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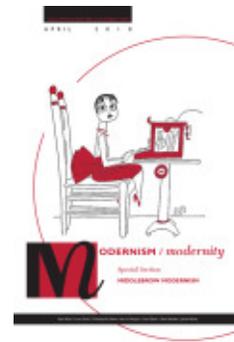
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“The Dangerous Art Where One Slip Means Death”: Dance and the Literary Imagination in Interwar Britain

Rishona Zimring

There comes a moment—“I will dance with you”, says Emma—which rises higher than the rest, which, though not eloquent in itself, or violent, or made striking by beauty of language, has the whole weight of the book behind it. In Jane Austen, too, we have the same sense, though the ligatures are much less tight, that her figures are bound, and restricted to a few definite movements. She, too, in her modest, everyday prose, chose the dangerous art where one slip means death.

—Virginia Woolf, “On Not Knowing Greek”¹

. . . one is at a music-hall and on to the stage come the dancers, trained to liveliness. One can say that here is the primal scene, here is exhibitionism, here is anal control, here is masochistic submission to discipline, here is a defiance of the super-ego. Sooner or later one adds: here is LIFE.

—D. W. Winnicott, “The Manic Defense”²

Recent scholarship on modernism and dance has celebrated the figure of the female dancer as not only a symbol, but as an agent of aesthetic transformation in the twentieth century. The female dancer, it is argued, embodies the quest for freedom. She represents a revolt against the confinements of domesticity, she invents, she breaks taboos, she is mad, she is criminal, society will not tolerate her, she is subversive. “She” is Lucia Joyce, Jane Avril, Loie Fuller, Maud Allan, Mata Hari, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Mary Wigman, Zelda Fitzgerald.³ Her context is the

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708 heyday and decline of the music hall; the sensational impact of Diaghilev's Russian Ballet; ragtime, jazz, ballroom dance, and jazz dance; the rise of cabarets and night-clubs; dance crazes and dance "manias"; and, going farther afield, the mechanization of everyday life (embodied, say, in tap dance's mechanical rhythms or Busby Berkeley's musicals) or, the opposite, the graceful, therapeutic movements of swooping airplanes, roller coasters, zippers, and cursive writing, which, along with Duncan's startling fluidity and tragically flowing scarf, all make up what Hillel Schwartz, in a masterful essay, has called "the new kinaesthetic of the twentieth century."⁴

So compelling are the female dancers, so charismatic in capturing the imagination, that they have obscured another kind of dancing that, I shall argue, actually dominated the literary imagination in interwar Britain, and for good reason. I refer to social dancing, which was viewed as both mundane and dangerous; indeed, which brought to the fore the very potency of an everyday activity both banal and extraordinary. As experienced at parties, dance halls, night clubs, college clubs, and on the street, social dancing was both a symptom of modern alienation and its potential cure, an evanescent yet visceral form of collectivity that offered a vision of community as well as a sign of its elusiveness. Social dance (participatory and coercive, ritualistic and boring, lively and mechanical) embodied a problem of modernity—the quest for community and the desire for (re)enchantment—while at the same time putting on spectacular display the fragmentation and isolation that characterized the feeling of being modern.

The hold of social dance on the literary imagination has been overlooked in modernist scholarship; in this article, I reassert the position of dance in interwar literature and culture. Hidden in plain sight, in modernist literary scenes, biographies and memoirs, psychoanalytic commentaries, educational manifestos, and ethnographies, social dance is everywhere in the documents of interwar Britain, serving as both fact and figure of modernity—of that famous feeling that "all that is solid melts into air."⁵ What better spectacle and symbol of ephemerality than the always changing, always temporary arrangement of bodies into now this, now that configuration, always ending with their dispersal? "Unity—dispersity" is the refrain of Woolf's *Between the Acts*: a neat summary of social dance itself, its rhythm of individuals pulled together, then apart.⁶

This essay, then, will survey how dance has come to be figured as female emancipation in key works of recent scholarship, and move on to complicate this representation by turning to perceptions of dance by interwar British intellectuals, who were particularly attentive to social dancing and its meanings because of their preoccupation with social coherence and collectivism in an era of national and imperial unease. First ranging widely among Bloomsbury intellectuals to glean a general perception of dancing by Britain's most prominent and canonical writers, I then consider one group—Mass-Observation—in order to show that Bloomsbury's concerns were shared by other Cambridge-educated intellectuals *and* by lower-middle-class observers, whose project of creating a British ethnography was deeply informed and influenced by artistic and literary sensibilities. Finally, a close reading of dance scenes throughout works by Woolf ends this investigation with a demonstration of the ubiquity and powerful resonance of social dancing in key works of the modernist literary imagination. By

bringing this broad range of materials together, I hope to show that social dancing was of widespread interest and concern to those who considered themselves observers, critics, and makers of culture. The story these materials tell complicates the account whereby avant-garde dance fueled modernist aesthetics in such a way as to connect formal innovation with social liberation. To refer to the second epigraph to this essay: D. W. Winnicott, early in his career, noted astutely that dancers seemed "trained to liveliness." While the epigraph evinces Winnicott's early skepticism of the diagnostic value of psychoanalytic labels ("exhibitionism," "anal control," etc.) this should not detract from his cogent observation that there is something suspicious, indeed manic, about the trained liveliness of dancers: the essay in which this observation appears, "The Manic Defense," attempts to invent a vocabulary for the pathological happiness of the interwar years. Let us share Winnicott's suspicions, and consider not only performed, but social, dance as a symptom of interwar Britain's "manic defense" against war anxiety and social change.

Knowing the Dancer from the Dance

A suitable emblem of the emphasis on individual female dancers is Lucia Joyce.⁷ Carol Loeb Shloss has moved Lucia from the margins to the center of Joyce's work, arguing that she was a "centrally important muse to Joyce . . . [Their relationship] helped to change the course of modern literature."⁸ Crucial to Shloss's roughly Foucauldian argument is the idea that Lucia, in dancing, managed to revolt not only against an unsatisfactory home life, but against all of Western culture, which is "built upon a system of exclusions" in which "the expressive, 'dancing' body is regulated, disciplined, normalized, and individualized in proportion to the fears it arouses about transgression."⁹ Acknowledging that Dionysian dancing is inherently dangerous in an Apollonian world, Shloss suggests that Nietzsche's diagnosis of modern life as a struggle between the forces of order and disorder illuminates Lucia's role in her father's schema: Lucia embodied the freedom Joyce could only imagine. Once Lucia's dancing is connected with insanity (as it was for two other famous dancers, Jane Avril and Nijinsky), she becomes a victim of medicalized knowledge. Before charting the disciplining of Lucia's dancing, Shloss sees her dancing, under the influence of several leading dancers, as a window on to utopian possibilities for social redemption. The influence of Jean Borlin, for example, whose Ballet Suédois Lucia had watched in Paris since 1923 and with whom she studied, was to inculcate in Lucia the "obsession with primitive tribal ritual . . . [and] the construction of an elsewhere of culture, [and the search] for alternatives on which to base . . . hopes of social renewal" (*LJ*, 146). Mary Wigman, expressionist dancer and writer, and later fascist, also "convinced . . . young women they were creating a new religion" (*LJ*, 151). Lucia's first dance teacher was Margaret Morris, the granddaughter of William Morris, whose goal was to achieve a synthesis between aesthetic and physical culture; dance was a form of physical rehabilitation, a kind of occupational therapy for typists and other sedentary workers, and a form of education through the senses for children. Studying at Morris's summer school in

710 the south of France in 1926 provides, for Schloss, perhaps the most glorious utopian possibilities of Lucia's—and maybe modernism's—life. Here, in a beautiful natural landscape away from the culture of Paris, the body could flourish, the synthesis could be achieved. If modernist aesthetics involves an ongoing confrontation not only with the ordering, sanitizing, pathologizing, disciplining forces of the dominant culture, but also with the fragmentations and separations bemoaned as symptomatic side-effects of the conformity to that culture, then dancing by the sea offers an image of health and liberation summed up in Schloss's description of the female dancers at Morris's school as “post-Victorian hippies” (*LJ*, 132).

