"Forebodings about fascism": Marion Milner and Virginia Woolf

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Introduction

In her 1937 book, An Experiment in Leisure, published under the penname Joanna Field, Marion Milner set out to “solve certain aspects of the everyday problem of what to do with one’s spare time.”\(^1\) “Obviously,” Milner wrote, “for a large number of people this is not a problem at all,” but, she continued, “there are others who are less certain in their attitudes, who are often more aware of other people’s identity than their own.”\(^2\) For these people, “and very often they are women, it is so fatally easy to live parasitically upon other people’s happiness, to answer the question—‘What shall we do today?’ by—‘We’ll do whatever you like, my dear.’”\(^3\) Drawing attention to the ways in which women’s wants, desires, and pastimes are shaped, and frequently obscured or mangled, by the desires of others, Milner set out to free her readers from living “parasitically” under the dominion of “other people’s” identities and values.\(^4\)
In her first book, *A Life of One’s Own*, published 3 years earlier in 1934, Milner had set out to record, and reflect upon, her own experimental attempts to unearth “what kinds of experience made me happy,” ranging across such diverse pleasures as her desire for a pair of red shoes, her pleasure in reading James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, her enjoyment of an ice hockey match, and her feelings of “delight” in front of a painting by Cézanne. In her “Preface” to *A Life of One’s Own*, Milner stated that:

The reason for publishing the book is that although what I found is probably peculiar to my own temperament and circumstances, I think the method by which I found it may be useful to others, even to those whose discoveries about themselves may be the opposite of my own. The need for such a method in these days is obvious, a method for discovering one’s true likes and dislikes, for finding and setting up a standard of values that is truly one’s own and not a borrowed mass-produced ideal.

Milner framed *A Life of One’s Own* not as autobiography or self-analysis, but, instead, as a new “method” — a “method” that she offered to her reader as a way of freeing himself or herself from the “borrowed mass-produced ideal[s]” thrust upon us in capitalist modernity. In *A Life of One’s Own*, as I’ve argued elsewhere, Milner pursues a distinctively modernist attempt to free herself from “influence from custom, tradition, fashion,” refusing to be “swayed by standards uncritically accepted from my friends, my family, my countrymen, my ancestors.” Like her modernist contemporaries, Milner charts the collapse of nineteenth-century values and traditions (“everywhere around me I saw old ways of doing things breaking down and proving inadequate”), and records her scepticism “about trusting the dictates of a social tradition which had landed us in the war,” while also tracking a typically modernist anxiety about the influences of mass culture. *A Life of One’s Own* records Milner’s attempt to secure what she describes as her “vacillating will” so that it is “kept in the ways that I love”, “Instead of [being] pulled this way and that in response to the suggestion of the crowd.”

Both *A Life of One’s Own* and *An Experiment in Leisure* are generically hybrid texts, made up of fragments of life-writing, self-analysis, diary, doodles, drawings, literary quotations, psychoanalytic theory, automatic writing, self-help book, mysticism, and essay. As Vanessa Smith observed in the inaugural issue of this journal, *A Life of One’s Own* occupies “a space athwart disciplinary and generic axioms”—it is “impossible to pigeonhole; a text of radical discursive crossings.”

It has elements of the confessional memoir, its gripping narrative of self-education puts it in the territory of the bildungsroman, it has been classed as both mysticism and detective fiction, it tells a story of a woman’s development that elides the marriage plot. It sidles up to and then shies away from the two dominant discourses through which selfhood was rethought between the wars – psychoanalysis and Modernism. Its aleatory, stream of consciousness style is reminiscent of Dorothy Richardson, but is presented as social-scientific rather than literary experimentation.

Milner would later train as a psychoanalyst: she qualified in 1943, before going on to become a celebrated figure in British psychoanalysis until her death in 1998. And yet, although Milner was certainly knowledgeable about psychoanalysis in the 1930s, both *A Life of One’s Own* and *An Experiment in Leisure* also keep psychoanalysis at bay: Milner hoped, she wrote in *A Life of One’s Own*, to “devise a method which might be available for anyone, quite apart from whether opportunity or intellectual capacity inclined them to the task of wading through psycho-analytic literature or their income made it possible for them to submit themselves as a patient.”
Just as Milner’s relationship to psychoanalysis is, in these early writings, characterized both by fascination and hesitation, her relationship to literary modernism is similarly complex. *A Life of One’s Own* has, of course, been read as an unconscious echo of, or unacknowledged tribute to, Virginia Woolf’s 1929 essay *A Room of One’s Own*. And yet, in *A Life of One’s Own*, Milner doesn’t refer directly to Woolf’s feminist essay, but instead quotes from Woolf’s essay on Montaigne, describing the elusive, discordant and shifting nature of the “soul”—a “creature” that Woolf describes as “so complex, so indefinite, corresponding so little to the version which does duty for her in public, that a man may spend his life in merely trying to run her to earth.” In an act of “common reading” that Woolf herself would surely have approved, Milner remembers copying this quotation out onto a piece of paper at the very beginning of her “experiment”, and carrying it with her, talisman-like, crumpled up in her pocket at the time. Milner’s notebooks from the 1930s reveal not only that she was familiar with the works of a number of modernist writers—Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Joseph Conrad, Sylvia Townsend Warner, D. H. Lawrence, Vita Sackville-West, Roger Fry, Wyndham Lewis, and Aldous Huxley are just some of the names that appear in the published and unpublished texts—but also that she explicitly understood her own writing in relationship to modernist formal experiment. One diary entry from 1931 comments on the “technique” of Richardson’s *Pointed Roofs* (“no omniscient observer”), while another entry from 1934 shows Milner comparing her own “method” to T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*:

Isn’t this, (ie my method) in a sense what T. S. Eliot was trying to do in his Waste Land? A series of emotionally important pictures.. (organic symbols..) which he has tried (un unsuccessfully?) to link, give coherence to, by a system of notes.

As I have argued elsewhere, Milner’s 1930s publications can both be read alongside contemporary modernist experiments with stream of consciousness writing by Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, and May Sinclair. Hugh Haughton has also drawn attention to the affinities between Woolf’s epiphanic “moments of being”, James Joyce’s epiphanies, and Milner’s interest in capturing what she describes as enigmatic “moments”, when even “the very simplest things,” such as “the glint of electric light on the water in my bath, gave me the most intense delight.” In this article, however, I want to explore Woolf’s and Milner’s shared—and deeply anxious—fascination with what Milner described, in her 1950 book *On Not Being Able to Paint*, as the “Monsters within and without.” In particular, this article tracks Woolf’s and Milner’s encounters with the internal and external “monsters” haunting 1930s Europe, showing how, for both writers, the historical vicissitudes of fascism traversed the terrains of psychic, cultural, and political life, unsettling any easy distinction between the inside and outside of the mind.

