia Woolf</i> (5 vols.: D1, D2, D3, D4, D5)
DM	<i>The Death of the Moth and Other Essays</i>
E	<i>The Essays of Virginia Woolf</i> (ed. Stuart Clarke and Andrew McNeillie, 6 vols.: E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6)
F	<i>Flush</i>
FR	<i>Freshwater</i>
GR	<i>Granite and Rainbow: Essays</i>
HPGN	<i>Hyde Park Gate News</i> (ed. Gill Lowe)
JR	<i>Jacob's Room</i>
JRHD	<i>Jacob's Room: The Holograph Draft</i> (ed. Edward L. Bishop)
L	<i>The Letters of Virginia Woolf</i> (ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols.: L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L6)
M	<i>The Moment and Other Essays</i>
MEL	<i>Melymbrosia</i>
MOB	<i>Moments of Being</i>
MT	<i>Monday or Tuesday</i>
MD	<i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
ND	<i>Night and Day</i>
O	<i>Orlando</i>
PA	<i>A Passionate Apprentice</i>
RF	<i>Roger Fry</i>
TG	<i>Three Guineas</i>
TTL	<i>To the Lighthouse</i>
TW	<i>The Waves</i>
TY	<i>The Years</i>
VO	<i>The Voyage Out</i>
WF	<i>Women and Fiction: The Manuscript Versions of A Room of One's Own</i> (ed. S. P. Rosenbaum)