Like Shloss, Nancy Reynolds and Malcolm McCormick have connected dance to female emancipation. The historical conditions for the emergence of modern dance were the newfound support among American female reformers for the inclusion of aesthetically pleasing physical exercise in the education of young women along with progressive, anti-Victorian encouragement of women's intellectual development. Reynolds and McCormick rank Loie Fuller the most important originator of twentieth-century dance, an assessment that harmonizes with Frank Kermode's celebration of Fuller as proto-modernist in his 1961 essay “Poet and Dancer Before Diaghilev.”¹⁰ Fuller is one of four American female pioneers whose innovative dances were to inaugurate the new era of modern movement: besides Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, and Maud Allan created a new space between music hall and ballet for the performances of newly liberated women. From the other direction came the Russian Ballet, which arrived in the West in 1909. The history of dance in the twentieth century begins with a competition between the innovative American female soloists and the Russian company whose leader was suspected of being a “dandy and a social climber.”¹¹ While the portraits of the American women are linked to the transformation, already underway, of women's social roles and the context of feminist agitation, the Russian Ballet's arrival in Paris is greeted with “shock” and outrage; it creates fads like the wearing of harem outfits and adds brighter colors to the clothing and décor of Western Europe.¹² Whereas female reformers set the stage for the success of, for example, Loie Fuller, the Russian Ballet revolutionized society with its freshness and “unabashed eroticism”: in short, the Russians successfully entered the marketplace for the primitive.¹³ According to Reynolds and McCormick, performed dance of the modernist era signified innovation and transgression.

For Woolf and for Bloomsbury, the Russian Ballet was of more obvious significance than the American female soloists. Evelyn Haller, in an essay on Woolf and the Russian dancers, surveys the impact of the Russian Ballet on Woolf and the London intelligentsia. Like Schloss and McCormick and Reynolds, the story of dance, for Haller, is the story of emancipation: “[t]o respond to the Russian dancers was to emerge from ossified forms of Victorian and Edwardian artistic and cultural constraints into a new sensibility.”¹⁴ The meaning of the Russians' experimentation and extravagance lies, too, in its redemptive possibilities. For Haller, the most important feature of the Russian ballet is not its eroticism, but its liturgical elements—its scenes of processions, weddings, and sacrifices. Haller infers that the value of the Russian ballet to western audiences was its ability to reawaken an inauthentic secular age to religious ceremony.

Certainly, for some in the Bloomsbury milieu, the power of dance to re-enchant and exoticize the world would seem to be its principal attraction. For Jane Ellen Harrison, for example, the observation of dance was indeed a mesmerizing experience. Harrison wrote in her 1925 *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* that watching dancers moved her in a way that no work of literature, music, or painting could. Seeing dancers at a festival in Spain, Harrison wrote that "a procession seems to me like life, like *durée* itself, caught and fixed before me But it is strangely moving in the fading light with the wondrous setting of the high altar and the golden grille, and above all the sound of the harsh, plangent Spanish voices. Great Pan, indeed, is dead—his ghost still dances."¹⁵ Dancers exert a powerful hold on Harrison the observer, allowing her to imagine that she is watching a still life; time stops, and the observer seems to experience the collapse of distance between present and past. Harrison's response to dancers (shared by Vita Sackville-West in her biography of her dancing Spanish grandmother, *Pepita*) is fairly characteristic of one strand of thought in modernist writing: dancers bring ancient, even primitive rituals to the forefront of our awareness, awakening progressive and alienated moderns in a technological society to an organic, ritualized, and communal existence that industrial capitalism has all but erased.¹⁶

Not particularly mystified by the Russian ballet nor enamored of its individual performers was Lytton Strachey, who met Nijinsky at a party in 1913 and declared him "attractive" but "not . . . particularly interesting—as the poor fellow cannot speak more than 2 words of any human language it's difficult to get very far with him"; Strachey found watching *Le Sacre du Printemps* "one of the most painful experiences of my life I couldn't have imagined that boredom and sheer anguish could have been combined together at such a pitch."¹⁷ Strachey's dismissal of Nijinsky as uninteresting because impossible to talk to is reminiscent of Woolf's profound distaste for Lydia Lopokova, the member of Diaghilev's ballet who had the most direct influence on Bloomsbury by marrying John Maynard Keynes.¹⁸ To many in Bloomsbury, including Clive Bell, Duncan Grant, Vanessa, and Woolf herself, Lopokova was anathema. Woolf wrote to Vanessa in 1923 that Keynes's marriage to Lydia would be "a fatal and irreparable mistake"; she called her a "parroquet" and made fun of her accent; she derided the "limitations" of her talk about the Ballet, and remarked that "unfortunately she sometimes writes"; she wrote in great detail to Jacques Raverat of Lydia's improper disposal of used sanitary towels; to Raverat she described Lydia's conversational style as "one shriek, two dances; then silence, like a submissive child."¹⁹ The initial aversion to Lydia as both foreigner and dancer exposes Bloomsbury biases, not least of which is the skepticism toward dance, and toward dancers as vulgar non-intellectuals whose contributions to conversation were not only negligible, but destructive.²⁰

While numerous comments on Lydia can be found throughout Woolf's diaries and letters, scant evidence exists about Woolf's exposure to other female dancers of the same generation. A single mention of Isadora Duncan, whose autobiography *Virginia* sent to Vanessa in 1928, throws into relief the absence of performers like Duncan, Fuller, and St. Denis in Bloomsbury's theater-going experiences.²¹ Bloomsbury (perhaps with the exception of Keynes) did not turn to the female dancer for inspiration. Woolf did,

712 however, turn to the music hall for escape. She went to the Hippodrome in 1918, the war and raids still going, “to see life.”²² She qualified her praise for the English humor performed there, which she called “the real thing,” with a declaration about the “incredible, pathetic stupidity of the music hall.” There is something in Woolf’s attraction to “the real thing” of the middle-class celebration of authentic working-class culture (whose endangerment by commodity culture was lamented in T. S. Eliot’s eulogy for music-hall performer Marie Lloyd in 1923).²⁰ On Marie Lloyd herself, Woolf recorded in her diary in 1921: “We went to the Bedford Music Hall [in Camden Town] last night, & saw Miss Marie Lloyd, a mass of corruption . . . waddling, aged, unblushing . . . I felt that the audience was much closer to drink & beating & prison than any of us.”²⁴ Woolf’s interest in authentic working-class culture only went so far.

