Biography and Autobiography at the Hogarth Press

by

Claire Battershill

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Department of English
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The subject of this thesis is the biographies and autobiographies published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press between 1917 and 1946. I combine several areas of scholarly inquiry – biography and autobiography studies, modernist studies, book history, and the history of reading – in order to examine the intersections between literary and textual constructions of genre and the role of categorization in the book trade. My central argument is that diversity, as both the policy and the product of the Hogarth Press, allowed a multitude of voices, methodologies, perspectives, and subjects to co-exist at one publishing house and produced a body of works that goes far beyond the small circle of Bloomsbury with which it is usually associated. The variety of the Hogarth Press’s publications meant that its approach to genre was one of hybridity, oscillation, and ambivalence, but one that nevertheless found ways to position complicated works in the category-oriented world of the book trade.

Drawing from unpublished archival materials in order to uncover relationships between authors, readers, publishers, booksellers, literary agents, book clubs, and critics, I argue that the Hogarth Press’s practices in publishing biographies and autobiographies informed the Woolfs’ writings about the importance and role of the genres in the context of literary modernism. Using material from the Hogarth Press Business Archive housed at the University of Reading, I offer detailed studies of the Press’s translations from the Russian of three biographies of Tolstoy and...
Sophia Tolstoy’s autobiography; two biography series of the 1930s; Henry Green and Christopher Isherwood’s fictionalized autobiographies; and Virginia Woolf’s own biographical experiments, *Orlando, Flush*, and *Roger Fry*. My analysis of these particular groups of works is underpinned by a reading of the Press’s whole list of publications between 1917 and 1946, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of which I offer in the opening chapter of the thesis. The 522 copies of Hogarth Press books and pamphlets I read are housed in the Virginia Woolf Collection at the E. J. Pratt Library at Victoria University in the University of Toronto.
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This work is dedicated to Cillian O’Hogan, with love.
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## Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BTEC</td>
<td>The Hogarth Press’s <em>Biographies Through the Eyes of Contemporaries</em> Series.</td>
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<td>DNB</td>
<td>Dictionary of National Biography</td>
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<td>HPA</td>
<td>The Hogarth Press Business Archives, University of Reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MHP</td>
<td>Monk’s House Papers, University of Sussex.</td>
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<tr>
<td>N&amp;A</td>
<td><em>The Nation and Athenaeum</em></td>
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<td>LWP</td>
<td>Leonard Woolf Papers, University of Sussex.</td>
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<td>LW</td>
<td>Leonard Woolf</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>Smith College Library Special Collections</td>
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<td>WMWS</td>
<td>The Hogarth Press <em>World-Makers and World-Shakers</em> Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>VSW</td>
<td>Vita Sackville-West</td>
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<td>VW</td>
<td>Virginia Woolf</td>
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Introduction

In order to gain your confidence, perhaps I should tell you a little more of my glamorous youth.

– Viola Tree, *Can I Help You?* (1937)

Once more the most notable thing in the promised harvest is the ever growing yield of biography. Biographical books are becoming serious rivals to novels, and it must be assumed that many get the same, and something more, out of the story of real people’s lives as they get out of imaginary tales about imaginary people.¹

– Leonard Woolf, “The Autumn Crop” (1927)

In 1937, Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press published *Can I Help You?: Your Manners, Menus, Amusements, Friends, Charades, Make-Ups, Travel, Calling, Children, Love Affairs*, a book that Diane Gillespie has recently described as “a hybrid of advice and autobiography” (“Please Help Me!” 173). The work begins with a personal anecdote: “When I was seventeen years old I was invited by someone who was thinking of asking me to marry him to his parents’ country house” (11). The meandering account of the visit is laced with revealing, humorous, and candid commentary on Tree’s own experience of social life. Throughout the book, she offers personal stories in a joking, intimate tone of confession. In her autobiographical introduction, Tree covers her movement through “Schoolroom, Stage, Ballroom, Farm, Vicarage,” establishes her lineage as a descendent of “born hosts,” and emphasizes her career as an advice columnist for the *Sunday Dispatch* newspaper, “besieged with questions by all classes” (24) on matters of decorum

¹ I transcribe all quotations from typescripts and published materials as they appear in the originals, including infelicities of typing, grammar, and spelling (here, for instance, Leonard Woolf does not hyphenate the compound adjective “ever growing” in the *N&A*). I do not use [sic] in these instances.
and social correctness. She has, she writes, “been consulted by hundreds and thousands,” and, she adds with mock self-aggrandizement, she is seen “as a kind of clairvoyante on the subject of manners” (14). She warns her readers, however, that despite her personal suitability for the task of writing an etiquette book based on her own experience, “there may be some flights of fancy that will make the elect laugh in their sleeves” (12) in the manual, and she even admits that “by my friends and family I am not considered oracular or even safe on the subject of manners – I am thought rude, tactless, and even farouche” (15). An autobiographical etiquette book by an advice columnist in which the author admits that her friends find her rude might initially seem contradictory, but Tree’s vividly personal tone achieves another kind of intimacy and authenticity that relies not on social standing or qualification in the arts of manners, but on personality and the ability to tell her own story. As Gillespie suggests, within this supposed etiquette book, Tree “has written another memoir” (173). She employs a characteristically tongue-in-cheek tone, then, as she asks her audience to trust her advice about the intricacies of social life: “to gain your confidence, perhaps I should tell you a little more of my glamorous youth” (16).

Contradiction, humour, hybridity of genre, and an emphasis on the personal are all features that link Can I Help You? with the ethos of the Hogarth Press. Tree’s was a

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2 The Hogarth Press had previously published Tree’s full-length autobiography Castles in the Air: The Story of My Singing Days (1926).

3 Viola Tree was the daughter of Herbert Beerbohm Tree (the half-brother of Max Beerbohm), an actor and the director of the Haymarket Theatre in the 1880s and the manager of His Majesty’s Theatre at the turn of the century (hence the star-studded upbringing). See Madeline Bingham and Hesketh Pearson for full-length biographies of Herbert Beerbohm Tree. She herself worked as a stage and film actress, an opera singer, a theatre manager, and a playwright. She also wrote a biography and an autobiography (see Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy for the “Orlando Project” entry on Viola Tree).
work with which, as Gillespie points out, Virginia and Leonard Woolf both “had a hands-on relationship” (“Please Help Me!” 173). The nature of that relationship was partly editorial: both Woolfs commented on the manuscript and suggested revisions, and the nature of their proposed changes offers further evidence that in their role as publishers, as well as readers and critics, the Woolfs felt that they were getting “something more” (Woolf “The Autumn Crop” 22) out of autobiography, particularly when it collided with other genres, in this case the advice book. Attempting to cut the manuscript down in length so that the Press could produce the book at a lower list price, the Woolfs suggested excising sections of the text, but in his letter to Tree, Leonard emphasized that “we both feel that it would be a great pity to cut out any of the stories which you tell, which are very amusing, or the more personal things” (HPA 496, 8 June 1937). The fact that the Woolfs were most interested in the autobiographical components of Can I Help You? invites a consideration of their investment in narratives of identity at the Press more broadly. The Woolfs’ edits on Tree’s text that encouraged its autobiographical character demonstrate the ways in which the Woolfs themselves were contributing to the “ever growing yield” of “sto[ries] about real li[ves]” (22) at the Hogarth Press by placing value on personal forms. As Leonard Woolf concludes his assessment of biographical works in the 1927 publisher’s list, he admits that his own preference for biography agrees with the publishing trend: getting “something more” out of personal works, he writes, is “a state of mind with which I sympathize” (22).

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4 Leonard wrote to Tree, “I think the book should be the ordinary novel size” (HPA 496, 7 June 1937), and as a result suggested that she cut down on the length and remove some of the illustrations. The book was eventually sold at the standard novel price of 7s6d. This positioning in the marketplace adds to the work’s generic complexity. I will discuss the relationship between genre and list price further in Chapter One.
The notion of an etiquette book “for all classes” (24) by an author who cheekily admits to her own gaucheness is not so far removed from modernist debates, or from the aims of the Hogarth Press, as one might initially expect. Described on its dust jacket as an “amusing and useful guide to manners for all classes” Can I Help You? was the only book of its kind to be published by the Press and was produced in response to “a long-felt want” for an etiquette manual that provided a range of answers to common problems for a diverse array of people. I begin with Tree’s text because it demonstrates some of the recurring features of the Hogarth Press’s autobiographical and biographical publications – humour, class awareness, female authorship, interaction between large-circulation and smaller-circulation productions, and the value of autobiography in convincing readers of a work’s authenticity – to which I will return throughout the thesis. It also offers an example of the generally unstudied delights that can be found in the body of works that the Press published in their twenty-nine years as an independent business. Tree’s combination of openness to shifting, unpredictable debates and conversations, and her interest, too, in facilitating them in the outwardly ordered world of social correctness provide a fitting parallel to the introduction of diverse works into a book trade that relies on mutually understood expectations.

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5 The reference to the text’s “amusing” tone as part of its appeal on the dust jacket suggests that J. H. Willis’s notion that the Press published this book “presumably without blushing or laughing” (379) is a misreading of this particular title’s place in the Press’s list. The Woolfs enjoyed the text’s humour and lightness of style, and, I argue, published it because of its autobiographical elements and because of the way in which it rendered the form of the etiquette book palatable by interweaving it with a fun and engaging life story.

6 Gillespie’s article is, at the present time, the only existing scholarly work on Tree’s text.
Retelling the Story of the Hogarth Press

It is an understatement to say that *Can I Help You?* is not the kind of book commonly associated with Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press, the best-known publications of which include works by such famous modernist thinkers and writers as Sigmund Freud, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, Roger Fry, Katherine Mansfield, and Virginia Woolf herself. However, in the diverse list of biographical and autobiographical publications produced by Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press between 1917 and 1946, playful stories of “glamorous youth” (Tree *Can I Help You?* 16) appear alongside educational biographies, accounts of ordinary lives, feminist biographies and autobiographies, treatises on vocations and accounts of working life, and memorial publications, among many other kinds of works in the broad genre of “stor[ies] about real li[ves]” (22) alone.

Now often associated with its beginnings as a hobby operation run by Leonard and Virginia Woolf in 1917, the Press became an independent publisher and produced works in a variety of fields through the first half of the twentieth century. The operation began in 1917 with the purchase of a “printing press, for all our friends stories” (*L* 2: 120). Almost immediately, the Press attained financial and cultural success and became a profitable business that sent work out to commercial printers and published works by unknown authors as well as friends and family. The Press published over five hundred titles between 1917 and 1946 and the subject matter of these ranged across a wide variety of topics and approaches and was “innovative and traditional, elitist and democratic,

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7 The Press relied on informal and unpaid labour at first, including help with the presswork by the Woolfs’ servants and friends (*See L* 2: 150, among other mentions of the servants’ help).
highbrow and commercial: a successful paradox” (Gordon 3). The Press had disproportionate influence relative to its size, especially during its days as a fully independent business from 1917, when the operation consisted of a small Albion hand press in the Woolfs’ drawing room at Hogarth House in Richmond, to 1946, when it was sold to Chatto & Windus. Despite the fact that the basic history of the Hogarth Press is well known (as a publisher of Virginia Woolf’s own works and of the works of her friends and contemporaries), scholarly research on the Press has, until recently, focused on a relatively small group of texts related to more prominent figures of modernism, and Woolf in particular. Especially often told is the story of the early hand-printed books that Leonard and Virginia Woolf produced on their tabletop press. The idea of Virginia Woolf setting type and binding books with her own hands has been frequently romanticized, which is understandable considering the Benjiminian “aura” (“The Work of Art” 221) produced by books hand-stitched by such a famous author. The artistic

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8 The exact number of publications in the list depends on how they are counted. Since the Press published a number of pamphlet series that were later bound into volumes, some critics will tend to count these as single books rather than separate pamphlets. Chronology also affects the count: Woolmer, in his second edition, gives the number of 525 publications (he includes each of the pamphlets separately and counts special editions as separate titles) and Southworth suggests “more than 450 works” (1) because the focus of her volume ends at 1941, the year of Virginia Woolf’s death.