Focussing on the portraits of reading in Woolf’s 1937 novel, *The Years*, alongside the portraits of leisure in Milner’s 1937 book, *An Experiment in Leisure*, I want to suggest that Woolf, like Milner, asks her readers to reflect upon the nature of our personal and political investments in the act of reading books. For both Woolf and Milner, the question of “what I like” becomes freighted with anxiety in an era when individual desires were understood to be prey to the manipulations, not only of capitalist mass-deception, but also of fascism. What might at first appear in Milner’s writing as a whimsical project in self-analysis, can in fact be read as a political project in extricating the self from the polluted desires of fascism. In the portraits of reading written into *The Years*, Woolf
explores the fear that entering into the pleasures of the text might leave the reader prey to the emotional manipulations of fascism. Both Woolf and Milner, I argue, are engaged in a similar endeavour to understand the entanglement of the psychic, social and political forces at work in our everyday acts of leisure and reading. Their analyses of the drives that underpin our moments of everyday pleasure are informed, and haunted, by the history and politics of the 1930s. For both, there is a fragile border between a kind of rapturous identification and the troubling psycho-politics of fascism.

Beginning with a discussion of *An Experiment in Leisure*, this article then moves on to an analysis of the troubled scenes of reading in *The Years*. I conclude by considering how both Woolf and Milner solicit their readers to take up a method of self-reflexive reading that anatomizes the dominant “mass-produced” fantasies of the early twentieth century, while resisting the monsters that these writers trace both inside and outside of the mind in 1930s Europe.

*“Forebodings about Fascism”: Marion Milner’s *An Experiment in Leisure* (1937)*

In the “Preface” to *An Experiment in Leisure*, Milner described her second book as an attempt “to find out by simple observation just what this particular mind [...] seems to find most interesting.” By 1937, however, the question with which Milner had begun *A Life of One’s Own*, and the urgency of answering it, had shifted. Out of the question, “What do I like?” grew a second question: “Is this feeling of liking something trustworthy at all, is feeling a safe guide?” Milner writes, “to ask the second question because for a long time I had suffered from a growing uneasiness over the anti-intellectual trends of modern life.”

This uneasiness [...] grew from the knowledge that I myself had always been more guided by feeling than by reason; although loving the clear precision of science and rational exposition I had always felt it to be slightly foreign and a little dangerous, too clear to be true [...]. But now I was continually reading accounts of how the uncritical exaltation of feeling seemed to be leading to manifestations which with my whole soul I loathed: to intolerance and ruthless tyranny over individual freedom of thought. Particularly did the distortion of facts for the sake of arousing and exploiting the feelings of the masses make me feel physically sick, as though the ground had fallen away under my feet.

As Milner had pointed out in *A Life of One’s Own*, she had “a First Class Honour Degree in Psychology” from University College London, she had also worked with Cyril Burt at the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, she had lectured on psychology for the Workers Educational Association, and in 1927 she was awarded a Laura Spelman Rockefeller Scholarship to study industrial psychology at the Harvard Business School. The ambivalence in both books to the “clear precision of science” is therefore by no means a simplistic binary opposition of reason and feeling. And yet, writing against the backdrop of a rising current of fascism and “ruthless tyranny” across Europe (part of the book records Milner’s stay in Spain during 1936), there is a new urgency, for Milner in 1937, in understanding the ease with which, not only Hollywood movie makers, but now also European dictators might manipulate individual desires.

Beginning by exploring “pleasant memories” from childhood, Milner takes her reader on a journey of self-observation, tracking the threads of association between her memories, pastimes and pleasures, as recorded in diaries, fragments of automatic writing, and doodles. Considering her
attraction to English landscapes marked by pagan history, Milner records that one day she found this “thread of allurement to places had become entangled with ideas that I remembered from books.”

Milner describes her free associations to these landscapes and books, alluding to a book by John Buchan, and quoting Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, which in turn reminds her of a sketch she has drawn at the zoo:

lying in bed after the birth of my son, I found I was repeating the name of a book of short stories that I had just read; *The Runagates Club* [by John Buchan]. It was so persistent that finally I let go all my absorption with immediate purposes and simply watched my thoughts; as I did so a vague fear grew round the name, and with it the memory of a passage in another book that I had just been reading:

“It rasped her, though, to have stirring about in her this brutal monster! To hear twigs cracking and feel hooves planted down in the depths of that leaf-encumbered forest, the soul; never to be content quite, or quite secure, for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred…”

and then my thoughts jumped to a rough sketch I had myself made at the Zoo [Figure 1]. Spontaneously this thought with its vague fear took the name of “the Green Wildebeste.”

[Insert] Figure 1: Milner’s sketch at the zoo.

The fearful “Green Wildebeste”, the “brutal monster” that rasps Mrs Dalloway, the “hooves” that she feels “planted down in the depths” of her soul—all these lead Milner on to another set of free associations: to the mythological figure of Pan, a drawing with “a pair of great horns”, and an English folk dance called “The Horn Dance of Abbots Bromley.”

“Certainly”, Milner observes, “the theme of horns and hoofs seemed to be cropping up rather frequently. But I could not see any reason for this, so I went on following up the clues of interest.” The “clues of interest” lead from Woolf’s “brutal monster”, the “horns and hoofs” of Pan and English folk dancing, onto Milner’s attraction to witchcraft, pagan ritual, Wagner’s *Ring Cycle*, and Spanish bullfighting.

Unpicking her own appeal to witchcraft and pagan ritual (a fascination that Milner shares, as she notes, with Sylvia Townsend Warner’s 1926 novel about a witch, *Lolly Willowes*), Milner teases out her desire for an “ultimate submission”, interpreting her fascination with rituals of self-abandon as part of an urge to “submit yourself to an alien force that wishes to destroy you.” Milner traces this urge “to submit” in her other “leisure interests”, noting that while the “melody of the impending doom of the gods from *The Ring* had haunted [her] for weeks”, she had also become fascinated by accounts of the “ceremony of the killing of the god” in James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*. In *A Life of One’s Own*, Milner had described her aesthetic experiences of music, sculptures, paintings and books, as linked to a desire to “lose myself in the thing perceived.”