Writing about modernism and dance has focused on performance, framing it either with the relationship between modernism and popular culture or with the symbiotic relations between different avant-garde art forms. However, we should not overlook the significance of casual, recreational dancing to Bloomsbury. From the letters she wrote as a young woman, we get a sense of Woolf’s participation in, and hesitation about, dancing at parties. She danced her first May Ball at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1900 at the age of 18. Characteristically, she did not dance much. The next year, she went to “only” three dances in her “London season,” and revealed that “we sit in corners and look like mutes”; the next year, she lamented that “I would give all my profound Greek to dance really well.” That lament was short-lived. Virginia thought of herself as a non-dancer, which meant being an “unpopular” young woman and a social “failure.” In 1906, she wrote to Violet Dickinson that “I went to a dance last night, and found a dim corner where I sat and read *In Memoriam*. While Nessa danced every dance till 2.30.”²⁵ Woolf’s diary underscores dancing as a social convention, a way of defining, not liberating, a young woman of a certain class. Woolf needed to navigate the social terrain that demanded that girls be dancers, and find a world in which it was more than acceptable to read Tennyson, sitting in a corner, rather than participate in the social whirl. Contrast Woolf’s feelings of inadequacy with the relatively sprightly accounts of dancing for others in the Bloomsbury milieu. Lytton Strachey wrote about dancing two-steps “so much nicer than waltzes” dressed as a pirate at an all-night party; Strachey danced, it seems, without self-consciousness, and was described by Osbert Sitwell as possessing the “air of someone pleasantly awakening from a trance, jiggling about with an amiable debility.”²⁶ Perhaps Bloomsbury’s premier recreational dancer, and the best at describing it, was Frances Partridge, eighteen years Woolf’s junior. From the weekly dances at the progressive Bedales school, where “the girls whirled round with bodies and legs parallel to the ground, supported on the interlocked arms of their partners” to the wartime dances given by local ladies for officers, which Partridge attended zealously in search of a “good time,” to the postwar Cambridge jazz dances of the Quinquaginta club, Partridge provides a glimpse of a world where dance signifies the breakdown of sexual boundaries for the generation after Woolf’s.²⁷ After the war, she writes in her memoir, “[a]ll England had gone dancing mad and so had Cambridge.”²⁸ Dance was an outlet, a pent-up energy released in a frenzied vitality.

Liberation for women? Perhaps. Yet, like Woolf, she experienced pangs of confusion over what dancing meant. "[T]he dichotomy between dancing and intellectual interests produced a form of schizophrenia, one of the unpleasant symptoms of which was blind panic when members of different worlds happened to be present at the same time. I was like a jelly that had only partly set."²⁹

As much as, or even more than, innovative female soloists and the Russian ballet, new dances inspired by ragtime, jazz, and other forms of popular music influenced Bloomsbury's experience of sociability, generational differences, gender roles, health, intellectual pursuits, alienation, and mortality. Jazz and its dances belonged to the younger generation. The *Daily Mail* wrote for the first time of "this jazz age" in 1919, an age of "people dancing as they have never danced before, in happy rebound from the austerities of war."³⁰ (Such postwar happy rebounds would become the occasion for Winnicott's elaboration, following Melanie Klein, of the "manic defense"³¹). Jazz was introduced to Britain in 1912, consolidated with that year's revue "Hullo, Ragtime"; Irving Berlin visited Britain in 1913; the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in 1919; and Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra in 1923. The most popular postwar dances were the foxtrot, one-step, shimmy, blues, and Charleston. New publications devoted to jazz sprouted up in the 1920s and 1930s, including *Melody Maker* (1926), *Rhythm* (1927), *Gramophone* (1923), *Swing Music*, and *Hot News* (1935). African, Guyanan, Jamaican and other Caribbean musicians, as well as African Americans, made blacks highly visible in a new range of performance venues. This is the general context for Virginia Woolf's alienation, Strachey's amiable debility, and Partridge's mix of a good time with schizophrenia.

"To the dogs, to the pubs, to the dance hall": Mass-Observation

One of the most revealing sources of information about social dancing are the notes taken by Mass-Observation observers in dance halls in the late 1930s, part of the project to create an ethnography of the British people through collection of information on everyday life. Tom Harrisson, one of Mass-Observation's principal founders, searched out materials with great gusto by going out, as one of his artist colleagues reminisced, "to the pubs, to the dogs, to the dance halls."³² Along with poet Charles Madge and filmmaker Humphrey Jennings, Harrisson spearheaded an effort to document the everyday with every bit as much zeal as the surrealists—to whom Mass-Observation has frequently been compared, and who influenced Mass-Observation in both direct and indirect ways.³³ Propelled by a sense of national crisis (symbolized twofold by the abdication crisis and the spectacular burning-down of the Crystal Palace, which by that time had become a venue for dances), the Mass-Observation notes on dance halls, jazz, night clubs, and rhythm clubs provide a stunning opportunity to glean perceptions of dance as both potentially community-building national pastime and as symptom of late-1930s fragmentation, by a mix of middle-class, Cambridge-educated intellectuals, literary types—both H. D. and the Scottish novelist Naomi Mitchison served as observers—and lower-middle-class observers and diarists who found themselves em-

714 powered by the opportunity to be creative and critical writers. The Mass-Observation fieldwork significantly enhances an assessment of how dance captured “the literary imagination.”³⁴

By the late 1930s, British intellectuals were well aware of the role dance and dance music might play in the context of rising anxieties about war. One role was reflective: a newspaper article collected by an observer noted that “perhaps this noisy exhibition of abandoned convulsions was all in keeping with a mad world in which madmen are fighting to dominate the continent.”³⁵ At the same time, one of the most important functions of dance and dance music was to soothe. “The universal and subtle influence of jazz is that it plugs up and soothes the jangled nerve, the wishful thought.”³⁶ Observers noted that radios and gramophones were increasingly used in workshops and small factories in London’s East End to calm workers’ raw nerves. “Dance music is the most popular type” and “The music has, of course, to be carefully selected—quick steps tend to speed up workers’ rhythms to a damaging extent on intricate jobs, while slow waltzes may actually reduce the rate of work of repetitive processes.”³⁷

The soothing effects of jazz music, however, are juxtaposed with observations of dance halls, where the dominant themes are hardly the well-being induced by modern social dancing: on the contrary, the resounding themes are racial difference, conspicuous sexualities, bodily harm, and a problematic mix of ages and generations. Among the “odd details” noted by observers was the children’s space upstairs, decorated with Disney paintings.³⁸ Observers recorded the presence of mixed ages, including a ten-year-old girl accompanying her parents. Tension is noted between old-timers who have been coming to the same dance hall for almost forty years, and new, younger dancers described by the older generation as having “no sociability, no etiquette.”³⁹ The new generation looks unhealthy. The typical expression on the faces of dancers is boredom.⁴⁰ Dancing causes injuries: participants complain about becoming ill and disabled from dancing (one asphalter cannot work because of his injuries); an observer notes a petition to ban the jitterbug because of people getting kicked. Observations of boredom and illness combine with “surprise” at the “amount of open intimacy” and “excessive fondling.”⁴¹ The threat of sexuality registers in the presence of a “pansy type” who “gazes in admiration” at a “negress” who sings. At the Paramount dance hall in Tottenham Court Road, the “crowd is mostly working class—coarse type in many cases. Percentage of Jews about 40.” A “Negro aged about 25,” a native of Freetown, remarks that the color bar is higher in London than in Paris. “When he goes and asks a girl to dance he expects to be refused and takes it as a matter of course.”⁴² At another dance hall in Tottenham Court Road, the observer notes “crowd . . . with high Jewish percentage” and a youth with a “badge on which was the Jewish symbol.” “Seems to be a centre for Jews,” he remarks to an interlocutor.⁴³ Dance halls displayed a spectacle of difference: race, class, sexuality, and youth all presented dance as a challenge and a problem, not a spectacle of emancipation and progress, but the tensions of a society in transition, a society in conflict, and bodies less liberated than convulsive and banal.

The observations at dance halls share features of those at nightclubs and rhythm clubs, where dancing took place and which were also locations of considerable heterogeneity.