9 By adopting nineteenth-century printing practices when they began the Press (including the use of woodcuts, a technique that Benjamin specifically identifies as marking the moment when “graphic art became mechanically reproducible for the first time, long before script became reproducible by print” (218)), the Woolfs went some way to restoring the kind of “presence in time and space” (220) that Benjamin suggests is lost in the act of reproduction. Although Benjamin’s own narrative suggests a historical progression of reproducibility underpinned by a Marxist view that the transformation of society cannot be reversed by using nostalgic or antiquated methods, the early Hogarth Press hand-printed books now give the illusion, at least, of the “presence of the original” that Benjamin cites as the “prerequisite to the concept of authenticity” (220). The machine-printed books published by the Press have received so much less attention by collectors, bibliographers, and critics because they lack a connection with Virginia Woolf’s hands.

10 Less frequently mentioned, for instance, is the fact that the hand-printed Hogarth Press books themselves are famously badly printed (the most extreme example is Monday or Tuesday in which the over-inked illustration blocks obscure the text on the opposite leaf almost entirely). The Woolfs admitted to their own
partnership between Vanessa Bell and Woolf has been studied, too, alongside biographical accounts of their sibling relationship. Finally, the Hogarth Press is frequently mentioned in passing in modernist studies as a publisher of works by T. S. Eliot, Sigmund Freud, Gertrude Stein, and, of course, Virginia Woolf herself.

Focused studies of Virginia Woolf and the Hogarth Press – its influence on her own writing, its role as a vehicle for her experimental fiction, and its place in her daily life – comprise a subcategory of Woolf studies. The aesthetic relationship between Woolf’s writing and the Press’s books is embodied in the distinctive illustrated dust jackets of the Hogarth Press books. The combination of the Post-Impressionist aesthetic of many of Vanessa Bell’s cover designs with Virginia Woolf’s own “brand,” to use Gordon’s term, meant that the Press imprint took on an especially powerful role by the amateur status as printers and they did improve over time, but the early books, in particular, are frequently in very bad shape in library collections relative to their age because they were not very well made in the first place. The amateurish production values, especially for the hand printed books, were not considered failings by the Woolfs themselves, but were part of the Press’s initial aim, as well. Functionality and accessibility were also significant in press production, which Angelica Garnett links with Woolf’s notion of the “common reader”: “The Hogarth Press books were meant for the common reader and not, for example, like those of the Nonesuch Press, intended to be lasting objects of beauty, something that, because of what seemed like her excessive self-consciousness, Vanessa would have felt uncomfortable with. Far from designing for future generations she concentrated on the moment, searching for spontaneity, consigning it to poor quality paper and simple line block printing which exactly suited her gift for the abstract and purely visual” (A. Garnett “Foreword” 7).


12 Sara Blair argues that the Bloomsbury Group itself was and is often characterized by a similarly indefinable but prevalent “aura” (814).

13 See Gordon, Anna Snaith, S. P. Rosenbaum “Leonard and Virginia Woolf,” J. H. Willis, and Alice Staveley for this approach. Although Southworth’s essay collection takes a broader view, as does Gordon’s Woolf’s-head, the titles of both collections still emphasize the names of the Woolfs.
late 1920s. However, these designs appeared on many other authors’ books at the Press, and the contemporary effect of Hogarth Press was more complicated than simply being aligned with Woolf’s reputation as an author. The Hogarth Press had its own brand of cultural respectability that went beyond Virginia Woolf’s, as Gordon argues in “Under the Imprint.” It was not just later critics who produced and encouraged what Gordon calls the Press’s “publisher function” (6). The Press’s own title-page statement “Published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press” reiterates the personal names attached to the Press. I would add to Gordon’s analysis that Leonard, as well as Virginia, was important to the Press’s branding. His role as editor at the Nation and Athenaeum (N&A), and his political connections, associated him with what Elizabeth Dickens describes as “so-called serious books” (28) and with the world in which those books were produced, debated, and circulated. The emphasis on the title page on personal names was effective because of both Woolfs’ status as “rather influential” (Eliot Letters 1: 278) figures in the literary world. No one else’s name ever appeared on a Hogarth Press title page, despite the fact that John Lehmann bought Virginia’s share and took over a great deal of the editorial work in 1938. I do not argue against this emphasis on the importance of Virginia Woolf’s authorial reputation in the Press’s marketing and

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14 Gordon builds upon Brenda Silver’s work in Virginia Woolf Icon in her recent examination of the marketing and branding of Virginia Woolf’s literary persona both for her contemporaries and in her literary afterlife (“The Pope of Russell Square”). Gordon has done extensive work on the cultural capital of the Press’s imprint and on the cachet that it lent the books that appeared with the logo. See Under the Imprint.

15 Virginia Woolf’s reputation was not straightforwardly positive, and her fiction received mixed reviews throughout her career, so the alignment of the Press with her authorial status had both positive and negative aspects. Gordon focuses primarily in Under the Imprint on the ways in which Woolf’s reputation enhanced the Press’s success.

16 See Duncan Wilson, Peter Wilson, and most recently Jeanne Dubino on Leonard Woolf’s political activities.
business practices, nor do I unpack it in detail, but rather I attempt to expand the field by exploring materials other than Woolf’s writings that the Press published and by giving Leonard Woolf’s role, not only as a bookkeeper but as an intellectual, more emphasis in the Press’s story. Other Hogarth works circulated in the same publishing conditions as Woolf’s own writings on biography, and she would have read and commented upon them as an editor and publisher at the Press.

The broader remit of the Press has, as a consequence of the focus on hand printing, been less discussed until recently. A new gathering of articles on various aspects of the Press’s list is invigorating the field in exciting ways and approaching the Press’s list by uncovering its offerings of particular genres, political ideologies, formal tropes, class identities, and gender politics. Any examination of the Hogarth Press beyond its more famous authors shows that it was an institution that accepted work from

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17 Leonard Woolf is often depicted as a miser. John Lehmann wrote in *Thrown to the Woolfs* that “old Hogarth Press galley proofs were provided as toilet paper” (123). This anecdote has, in the way that humorous biographical details often will, been more prevalent in popular understandings of Woolf than has his serious intellectual work and his thoughtfulness on the subject of the publishing trade.

18 The Press is not often associated by critics with Virginia Woolf’s work as a publisher or as an editor, and there is a great deal of work still to be done on Woolf’s editorial role. In discussing Woolf’s letters, for instance, Gillies makes the revealingly dismissive comment that “Some [letters] deal with apparently mundane matters, such as hiring a servant or developments at the Hogarth Press” (24).

19 By treating individual biographies and autobiographies, I expand on recent work by Southworth on working class writers at the Press; Laura Marcus on the Russian translations and on the Press’s overall history; Gillespie on detective fiction, religion, and, most recently, Viola Tree; Staveley on the feminist aspects of Woolf’s role at the Press; Nicola Wilson on Hugh Walpole and the Press’s relationship with the Book Society; Anna Snaith on its anti-colonial dimensions; and Gordon on the Press’s cultural significance and branding. Each of these critics aims to offer a closer look at the actual content of what was published at the Hogarth Press by focusing on particular aspects of its output, and Southworth’s recent collection, which contains essays on Vita Sackville-West’s role as a Hogarth Press author by Stephen Barkway, an analysis of the precocious teenaged poet Joan Easdale by Mark Hussey, a look at the transnational modernist writings of William Plomer by John K. Young, a study of the middlebrow novels of E. M. Delafield and Rose Macaulay by Melissa Sullivan, and a re-evaluation of the radical politics of the Press through Jane Harrison’s translation from the Russian of *The Life of Archpriest Avvakum, by Himself* by Jean Mills.
writers of various social classes, nationalities, ages, political and ideological persuasions, genders, and sexualities.  

Recently, Gillespie, Southworth, and Gordon have emphasized unexpected and surprising components of its list in order to reframe the Hogarth Press in a way that draws attention to the richness of these materials. In her recent paper on Tree, Gillespie offers a list of the seemingly incongruous Hogarth Press publications and of their critical reception, which focuses on their eccentricity: “Even those who know the Hogarth Press well are surprised by Adventures in Investing by ‘Securitas’ (1936); Diet and High Blood Pressure, by Dr. I. Harris (1937); and Viola Tree’s Can I Help You?” (Porter 7). The Hogarth Press’s two detective novels by C. H. B. Kitchin (1929; 1934) initially seemed a similar anomaly (Gillespie, “Virginia”). The Press’s “Religion” category in catalogues of the 1920s and 1930s also at first seemed uncharacteristic” (“Please Help Me!” 179). Gillespie’s work on the detective novels published by the Press and on the Religion publications, and Gordon’s attention to what she calls, in the subtitle to an exhibition catalogue containing Hogarth Press materials, “The Highlights and New Lights of the Hogarth Press” indicates a tendency to view publications that are unlike Woolf’s own novels as “surprising,” “uncharacteristic,” “unexpected,” or “anomalous.” As Gillespie’s own language indicates, however, what “at first” (179) seems uncharacteristic is, in fact, not so surprising at all if the Press’s list is considered in its entirety, rather than being treated solely or even primarily as the publisher of Virginia Woolf’s novels. Is it so surprising, given all of these works that differ so greatly from Woolf’s own (and given

20 See Gordon Under the Imprint and Woolf’s-head, Marcus Hogarth Press and Southworth.
the diversity of Woolf’s oeuvre in terms of genre, size of audience, publication features, and tone), to find a children’s book about preteens who metamorphose into wild beasts,\textsuperscript{21} or a collection of photographs of death masks, complete with instructions about how these are made?\textsuperscript{22} What about an early film studies publication on the construction of paper silhouette puppets,\textsuperscript{23} or an autobiographical account of a journey to a monastery entitled \textit{The 6,000 Beards of Athos} (a book richly illustrated with photographs of the eponymous beards)?\textsuperscript{24} I argue that truly to acknowledge the diversity of the Hogarth Press list is to move beyond a reaction of surprise at its apparent peculiarities and to recognize eclecticism as a principle that agreed with both Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s ideals about the need for a multitude of voices in the world of books. The Press’s list is full of works that complicate the Press’s basic image and cultural reputation, and can enrich an historical understanding of the modernist context in which it found itself by showing the ways in which the institutions and structures of publishing and of the book world received various and often contradictory works.