This form of self-abandonment is described, in both books, as an intensely pleasurable, but also fearful experience: Milner describes “the dread of annihilation merging into a deep delight.”

Part of the pleasure, for Milner, of self-abandonment, is that she views what she calls the “internal act of the wiping out of myself” as a crucial aspect of creativity, for both the creator and the reader or spectator. And yet, while, on the one hand, Milner interprets her desire for “emotional abandon” as a key to creative endeavour, there is, on the other hand, something more disturbing about her Wagnerian “interests” in pagan rituals of submission and abandon.
Throughout *An Experiment in Leisure*, Milner describes her feeling of being “haunted by [...] forebodings about Fascism.” She is troubled by “thoughts of political brutalities”; “obsessed” by “preoccupations with cruelty”; she notes the feeling of a “dead weight of foreboding over international affairs.” Milner is, therefore, horrified to discover that the pagan rituals of submission she finds so enthralling, also take centre-stage within the propaganda stalking fascist and totalitarian Europe. In her “Summing Up”, Milner writes:

> I had often been filled with a kind of horror to observe how the opinions of groups of people could be stampeded by an image [...] I had been most shocked when I found that some of those images which had seemed to grow out of my most intimate and private experience, and that I had thought represented for me the kernel of the problem of escape from the narrow focus of egoism, were being used by others to foster what seemed to me that most sinister form of egoism—jingoistic nationalism. For I had read in the newspapers that pagan rituals were being revived in Germany, as part of the movement to glorify violence and to discredit the teachings of Christ. When I first read this I had been tempted to throw over my whole enterprise, I thought that all this time I must have been following a will’o’-the-wisp, that images in their double-facedness were false gods after all.

Milner describes a feeling of horror, as she recognizes that her own desire for a form of emotional surrender to a fantasy world dominated by images of witches, horned devils, bullfights, Wagnerian mythology, and sacrificial gods, bears a disturbing resemblance to the fascist appeals to the iconography, and forms, of pagan ritual. As Maud Ellmann notes in her introduction to *An Experiment in Leisure*, Milner’s lengthy discussion of her awe at Spanish bullfighting (she describes it as “the most fully satisfying religious ceremony of my life”), is tempered by her unease at the possible fascist connotations of a nationalist ritual that Franco would quickly promote “as a symbol of Spanish national unity.” The reference to the revival of “pagan rituals” in Germany also suggests Milner’s awareness of the Nazi appropriation of Wagnerian pagan mythology. Milner was fascinated by Wagnerian mythology, recording, in both *A Life of One’s Own* and *An Experiment in Leisure*, her “haunting” returns to *Götterdämmerung*, as well as her interest in the *Nibelungenlied*. And yet, by 1937 she seems to have been worrying about the Nazi adoption of Wagnerian mythology in propaganda such as Leni Reifenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*, the 1934 film of the Nuremberg Rally, in which Hitler is seen to descend from the sky like the Germanic god, Wotan. Milner may also have “read in the newspaper”, specifically in *The Times* in May 1936, about “Herr Hitler’s May Day”, when, as the newspaper correspondent described, Hitler delivered a speech to the masses next to “a large Maypole [...] decorated with swastikas and fir branches.” For Milner, what is most disturbing, is not simply that she uncovers a shared fascination with the pagan icons of European fascism, but that these magnetic “images” also, in Milner’s interpretation, represent her own “most intimate and private” desire for an emotional surrender of the ego—a form of individual surrender that bears a striking resemblance to the forms of emotional surrender demanded by fascism. While the wiping out of individual subjectivity might, for Milner, represent an escape from egoism, such a form of self-obliteration may also, when deployed to sweep up the individual into the fascist crowd, be used “to foster [...] jingoistic nationalism,” and much worse.

Milner’s response to this recognition is, initially, she records, one of shock. And yet, she insists, the prevailing insistence that we must fight totalitarian irrationalism with democratic reason seems to have failed. “We are continually reading,” Milner writes in her conclusion, “of how democracy demands that all of us should think more clearly, reason more adequately, about public affairs.” “But,” she notes, “it has in recent years been proved that the inborn reasoning capacity of most of us is not very high.” Citing a review by Aldous Huxley of “a book which expounded the
racial beliefs of Nazi Germany” (the book was Lothar G. Tirala’s 1935 publication, Rasse, Geist und Seele), Milner draws out the ways in which the dogged insistence on “democratic reason” merely leaves a gaping hole for the raging passions of modern nationalism to burn. Struck by Huxley’s observation that “the attempt to replace passion and prejudice by reason” is, in the face of “Modern nationalists”, “absurd”, Milner asks:

Was it not possible that Freud was right, and that man’s discovery of reason had, so to speak, gone to his head, with the result that many reformers assumed it should be possible to make everybody live by reason all the time, when actually the great majority of people can never live by reason, but only by habit and by faith?

The illusion that we might banish the irrational fantasy components of social and political life through the simple appeal to “reason”, Milner implies, may drive those irrational elements further underground—and, of course, like any good student of Freud, Milner recognizes that the attempt to drive unreason underground, only results in its more violent re-emergence.

Attempting to distinguish between her own fascination with pagan rituals of self-abandon, and the image of “an absolute father-god-dictator” within Nazi propaganda, Milner develops, or at least attempts to develop, a crucial distinction between the inward psychological meanings of pagan images, and the ideological manipulation of such symbols in “public life.” Acknowledging the power of these images in “controlling a people’s mood”, Milner writes:

My own experience seemed to show that such images were really outward and visible signs of inward experience, and I thought that their power in controlling mood must lie in the fact that, unlike abstract ideas and reasoning, their outwardness was deeply rooted in simple sensation, in the concreteness of colour and shape and texture and sound and movement. Yet this very source of their power was also the source of their danger; for [...] the double meaning of the image so easily got lost, the whole matter got transferred into the outside world. Instead of vehicles for the communication of inner private immediate experience, they had been taken as real in their own right, because to believe in the innerness of experience was difficult, but to cling to a concrete statement of apparent external fact was easy.