The notes on nightclubs evince a preoccupation with race. For example: quoting a French, female interviewee, “there was only me and a few women—prostitutes. In came these great big men, black as coal . . . These people dance the whole night . . . some of the coloured girls, they’re beautiful.” Another interviewee comments, “this place is run by Jews.” And another says, “Dance music has originated from the coloured people, the niggers. All their music is rhythm.”⁴⁴ At a rhythm club, where people gathered for jazz appreciation, an interviewee commented “if [observer] wants to go into the racial side of jazz it may interest him to know that most of the big time players are Jews. “They are always where the money is.”” At the back of the club, “A Jew and [some] Chinese entered into an earnest discussion on jazz.”⁴⁵ These were places where races mixed: the interviews reveal that club-goers were highly conscious of this mixture, in some cases attracted by it, in others, uncomfortable. Places where social dancing occurred or where dance music was played were locations of everyday “cosmopolitan modernity.”⁴⁶ They displayed a hybridity hard to discern elsewhere (say, at Cambridge) but highly significant as a challenge to English xenophobia and a harbinger of a new, multicultural society.

The cosmopolitanism of the nightclubs and rhythm clubs throws into relief something that interested Mass-Observation a great deal about the dance halls: they sometimes became places to reassert Englishness. For one interviewee, the rhythm club offered an interesting place to escape the boredom of the dance halls: “there’s the monotony—going round and round a floor, doing the same old steps again and again, until one day I asked myself, “what am I doing this for?””⁴⁷ The dance halls’ monotony arose in confrontation with the multiculturalism of jazz, which for some in the music business was a problem, a threat to English identity as revealed and bolstered by native traditions in music and dance. The solution was to invent a tradition.

The solution arrived under the subheading of “Modernity—Combined with an Old-time Character.” In 1938, dance hall impresario C. L. Heimann sought to invent and market a dance that would appeal to old and new alike, drawing on nostalgia to counter the hybridity and difference that dance had come to represent. A press bulletin stated:

The present vogue of returning to past epochs—as, for example, the popularity of things Victorian and Edwardian—is exemplified in this dance . . . The musical basis . . . is an old-time melody—this and the Dance itself is severely ENGLISH. So many of the new and short-lived dances that have been introduced in recent years have been American, and based upon Negro rhythms that have not been suited to English temperament.⁴⁸

The new dance was called “The Chestnut Tree,” and it was regarded as both English and democratic. (Fig. 1) Its arm movement—both arms upraised—was seen to provide a contrast with the one arm raised in salute to Hitler. Both English and anti-fascist in conception and marketing, it was intended to conquer difference, provide an image of unity—across class, not race. It was purely invented; it did not derive from any authentic working-class culture.⁴⁹ “The Chestnut Tree” or “Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree” was a popular song in campfire and community singing in the interwar



Fig. 1. Dancing “The Chestnut Tree” c. 1938. Photographer unknown but image collected by Mass-Observation as part of the Music and Dancing investigation of 1938. Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex.

years; it may allude to Longfellow’s poem “The Village Blacksmith” or to a popular nursery rhyme. In 1984, a dystopian version of the song is played on a telescreen in the Chestnut Tree Café. “The Chestnut Tree” was by no means the only dance that Mass-Observation followed (the “Lambeth Walk” received much attention, as well as others, to a lesser degree). But the remarkable attention to it in the Mass-Observation notes indicates that it seemed a particularly apt entry into a collective unconscious, one of Mass-Observation’s goals. It was a nationally known symbol, popular and familiar from childhood, associated both with the high (royalty) and the low (Longfellow’s village). The King had sung it; Victoria said that Longfellow was the only poet her servants knew; memorization of Longfellow’s meter was embedded in the English education system.⁵⁰ “The Chestnut Tree”’s flexibility as a symbol made it especially resonant as a potential icon of social coherence to counter the hybridity of jazz that threatened the dance halls. Mass-Observation assiduously collected responses from volunteers about “The Chestnut Tree”; it was the dance whose impact they most doggedly pursued (to discover, through interviews, that the majority of dance hall attendees found it fairly silly).⁵¹ As fragile symbol of social coherence perhaps “The Chestnut Tree” dance embodied a desire for synthesis, somewhere in the future, that Yeats had expressed in 1927 in “Among School Children”: “O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer . . .

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance / How can we know the dancer from the dance?"⁵²

The Mass-Observation notes reveal that social dance took place in arenas where multicultural influences competed with nativist proclivities; English identity was at stake. The power of social dance as a symbol of collective identity deployed in literature remains to be explored, which I now do in the work of Virginia Woolf.

Dancing with Woolf

Dance scenes and dance metaphors are rich presences throughout Woolf's fiction. Three of her major novels—*The Voyage Out* (1915), *The Years* (1937), and *Between the Acts* (1941)—display dance scenes quite conspicuously to explore themes crucial to Woolf such as community and isolation, the limitations of language, the power of music, the socialization of women, tradition and modernization. In *Jacob's Room* (1922), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *The Waves* (1931), dance figures either literally or figuratively, as it does—in what is perhaps Woolf's most masterful and poignant use of dance—in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). Indeed, dance is central to Woolf's literary enterprise. Understanding Woolf's carefully choreographed deployment of dance illuminates crucial aesthetic and social meanings of her work, and in particular reveals that while social dance often offered feelings of collectivity and communal values, those feelings were ephemeral, and precariousness signifies most powerfully in Woolf's use of dance in her narratives.

Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, contains a complex dance scene that rewrites *Emma's*, putting a distinctly modernist spin on its precursor; it sets the stage for further consideration of Woolf's interwar fiction.⁵³ In chapter 12, Rachel Vinrace, Woolf's shy, reclusive heroine, seems to triumph over seclusion and alienation through not only the pleasure of social dancing, but the pleasure of enthraling an audience—indeed, inspiring it to dance—with the skill and artistry of her piano playing. Toward the end of the chapter, which is devoted in its entirety to the dance party, Rachel exclaims "I've changed my view of life completely!" after having confessed to one of her companions that "she'd no idea that dances could be so delightful."⁵⁴ Rachel's apparent transformation from withdrawn adolescent to delighted young woman culminates in her role as musician at the dance's end. In a rousing finale, she takes over when the South American musicians stop playing, and leads her audience to depart with her from convention while she plays a Mozart sonata and, in answer to the objection that she is not playing dance music, urges the party to "'Invent the steps.' Sure of her melody she marked the rhythm boldly so as to simplify the way . . . 'This is the dance for people who don't know how to dance!' she cried" (*VO*, 166). Under the newly bold, impassioned Rachel's leadership, the English tourists suddenly become more spontaneous, creative, and even fantastic.

St. John hopped with incredible swiftness first on his left leg, then on his right; the tune flowed melodiously; Hewet, swaying his arms and holding out the tails of his coat, swam

down the room in imitation of the voluptuous dreamy dance of an Indian maiden dancing before her Rajah Once their feet fell in with the rhythm they showed a complete lack of self-consciousness. (VO, 166)

At this point, Woolf seems to use dancing to underscore the transformative power of Rachel's music, as well as the emergence of her art from a private to a public realm. The dancing seems to liberate the young men in the room; in Hewet's case, it leads him into a predictable imperial fantasy in which he is feminized, the masculine subject of empire allowed a temporary holiday in which he inhabits the place of the other. Hewet's transformation through dance into an Indian maiden alerts readers to the inseparability of the dance scene, and all its attendant unconscious wishes, from the novel's general geopolitical psychodynamics: the novel is, after all, about, and skeptical of, the English touristic desire for exotic locations.