It is important, therefore, to make a distinction between Bloomsbury and the Hogarth Press, which were actually separate (though overlapping) networks of people, although they are often wrongly conflated. Southworth notes that “dispelling misconceptions about the dominance of Bloomsbury Group authors at the Press” (2) is part of the project of the volume she edited and that the focus of most of the essays in

\textsuperscript{21} Barbara Baker’s \textit{The Three Rings} (1944).
\textsuperscript{22} Ernst Benkard’s \textit{Undying Faces: A Collection of Death Masks} (1929).
\textsuperscript{23} Eric Walter White’s \textit{Walking Shadows} (1931).
\textsuperscript{24} Ralph Brewster (1935).
that book is on authors outside the expected canon. Her introduction provides the most accurate brief account of the Press’s history that is currently published. There are no essays in the edited volume that focus specifically on biography and autobiography and the suggestion she offers that the collection “aim[s] to encourage further work on the Hogarth Press and to suggest new directions in the neglected field of modernist presses” (20) is an invitation to which my thesis directly responds. Southworth’s claim about the need to dispel the myth about Bloomsbury dominance is particularly crucial since it is the Press itself that often complicates contemporary understandings of who was actually considered to be a part of the group. Confusion, for instance, about T. S. Eliot’s and Vita Sackville-West’s and others’ participation in Bloomsbury life stems in part from their involvement with the Press, which came to be seen as the public face and publishing outlet of Bloomsbury despite the fact that it was a much more diverse operation.

The most recent studies of Bloomsbury that reconnect it with its origins in a specific social and geographical context also reveal the inaccuracies of many of the assumptions that are held even about the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury, which was, after all, still the location of the Hogarth Press’s offices for most of its time as an independent business. As Blair explains, the stately larger houses in Bloomsbury were in the process of being divided up into smaller, more affordable living spaces (820), a property division that challenges common assumptions about the class positions occupied by people living in Bloomsbury in the early-twentieth century. Blair traces, through contemporary socio-geographical discussions of London, the transformation of Bloomsbury from a “well to do” but not “wealthy” neighbourhood housing mostly bankers and lawyers in the 1890s, to a community of arts professionals, “educated men’s
daughters” (820) and people involved in the burgeoning publishing industry a couple of decades later, whose means might actually be relatively slender and who included “upstart cuckoos, colonials, ethnic outsiders, other aspirants to culture” (Lock qtd in Blair 822). The Hogarth Press’s location for much of its corporate life in Bloomsbury places it in what Blair shows to be a burgeoning publishers’ hub, which housed Faber as well as the Hogarth Press, and in a neighbourhood that was, like its own list, more diverse than is commonly supposed. Even moving beyond geographical reassessment, the ethos of Bloomsbury stands for more than so-called highbrow culture. Snaith argues, in relation to Indian writer Mulk Raj Anand’s connection with Bloomsbury, that “the Hogarth Press was a key disseminator of anti-colonial thought” (104) and that the characteristics of Bloomsbury’s cosmopolitan character in its geographical life also was a “set of values whose reach extends far beyond the squares, bedsits, bookshops, and drawing rooms” (104). I argue that the “set of values” that the Woolfs promoted through the Press was characterized by dialogue and discussion, sometimes advancing their own political stances, such as anti-colonialism, and sometimes allowing counter-arguments to surface and alternative perspectives to be read.

Although the Press was a separate entity from the Bloomsbury Group, ideas about Bloomsbury nevertheless often extended to characterizations of the Hogarth Press as a private operation that published an elitist group and had little to offer to the “common reader,” even as recent interpretations such as Snaith’s and Blair’s challenge those

25 The Press moved to Bloomsbury in 1924, before which the business operated out of the Woolfs’ home, Hogarth House, in Richmond, after which the operation was named (Willis 2).
assumptions. A contemporary review in the *Manchester Guardian* of one of the Press’s most famous early publications, T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1923), for instance, suggests that the poem is “not for the ordinary reader” since “meaning […] is massed behind a smoke-screen of anthropological and literary erudition” (Powell 61), and it is this kind of erudite publication and this kind of reception for which the Press is still frequently known. While it is certainly true that the Press, like its founders, produced and applauded its share of in-jokes and difficult, experimental works, detailed study of the books it published demonstrates a much wider social engagement in print than the common perception of Woolf as a snob and of Bloomsbury as an isolated clique might imply. In order to analyze the significance of the biographical and autobiographical publications at the Press, I read all of the publications on the list. This reading more than supported the recent critical arguments for its diversity and complexity as a body of texts.

Although it occupied a culturally respectable position, the Hogarth Press was an anomaly in the publishing world rather than a representative example (although, as histories of other publishers such as Andrew Nash’s work on D. H. Lawrence’s relationship with Chatto and Nicholas Joicey’s and Rick Rylance’s work on Penguin indicate, there is really no publisher, no matter how apparently mainstream, whose

26 Here I deliberately invoke Woolf’s complicated term, the most recent detailed discussion of which can be found in Koutsantoni.

27 In addition to biographical studies of the Bloomsbury group, historical and anecdotal accounts of the Press have been written in a variety of genres and marketed to several different audiences, from Richard Kennedy’s charming illustrated trade book, *A Boy at the Hogarth Press* (1972), to collectors’ catalogues, to scholarly articles. Like Bloomsbury, the Hogarth Press as an historical subject serves as a site of intersection between popular and academic interests. While what Regina Marler, in *Bloomsbury Pie* (1997), teasingly calls the “obsession” (15) with Bloomsbury has created an enormous amount of scholarly and popular work on Virginia Woolf, the Press has, until recently, received substantially less attention than might be expected for such a saturated academic and cultural field.
practices could be interchanged with another). The Press makes an ideal case study because it is just small enough to allow for a comprehensive view of its entire list, yet it still occupies a central enough position in the cultural field of its moment to have had an important influence on the way literary modernism is now characterized and studied. The fact that the Hogarth Press is an unusual publisher with an unusual story also means that its relationship with book trade conventions was often at once more complicated and more clearly expressed than in many other cases. Decisions about genre, marketing, and positioning in the book trade were made by Leonard and Virginia Woolf, and later by John Lehmann, on a case by case basis. The fact that publishing tactics were specifically tailored to individual titles (rather than, for instance, all books in a given genre being marketed in exactly the same way) and that they were being made by writers, cultural critics, and active participants not only in the marketplace but also in the literary realm, means that these decisions often took literary and cultural debates into account. Unlike at larger commercial houses, Leonard and Virginia Woolf were involved with nearly all the publications that came through the Press. Leonard, in fact, read all of them.

The reason I examine biographies and autobiographies specifically, in addition to the “something more” that Leonard Woolf suggests some readers are getting out of “stor[ies] about real li[ves]” (22), is that examining non-fictional genres about identity foregrounds debates in modernist literary culture about representation and reception. The embracing of individuality and peculiarity in the titles of the Press’s list extends, in the context of biographies and autobiographies, to an emphasis, too, on different kinds of people and different ways of representing and narrating them. The status of biography as at once a popular genre and a culturally respectable one in the modernist period was and
is a contested subject.\textsuperscript{28} In economic terms, biography as a category\textsuperscript{29} often (including, for a time, at the Hogarth Press) made more money per title for publishers than fiction did.\textsuperscript{30} It was associated at once with respectable works of history and also with gossipy, scandalous narratives and popular memoir. Part of understanding the role of biographies and autobiographies in their many complex manifestations in shaping the Hogarth Press’s literary world of the late 1910s through the 1940s is acknowledging that market success and literary respectability were not considered to be mutually exclusive for the Woolfs. This was not a consistent opinion among other modernist thinkers and writers, but the Woolfs themselves had a special investment in works that offered compelling true stories. Contradictory statements about how good biography was, how readable, how respectable, and how saleable abound in periodicals of the period – as I will explain further in Chapter Two – which meant that in some cases the Woolfs’ investment in and ideas about the genres did not match up with their reception in the literary marketplace.\textsuperscript{31}

The question of what, exactly, people thought of biography as a category and how it was received by readers has no single answer, but it is clear from the letters from readers and responses of reviewers that expectations, particularly about the importance of fidelity to truth, weigh heavily on any work that claims to be a work of non-fiction. The various ways in which Hogarth Press authors define “truth” (some accepting that dates and facts and positivist accounts of history constitute accuracy, and others suggesting that truth

\textsuperscript{28} I expand on its conflicted reputation, particularly as this was discussed in periodicals, in Chapter Two.

\textsuperscript{29} In book trade terminology, “Biography” frequently included autobiographies and memoirs, and I discuss this conflation of labels in the following section.

\textsuperscript{30} See Appendix C for the distribution of the Press’s sales figures by genre.

\textsuperscript{31} A clear example of this mismatch between expectation and success occurs in the case of the two biography series I address in Chapter Four.
itself is more complicated, nuanced, and emotional than facts allow, and can sometimes find expression in imaginative work) creates a dialogue between books that place different and often carefully calibrated amounts of emphasis on different aspects of truth, and therefore offer no consistent definition of what non-fiction means. This complexity can be problematic in the realm of the literary marketplace and the book trade: a context in which sales figures and print run numbers and a fondness for categorization tend to render it difficult for literary texts to exist in the space between fiction and non-fiction that some of these works would most comfortably occupy. As a result, the expectations of readers and reviewers who seek guidance from the book trade in the form of genre categories can be frustrated in cases where the Hogarth Press published work in conventional non-fictional categories that took more nuanced and flexible approaches to truth. Examining the Hogarth Press’s output in the realm of biography and autobiography shows a number of strategies for engaging with contradictory perspectives and intervening in literary debates.

Taking an unusually successful small publishing enterprise that was a hub for theories and experiments in biography and autobiography in the period as my focus, I use methods informed by book history to trace several books’ developments from their initial proposals or solicitations by the Hogarth Press to their receptions by readers and critics.

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32 My approach draws on Robert Darnton’s “Communications Circuit” in “What is the History of Books?” (1985) and his later revision of the model (2007). The circuit, expressed as a diagram, traces what Darnton calls the “life cycle” (72) of a book as it moves from author to publisher to printer to shipper to bookseller to reader. In revisiting the model in 2007, Darnton is careful to point out that the diagram had not been intended to be used in an overly literal way by subsequent book historians. His revision (which is framed, pleasingly for the present study, as a scholarly autobiography) focuses on stripping book history work down to the following three broad questions: “how do books come into being?”; “how do they reach readers?” and “what do readers make of them?” (495). Taking Darnton’s revised description of book
I have drawn extensively on previously unpublished archival materials in order to uncover these relationships. The main archive I consulted is the Hogarth Press Business Archive housed at the University of Reading, but I also consulted letters and manuscripts from the Leonard Woolf Papers at the University of Sussex, The Monk’s House Papers at the University of Sussex, the Smith College Library Special Collections, and the UCLA Majl Ewing Collection of Hogarth Press Manuscripts. Additionally, the Hogarth Press books that are housed in the Virginia Woolf Collection at the E. J. Pratt Library at Victoria College in the University of Toronto have especially facilitated my focus on paratextual evidence. This body of Hogarth Press materials, which began as Mary Rowell Jackman’s private collection, contains first editions with dust jackets of nearly all of the Press’s publications. The origins of the Pratt collection in a personal library mean that unlike the Bodleian and British Library copies of the Hogarth Press books, these works have had their dust jackets preserved, which has been an invaluable resource in history methodology as a loose starting point (the spirit in which, as he points out in the 2007 article, it was intended) allows for the increased visibility and representation of people other than a book’s author in the construction and distribution of literary works. Because I introduce genre as a central area of inquiry for the study, I focus rather less on material production of physical books than on the literary and cultural implications of publishing practices. The bibliographic details of paper types and printing techniques are less relevant to the present study, so the shippers, binders, and commercial printers receive less attention here than do the cultural, economic, and intellectual exchanges that occur as a book moves from author to publisher to reader. A study of the Hogarth Press’s practices in terms of material production would certainly be possible drawing from items in the HPA. Letters to the commercial printers, paper samples, production sheets and proofs are all filed alongside the editorial correspondences, review clippings, letters from readers, typescripts, and planning documents that form the basis of my work.