The appeal, Milner insists, of “primitive images”, is that they speak powerfully to the individual’s inner psychological needs—but in political and cultural life this potent imagery is manipulated so that it will be confused, by readers, spectators, and consumers, with a direct representation of “external fact.” “In democratic countries,” Milner writes

the most powerful manipulators of vital images seemed to be the film-producers, the advertisers and the popular press; and these on the whole manipulated them quite irresponsibly for their own financial advantage, though at times of national stress and in elections they were also used politically. Under dictatorships, vital images seemed used more deliberately for political purposes, primitive images of blood-brotherhood, of blood sacrifice for one’s country, of an absolute father-god-dictator at the head of the nation.

The danger resides, Milner insists, in “taking images literally”, in confusing the outer symbol of one’s inner needs, with external “fact”:

For if you lived recognising only the outer half of the facts, taking images literally, as many people did, then the ignored inner facts, the demands of the inner organization of desire,
took their revenge by distorting your external vision, and you would read with gusto the lies of atrocity-mongers and pass them on to your friends as if they were the external truth.\textsuperscript{56}

Once taken as a “a truth of external fact” (rather than as a figure that symbolically satisfies internal needs), such imagery becomes, Milner writes, “the instrument of all kinds of exploitation—lustful, political, social, the instrument of the crudest infantile desire to be king of the castle and to prove that others are dirty rascals.”\textsuperscript{57}

Milner doesn’t offer a historical analysis as to why, in the 1920s and 1930s, people became so acutely vulnerable to the appeals of fascist propaganda. I’d like, however, to draw a link between Milner’s analysis of the process through which fascist propaganda appeals to “the demands of the inner organization of desire”, and Hannah Arendt’s analysis, in The Origins of Totalitarianism, of the “introverted” (that’s Arendt’s word) appeal of twentieth century European nationalisms.\textsuperscript{58} In her account of the rise of totalitarianism, Arendt describes a shift from what she calls the “extroverted Chauvinism” of the older, nineteenth-century nationalisms, to the “introverted” appeal of the new “tribal nationalism” that arose across Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{59} This new “introverted” nationalism, like the “vital” imagery that Milner describes as appealing to the “demands of the inner organization of desire”, “concentrates [as Arendt puts it] on the individual’s own soul.”\textsuperscript{60} For Arendt, it was the increasingly atomized nature of a twentieth-century classless mass society that rendered Europe so ripe for the ideological manipulations of fascist demagogues. The boom in statelessness (and its consequent rightlessness) in the wake of the First World War, the breakdown of traditional class structures across Europe, and an increasing “alienation of the masses from government”, all coincided, in Arendt’s analysis, to produce a population of alienated, atomized, lonely individuals who were uniquely prey to the “especially violent” and “introverted” nationalism propagated by mass leaders for “purely demagogic reasons.”\textsuperscript{61} Both Milner and Arendt are describing, in different ways, the process through which fascist ideology makes its appeal to the inner psychological needs of the atomized modern individual, in order to manipulate, as Milner puts it, the individual’s “external vision” so that he or she “would read with gusto the lies of atrocity-mongers [...] as if they were the external truth.”\textsuperscript{62}

Milner’s anxiety about her own susceptibility to the irrational appeals of fascism does not dissipate. But, in the final pages of An Experiment in Leisure, Milner does describe what she sees as a way “to pass sagely between this Scylla and Charybdis” of “reason” and “passion”, suggesting that her “method” might itself become what Maud Ellmann describes as a “program for resisting fascism.”\textsuperscript{63} Milner argues that the process of cultivating and observing one’s own interests and desires might itself be a method of avoiding the blind adherence to those she describes as the “public exploiters of furtive emotion—the politicians, the atrocity-mongers, the popular press.”\textsuperscript{64} Wondering “whether the problem of the education of opinion towards public affairs might not be approached from a different angle”, Milner (who also worked in both children’s and adult education) proposes an alternative model of democratic creative education.\textsuperscript{65} “[I]nstead of trying to teach people to reason better, which is very likely beyond the inborn capacity of most of us,” Milner asks: “why not teach us to understand our feelings better, to know what we really want, so that we would be less at the mercy of unscrupulous exploiters [...]?\textsuperscript{66} In An Experiment in Leisure, Milner emphasizes the need for a method of self-observation that might allow the individual not only to understand their own pleasures and desires, but also to cultivate these individual desires in opposition to the “unscrupulous exploiters” of capitalist and fascist modernity.\textsuperscript{67} “I do not mean”, she acknowledges, “that we should all try to join the ranks of minor poets or exhibit at local art shows, but that each of us should realise that the act of welding, [...] into some sort of tangible form—a single moment of lived experience, is action [...] real and effective.”\textsuperscript{68} For Milner, the act of
“welding” “raw lived experience” into “some sort of tangible form”, is a form of what she calls “expressive action”—an active creative process of resisting the widespread surrender to fascism. Unreason, Milner argues, cannot be simply tamed by appeal to the court of reason, but by seeking, through her method of self-observation, “to understand our feelings better,” we might be “less at the mercy of unscrupulous exploiters.”

**Reading the Reader in Virginia Woolf’s The Years (1937)**

In *An Experiment in Leisure*, Marion Milner charts the perils of a desire for self-surrender in the social, cultural, and political world of 1930s Europe. In *The Years*—published, like Milner’s *Experiment*, in 1937—Virginia Woolf offers up an analysis of the psychic and political perils of reading books in an age of fascism. In the portraits of reading that I want to turn to now, Woolf offers up a thrilling account of the pleasures, for women in particular, that reside in reading books. Nonetheless, I want to argue, Woolf does not rest in any easy celebration of the pleasures and enchantments of reading. Like Milner, who tracks the political dangers of her own desire to immerse herself in rituals of self-abandon (whether in the form of pagan ritual or aesthetic absorption in a book, a painting, or a piece of music), Woolf traces her own anxiety about the proximity between moments of aesthetic self-abandon and Sara Pargiter’s self-abandonment to fascist ideology. Just as Milner is fearful of the ways in which her pleasures might be co-opted by the “unscrupulous exploiters” of fascism, Woolf similarly reveals how the reader’s pleasure in reading might leave her vulnerable prey to fascist ideology.