Therefore it is apt that the dance's finale underscores the Englishness of the tourists, solidifying their collective identity but closing off the possibilities of invention and exoticism that temporarily opened up under the rubric of Rachel's idiosyncratic choice of a Mozart sonata as dance music. "'Now for the great round dance!' Hewet shouted. Instantly a gigantic circle was formed, the dancers holding hands and shouting out, 'D'you ken John Peel,' as they swung faster and faster and faster, until the strain was too great, and one link of the chain—Mrs. Thornbury—gave way, and the rest went flying across the room in all directions" (VO, 166–67). The dance shifts, in its climax, to a celebratory, and ultimately chaotic, embrace of Englishness, departing from waltzes, barcarolles, and the Mozart sonata to a definitively English song. The round dance is an unambiguous symbol of English parochialism. At the beginning of chapter 12, the snobbish Pepper "began a discourse upon round dances, morris dances, and quadrilles, all of which are entirely superior to the bastard waltz and spurious polka which have ousted them most unjustly in contemporary popularity—when the waiters gently pushed him on to his table in the corner" (VO, 151). The aftermath of the great round dance casts the English tourists in an unflattering light, suggesting of course what one might expect: Woolf's nascent skepticism towards empire and distaste for xenophobia mired in the contradictions inherent in her own position of social privilege and touristic experiences.

"How silly the poor old lights look!" said Evelyn M. in a curiously subdued tone of voice. "And ourselves; it isn't becoming." It was true: the untidy hair, and the green and yellow gems, which had seemed so festive half an hour ago, now looked cheap and slovenly. The complexions of the elder ladies suffered terribly, and, as if conscious that a cold eye had been turned upon them, they began to say good-night and to make their way up to bed. (VO, 167)

Thus the dance serves as a source of temporary coherence, ultimately framed as "unbecoming" and the cause of dishevelment and exhaustion. The chapter ends with individuals emphatically separate from each other, distinctly uncommunicative ("They did not wish to share their impressions" [VO, 169]) after all the dancing has stopped

and a sense of space has been created by Rachel playing Bach. English dancing conveys a fragile collective feeling that quickly dissolves, leaving the reader with impressions of commotion and disturbance rather than the defiance of convention and flirtation with otherness that ensued from the invention of dancing to Mozart. Individuals then retreat into their separate spaces and silences. The dance chapter impresses on the reader that the power of dance to bring people together is evanescent.

Woolf indicates in her first novel that she takes interest in the way dance can elaborate tension, danger, fragmentation, and even violence. In the chapter, the language associated with dance is threatening and haunted. Woolf chooses language that conveys friction, even calamity: "the trio dashed spontaneously into the triumphant swing of the waltz"; "the circles smashed into little separate bits"; "the eddies whirled, the couples circled round in them, until there was a crash, and the circles were broken up into separate bits" (VO, 152); "all this, the strife of men and women" (VO, 155); "the music to which they had danced so gaily was one of passionate regret for dead love . . . dreadful sorrows had always separated the dancers from their past happiness" (VO, 165). Words like "dashed," "smashed," "crash," "tramping," "strife," "dishevelled," and "chaffing" all unequivocally connote disorder, stress, anxiety. The dance scene is also a stage for a violent argument between Rachel and St. John Hirst, during which he communicates his misogyny and she emerges with the cry that "He's made me furious!" (VO, 155).

Whether the coming-together of the English tourists, inspired by Rachel's playing, resolves any of this friction is dubious. To be sure, a certain calm is restored and much violent energy released and dissipated. However, a clear triumph of Rachel's emergence into public life, progress in the communication between individuals, and enjoyment of shared meaning, remain elusive. When asked to confirm that her view of life has changed, Rachel yawns. "I don't remember . . . I feel like a fish at the bottom of the sea." Hirst is thinking hard, but all he can communicate is "I have a key," "cryptically." And Hewet declares "I don't find it simple at all" (VO, 169). The chapter ends on a note of uncertainty and mystery, not revelation. That Rachel should feel like a "fish at the bottom of the sea" is sinister, suggesting that the dance, with its dangerous eddies, has submerged her, foreshadowing her death at the end of the novel.⁵⁵

Throughout her career, Woolf continued to use dance scenes to stage struggles over individual and group identities; in particular, she returned much later, in *The Years* and *Between the Acts*, to the dance as a scene of attempted yet unsuccessful solidification of English identity and coherence. In *The Years*, the dance occurs in the final, "Present Day" section, the section that follows the war and in which the Pargiters attempt to restore their connections to each other. The most successful dancers are Sara Pargiter and Nicholas, the text's most eccentric figures; they find harmony amidst the fragmentation that persistently troubles the family (a microcosm of the nation in this multigeneration saga). Significantly, and like a rehearsal for *Between the Acts*, the dance music is replaced by a curious song sung by children at the very end of the novel, a song "so shrill, so discordant, and so meaningless" that some in the family nevertheless find "beautiful."⁵⁶ The children's "noise" foreshadows the cacophonous jazz music in Woolf's final novel. In *Between the Acts*, dance first figures as part of the

720 pageant play, a genre Woolf employed to emphasize communal values.⁵⁷ The dance of the villagers serves briefly to unify the English across classes, providing a glimpse of a shared community: “The gramophone blared. Dukes, priests, shepherds, pilgrims and serving men took hands and danced . . . It was a mellay; a medley; an entrancing spectacle (to William) of dappled light and shade on half clothed, fantastically coloured, leaping, jerking, swinging legs and arms. He clapped till his palms stung” (*BTA*, 93). Here the village dancers are at their most inspiring, almost magical in their ability to enchant the alienated, marginalized William Dodge into their embrace. United by their movement in time to the music of the gramophone, they embody the idea, expressed later in the text, that “Music wakes us. Music makes us see the hidden, join the broken” (*BTA*, 120). Not only does dancing embody the redemptive, healing powers of music: it also figures a sacralized, primitivist connection to nature, representing, in this text haunted by droning airplanes, a resistance to modernity and the coming war. When Miss La Trobe watches swallows in the woods that are “a church without a roof . . . an open-air cathedral,” she sees them “dancing, like the Russians, not only to music, but to the unheard rhythm of their own wild hearts” (*BTA*, 65).⁵⁸ Whether connecting across classes to form a coherent English heritage and identity, or to a sacralized nature, to overcome modern alienation, dance holds out the promise, at key points throughout the text, of the “unity” that echoes throughout *Between the Acts* as the goal amidst private and public strife.

Yet while unity means the overcoming of class differences and alienation, this text, as many readers have pointed out, is haunted by the spectre of fascism, and unity can connote the frightening collectivism of National Socialism.⁵⁹ William’s entrancement is inverted later when the audience is “all caught and caged; prisoners; watching a spectacle. Nothing happened. The tick of the machine was maddening” (*BTA*, 176). As the pageant play enters the present moment, the music switches to jazz dances, providing dissonant musical accompaniment for the modern message of liberation through technology: “Each of us a free man; plates washed by machinery; not an aeroplane to vex us; all liberated; made whole . . .” The dishwasher’s promise of modern wholeness is immediately subverted by the effects of the music: “The tune changed; snapped; broke; jagged . . . What a cackle, a cacophony!” The new generation has arrived in scare quotes: “the young” who “shiver into splinters the old vision; smash to atoms what was whole” (*BTA*, 183). With the continued plea from the old that “what we need is a centre” (*BTA*, 198), the text concludes with irresolution of the conflict between tradition and modernity, heritage, and youth; “Dispersed are we” the text echoes again and again. In having Miss La Trobe find refuge in “wonderful words” (*BTA*, 212) and by ending the novel with the words “They spoke” (*BTA*, 219) as the opening of a new act in the marriage of Isa and Giles, Woolf turns away from the spectacle of dance, the embodiment of a potentially unifying music that threatens to erase the idiosyncratic identities that the novel ultimately holds dear; the values of the novel lie with the “cacophany” of jazz precisely because of its disruptions.