33 The material I use from Smith College is available online as part of a special exhibition.

34 The collection “began when Mary Rowell Jackman presented a number of first editions of Virginia Woolf’s works and Hogarth Press publications to the Women’s Residence Library […] and has grown significantly since then” (“Introduction to the Collection” par. 3) to the extent that it now houses “more than 3000 items” (par. 1) including all of the hand-printed books and a near complete collection of the machine printed books up to 1946.
positioning the works in the literary marketplace and especially in identifying genre categorizations.

Because of the archival basis of this project, when I mention “readers,” I make a point of including non-professional readers (as distinct from contemporary reviewers) who wrote to the Hogarth Press expressing their views on the books, or who expressed these views in other publications such as the Readers’ Union *Open Forum*. I address the ways in which the Press itself marketed books to imagined or projected readerships, but I also rely wherever possible on individual actual accounts of reading experiences to give a sense of particular readers’ abilities to figure in the reception of Hogarth Press books, and to illustrate the relationship that the Press had with its actual readership. Evidence of this kind, in combination with the work of aggregated collections such as the Reading Experience Database, which focuses primarily on published accounts (including many of Virginia Woolf’s own reflections and notes on her reading), give a sense, too, of the expectations that readers had about the books they encountered and the ways in which these books did or did not match up to those expectations.  

Both kinds of reader accounts, published and unpublished, also indicate the particularity and individuality of reader queries and responses, and complicate the frequent literary critical tactic of discussing “the reader” as a generalized subject as opposed to a particular reader in a particular moment.  

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35 Letters from readers to Woolf in Chapter Six offer evidence of readers who felt confused by the presence of fictionalizing elements in supposedly “biographical” works.

36 Studies of modernist readers and reading practices, including Altick’s *The English Common Reader*, and more recently, Simon Eliot’s work on circulating libraries, Amy Blair on middle class readers in the United States, Kate Flint on women readers of the modernist period, Mary Hammond on readers, publishers, and
readers who wrote to the Press becomes clearer upon examination of the files in the HPA. The readers’ letters to the Press, and the generosity with which Leonard and Virginia Woolf and their employees consistently replied to the letters, indicate the Press’s strong interest in and advocacy for its readers’ importance in literary culture.  

By examining biographies and autobiographies as they move through the “communications circuit,” I argue for a fundamentally relational approach to the representation of identity in the literary realm. Stories about real lives are, in the context of publishing history, collaborative productions in which selves and personalities

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37 In Darnton’s “Communications Circuit,” the relationship between reader and publisher is depicted as a dotted rather than a solid line in the 1982 version, indicating the sometimes-tenuous connection between these two figures in the literary circuit of production. His focusing of the three central questions of book history in the 2007 article, which I mentioned above, on the reader seems to indicate a shift in his thinking that prioritizes readers in the subsequent model. However, the problem remains that there is seldom as much evidence about readers and their reactions as there is about other aspects of the process of book production, which are often documented in publishers’ archives. In the case of the Hogarth Press, however, the connection between particular readers and the publisher is documented in the correspondence files, so wherever possible I have drawn attention to these relationships. The significant presence of these letters in many of the files seems to indicate that this particular Press had a stronger relationship with individual readers than was usual.

38 “Relationality” is a term that has been used in a variety of specific contexts: in psychoanalytic literature (see Stephen Mitchell); in feminist criticism, particularly of women’s autobiographies, and in autobiography and biography studies more generally (see Shari Benstock, Barbara Schapiro). The exploration and representation of human experience through a subject’s relationships to things and persons outside of itself, relationality is also a central concept when its definition is broadened out from its psychoanalytical roots for book history methodology. Darnton’s “Communications Circuit” and Bourdieu’s “field of cultural production” (78) emphasize the importance of understanding relationships between aspects of production as a means of understanding texts and their contexts. I use the term in the thesis primarily in Chapter Five, which addresses Henry Green’s radical relationality, but it is a broadly important concept for understanding why and how readers, publishers, and authors construct and define one another.
are interpreted, negotiated, and refined through the processes of cultural discourse and
through participation in an economic marketplace.\(^{39}\) The evidence of this relationality in
the form of Press correspondence gives a more empirical sense of the make-up of the
cultural field. I explore the nature of specific collaborations between authors, readers,
and publishers at the Hogarth Press in the making of genre in order to examine the ways
in which dialogue and exchange in the world of books promotes new understandings,
both contemporary and historical, of representational methods.

Modernism, Biography and Autobiography, and Virginia Woolf

Biographies and autobiographies have traditionally been seen as marginal genres in the
modernist canon, but, as the Hogarth Press’s output shows, they contributed to the
eclectic and complicated ideas about the representation of subjectivity that circulated in
early-twentieth-century book culture.\(^{40}\) For biographers and autobiographers, the
question of methodology in representing human experience is central and is overtly
called into play by the genre itself. Exploring the various ways in which Hogarth Press

\(^{39}\) Approaches that consider self-presentation (autobiography in particular) in relation to publishing in
Dutch, Prussian, Spanish, Austrian, Japanese, Palestinian and French contexts are modeled in the essay
collection edited by Adrianne Baggerman, Rudolf Dekker, and Michael Mascuch: \textit{Controlling Time and
Shaping the Self}. Paul John Eakin’s theoretical article in that volume offers a particularly helpful opening
remark on the nature of relationality and collaboration in the context of publishing: “Despite our illusions
of autonomy and self-determination – “I write my story, I say who I am” – we do not invent our identities
out of whole cloth. Instead we draw on the resources of the cultures we inhabit to shape them, resources
that specify what it means to be a man, a woman, a worker, a person, in the settings where we live our
lives. It’s easy enough to posit that we draw on models of identity as we go about in the business of making
ourselves, whether in our lives or in our writing about them; it’s much more challenging, however, to
specify how this process works” (231). The case of the Hogarth Press biographies and autobiographies
adds to the ongoing scholarly dialogue regarding the relationship between constructions of personality and
cultural institutions, particularly in an English context.

\(^{40}\) As Max Saunders notes, the genres have even been seen as antithetical to the very ethos of modernism:
“A certain kind of exclusionary critic might argue that some of these novels (Lawrence’s, say) are not
‘impersonal’ enough to count as modernist. Nevertheless, the autobiographical is central to modernist
narrative, and never far from the surface even in the extended poetry of Pound or Eliot. How, then, are we
to construe modernism’s engagement with life writing?” \textit{(Self Impression 13)}
authors answered the question, as Woolf somewhat dramatically put it, “My God, how does one write a Biography?” (L VI: 225) demonstrates that genre provoked a similarly interrogative response from many authors and readers. Some readers think that facts make up a life, and some writers think that the essence, or personality, or spirit of a person is the crucial component. When those expectations clash, challenging conversations occur about what it means to be a reader, what it means to know a person, and what it means to write about the real world and declare seriously that one aims to do so. For such questions there can be no single answer, especially given the spirit of experimentation, playfulness, and energy with which Hogarth Press authors tackled the problem of subjective representation. The conventions that the biographies and autobiographies published by the Hogarth Press adopted and refashioned in the social world of the book trade negotiated an expanding publication field, a variety of readers, and a changing set of style and genre expectations. Approaching the Hogarth Press in the light of genre and book-history considerations reveals the intricacies of the lesser-known publications and re-evaluates the Press’s contribution to the cultural history of the early twentieth century as one more varied and complicated than is often acknowledged.

Virginia Woolf’s relationship to forms of biography and autobiography is not a new subject for criticism. The recent issue of Virginia Woolf Miscellany (2011) dedicated to “Woolf and Auto/biography,” and the dominance of papers on Orlando, with its biographical elements, at the 2012 Woolf conference, are testament to a persistent

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41 Hermione Lee begins her biography of Woolf with this question, offering it as a query that “haunts [Woolf’s] own biographers” (3). All the more reason, I argue, to examine the ways in which that question was answered by Woolf and her contemporaries.
interest in Woolf’s biographical and autobiographical writing. Current work is moving to consider Woolf’s less frequently studied biographies like *Roger Fry* and *Flush*, and the posthumous publication of her fragmentary memoirs (including, most recently, the autobiographical fragments gathered in Rosenbaum’s edition, *The Platform of Time*) has led to a great deal of interest in Woolf as an autobiographer, as well. Woolf’s ideas about and her interest in biography and autobiography underpin my analysis of Hogarth Press works by other writers on whom Virginia Woolf may have had an influence, and with whose ideas Woolf was also engaging as she read incoming manuscripts as an editor at the Press. My concluding chapter examines the ways in which Woolf’s own writings on and readings in these genres can be framed differently in the context of the Press and its readers. John Lehmann writes that Virginia Woolf “read and gave her opinion on all the literary manuscripts offered to the Press” (17) and the extent of the intertexuality and dialogue that resulted from her editorship has yet to be fully addressed. Several of the HPA files indicate that biographies and autobiographies were considered “literary” and that Virginia Woolf read and offered editorial advice on a great many of them, including, for instance, *Can I Help You?*.

Max Saunders notes that studies of biography and autobiography have been relatively prevalent in Woolf and Stein studies, but that attention to these genres in modernist studies as a whole has been lacking (*Self Impression* 14). Since I argue that the diversity and significance of the Hogarth Press ought to be recognized as embracing perspectives and literary practices beyond Woolf’s own, a study of biography and

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autobiography in the context of the Press’s list supports Saunders’ claim for the importance of the genre in a broader characterization of modernism. Saunders argues powerfully that

Where those modernists who inveighed against auto/biography did so in response to its prevalence and pervasiveness, so their interventions can be redescribed as contributions to the modernist discourse of auto/biography and auto/biografiction. Reading such interventions in this way makes clear the extent to which modernism is often not negating auto/biography but making it new. Thus to synthesize modernism and life-writing is to redefine modernism (14).