In *The Years*, which tracks an extended late-Victorian family from 1880 to the “Present Day” of the 1930s, Woolf embeds a number of extended scenes of reading, challenging her own reader to reflect on the cognitive processes, personal, and political fantasies that shape their own scene of reading. This scene, taken from the 1907 section of the novel, focuses on Sara Pargiter as a teenage girl. Sara remains at home in bed reading while her older sister and parents are out at a ball. Abandoning a “faded brown book” of philosophy, Sara reaches for her cousin’s translation of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, and begins to read:

She skipped through the pages. At first she read a line or two at random; then, from the litter of broken words, scenes rose, quickly, inaccurately, as she skipped. The unburied body of a murdered man lay like a fallen tree-trunk, like a statue, with one foot stark in the air. Vultures gathered. [...] [W]ith a flap of the grey throat swinging, they hopped—she beat her hand on the counterpane as she read—to that lump there. Quick, quick, quick with repeated jerks they struck the mouldy flesh. Yes. [...] The unburied body of the murdered man lay on the sand. Then in a yellow cloud came whirling—who? She turned the page quickly. Antigone? She came whirling out of the dust-cloud to where the vultures were reeling and flung white sand over the blackened foot. [...] Then behold! [...] the horsemen leapt down; she was seized; her wrists were bound with withies; and they bore her, thus bound—where?

[...]

[...]. The man’s name was Creon. He buried her. [...] The man in the loincloth gave three sharp taps with his mallet on the brick. She was buried alive. The tomb was a brick
mound. There was just room for her to lie straight out. Straight out in a brick tomb, she said.

And that’s the end, she yawned, shutting the book.71

Discarding a book of philosophy that appears to put mind over body, Sara’s reading of Antigone is breathless, imaginative, involved, embodied. The short sentences convey the excited rapidity with which Sara reads, “turn[ing] the page quickly”, while the slippage and blurring of the ambiguous third person pronoun suggests Sara’s identification with Antigone. “She” comes to describe both the reader and the protagonist in this passage—“she”, Sara, in the process of reading Sophocles’ account of Antigone being “seized” and “bound” by Creon’s henchmen, is herself “seized”, “bound”, gripped by the words on the page.72

Read alongside Woolf’s critique of institutionalized forms of masculine, disinterested scholarly reading, it’s tempting to read this scene from The Years as a counter-celebration of feminine pleasure in reading “at random.”73 It’s tempting to read Sara’s pleasure in reading as an example of the forms of rapturous delight that Milner tracks in her experiments in leisure. Not only, however, might we want to read this scene in The Years as a portrait of feminine pleasure in reading, we might also want to read it alongside Woolf’s analysis of Antigone in her 1938 essay Three Guineas, and to argue that Sara enacts the form of feminist reading that Woolf modelled in what she called her “Anti fascist Pamphlet.”74

In Three Guineas, arguing for the value of “public libraries” in fighting fascism, Woolf summoned Sophocles’ Antigone as a lens through which to examine her contemporary historical moment.75 “Consider the character of Creon,” Woolf demanded:

Consider Creon’s claim to absolute rule over his subjects. That is a far more instructive analysis of tyranny than any our politicians can offer us. [...] Consider Antigone’s distinction between the laws and the Law. That is a far more profound statement of the duties of the individual to society than any our sociologists can offer us.76

Tracing the cry of dictators issuing from the 1930s wireless, back to the cry of “Creon, the dictator” in Ancient Greece, Woolf tracks the parallels between Creon’s dictatorship and the dictatorships of 1930s Europe. Antigone, in this interpretation, becomes a feminist critic of contemporary totalitarianism, anticipating Woolf’s own valorisation, in Three Guineas, of the woman as an “Outsider”, uniquely empowered through her marginal status to offer up a critique of the reigning structures of patriarchal, imperialist, and fascist oppression.77 Reading Sara reading Antigone, therefore, we might hope that, on the basis of her identification with Antigone, Sara too will be empowered to perform a similar outsider’s critique of twentieth-century patriarchs and dictators.

I do believe that this portrait of Sara reading forms part of Woolf’s valorisation of the pleasures of imaginative, leisurely reading, and I do think that this scene is linked to Woolf’s claim, in Three Guineas, that reading Antigone might inspire the “common reader” to perform her own critique of patriarchal fascism. And yet, nonetheless, I also want to argue that there is something in this scene of Sara reading that exceeds both of these arguments. There’s something disturbing in the breathless anticipation with which Sara confronts the body of Antigone’s dead brother, “beat[ing] her hand on the counterpane as she read[s]”, mirroring, enacting the vultures “Quick, quick, quick” as they strike the “lump” of “mouldy flesh.”78 There’s something troubling about that “Yes” that follows on from the image of the “mouldy flesh.”79 Sara doesn’t appear only to identify with Antigone, but gets caught up in, bound up in, the actions of the vultures pecking at the dead brother’s “unburied body.”80 Furthermore, as we’ll see in my second scene of reading from The Years, despite Woolf’s insistence in Three Guineas that Antigone might provide a model for women
to articulate their own rights against the perverted patriarchal laws of totalitarian Europe, the deeply eccentric and troubling character of Sara does not appear to carry such values across from her reading of Antigone into her present-day life or politics. Just as Milner’s Experiment in Leisure describes a fearfulness that individual pleasures might be co-opted by noxious political ideologies, Woolf too encourages us to confront the ways in which the individual’s pleasure in reading might get caught up in some of the most troubling political ideologies of 1930s Europe.

In the “Present Day” 1930s section of The Years, Sara’s cousin North recites Andrew Marvell’s poem “The Garden” to her in a darkened room in East London in a street marked with the chalk graffiti symbols of Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists. Their “delicious solitude” is interrupted by Sara’s disturbing and virulent antisemitic outburst when she hears a person she describes as “the Jew” running a bath in the shared bathroom of her boarding house.

As he spoke the words out into the semi-darkness they sounded extremely beautiful, he thought, because they could not see each other, perhaps.

He paused at the end of the verse.

“Go on,” she said.

He began again. The words going out into the room seemed like actual presences, hard and independent; yet as she was listening they were changed by their contact with her. But as he reached the end of the second verse—

Society is all but rude—

To this delicious solitude...

he heard a sound. Was it in the poem or outside of it, he wondered? Inside, he thought, and was about to go on, when she raised her hand. He stopped. He heard heavy footsteps outside the door. […]


“The Jew?” he said. They listened. He could hear quite distinctly now. Somebody was turning on taps; somebody was having a bath in the room opposite.

“The Jew having a bath,” she said.

“The Jew having a bath?” he repeated.

“And tomorrow there’ll be a line of grease round the bath,” she said.

“Damn the Jew!” he exclaimed. The thought of a line of grease from a strange man’s body on the bath next door disgusted him.

“Go on—” said Sara: “Society is all but rude,” she repeated the last lines, “to this delicious solitude.”