While the ability of dance scenes to stage fluctuations in the recuperation and disintegration of English collective identity is an important element of Woolf’s modern-

ism, her attention to the particular experiences of individual female dancers should by no means be overlooked. Rachel Vinrace, Sara Pargiter, and Miss La Trobe have all been mentioned; just as important are the ways Jinny in *The Waves*, Fanny Elmer in *Jacob's Room*, and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* are represented as dancers, either literally or metaphorically. The most significant sensibility that Woolf brings into her representations of dance, in these instances, echoes her exploration of dance with Rachel Vinrace: dangerous foreboding. "Here is my risk," thinks Jinny of the social world she inhabits as a dancer: "I am carried off. We yield to this slow flood. We go in and out of this hesitating music. Rocks break the current of the dance; it jars, it shivers."⁶⁰ The threatening currents of watery dance recall the eddies of *The Voyage Out*, and can be found in *Jacob's Room* as well, where Fanny Elmer, caught up in an aching longing of unrequited passion for Jacob, watches dancers with him, and imagines herself one of them:

Then there she was herself, whirling across the stage in white flounces, and the music was the dance and fling of her own soul, and the whole machinery, rock and gear of the world was spun smoothly into those swift eddies and fall, she felt . . . never was there a more irrational passion. And Jacob was afraid of her for a moment—so violent, so dangerous is it when young women stand rigid; grasp the barrier; fall in love.⁶¹

Given Woolf's propensity to represent dance as threatening when experienced by women, and to figure dance as dangerous eddies, her use of dance to figure Lily Briscoe's artistic process conveys Jinny's "risk," Fanny's "irrational passion," and Rachel's "He's made me furious!" Lily is Woolf's paramount figure of the artist as defier of convention, refuser of conformity to courtship, marriage, and domesticity. It is crucial then that her painting should be represented as dance, that formulaic narrative technique for introducing boy to girl, yet in keeping with Woolf's modernist, ironic subversion of convention. Here is Lily painting:

The brush descended. It flickered brown over the white canvas; it left a running mark. A second time she did it—a third time. And so pausing and so flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related; and so, lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines which had no sooner settled there than they enclosed (she felt it looming out at her) a space. Down in the hollow of one wave she saw the next wave towering higher and higher above her. For what could be more formidable than that space? Here she was again, she thought, stepping back to look at it, drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of the formidable ancient enemy of hers—this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her . . .⁶²

Art, after all, is a dance: it is a rhythmical form of combat that puts its practitioner into play with forces out of her control. "Striking," "nervous," "looming," "formidable": the artist's position is precarious, her dance bristling with tension and anxiety. To repeat: dance may seem to offer a comforting group identity, a sense of community. Yet it also

722 picks up its participant and whirls her around in ways not entirely pleasant. One can lose oneself in dance, or find that the *temptation* of dance is exactly its promise of an only evanescent sociality. For Woolf, dance could mean danger, a meaning certainly to be found in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Perhaps the most powerful use of dance to figure danger in Woolf's work occurs in the three instances in which the word "shindy" is used in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

In a public house in a back street a Colonial insulted the House of Windsor which led to words, broken beer glasses, and a general shindy which echoed strangely across the way in the ears of girls buying white underlinen threaded with pure white ribbon for their weddings. For the surface agitation of the passing car as it sunk grazed something very profound.⁶³

"The War?" the patient asked. The European War—that little shindy of schoolboys with gunpowder? Had he served with distinction? He really forgot. In the war itself he had failed. (*MD*, 96)

And here a shindy of brawling women, drunken women; here only a policeman and looming houses, high houses, domed houses, churches, parliaments, and the hoot of a steamer on the river, a hollow misty cry. (*MD*, 164)

Woolf uses the term "shindy," which refers to a sailor's dance and means spree, merrymaking, row, or commotion, in part to undermine authority, or to diminish the stature of something, in the case of Septimus referring to war. "Shindy" is a colloquial term; it shows Woolf delving into the common language; in this sense too, Woolf defies authority, delving into the linguistic "low" to challenge the "high." But perhaps most importantly, the events described as shindies are *violent* encounters—conflict between a colonial subject and royal power/royal supporters; war; drunken women in a brawl, under the shadow of police surveillance. The shindy betokens irreconcilable differences, and puts on highly visible display not harmony, but discord; not the solution, but the problem. In anticipation of the dance halls and nightclubs Mass-Observation would observe a little more than a decade later, Woolf depicted London as a fractious social dance. Given how ubiquitous dance is in Woolf's fiction, it is striking that it *only* appears as a metaphorical "shindy" in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Mrs. Dalloway ends with a party where there is no dancing, yet shadows of meaning hover around its absence. "I had meant to have dancing," said Clarissa . . . "I had hoped to have dancing" (*MD*, 177–78).⁶⁴ Dancing marks the difference between her generation and the next.

For the young people could not talk. And why should they? Shout, embrace, swing, be up at dawn; carry sugar to ponies; kiss and caress the snouts of adorable chows; and then all tingling and streaming, plunge and swim. But the enormous resources of the English language, the power it bestows, after all, of communicating feelings (at their age, she and Peter would have been arguing all evening), was not for them. They would solidify young. They would be good beyond measure to the people on the estate, but alone, perhaps, rather dull. (*MD*, 177–78)

If dancing precludes the power of the English language to communicate feelings, Woolf has written into the ending of *Mrs. Dalloway* a lesson or gift from Clarissa to the next generation: the absence of dancing requires them to talk instead. Woolf, I suggest, wanted people not to dance, but to communicate feeling in language. Recall Woolf retreating to a corner to read at a dance. Alienated as a young woman from the dance scene, she discovered in her reading corner a liberation *from*, not to, dance. More specifically, the end of *Mrs. Dalloway* transposes into fiction an incident that underscores how the frenetic interwar embrace of dance could instill in its observers a certain dread. In June 1920, Woolf recorded in great detail her sister's account of a young man's death in the middle of a party, the source, perhaps, for Clarissa's experience of "in the middle of my party, here's death" (*MD*, 183). A young man stepped out over the edge of a roof on which people had gathered, and fell thirty feet on to the flagstones below. He died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital: the young man's death stopped the dance. Woolf writes, "Nessa says the younger generation is callous. No one was upset; some telephoned for news of other dances A strange event—to come to a dance among strangers & die—to come dressed in evening clothes, & then for it all to be over, instantly, so senselessly."⁶⁵

It is well known that Woolf's fiction is profoundly elegaic, and that it derives from convergences of private and public loss.⁶⁶ Yet I know of no interpretation that observes the remarkable occurrence of a *death involving social dancing* as a source for *Mrs. Dalloway's* poetics of mourning. The "strange event" recorded in Woolf's diary is a striking, literal referent for the idea of "the dangerous art where one slip means death," as well. Woolf began composing "On Not Knowing Greek" in 1922, two years after the "strange event" and during the composition of *Mrs. Dalloway*; both are memorials to the young man whose death stopped the dance, and after which no one was upset.