That Leonard Woolf himself notes the “prevalence and pervasiveness” (“The Autumn Crop” 22) of the genres in the publishers’ lists provides further evidence from the realm of the book trade that modernist writers were responding to and engaging with a significant literary trend whose centrality has been effaced in literary-historical accounts of the period. T. S. Eliot’s famous articulation of his theory of impersonality in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” may seem a counterintuitive text through which to emphasize the importance of biography and autobiography in modernist literary discourse, but Saunders takes Eliot’s focus on “impersonality” as a sign of the prevalence of personality in the context of modernism. Even Eliot’s approach to tradition is fundamentally relational, and offers a way of thinking about literary convention and history that is congenial with the approaches of many other Hogarth Press authors. Eliot emphasizes the importance of “the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors,” and suggests the conception of poetry as “a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written” (12), and in this way, one aspect of what he calls his “impersonal theory of
poetry” (12) might equally be described as a relational theory, in which poetic identity is constructed by and constructs all past and present participants in literary culture. The Hogarth Press’s practices of publishing different and ideologically opposite biographies alongside one another and of holding a long view of literary tradition acknowledge the complexity of the “living whole” (12) of Eliot’s figuration. Although Eliot is often cited as the single greatest champion of anti-biographical readings of poetry, his framework might nevertheless be fruitfully applied to biography and autobiography as forms of art. This is not to say, in Eliot’s view, all biographies or autobiographies were created equal. In Eliot’s preface to Stanislaus Joyce’s biography of his brother James Joyce, he writes that “curiosity about the private life of a public man may be of three kinds: the useful, the harmless, and the impertinent” and adds that, perplexingly, “the line between curiosity which is legitimate and that which is merely harmless, and that which is vulgarly impertinent, can never be precisely drawn” (vii). The range and diversity of biographical publications and methods that Eliot encountered mean that to take his comment on impersonality as a slight on the form as a whole is to oversimplify the genre’s role in the literary culture. Leonard Woolf’s argument for biography’s prevalence when he suggests that many readers get “the same, and something more, out of the story of real people’s lives” (22) [emphasis mine] is one I want to take seriously in order to show the importance of biography and autobiography for the Hogarth Press and for the values of ideological complexity and intellectual engagement with representations of subjectivity that it sought to promote.

    Redescribing invectives against biography in the modernist period as contributions to its discourse does allow for a re-evaluation of the status of the genre in
understandings of the period. However, unearthing the contributions of the Press to the genre also demonstrates that not all reactions to biography were negative or anti-modernist in the first place. Hogarth Press experiments in non-fictional literature indicate that ontological questioning and doubt about the very possibility of a unified self are problems that autobiographies and biographies, like fiction, tackled and attempted to express. By highlighting the ways in which the Woolfs, who believed in the value of biography and autobiography for their own time, added to the intellectual and cultural development of the forms during the period through the Hogarth Press, I assert their value in scholarly narratives of early-twentieth-century literary history.

“Naughtyboyography” and “Autobiografiction”: Naming Modernist Genres

The fact that works themselves often resided in indeterminate categories and took varying approaches to defining truth meant that a practical dilemma confronted publishers, who had to decide what to call them. The act of labeling, I argue, is also one that demands conceptual consideration. The shifting meanings of genre categories, both straightforward and playful, and the terminological debates that surrounded the publisher’s task of labeling works inform and are informed by book trade conventions that assigned set prices and formats to particular kinds of books.

It is customary in critical discussions of biography and autobiography to try to untangle what has become rather an untidy set of terms around these genres and their associated forms. For my own purposes in this study, the definitions are quite simple and remain rather broad, with the implication that a variety of narrative methods, chronologies, techniques, and approaches might be used in the works I explore in the
chapters that follow. A biography is a published account of the life of another person, and an autobiography is the published account of one’s own life. I add the stipulation that these works ought to be published because my contention is that in order for a work to have a genre in the context of the book trade, it ought to wear one on its dust jacket (or elsewhere in its paratexts), and the act of bestowing genre upon a work is one that is often, in varying degrees, carried out and reinforced by the publisher. Any approach, in this framework, to biographical or autobiographical composition might be admitted into the category of biography or autobiography, even if that method involves a certain amount of fictionalizing. The Hogarth Press biographies and autobiographies, therefore, differ from what might be described as “conventional” or “Victorian” biography in several ways. A conventional Victorian biography, broadly understood, tells the story of a person from birth to death, and the narrative usually concerns the life of a great man. This notion of conventional biography is not intended to describe mainstream practices.

43 My analysis of paratextual evidence is informed by Gerard Genette’s argument that a paratext “constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction, a privileged place of pragmatics and strategy, of an influence on the public” (2). Paratexts, as the usual first points of contact between readers and books, are particularly relevant to the study of genre designations and the ways in which these are communicated. Genette draws on Phillip Lejeune’s emphasis in his critical work on autobiography on the “fringe of the text” which “control’s one’s whole reading of the text” (45). I argue, along with Lejeune, that paratextual designations are particularly relevant to the study of works that declare themselves to be non-fictional. I combine my analysis of the various paratextual statements on Hogarth Press books with other forms of evidence in this project in order to qualify Lejeune’s statement somewhat. Paratexts may not control a reader’s whole experience of a text, but they do hold a privileged place in the study of publishing history.

44 Juliette Atkinson has recently argued that Woolf’s characterization of Victorian biography has also misled subsequent readers and critics since the practices of biography in the nineteenth century were, she argues, much more diverse than Woolf suggests in “The New Biography”: “Victorian biographers were interested in hidden lives, the lives of failures, and the lives of humble men and women. Long before the ‘new biographers’ of the 1930s and ‘micro-historians’ of the 1970s, not only did they publish lives of men and women who by all accounts were not ‘Great’, but they did so at a rate that took many critics by surprise” (3). However, Atkinson’s argument hinges upon Woolf’s description of Victorian biographies as possessing certain features: an emphasis on Great Men, conventional birth-to-death linear narration, and frequently lengthy tomes in which the biographies appeared.
in biography of any period (although Leslie Stephen’s *Dictionary of National Biography* is a good example of an institutionalized application of the principles of conventional biography in that sense), but is rather a conceptual category against which, as I will explain further in Chapter One, writers like Woolf and Strachey, and several others at the Press, sought to define themselves.

Several modernist critics cite autobiography’s relative newness as a category as a reason for aligning it with modernity – what better form to characterize a decidedly new age than one that has a short history and a promising future? Harold Nicolson, in *The Development of English Biography*, which was published by the Hogarth Press in 1927, reflects on the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition from the 1920s, “the history of the lives of individual men as a branch of literature,” and offers his own refinement: “a truthful record of an individual, composed as a work of art” (8). He explicates the definition in order to lay out his own narrative of the history of the genre and to put forward his own criteria:

This definition is convenient: it insists on three essential elements – “history,” “individual,” and “literature;” it prescribes by implication that biography must be a truthful record of an individual and composed as a work of art; it thus excludes

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45 The *OED* suggests that autobiography is a relatively young genre, having only acquired a special name in the early nineteenth century. Before a genre has a specific name that separates it from other associated works, it is still perfectly capable of existing under different guises. Biography is often described as relatively youthful as well; it is a common assumption that these genres post-date poetry and fiction somehow, as if they are later developments in a narrative of English Literature. Biography was not so new at all in the 1930s: Plutarch’s *Lives* is the famous example from classical antiquity, but there are in many earlier periods forms of writing that share the impulse of what came to be the “biographical,” which is to say, writing a story about somebody else, preferably a real person.
narratives which are unhistorical, which do not deal primarily with individuals, or which are not composed with a conscious artistic purpose (8).

Like Virginia Woolf’s frequently quoted metaphor of combining the “granite” of fact with the “rainbow” of imaginative writing, Nicolson insists here on the necessary combination of fact and fancy for a biography to be appealing to readers. The definition in the OED has changed since Nicolson’s work to something that, in my view, is actually rather odd. “Biography” as a noun is described as an act:46

The process of recording the events and circumstances of another person’s life, esp. for publication (latterly in any of various written, recorded, or visual media); the documenting of individual life histories (and, later, other forms of thematic historical narrative), considered as a genre of writing or social history (par. 1).

There are a number of notable differences between this definition, the earlier OED version and the one that Nicolson proposes. Whereas “art” is one of the three crucial elements of biography for Nicolson, in the present OED definition, it has been removed altogether. Additionally, publication has been added as a possible criterion, and forms of expression that might fall under the category have been expanded to include a variety of media. Finally, biography’s status as a “genre of writing or social history” [my italics] suggests implicitly that it might be a literary genre or it might be a species of history, but that it need not be both at once. The fact that, in this description, biography is not literature and history, but literature or history, sets aside many of the central debates

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46 A roughly similar definition, “To write about the life of a person” is included as well, though with different quotation examples, under “biography” as a rarely used transitive verb (OED par. 1).
about combining “artistry” and “truth” that modernist theorists considered crucial to defining the genre.

The term “auto/biography,” coined in the 1980s, is more academic than popular and has been used in two basic ways. The first is as a way of combining autobiography and biography into a single field of scholarly inquiry and also of shortening the lengthy and cumbersome “autobiography and biography” combination. The second is to describe a particular kind of work that seems to be a hybrid between the two genres: at once a biography of oneself and of someone else. Although I maintain the separation between the two terms in my own analysis, the question of what to do with works that combine the conventions and practices of both genres is fruitfully complicated, and perhaps even more so when the separation of the labels is maintained.

Another term used in the present scholarly field is “life writing.” This term is used as a way of allowing works like diaries, letters, informal memoirs, graphic novels, screenplays, certain kinds of ephemera, and fictionalized autobiographies and biographies to share one scholarly umbrella with biography and autobiography. For the purposes of this project, which focuses on a publisher’s categories as they relate to formal features in the works themselves, “life writing” is not my label of choice simply because it was not a term that was used by publishers in the early-twentieth-century book trade to describe works. As with auto/biography, diaries and letters, memoirs, and

47 See the journal “a/b: auto/biography studies” and Marcus for examples of this meaning.

48 See Marlene Kadar who describes it as “a flexible term: one that implicates self and other(s) in a context in which a dialectic of relationality is both acknowledged and problematized” (3). It is also used sometimes for biographies, such as Boswell’s of Johnson, that are covertly or even unintentionally autobiographical.
biographies, were considered to have distinct traditions and distinct conventions, even if the works that the Hogarth Press was publishing, for example, were playing with and muddling those distinctions all the time. When they were all grouped together, the collective term for reviewers and publishers tended to be “Biography.” As I will explain further in Chapter One, the very establishment of separate categories forces a consideration of what those categories mean and can do for readers and critics. I frequently highlight instances in which tensions between genre labels and narrative strategies, tones, or methodological approaches invite reconsideration of the nature of non-fictional representations. The disjunctions between label and work are often intellectually productive, and can reveal a great deal about what readers, writers, and publishers gain from perceiving works as belonging to a particular kind or type.

Harold Nicolson’s argument about genre labels suggests his uneasiness about the inclusion of diaries, letters, memoirs, and other autobiographical forms alongside biography, which he sees as having a distinctive history:

we must endeavour to find some formula which will place [biography] in the proper relation to such cognate modes of expression as journals, diaries, memoirs, imaginary portraits, or mere jottings of gossip and conversation (8).

Evidently this “formula” has still not been found, and Nicolson’s notion that the separation between different modes of expression is important if the genre is to be

49 Other serious terms for autobiography included “memoir” – still in use today, but used also by Woolf and by publishers in the early twentieth century – and “reminiscences,” which usually made reference to some specific aspect of a life or to a case in which the author is a friend or personal acquaintance of the subject.
discussed seriously indicates a value for biography that can be reinforced by defining it carefully in relation to other similar modes. The idea that diaries and imaginary accounts are “cognate forms” allows for formal differences to exist while acknowledging the necessarily overlapping nature of the genres. The distinction, for instance, between what Philippe Lejeune would later describe as the “autobiographical” and “autobiography” (11) has been a prevalent feature of critical discussions on this topic. Biographies and autobiographies often contain embedded letters, extracts from diaries, and conversation, which may be used as illustration or evidence. Since my own notion of genre is informed by the ways in which booksellers, printers, publishers and general readers use genre to communicate with one another, the differences between unpublished letters, privately circulated documents, and published biographies and autobiographies is one way of defining the relationship of these “cognate” forms to one another: that is, by context and function rather than purely by form.