“No,” he said.81

This, one of the most disturbing, and controversial, scenes in Woolf’s writing, quickly develops into a barely-intelligible frenzied rant from Sara, in which she describes herself having rushed out of the bathroom, out of the house, onto a bridge to cry: “Am I a weed, carried this way, that way, on a tide that comes twice a day without a meaning?”82 Evoking T. S. Eliot’s deathlike crowd flowing over
London Bridge and echoing the language of *The Waste Land*, Sara describes the “people passing” with a horror for the passive urban masses of modernity, recalling them as “the strutting; the tiptoeing; the pasty; the ferret-eyed; the bowler-hatted, servile innumerable army of workers.”83 “Must I join your conspiracy?” Sara demands, “Stain the hand, the unstained hand [...] and sign on, and serve a master; all because of a Jew in my bath [...]?”84 But even as Sara claims a desire not to be subservient to group behaviour, even as she claims to reject the passive “servility” of the masses, she reveals herself to be utterly caught up in the groupthink of British fascism. Towards the end of the passage Woolf describes Sara sit up and laugh, “excited by the sound of her own voice which had run into a jog-trot rhythm.”85 Sara is—and I am arguing that Woolf wants us to recognize this—caught up in the mass mind and “jog-trot rhythm” of fascism.

The question of Virginia Woolf and antisemitism is, of course, a vexed one.86 In both *Three Guineas* and *The Years*, and across her political writings, Woolf insisted upon the insidiously intimate links between discourses and forms of oppression and intolerance, anatomising the interlinked forces of sexism, imperialism, class prejudice, homophobia, militarism, racism and xenophobia. Woolf was, as Anna Snaith notes, involved with a number of anti-fascist organisations in the 1930s, including For Intellectual Liberty and the International Association of Writers in Defence of Culture, and she was also involved with Storm Jameson at the International PEN club supporting refugees.87

In 1935, the Woolfs drove through Germany as part of a holiday to Europe, and found themselves caught up in a reception for Hermann Göring near Bonn—surrounded by fascists, the Woolfs’ pet marmoset Mitzi was cheered by “ranks of children with red flags,” while the crowds waved signs claiming “The Jew is our enemy” and “There is no place for Jews.”88 Leonard was held at German customs, while Woolf sat in the sun “nibbling” at D. H. Lawrence’s *Aaron’s Rod*, and watched “A car with the swastika on the back window” pass “through the barrier into Germany.”89 Woolf described the “docile hysterical crowd” and “stupid mass feeling.”90

And yet, throughout her writing career, even as she produced powerful critiques of fascism, Woolf continued to deploy antisemitic stereotypes in both her published writing and in letters and diaries; despite Woolf’s own anti-fascist activism, and despite her own personal experience witnessing Nazi antisemitism in Germany, there is, as David Eberly puts it, “a troubling persistence in Woolf’s antisemitism.”91

I don’t want to excuse or attempt to rationalize what is, undoubtedly, a troubling antisemitism in some of Woolf’s writings; as recent scholarship has stressed, Woolf was a deeply contradictory political thinker.92 But I do want to argue that this particular scene of Sara and North reading “The Garden” in *The Years* functions to reveal the ease with which the reading of lyric poetry might become invested with the most noxious of twentieth-century political ideologies. Like David Bradshaw, I think that Woolf encourages her readers both to identify and to condemn Sara’s antisemitic rant in this scene: as Bradshaw points out, Sara’s boarding house is located in the East End of London in a street that Woolf pointedly describes as graffitied with the chalk marks of the British Union of Fascists—chalk marks that Woolf herself had noted with concern in London in 1935.93 As Bradshaw notes, by foregrounding these historical details, “Woolf asks her readers to [...] to take on board the appalling closeness of Sara’s anti-Jewish invective to the rabble-rousing rhetoric of [Oswald] Mosley and his followers.”94 It is, I want to argue, precisely Woolf’s framing of this scene as a scene of reading that, alongside the precise historical location, asks us as readers to identify both North’s and Sara’s attempts to use the poetry of “delicious solitude” to evade their historical present. Some critics have read this scene as part of Woolf’s own desire for a lyrical and historically evasive modernism of redemption.95 I read this scene as, on the contrary, part of Woolf’s indictment of the very idea that lyric poetry might offer the reader a form of redemption from historical and political reality. The uncomfortable juxtaposition of the seductive lyricism of Marvell’s reflection on “delicious solitude”, with Sara’s and North’s violent antisemitism, reveals Woolf’s sense of how
violent anti-social fantasies might be mediated and buttressed via a fantasy of poetry as a form of retreat from the burdens of history and society. In this scene, Woolf shows us how the idea of the “beautiful” poetry of “solitude” might be used to reinforce fascist fantasies about the contaminating presence of “the Jew” in British society. In Three Guineas Woolf argued that reading Antigone might solicit a recognition of the “duties of the individual to society”, but Sara’s reading of Marvell’s “delicious solitude” utterly fails to recognise any such responsibility to society.

In The Years, in the character of Sara, we see Woolf probing a set of political questions about the nature of the reader’s absorption within literary texts. We cannot, Woolf seems to be suggesting, be sure of where the reader’s identifications will take her, politically. In a footnote to Three Guineas, Woolf articulated an unease with her own apparent championing of the idea that reading Antigone might produce political enlightenment in the woman reader. At first, Woolf comments on the ease with which Antigone might be made into what she describes as “anti-Fascist propaganda”:

Antigone herself could be transformed either into Mrs Pankhurst, who broke a window and was imprisoned in Holloway; or into Frau Pommer [a Prussian woman who was imprisoned and charged with “slandering the State and the Nazi movement” when she spoke out against antisemitism]. Antigone’s crime was of much the same nature and was punished in much the same way. Her words […] could be spoken either by Mrs Pankhurst, or by Frau Pommer; and are certainly topical. Creon, again, […] is typical of certain politicians in the past, and of Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini in the present.

“But,” Woolf carries on, “though it is easy to squeeze these characters into up-to-date dress, it is impossible to keep them there. They suggest too much; when the curtain falls we sympathize, it may be noted, even with Creon himself.” Once again, in this footnote, we find Woolf pushing at the more disturbing dimensions of the reader’s investments in literary texts. Reading Antigone we might identify the heroine with a Mrs Pankhurst or a Frau Pommer, and thereby translate Antigone’s fight against tyranny into a contemporary articulation of resistance to fascism. But beneath Woolf’s faith in the transformative possibilities of the woman reader’s identification with Antigone, lurks a more troubling possibility—that we might, “when the curtain falls […] sympathise […] even with Creon himself,” that figure who fits himself so well to Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini. The reader’s sympathies might take her to the darkest of places.