Coda: "the dancers, trained to liveliness Here is LIFE"

The redemptive and emancipatory value of dance has been overemphasized, in effect obscuring the importance of Woolf's meaningful exclusion of dance from *Mrs. Dalloway's* final party. According to the aesthetics of *Mrs. Dalloway*, dance did not provide synthesis, integration, community, female liberation, emancipation from machine culture, therapeutic primitivism, or ameliorative re-enchantment. Dance, instead, was for Woolf a form of callousness; translated into the psychoanalytic terminology of the interwar years, dance was a form of manic defense, a denial of the inner life, a loss of values and an inability to mourn: the pathology of happiness with which D. W. Winnicott was experimenting when he observed dancers "trained to liveliness" as possibly abnormal. *Mrs. Dalloway's* violent "shindy" replaces the actual social dancing that provided inspiration for a book about death in the middle of a party; war trauma became the cause of death, but "shindy" contains the secret link between violence in everyday life (the latent tensions of social dancing) and the violence of wars whose roots are, ultimately, the confrontations between natives and foreigners, different races and ethnicities, and competing national sentiments that Mass-Observation encountered in dance halls.

724 Social dancing provided a glimpse of possibilities—multicultural, cosmopolitan, class-, generation-, and gravity-defying possibilities—whose difficulty was widely felt. Woolf turned away from dance, toward words, constructing in her fiction an idea of dance as danger that helped her, as well as others, fortify the individual and the inner life in their argument with the world. Whether they won or lost remains the question we dance around when we wrestle with modernist fiction's haunting power.

Notes

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1. Virginia Woolf, "On Not Knowing Greek," in *The Common Reader* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1925), 43.

2. D. W. Winnicott, "The Manic Defense," *Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis* (London: Hogarth, 1975), 131.

3. Scholarship on modernism and dance, or connecting dance with modernist literature, and foregrounding individual female performers includes the following: Jonathan Robinson Appels, "Two Women Dancing," in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 11:1 (1998), 167–74; Sally Banes, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Frank Kermode, "Poet and Dancer Before Diaghilev," in *Puzzles and Epiphanies: Essays and Reviews 1958–1961* (London: Routledge, 1962), 1–28; Amy Koritz, *Gendering Bodies/Performing Art: Dance and Literature in Early Twentieth-Century British Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Laura McLary, "Restaging Hysteria: Mary Wigman as Writer and Dancer," in *Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature* 27:2 (2003), 351–69; Terri A. Mester, *Movement and Modernism: Yeats, Eliot, Lawrence, Williams and Early Twentieth-Century Dance* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997); Carrie Preston, "The Motor in the Soul: Isadora Duncan and Modernist Performance," in *Modernism/Modernity* 12:2 (April 2005), 273–89; Audrey T. Rodgers, *The Universal Drum: Dance Imagery in the Poetry of Eliot, Crane, Roethke, and Williams* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979); Julie Townsend, "Synaesthetics: Symbolism, Dance, and the Failure of Metaphor," in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 18:1 (Spring 2005), 126–48; Rachel Vigier, *Gestures of Genius: Women, Dance, and the Body* (Stratford, Ontario: Mercury Press, 1994).

4. Hillel Schwartz, "Torque: The New Kinaesthetic of the Twentieth Century," in *Incorporations*, eds. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 71–127. The following works emphasize dance as mechanical: Felicia McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Joel Dinerstein, *The Swinging Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture Between the World Wars* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and transl. Thomas Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

5. I quote, of course, Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1988), which takes its title from the *Communist Manifesto*.

6. Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (New York: HBJ, 1969), 201. Henceforth abbreviated BTA.

7. Lucia Joyce, as well as Shloss, may well become even more a symbol of freedom, if Lawrence Lessig is successful in defending Shloss and other Joyce scholars against "copyright intimidation." See D. T. Max, "The Injustice Collector: The James Joyce Estate vs. Everyone Else," *The New Yorker* (June 19, 2006), 34–43.

8. Dinitia Smith, "A Portrait of the Artist's Troubled Daughter: Understanding Joyce's Family, Despite an Heir's Resistance," *The New York Times* (November 22, 2003), A1.

9. Carol Loeb Shloss, *Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux 2003), 225. Henceforth abbreviated *LJ*.

10. Fuller's importance and complexity will receive rich tribute in Rhonda Garelick's *Electric Salome* (forthcoming, Princeton University Press).

11. Nancy Reynolds and Malcolm McCormick, *No Fixed Points: Dance in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 33.

12. Reynolds and McCormick, *No Fixed Points*, 56 and 58.

13. Reynolds and McCormick, *No Fixed Points*, 48.

14. Evelyn Haller, "Her Quill Drawn from the Firebird: Virginia Woolf and the Russian Dancers," in *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Diane Gillespie (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 182.

15. Jane Ellison Harrison, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (London: Hogarth, 1925), 84–85.

16. Vita Sackville-West, *Pepita* (New York: Doubleday, 1937).

17. Quoted in Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey: A Biography* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), 543–44.

18. Before joining Diaghilev's ballet in 1916, Lopokova performed vaudeville in American music halls after leaving Russia in 1910. Beginning in 1918, she danced for London audiences in the various music halls such as the Alhambra, where Diaghilev's ballet performed, was introduced to Bloomsbury, and married Keynes in 1925. Clearly, Lopokova was more than charming to some audiences. Cyril Beaumont, adoring chronicler of the Russian Ballet in London, recalled Lopokova dancing "like a Maenad and [she] electrified the audience with the sheer joy and seemingly boundless vitality of her movements." Offstage, according to Beaumont, "[s]he spoke English well, with an attractive accent, and had a habit of making a profound remark as though it were the merest badinage." She was "very intelligent and witty, and, unlike some dancers, her conversation was not limited to herself and the Ballet." Cyril Beaumont, *The Diaghilev Ballet in London: A Personal Record* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1951), 111, 115, and 116. Bloomsbury's derision of Lopokova has been well documented in Robert Skidelsky's biography of Keynes. See Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes. Volume Two: The Economist as Savior, 1927–1937* (New York: Penguin, 1992).

19. *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, eds. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975–80), III: 32–33, 28 April, 1923; III: 50–52, 24 June, 1923; III: 76–78, 4 November, 1923; III: 129–31, 4 September, 1924. Henceforth abbreviated *L*. Woolf's response to Lydia mellowed to some extent over the years, and by 1935 she was writing in her diary of "the other Lydia" (one not so naïve) of whom she would write sympathetically were she to author Lydia's biography; in 1934, she had praised Lydia's performance in Ibsen's *Doll's House* in a letter to Quentin Bell. *L*, V: 281–83, 8 March, 1934.

20. Woolf recorded in her diary that "I wanted to observe Lydia as a type for Rezia" and in 1924 that she called Lydia Rezia by mistake. One might interpret the fictionalization of the dancer Lydia as *Mrs. Dalloway's* seamstress Rezia as an indictment of the marriage of a bookish man to a non-intellectual and foreign woman, Woolf's lament for the lack of communication she imagined must lie like an abyss into which domestic partners would plunge. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Ann Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich 1977–84), II: 265–68, 11 September, 1923; II: 309–12, 15 August, 1924. Henceforth abbreviated *D*.

21. *L*, III: 499–502, 25 May, 1928.

22. *D*, 144–46, 1 May, 1918.

23. T. S. Eliot, "Marie Lloyd," in *Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux 1975), 172–74. See also Barry Faulk, "Modernism and the Popular: Eliot's Music Halls," *Modernism/Modernity* 8:4 (November 2001), 603–22 and David E. Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

24. *D*, II: 106–107, 8 April, 1921.

25. *L*, I: 33–35, 17 June, 1900; I: 43–44, 8 August, 1901; I: 63–64, 27 December, 1902; I: 216–17, 16 January, 1906.

26. Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey*, 560 and 749.

27. Frances Partridge, *Memories* (London: Robin Clark, 1982), 50 and 52.
28. Partridge, *Memories*, 62.
29. Partridge, *Memories*, 64.
30. Quoted in Derek Scott, "The 'Jazz Age'," *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Stephen Banfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 57. See also George McKay, *Circular Breathing: The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
31. Three works that situate psychoanalysis in the interwar British context are Peter Homans, *The Ability to Mourn: Disillusionment and the Social Origins of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Knopf, 2004); and Nora Newcombe and Jeffrey C. Lerner, "Britain Between the Wars: The Historical Context of Bowlby's Theory of Attachment," in *Psychiatry* 45 (February 1982), 1–12.
32. Julian Trevelyan, *Indigo Days* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1957), 82–83; quoted in Laura Marcus, "Introduction: The Project of Mass-Observation," *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 44 (Autumn 2001), 5–20.
33. Jennings helped organize the International Surrealist Exhibition at the New Burlington Galleries in June 1936 (Marcus, "Project of Mass-Observation," 6); for more on Mass-Observation's surrealism see the following: David Chaney and Michael Pickering, "Authorship in Documentary: Sociology as an Art Form in Mass-Observation," in John Corner, ed. *Documentary and the Mass Media* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), 39; Ben Highmore, "Surrealism and Mass-Observation: The Missing Link," in *New Formations* 55 (2005), 200–204; Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002); Tyrus Miller, "Documentary/Modernism: Convergence and Complementarity in the 1930s," in *Modernism/Modernity* 9:2 (April 2002), 225–41.
34. There are different ways to establish the literariness of Mass-Observation; Highmore's writings are good examples of scholarship that illuminates the affinities and direct links between surrealism and Mass-Observation. For H. D.'s involvement in, and inspiration by, Mass-Observation, see Diana Collecott, "H. D. and Mass Observation," in *Line: A Journal of Contemporary Writing and Its Modernist Source* 13 (1989), 153–69. On Mitchison's involvement and on the pleasure in writing to a range of classes allowed by Mass-Observation, see Margaretta Jolly, "Historical Entries: Mass-Observation Diarists: 1937–2001," in *New Formations* 44 (Autumn 2001), 110–27. For an opposing view of Mass-Observation as a form of Foucauldian surveillance carried out by unsympathetic middle-class intellectuals, see Peter Gurney, "'Intersex' and 'Dirty Girls': Mass Observation and Working-Class Sexuality in England in the 1930s," in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8:2 (1996), 256–90.
35. Mass Observation Archive (M-O A): *FR* 11A, "Jazz and Dancing," 21 November, 1939, 12.
36. M-O A: *FR* 11A, 28.
37. M-O A: *FR* 348, "Report from Mass-Observation on Gramophone and Wireless Workshops," 2 and M-O A: *FR* 1249, "Radio," 11 May, 1942, 1.
38. M-O A: *TC* 38 Dancing and Jazz 1938–41, 1/A Observations in Dance Halls.
39. M-O A: *TC* 38/1/E.
40. M-O A: *TC* 38/1/A, 1/E.
41. M-O A: *TC* 38/1/A.
42. M-O A: *TC* 38/1/B.
43. M-O A: *TC* 38/1/C.
44. M-O A: *TC* 38 4/H, Night Clubs.
45. M-O A: *TC* 38 4/G, Rhythm Clubs.
46. Mica Nava, "Cosmopolitan Modernity: Everyday Imaginaries and the Register of Difference," in *Theory, Culture & Society* 19:1–2 (2002), 81–99.
47. M-O A: *TC* 38/4/G.
48. M-O A: *TC* 38 3/A, Dances, Professional Dancers, and the Music Business.
49. Unlike the "Lambeth Walk," to which Mass-Observation devoted much analysis and interpretation. I have focused here on "The Chestnut Tree" instead because it is less well known to scholars of Mass-Observation. Mass-Observation was interested in the "Lambeth Walk" as a dance that combined a genuine working-class art form and commercialization; did this constitute community? Mass-Observation admitted without lamenting the commercial forces that constitute the popular. In

their interpretation, they also emphasized the roles of cultural producers in forging a popular fad, and viewed the spectacle of 3,000 dancers and spectators of the "Lambeth Walk" as anti-fascist. Thus there are many parallels between the more well-known "Lambeth Walk" and "The Chestnut Tree". On the "Lambeth Walk," see Mass-Observation, *Britain*, intro. Angus Calder (London: Cresset, 1986).

50. I am grateful to Virginia Jackson for the information about Longfellow in England.

51. M-O A: TC 38 6/D, Voluntary Observers' Reports.

52. W. B. Yeats, "Among School Children," in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1961), 245.

53. In her recent work on Woolf, Christine Froula provides an extremely valuable reading of this scene that emphasizes the redemptive power of dance: "Seeing things new by the light of the impromptu Post-Impressionist spectacle Rachel's playing conjures, the community . . . celebrates both her future and a revelatory vision of its own." Christine Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (New York: Columbia UP, 2005), 52. Similarly, Mark Wollaeger reads Rachel's performance as "breaking up and reassembling older social and aesthetic forms in a virtuoso performance of her independence." Mark Wollaeger, "The Wolfs in the Jungle: Intertextuality, Sexuality, and the Emergence of Female Modernism in *The Voyage Out*, *The Village in the Jungle*, and *Heart of Darkness*," in *Modern Language Quarterly* 64:1 (2003), 41. Wollaeger goes on to note that "Rachel's release from tradition is *only temporary*," and Froula begins her discussion with "Rachel makes a spontaneous intervention in the social rituals of mating and marriage that leads the whole company *momentarily* to see things new" (Froula, *The Bloomsbury Avant-Garde*, 51; emphases mine). In my reading, the temporary and momentary are crucial. See also Haller, "The Quill Drawn from the Firebird," who focuses only on the Russian ballet's influence on *The Voyage Out*.

54. Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (New York, Harcourt, 1948), 163. Henceforth abbreviated as VO.

55. Froula makes the salient point that the dance scene recalls Woolf's "A Dance in Queens Gate" (1903), in which she wrote of "that strange passion which sends you whirling round the room . . . in & out, round & round—in the eddies & swirls of the violins. It is as though some swift current of water swept you along." Froula, *The Bloomsbury Avant-Garde*, 51.

56. Virginia Woolf, *The Years* (New York: Harcourt, 1965), 430–31.

57. See for example Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 87.

58. On Miss LaTrobe's religious experience, see Pericles Lewis, "Churchgoing in the Modern Novel," in *Modernism/Modernity* 11:4 (2004), 669–94. On the phrase "dancing, like the Russians," see Haller, "The Quill Drawn from the Firebird."

59. See for example Michele Pridmore-Brown, "1939–1940: Of Virginia Woolf, Gramophones, and Fascism," in *PMLA* 133:3 (1998), 408–21.

60. Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (New York: Harcourt, 1959), 103.

61. Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (New York: Harcourt, 1950), 117–18.

62. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, 1981), 158.

63. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harcourt, 1981), 18. Henceforth abbreviated MD.

64. Julia Briggs notes that the 1997 film of *Mrs. Dalloway* departs from the book by turning the party into a dance, which is indeed noteworthy, but interprets the lack of dancing in the novel only as the lack of space for it, as opposed to what I argue is its meaningful absence. Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 158 and 440 n. 150.

65. D, II: 50–51, 29 June, 1920.

66. The most stunning account of *Mrs. Dalloway* as elegiac is Froula's.