Alongside the serious book-trade words for biography and autobiography, modernist writers also used a number of playful alternatives to the traditional terms. In a letter to Ford Madox Ford in 1933, Ezra Pound described publishers’ requests for his “naughtyboyography,” (126) – a statement that indicates both the publishers’ interest in autobiographical writing and the kind of appeal held by stories of mischievous youths and childhoods. 50 Another contemporary coinage that has received some recent critical attention is Stephen Reynolds’ use of what he called “a rather dreadful portmanteau word,” “autobiografiction,” (26) which refers to the genre somewhere between fiction

50 Brita Lindberg-Seyersted and Saunders both mention this incident.
and autobiography that, as Saunders amply and skillfully illustrates in *Self Impression*, so many well-known modernist novelists adopted and refashioned.\(^{51}\) The extent to which biographies and autobiographies could fictionalize was a frequently debated question during the modernist period, and as my chapter on Christopher Isherwood and Henry Green and the last one, on Woolf, will show, it was often safer for publishers to avoid engaging with the dilemma and to place these works in the category of fiction.

**This Thesis and What it Does**

This thesis is divided into two sections, the first of which consists of two chapters, one devoted to the practices of genre categorization at the Press and one to intellectual debates about biography and autobiography that contextualize the Press’s output in this area. This opening section establishes contexts both pragmatic and intellectual for the individual case studies that follow in the second half of the work.

My first chapter offers a quantitative and qualitative overview of Hogarth Press’s list. I offer an analysis of its relationship with a crowded book trade, its relationship with genre, and its practices of material and cultural production. It is the purpose of this first chapter and the appendices, which quantify and extensively outline that list, to acknowledge and respect unique publications at the Press. As I will explain in my first chapter, the kinds of books published by the Press were far from coherent ideologically or aesthetically. I argue throughout the thesis that contention, contradiction, and debate were actively valued by the Press, and were cultivated by a publisher’s list that sought to promote complexity and innovation by presenting many different perspectives on a given

issue, subject, or form. In this way, the Hogarth Press itself was a quintessentially modernist institution.\textsuperscript{52}

The second chapter establishes the backdrop of methodological and literary debates about biography and autobiography in reviews by and about Hogarth Press authors against which the Press’s publications can be read. Any brief historical survey of critical and theoretical approaches to a genre is inevitably selective, and in this case I have taken my project’s focus on the Press as a guiding principle. The ideas discussed in this chapter are those that most significantly underpin some of the works published by the Press, and provide the frame, in terms of the book trade and in terms of intellectual debates, in which the publications were being produced. The overview of the major concepts in modernist biography and autobiography that follows will inevitably invite mention of outliers and exceptions, and I hope that together Chapters One and Two will offer an overview of the Press’s biographical and autobiographical works that identifies some of the major intellectual stakes of the genres at the Press but also acknowledges the complexity of the Press’s list.

\textsuperscript{52} My approach to the Press and to modernism is one that emphasizes, as I believe the Woolfs did, debate and dialogue. Melba Cuddy-Keane characterizes Woolf as a writer who “promoted a dialogic rather than an authoritarian relation between writer and reader and opposed the increasing standardization or ‘massification’ of the reading public implicit in the process of mass production and distribution. Publishing through a private press and seeking a readership in part through the public library, Woolf developed an alternative pedagogy outside the educational institutions” (2). Cuddy-Keane’s emphasis in \textit{Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere} on Woolf’s dialogism and prioritization of the reader is borne out in further study of the Hogarth Press. The documents in the HPA continually reinforce the constant shifting and refining of viewpoints based on ongoing conversations, and the serious interest of the Press in advocating for the reader as an important producer of literary culture. Ursula McTaggart has recently figured the Press as Woolf’s “Outsider’s Society,” a term borrowed from \textit{Three Guineas}, in which “a multiplicity of private actions exert public influence” (63). Further examination of the specific kind of debates and dialogues about biography and autobiography, and acknowledgment of the diversity of the views represented in this respect support both readings of Woolf as an intellectual and the Press as a powerful mouthpiece for voicing alternative opinions.
Bearing in mind these developments in scholarship and criticism about biography and autobiography when approaching the later chapters will illuminate the genre dynamics of specific works. As I will demonstrate, the practices of biography and autobiography at the Press frequently combined new and old approaches. The binary of old and new, while a fundamental element of theoretical constructions from the period, rarely holds in the works themselves. Ambivalence and oscillation between constructed oppositions is a key sentiment of biographies and autobiographies – about past and present, history and art, experiment and tradition, obscurity and fame, truth and fiction. The writers about biography and autobiography discussed in Chapter Two are usually talking about broadly literary versions of the genre, though the first chapter on the Press’s whole list indicates the authentically interdisciplinary character of the publications.

The second section of the thesis offers four detailed studies. Each of these four chapters groups texts together that share publication features, offers close readings of the texts, and relates their biographical and autobiographical features to previously unpublished materials from the HPA that document their publication histories. I focus on real individual readers’ reactions to the works, on the Press’s own role in selecting, producing, and distributing works, and on the authors’ relationships with the Press, the readers, and the form. The case studies are organized roughly chronologically, with the example of Virginia Woolf’s role as an author of biographies and autobiographies acting as the closing chapter.
Chapter Three, the first case study, addresses the Russian translations, which the Press produced throughout the 1920s, and which were its first commercial publications. This chapter argues that examining the translations’ biographical methods indicates that the Press’s interest in biography began early. That Maxim Gorky’s fragmentary biography of Tolstoy and Sophia Tolstoy’s autobiography were published by the Press before many of the theoretical treatises about experimental form and before Virginia Woolf’s articulations of her feminist ideals for autobiography indicate the Press’s importance in shaping later developments in the Woolf’s thinking on the genres.

Chapter Four focuses on two short-lived biographical series produced by the Press in the 1930s, *World-Makers and World-Shakers*, a series of educational biographies for children, and *Biographies Through the Eyes of Contemporaries*, a series of collections of eye-witness accounts that present biographical subjects through fragmentary contemporary documents. This chapter explores the extensive documentation of the formation of the series and reads the publisher as a theorist. The development and articulation of the aims for the two series offer several innovative ideas about what biography could be and what it could do for intellectual and educational cultures, and indicates the Press’s institutional investment in presenting new and challenging writings.

Chapter Five explores two works that negotiated the complex relationship between autobiography and fiction, by late modernist writers Christopher Isherwood and Henry Yorke (who wrote under the pseudonym of Henry Green). This chapter argues for the importance of reticence as a rhetorical strategy and, for Green, as an authorial
posture. I argue that the Press supports and reinforces the two authors’ reticent authorial positioning by allowing the authors to choose to have their autobiographical books published as fiction, and, in the case of Green, by protecting his identity. This chapter focuses on the fundamentally relational structure that the autobiographers establish in their works. It also contextualizes them in the developments at the Press in the late 1930s and into the early 1940s, in terms of staffing, editorial policies, and responses to the restrictions of the war years.

Chapter Six turns, finally, to Virginia Woolf’s own works in the realm of biography – *Orlando* (1928), *Flush* (1933), and *Roger Fry* (1940) – and addresses the problem of seriousness and humour in the marketing of her biographical works. It explores the Press’s role as an advocate for Woolf’s interests and describes the specific ways in which its practices responded to the nature and development of each individual work and its particular requirements. By turning to letters from Virginia Woolf’s readers, the chapter analyzes the effect of marketing strategies on the reception of genre in Woolf’s biographical writings.
Part One: Writing, Debating, and Publishing Biography and Autobiography

Chapter One: Genre at the Hogarth Press

The ever-increasing number of books published under the general heading of biography admits of subdivision into a variety of types, differentiated according to the author’s aim and method […] But labels alone, with their flavour of the arbitrary, are unenlightening. By a consideration of the books placed under these headings, the typicalities of each group become more easily apparent, as do also their specific differences.

– Leonard Woolf, “Biographies and Autobiographies” (1927)

In the November 1927 Literary Supplement for the N&A, Leonard Woolf reflects on the prevalence of books under “the general heading of biography” (22) in the Publishers’ Lists for the fall season. He acknowledges the simultaneous importance of categories as a heuristic tool for understanding and managing a mass of materials, and the disadvantage of labeling as an overly definitive and prescriptive way of describing books. Woolf’s attitude toward publishers’ labels is an appropriate starting point for understanding and describing the Hogarth Press’s own list of publications and the ways in which the Press categorized and organized its books and pamphlets. Since many of the Press’s published works paradoxically both invite and defy categorization by directly engaging with genre, often in playful or challenging ways, ensuring that Hogarth Press publications appeared under the most appropriate “general heading” when they entered the book trade was a rich and complex process for the Woolfs and their employees.

Leonard Woolf’s approach to the headings of the book trade was not to dismiss them altogether but to undertake the process of categorization in order to understand patterns and broader developments in the genre. He offers an analysis of the trends in biographical and autobiographical practice by adding his own classifications to those of
the book trade: “the present list falls roughly into three groups, each one representing a
definite type. Stated in the briefest way, the first six books are objective, the next three
self-conscious, the last three egotistic” (“Biographies and Autobiographies” 250).
Woolf’s subdivision in his article of the broader category of biography in order to isolate
different literary methodologies reflects a practice that the Press also adopted. Books
appeared in the publishers’ lists and in the Press’s own advertising materials under
recognizable headings, but they frequently also bore paratextual qualifications and
refinements to the broader genre that simultaneously highlighted the works’
“typicalities” and attended to the individuality of particular titles by characterizing their
“specific differences” (250).

In order to isolate particular genres from the Press’s overall list and define my
focus on biographies and autobiographies, I begin by examining the ways in which the
publisher treated genre more broadly and by determining the various kinds of archival
and paratextual documents that can inform a reading of genre as a publisher’s domain.
The present chapter begins by considering the Press’s self-definition in relation to a
crowded book trade; describing the Press’s own categorizations of its publications as a
way of managing and communicating a diverse array of materials; and offering examples
of some of the equivocations about genre that appear in the paratextual materials of
Hogarth Press books. Supplemented by Appendix A, a comprehensive list of the
publications I consider to fall under this heading, the chapter should give a sense of what
this biographical and autobiographical slice of the Press’s output looks like and how it
relates to other publications produced by the firm.
The Hogarth Press’s overall mandate was to publish “writing of merit which the ordinary publisher refuses” (VW L 2: 242). It is a self-description that at once allows for openness to experimental and interesting writing that might not survive the pressures of a large commercial publisher but, by setting itself deliberately against the mainstream, risks appearing to dismiss the concerns of the market and therefore of a great many readers. It is perhaps this frequently reiterated aim, to do what mainstream publishers would not, that has ensured the Hogarth Press’s reputation as a small and exclusive venture. An often overlooked aspect of accepting work that “ordinary” (VW L 2: 242) publishers would not publish, however, is that there are a number of reasons beyond a book’s overly erudite or inaccessible nature for which a regular publisher might not take a book. Two of these reasons in the case of biography and autobiography are that work involving unknown biographical subjects or autobiographers are more difficult to market than are those about people who are already famous, and that works that refashion old conventions can be difficult to categorize and therefore to place with a publisher.