“Summing Up”: a “program for resisting fascism”?

In the “Summing Up” to An Experiment in Leisure, Marion Milner writes:

My conclusion was that there was a psychological necessity to pay deliberate homage to something since if it is not deliberate it will be furtive, but none the less powerful and at the mercy of public exploiters of furtive emotion—the politicians, the atrocity-mongers, the popular press; and also the psychological necessity to find your own pantheon of vital images, a mythology of one’s own, not the reach-me-down mass-produced mythology of Hollywood, of the newspapers, or the propaganda of dictators.

As Lyndsey Stonebridge has observed, Milner does not offer her reader “a fence to sit on, or a line which would neatly demarcate the space between personal desires and identifications and those of a wider political scenario.” Instead, Stonebridge argues, Milner “point[s] uncompromisingly to
the fragility of this line of severance” between the personal and the political. Despite her fearfulness that this need to “pay deliberate homage to something” bears an uncomfortable resemblance to the forms of homage and individual surrender demanded under totalitarian rule, Milner nonetheless insists that it is a “psychological necessity.” For Milner, this need for emotional surrender is, in fact, at its most dangerous when the emotion is forced to become “furtive”, where it becomes prey to the “public exploiters of furtive emotion—the politicians, the atrocity-mongers, the popular press” and the “dictators.” Milner, as I’ve been arguing, insists that the only way to guard against the passive adherence to the “monsters” of 1930s Europe is, through the very process of cultivating, observing, and analysing one’s own interests and desires. Milner’s “method” of self-observation and self-analysis itself becomes an attempt to insure individual desires against the unconscious acceptance of the “reach-me-down mass-produced mythology of Hollywood, of the newspapers, or the propaganda of dictators.” This “method” of cultivating and analysing one’s own pleasures, becomes, as Maud Ellmann argues, a “program for resisting fascism.”

If Milner, to reiterate Stonebridge’s argument, refuses to offer us a neat dividing line between personal and political desires, then Woolf too reveals the fragile border between the reader’s rapturous identification with a book and the troubling psycho-politics of fascism. In The Years Woolf charts the perilous proximity between the individual reader’s pleasure in a literary fantasy of “delicious solitude” and fascist groupthink fantasies about the contaminating presence of “the Jew” in British society. Submitting herself to the pleasures of the literary text, the reader might discover herself in the figure of Antigone, she might uncover a powerful outsider’s critique of totalitarian rule. But, like Sara, she might also find herself submitting to the “jog-trot” rhythms of fascism. She might find herself sympathising “with Creon himself”, or, in Sara’s case, repeating the racist rhetoric of Oswald Mosley. In presenting us with these self-reflexive scenes of reading, Woolf encourages her readers to confront the more troubling fantasies at work within modernist culture about the role of the literary text in psychic, social and political life. Woolf’s portraits of reading also provide a sharp riposte to the age-old, and recently much-trumpeted claim that empathetic identification in the act of reading is, in itself, a moral or political good. As Lyndsey Stonebridge and Rachel Potter write in the context of literature and human rights, “Few [...] have questioned the assumption that rights writing should produce empathy, or that empathy is somehow intrinsically good for rights outcomes.” And yet, they cite Hannah Arendt, “Pity taken as the spring of virtue, has proved to possess a greater capacity for cruelty than cruelty itself.” Woolf’s portraits of Sara reading, read alongside that footnote in Three Guineas, demonstrate that the reader’s identification with a literary text is complex, overdetermined, and often obscure; it can be as politically compromised as it can be politically liberating.

And yet, where Milner encourages her reader to take up her “method” of cultivating, observing and analysing her individual pleasures, Woolf too, I want to argue in conclusion, asks her reader to develop a similar self-reflexive “method” of analysing her own literary pleasures and identifications. In The Years Woolf embeds within her writing a series of self-reflexive scenes of reading that work to foreground, and also to challenge, the fantasies that shape our understanding of the function of literature in individual psychic, social and political life. These portraits of reading, like Milner’s Experiment, demand a more self-reflective mode of reading. Woolf’s portraits of reading solicit an increased vigilance on the part of her own readers, and encourage us to reflect more seriously on, and develop an analysis of, the unconscious fantasies that shape our pleasures, desires and identifications as readers. In performing such an analysis we might better understand the ways in which such pleasures and identifications can become captive to toxic political ideologies. And, I’d venture in conclusion, it’s only by understanding such desires—today in the twenty-first
century as much as in the 1930s—that we might transform those desires and find ourselves less at the mercy of our present-day “unscrupulous exploiters.”

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1 Milner, *An Experiment in Leisure*, xliii.
2 Ibid., xliii.
3 Ibid., xliii.
4 Ibid., xliii.
5 Milner, *Life*, xxxiii, 16, 18, 81, 53.
6 Ibid., xxxiii-xxxiv.
7 Ibid., 5, 3, 5; Tyson, “‘Catching Butterflies’”.
9 Ibid., 30.


11 Ibid., 96. This article’s focus on Milner’s use of diaries and doodles shares other feminist scholars’ interest in the political stakes of diary-writing and scrapbooks. In Cherene Sherrard-Johnson’s recent article on the Harlem Renaissance performances of Rose McClendon, she describes McClendon’s performances as ‘modernist avant-garde theatre’ and writes of McClendon’s ‘narrative scrapbooking as modernist praxis’ (Sherrard-Johnson, “Rose McClendon’s Playbill”). In Melanie Micir’s and Aarthi Vadde’s analysis of Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas* scrapbooks and Kate Zambreno’s *Heroines* (2012), they write of scrapbooking and blogging as a form of ‘amateur criticism’ (Micir and Vadde, “Obliteration”, p. 519). For Micir and Vadde, Zambreno’s work ‘engages in a hybrid creative-critical mode of knowledge production through its fragmented collection of prose-poetry, argumentative prose, extended quotations, vernacular lectures, feminist and literary theory, and confessional writing’ (p. 530). Micir and Vadde describe ‘amateurism as an evolving ethos and style of criticism cognizant of the changing same of structural inequality, but also responsive to the distinct conditions under which inequality endures and must be fought. [...] Modernist criticism as amateur blends the trivial with the serious, the disposable with the preserved. These formal choices draw from a lineage of feminist writing tactics, and show these tactics to be at the vanguard of an institutional critique that ties the professionalism of the university to larger capitalist transformations in the management of knowledge. Woolf and Zambreno turn to low prestige genres and use unapologetically emotional voices to reflect as well as diagnose a range of twentieth-century intensifications in the corporatization of media, the privatization of information, and the casualization of labor.’ (p. 519). Milner’s writing can also be located within this feminist tradition of a form of writing that challenges the institutions of the university and of psychoanalysis, while highlighting the political potency of amateur and hybrid creative-critical writing.