The phrase “writing of merit which the ordinary publisher refuses” also allows for works that present contradictory viewpoints to be published alongside one another and for the contingencies and vagaries of personal taste to play a role in defining the Press’s list. Leonard Woolf writes about taste in his autobiography in the context of his colleagues at Cambridge and their intellectual interests, but his observation is of a general kind: “Nothing is more silly than the principle, which too often fatally influences practice, that you ought to be consistent in your feelings and your likes and dislikes. Where taste is concerned there is no law of contradiction” (BA 26). The variety of works published by the Hogarth Press reflects this sense of a complex and shifting taste that
might be equally interested in two opposing viewpoints or aesthetic sensibilities.

Marcus’s description of the Press as “heterogeneous” (“Virginia Woolf” 128) is a good adjective for the Press’s output, and this word works so well as a descriptor in part because it foregrounds the role of inconsistent taste in the Woolfs’ selection practices.

The Press’s flexible mandate is also what makes the HPA a particularly rich set of historical materials. Since the Press’s selection principles were based on the respectful treatment of individual titles that might be quite unusual, decisions about genre affiliations, marketing strategies, production, and editorial interventions were debated on a case-by-case basis. The files in the archive document the complicated negotiations that frequently occurred between different people involved in the production of books, but also between what Leonard Woolf described as the “immaterial inside of a book” (DA 80) or the text, and the material, economic, and social aspects of the publishing world that form what might be called, in a reversal of Woolf’s construction, the material outside of a book. It is this intersection (as it is documented in the Press archives), between inside and outside, between textuality and the book as a publishable and marketable item, that I argue is crucial for understanding and analysing Hogarth Press works and their reception. I focus on genre in particular, but the transition from “immaterial inside” (DA 80) to material outside is one that the Woolfs were continually negotiating. Part of that negotiation, I argue, was the articulation of values and ideals for biography and autobiography as genres that held heightened interest for both Leonard and Virginia Woolf, in part because of their ambiguous status in the wider world of the book trade.
A Small Press in A Big Wide World

A recent interest in modernist studies in “networks” has emphasized the connections between important figures in the field of literary production. Identifying connections, patterns, and relations between texts and people is one way of coping with mass culture. It is a commonplace in discussions of book production in the early twentieth century to mention and frequently to lament the enormous proliferation of books that were being published. This section will explain how the Press managed its own relationship to the vastness of the book trade, and to the contemporary regulations in publishing and the pressures of the literary marketplace that resulted from this saturated cultural field. I will focus particularly on the Press’s positioning in modernist publishing structures and institutions in relation to its mandate to publish writing that the Woolfs did not believe would stand a fair chance with a mainstream Press.

The BBC radiobroadcast “Are Too Many Books Written and Published?” in which Leonard and Virginia Woolf debate the title question, Leonard taking the “yes” side and Virginia the “no,” offers two views of the complexity of addressing a crowded field. Virginia Woolf’s comments derive in this broadcast mostly from her own experiences as a recreational reader and Leonard’s come mainly from his point of view.

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53 Southworth’s edited volume brings this interest to its readers’ immediate attention with its title, and “networks” was also the theme of the 2011 Modernist Studies Association conference. An approach that attends to the connections, whether geographical, social, historical, or biographical, between literary figures, has also been employed by feminist scholars of modernism. Bonnie Kime Scott’s graph connecting female modernist writers in her introduction to Gender in Modernism is a clear example of the application of network theory to modernist studies, and the Orlando Project’s recent adoption of digital visualization tools to demonstrate the connections and degrees of separation between women writers of the period as documented in its extensive literary biographical textbase shows a rich and complex literary landscape that can be brought into clearer focus by attending to these kinds of connections.

54 Recovered, introduced and transcribed by Cuddy-Keane and published in PMLA.
as a publisher. Virginia Woolf argues that the same people write too many books, but that a great advantage to the proliferation of print is the opportunity for classes and groups of people who would not previously have been able to do so to publish their works:

As a reader, I deplore the fact that I am catered for almost wholly by professional writers. Only scholars write about Latin and Greek; only famous people write their lives or have their lives written by others […] I should offer a prize to induce people who had never written a book to write one – preferably an autobiography (241).

Here Woolf expresses her frustration with a publishing world that continues to allow mediocre professional writers to produce a book a year despite the possibility that these might not be as interesting as new books that might appear from new writers. The Press advocated for just these kinds of writers, “people who had never written a book” sometimes, but also people who, like Woolf herself, wanted to write a different kind of book than would likely be accepted by mainstream publishers. The Press advocated for just these kinds of writers, “people who had never written a book” sometimes, but also people who, like Woolf herself, wanted to write a different kind of book than would likely be accepted by mainstream publishers. That Woolf privileges autobiography here indicates, too, her particular emphasis on that genre as one that offered opportunities for diversifying the literary field.

Leonard Woolf’s view, on the other hand, as he expresses it in the debate, is that “what happened to boots has now happened to books” (239) and that mechanized book

55 Woolf’s most famous comment on the matter appears in her diary: “I can write a book, a better book, a book of my own bat, for the Press if I wish! […] I’m the only woman in England free to write what I like. The others must be thinking of series’ and editors” (D 3: 43).
production has created a “deluge” (240) of books seeking to be best-sellers rather than seeking to be books of good quality, either in their material forms or their contents. The two views, as Cuddy-Keane points out in her introduction, are deliberately polarized to suit the “conversational debate” (235) format of the BBC broadcast, but they nevertheless both represent aspects of the Press’s production and selection. The shared interest in books beyond the “best-seller” and beyond trendy popular fiction is clear in both cases. Despite the naysaying position that Leonard Woolf occupies in the debate, he also acknowledges that even if there are, in his view, too many books being produced, “nothing will prevent people from writing books” and the “hopefulness” (243) of publishers will continue to see them published.56

The particular kind of “hopefulness” (243) that characterized the Hogarth Press’s operations as a publisher made it especially optimistic in its selection and distribution of works. In addition to the explicit reach beyond the ordinary, the Press was also an operation that complicated the conventional distinctions of “highbrow,” “middlebrow,” and “lowbrow” that the institutions and structures of publishing in the early twentieth century were designed to uphold.57 One example of such a structure was The Net Book Agreement, made between the Publishers’ Association and the Associated Booksellers,

56 In his part of the debate, Leonard Woolf also alludes to the “disastrous consequences from an economic point of view” (240) of having so many books produced at once. The economic and cultural forces that shaped the book trade were of great interest to Leonard, and in his autobiography he give figures about his and Virginia’s “earnings as writers” because of the “light which they shed upon the economics of the literary profession in the 20th century” (BA 89).

57 The stratification of reading publics into “brows,” famously articulated by Q. D. Leavis in Fiction and the Reading Public, has been a subject of much debate in modernist studies. The founding of the “Middlebrow Network,” a research group undertaking a variety of recovery projects to attempt to rehabilitate these kinds of novels which are often neglected in favour of a focus on supposedly “highbrow” modernist works, is just one example of the ways in which cultural labels and stratifications have been used in scholarly discussions of the early-twentieth-century book trade.
which was created to put an end to discount bookselling wars between different retailers. The Net Book Agreement was essentially a price-fixing arrangement that ensured booksellers received books from publishers and would sell them at an agreed upon, fixed retail price depending on the kind and quality of the book. It also reinforced and reflected the stratification of book-buying practices by the public:

The Agreement can also be considered in terms of a revival of fixed-price differentials, reflected in the stratification of the reading nation into highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow publics, and in the conservative, gentlemanly amateurism of publishers and booksellers - though with a number of publishers, ranging from Macmillan to Faber and Faber, in due course, “willing to invest in the copyright of more challenging kinds of literary work” (Willison 88).\(^\text{58}\)

The Hogarth Press certainly could be counted among those publishers who took up the task of publishing “more challenging kinds of literary work” (Willison 88) that were risky sales prospects. One way of managing the demands of the marketplace while at the same time publishing essentially whatever seemed like the best work was to run the full range of production numbers, which the Press did: its smallest commercial print run was approximately 150 copies (Woolmer 28), and its largest runs for best-sellers went up to 30,000 (Woolmer 85-6).\(^\text{59}\) What the price fixing agreement also did, however, was

\(^{58}\) The Hogarth Press also challenged the common association of the publishing business with the “gentlemanly” (Willison 88) by employing female book travellers, editors, authors, and managers. Staveley’s recent article on Norah Nicholls, the hitherto forgotten marketing manager who worked at the Press in the 1930s, emphasizes the importance of “the new class of educated and professionally ambitious women” (296), many of whom had connections with the Press.

\(^{59}\) By “commercial” here I mean that 150 was the smallest run of books that was printed for sale by the Press. Their smallest actual run was 50 copies of Harold Nicolson’s “Jeanne de Hénaut” but that was a
stratify pricing along genre lines, and thereby at least appeared to reinforce distinctions not only between “the brows” but also between literary categories. The standard prices for novels and biographies, then, meant that reader expectations about these kinds of books would be driven partly by price: at 12s, biographies were generally more expensive than fiction, so the ambiguity of their status in the seemingly unstable hierarchy of genres of the modernist moment was due in part to the fact that they were simultaneously popular and expensive.

One major reason why the Hogarth Press’s practices have been described primarily with reference to its origins is that statements that may have been true of the beginning of their operations less accurately describe its later procedures. Southworth notes that 1922 was a turning point for the Press since the Woolfs considered selling their business when they began outsourcing production to commercial printers, but in the end decided to keep it (1). Throughout the period of 1917-1946, the Press kept its mandate to publish “work of merit that the ordinary publisher refuses.” It simply turned out that there was more of this kind of work, and more variety to it, than the Woolfs had originally imagined. The outsourcing of production work to commercial printers and of tasks such as reading manuscripts, commenting on drafts, and even managing day-to-day correspondence to friends, dedicated employees, servants, and Hogarth Press authors

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privately printed and specially commissioned work, which was only distributed among friends. Frequently, as in the case of Sackville-West’s The Edwardians, the Press would do a limited, special run of 150 copies sold privately to friends of the author and of the Press for 25s each, and also a trade publication that would sell for the regular 7s6d (Woolmer 86).
became part of the everyday operations of the Press, and increasingly so through the 1930s and into the 1940s.\textsuperscript{60}

However, the Press retained, well into the 1930s, some of its original practices of producing slim volumes rather exquisitely with hand-marbled covers and end papers and sometimes with books set, printed and bound by hand.\textsuperscript{61} These kinds of specialized books were easy to sell to collectors and friends in very small runs, but much less likely to generate large sales figures or to reach wider audiences. The Press, therefore, most frequently used smaller runs for poetry. The use of variable production numbers and printing techniques provided a model that allowed the Press to differentiate production based on the expected sales of a work and therefore to accommodate different sizes of audiences. Poetry did not sell much, so the added appeal of a hand-made book, and a limited run of under 300 copies, suited the genre well.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{60} In each of the HPA files on individual texts there is a folder on “production,” which includes sample pages, production costs, invoices from R&R Clark and other commercial printers that the Press employed, and corrections and emendations. These production papers indicate the specific nature of the commercial relationship between the printers and the Press itself.