15 Ibid., 10.

16 Smith, “Transferred Debts”, 106, 98.

17 Marion Milner Collection, Archives of the British Psychoanalytical Society.

18 Milner, “Notebook (1931)”; Milner, “Notebook (1934).”

19 Tyson, “Catching Butterflies”.


22 Both Milner’s and Woolf’s fascination with everyday acts of leisure can also be viewed in the context of modernism’s broader interest in the everyday or the ordinary. On modernism and the ordinary, see Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary*.

24 Ibid., xliii.
25 Ibid., xliii.
26 Ibid., xliii-xliv.
29 Ibid., 17.
30 Ibid., 17-18.
31 Ibid., 22.
32 Ibid., 19.
33 Ibid., 19.
34 Ibid., 152, 28.
35 Ibid., 28.
37 Milner, *Life*, 151. On Milner’s anxieties about aesthetic absorption, see Tyson, “‘Catching Butterflies’”.
38 For Milner, a “ritual sacrifice” of personal worries is a method of overcoming intellectual and creative inhibition. She describes a process of repeating “I am nothing, I know nothing, I want nothing,” thereby “wiping away all sense of my own existence.” The result, she claims, is that “my mind would begin, entirely of itself, throwing up useful ideas on the very problem which I had been struggling with.” Milner, *An Experiment in Leisure*, 31
40 Ibid., 82.
41 Ibid., 82, 87.
42 Ibid., 166.
45 On this, see Eatwell, *Fascism: A History*, 145.
47 Milner, *An Experiment in Leisure*, 166.
48 Ibid., 166.
49 Ibid., 165.
50 Ibid., 165.
51 Ibid., 166.


54 Ibid., 168.

55 Ibid., 167-8.

56 Ibid., 169.

57 Ibid., 168. Milner, as Maud Ellmann notes, provides few “practical examples of this principle,” but, Ellmann suggests, “perhaps she is thinking of the fascist image of the Jew, in which an inner fear—of the inhuman, the excremental, the abject, the uncanny—is mistaken for an outer menace, justifying all atrocities against this bugbear.” Ellmann, “New Introduction”, xxxi.


59 Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, 292.

60 Ibid., 292.

61 Ibid., 328, 420-1, 292.

62 Milner, An Experiment in Leisure, 169.


64 Milner, An Experiment in Leisure, 174.

65 Ibid., 164. Milner trained as Montessori teacher; she also worked as a lecturer for the Workers Educational Association and for the Girls Public Day School Trust (GPDST). Milner’s work for the GPDST was published in 1938 as The Human Problem in Schools. See Letley, Marion Milner: The Life, 17, 23.

66 Milner, An Experiment in Leisure, 164.

67 Ibid., 164.

68 Ibid., 148-9.

69 Ibid., 148-9, 153.

70 Ibid., 164.

71 Woolf, The Years, 118-22.

72 Ibid., 121.

73 Ibid., 120. “Reading at Random” was one of the titles that Woolf considered for her final, unfinished, book on reading; see Silver, “‘Anon’ and “The Reader’”, 356. On Woolf’s hostility to the institutionalisation of scholarly reading in university English departments, see Cuddy-Keane, Virginia Woolf, 68-75.

74 Woolf, Diary, 4, 282.

75 Woolf, Three Guineas, 272. As Emily Dalgarno has argued, Woolf’s reading of Antigone was part of a wider development in practices of reading classical texts as a way of reflecting upon the
contemporary moment: her “reading of Antigone is part of a larger twentieth-century European criticism in which new approaches to the interpretation of classical texts criticised by implication Fascist policies.” Dalgarno, *Virginia Woolf*, 41.


77 Making the link between the interpretation of Antigone in *Three Guineas* and the scene of Sara reading in *The Years*, Dalgarno suggests that Sara’s identification with Antigone “makes intelligible to [Woolf’s] reader the deathlike life of a female in the Victorian family.” Dalgarno, *Virginia Woolf*, 56.

78 Woolf, *The Years*, 121.

79 Ibid., 121.

80 Ibid., 121.

81 Ibid., 305-6.

82 Ibid., 307.

83 Ibid., 307.

84 Ibid., 307.

85 Ibid., 307.


87 Snaith, “Introduction”, xlviii.


89 Woolf, *Diary*, 4, 310.

90 Ibid., 311.

91 Trubowitz et al, “Responses”, 17. As Maren Linett also points out, although some biographical critics claim that following her marriage to Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf abandoned her earlier antisemitism, these critics ignore Woolf’s frequently antisemitic descriptions of Leonard’s family in her letters and diaries throughout the 1930s. Linett, “The Jew in the Bath”, 345.

92 On the contradictions and ambivalences that characterize Woolf’s political activism, see Jones, *Ambivalent Activist*.

93 When North arrives at Sara’s street, he sees that “Somebody had chalked a circle on the wall with a jagged line in it. [...] Door after door, window after window, repeated the same pattern.” On 4th September 1935, Woolf wrote in her diary: “In London yesterday. Writings chalked up all over the walls. ‘Don’t fight for foreigners. Briton should mind her own business.’ Then a circle with a
symbol in it. Fascist propaganda, L. said. Mosley again active.” Woolf, The Years, 279-80; Woolf, Diary, 4, 337; Bradshaw, “Hyams Place”, 182.

94 “Sara is,” Bradshaw writes, “undoubtedly ‘an odd customer’ […] but at some stage Woolf seems to have decided to use her to represent ‘Hitler in England.’” Bradshaw, “Hyams Place”, 182.


96 Woolf, Three Guineas, 272.

97 Ibid., 395.

98 Ibid., 395.


100 Milner, An Experiment in Leisure, 174.

101 Stonebridge, The Destructive Element, 171.

102 Ibid., 171.

103 Milner, An Experiment in Leisure, 174.

104 Ibid., 174.

105 Ibid., 174.


109 Milner, An Experiment in Leisure, 164.