\textsuperscript{61} An example of this practice from Virginia Woolf’s oeuvre is the limited run of 250 numbered, signed copies of \textit{On Being Ill}, published in 1930.

\textsuperscript{62} Aurelea Mahood offers David Eggers’ \textit{McSweeney’s} as an example of a present-day author-run Press analogous to the Hogarth Press. Mahood points out that although \textit{McSweeney’s} prices are generally higher than for other Presses, its offers of deep discounts through online sales and through various kinds and levels of subscription allow for some variation in the prices. Since \textit{McSweeney’s} exists outside a fixed-priced publishing climate, the dynamics are somewhat different than they would have been for Hogarth. Additionally, Mahood points out, the circulation of Eggers’s books habitually runs in the tens of thousands, rather than in the smaller numbers that would be expected for a small publisher. A Canadian example of a small press using a variety of types of production and offering publications that run the range from small-run poetry books to best-sellers is Coach House Press, which also combines digital and letterpress productions in ways that echo the practices of the Hogarth Press. These current examples indicate that running a range of price points and styles is a way for small, quirky institutions to survive in a crowded marketplace.
One example, beyond material production, of a shift in the Press’s operations from its beginning to its later, more commercial manifestation is the shift from subscription sales to more conventional bookselling through book travellers and sellers.\textsuperscript{63} When the Press began, it employed a two-tiered subscription system. The “A” subscribers would automatically receive all of the publications that the Press produced, and the “B” subscribers would choose the books that they wished to purchase. These subscriber lists were comprised primarily, especially at first, of the Woolfs’ friends, whom they had canvassed and who might have a special interest in the Press’s success. However, the difference between the Hogarth Press and other small operations with subscription systems is that the Press quickly abandoned the scheme because the demand far surpassed the hand-made mode of production and would have resulted in a larger list of subscribers than was practical. The Woolfs employed several different book travellers, including John Lehmann, to traffic their wares to booksellers across England. Sometimes, they also did the travelling work themselves.\textsuperscript{64}

Despite the fact that often the Press’s idiosyncratic policies did not match up with the wider conventions of the publishing business, it nevertheless had a place in the literary market and interacted with the kinds of “organized self-conscious entities” with their “various mouthpieces” (VW CE 2: 149) and professional organizations that were operating in the early twentieth century. The Press’s interest in new writers, the kind of writers for whom Virginia Woolf advocates in “Are Too Many Books Written and

\textsuperscript{63} Book travellers were intermediary employees of the Press who were sent to sell the productions of the publisher to the booksellers.

\textsuperscript{64} See VW D 3: 303.
“Published?” is documented in one of the Press’s own pamphlets. In *The Cock Robin’s Decease* (1928), the poet and editor of the “Sixpenny Poets” series published by Benn, Edward Thompson, describes the “sixpennyning” of poetry as an undervaluing of the genre by the public. The book is structured as what Thompson describes as “An Irregular Inquest” (a characteristically inventive genre description) in which he enacts a trial to condemn the murderer of poetry in contemporary society. He acquits poets, publishers, and the public, and ends up condemning reviewers and their editors. He explains that “poetry cannot expect, nor do poets as a rule worry at not getting, the sales of novels and the more exciting kind of memoirs” (22) and suggests that the problem remains that new poets have very few publishers to choose from who will accept work by unknown writers. Thompson mentions the Hogarth Press as a “partial exception” (11) to the rule that new poets will not be published by established publishing houses, and while it might be that the writer is praising the publisher of his own volume in a biased way, the Press’s list supports his notion that new poets were welcome. Thompson’s sense that “it is a matter of notorious truth that publishers are grossly commercial in outlook, and blind to all excellence except of the marketable sort. No one will expect me, an author, to stand up for them” (14) indicates that part of the value of the Hogarth Press was that it was perceived to be exceptional in advocating “freedom and freshness of thinking” (14).

The difference that Thompson highlights between the small audience for poetry and the greater interest in fiction and “the more exciting kind of memoir” indicates that print run numbers and retail prices were often, pragmatically, assigned along genre lines.

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65 Thompson was also the author of an important Hogarth Press publication on India, entitled *The Other Side of the Medal* (1925).
While the Press aimed to publish work that would question and complicate genre distinctions, it also adhered, at least on the surface, to expected categories and recognized their importance to the book trade.

**Categories and Subjects**

Like most publishers, the Hogarth Press supplemented its advertisements in weekly periodicals and its notices of new books in the jackets of their other publications with catalogues. The “Complete Catalogue of Publications arranged under Subjects to the Summer of 1939,” introduces the idea of categorization or grouping by subject as a way of communicating the Press’s list to the public. The document is a rather lavish one by the standards of Hogarth Press advertisements. Vanessa Bell designed the cover.

**Figure 1: 1939 Complete Catalogue**

While a number of circulars and seasonal announcements were produced by the Press, including categorized catalogues in 1934, 1936, and 1939, I take the fullest one, the 1939 version, as my example here. In contrast with the catalogue’s method of grouping books
by subject, other publicity materials would often equivocate about genre, as I will explain further in the case studies, providing sufficient descriptive detail to allow a book to be assessed based on the descriptions rather than from a clear affiliation with a particular kind or type.

While the 1939 catalogue itself groups by “subject,” the headings sometimes relate to form and sometimes to content, and could, in most cases, be more accurately described as genre distinctions. “Fiction,” and “Poetry and Drama” for instance, are not quite “subjects” in the way that, for instance, “Medicine” is, and many of the categories conflate subject matter and form (“Poetry and Drama” is a list of books of poems and plays, rather than books about poetry, which fall under “Literature and Criticism”). The category on which I focus, “Biography, Memoir, Etc.” is one of the most open-ended, with its “Etc.” to catch all the strays that may or may not be traditionally associated with the heading. The fuzziness of categories is perhaps deliberate, and the divisions are by no means absolute. Even the catalogue, with its appearance of definitiveness, is indeterminate and complex. Some works appear in more than one category, and the aim appears to be to introduce readers to the books in which they might be interested, rather than to pin down the specific group to which a work must belong. Genre here is a tool for the Press and is being used in a pragmatic way for both commercial and social purposes (in order to sell books and in order to create intellectual interest in them). It is also being used as shorthand for the longer descriptions in advertisements for the books.

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66 S. Eliot notes that one of the difficulties of working with Circulating Library catalogues is that the books are often listed twice: once under author and once under title, so all counts need to be halved. No such systematic doubling is present in this catalogue, but the problem of doubled entries is certainly shared.
and on the dust jackets. For instance, Lyn Irvine’s *Ten Letter Writers* (1932) which appeared in the catalogue under “Biography, Memoir, Etc.,” has the following genre-defying dust jacket description:

This study of three French and seven English letter-writers begins with Dorothy Osborne and Madame de Sévigné and ends with Mrs. Carlyle. But rather than a collection of biographical and critical sketches it is a discussion of self-expression and character through three centuries, dealing with such matters as feminine talent, the changes in sense of humour, and the contrast between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth.\(^\text{67}\)

The reluctance to describe this book as “biographical” or “critical” as opposed to one concerned with “self-expression and character” points to an emphasis on the human values that are at stake in the book rather than the external categorization or formal descriptions that might be placed on them. In her introduction, Irvine explains that letters are subject to the repetitiveness and “the disproportions of life itself” (6) and warns that “we must not expect to be amused all the time” (7) when “we read of Mrs. Carlyle’s headaches and Mme du Deffand’s sleeplessness and Lord Byron’s perpetual need of tooth-powder and Cowper’s gratitude for fish” (6). Irvine’s reflections on the value of letters as non-selected, potentially tediously large sheaves of trivial observations and

\(^{67}\) Rosenbaum asks the question of who wrote the dust jacket blurbs for the Hogarth Press (“Leonard and Virginia Woolf” 6). While my suspicion is that in this, as in other things, the Press’s practices likely changed over the years, the usual practice by the 1930s, according to the Hogarth Press Business Archives, was for the Press Secretary, or, in the case of personal acquaintance, Leonard or Virginia Woolf, to contact the author and ask him or her to provide the blurb as well as the biographical material about the author that should appear alongside the book. Sometimes these were edited and occasionally rather drastically rewritten by John Lehmann or Leonard Woolf and sometimes authors did not provide the requested blurb. Authorship of dust jacket blurbs is a sticky subject, but this is my best guess based on the records.
alignment of letters with “life itself” (6) appeals to immediacy and biographical significance. *Ten Letter-Writers* seems to nest the art of the epistle within a biographical, historical, and critical frame, allowing each of these genres to be in dialogue with the others, all in the service of “self-expression and character” (6).

Despite some resistance to genre categories as overdetermined labels, to be able to convince readers that books are worthwhile, publishers need to know what kinds of things they are selling, and making sense of a complicated, expansive mass of books necessarily involves categorization, selection, and description of these categories. It is notable that even in the case of *Ten Letter-Writers* the categories of “criticism” and “biography” are invoked, if only to suggest that the book does something more. The idea of judging books primarily on individual “merit” and reading variously was a value that both the Woolfs frequently expressed, but not all readers are like the Woolfs, and the tendency of publishers to rely on genre as a key aspect of marketing is testament to this fact.68

The quantitative results I offer here and in the Appendices derive from my examination of 522 titles in the Virginia Woolf Collection in the E. J. Pratt Library at Victoria University in the University of Toronto and from the 1939 catalogue. The first figure describes the distribution of the Press’s books by “subject” according to their own catalogue, discussed above. There are limits to the reliability of the Press catalogue as a

68 Penguin’s practice of colour coding its paperbacks of the 1930s along genre lines (dark blue for biography, orange for fiction, green for crime novels, yellow for travel, and so on) is perhaps the most overt example of genre classification as a marketing strategy for attracting readers to groups of books rather than to individual titles.
quantitative resource, since there are obvious errors and omissions (Ruth Manning-
Sanders’s poem *Martha-Wish-You-Ill*, for instance, appears in the catalogue as *Martha-
Wish-You-Well*). Such vague headings as “General” allow for a small number of books to
remain entirely uncategorized. The Press also only categorizes those books that were in
print, though it does list the “Out of Print” publications in the front and back matters.

![Figure 2: List of Books Out of Print from the 1939 Catalogue](image-url)
Figure 3: Distribution of Titles in the 1939 Catalogue

The chart above gives a rough idea of the distribution of the catalogue but, because of the “Out of Print” titles and the overlap of genres, this does not mean it gives a full account of the output of the Press. Some of the books, for example, appear in more than one category, which renders the total number represented in the chart above (and in the catalogue from which the number is derived) higher than the total number of separate titles that the Press actually published. This disjunction is an interesting one, since the chart above represents the works as they were being advertised in 1939, and this does not directly correspond with the Press’s complete output. That marketing practices made the Press appear as though it published more titles than it did indicates that the categories could be used to the Press’s advantage in some perhaps unexpected ways, including as a method for suggesting a greater number of works than was actually available.
In my own analysis of the Press’s publications, I found that accounting for the seven years that the Press was in business after the 1939 catalogue’s publication, for a few inexplicably missing titles, and also for the Out of Print titles, 63 were published in the areas of Biography, Autobiography and “Etc.” (which I took to mean, primarily, the six books of Letters and Diaries), as opposed to the 31 listed in the catalogue.\(^6^9\)

\[\text{Figure 4: } "\text{Biographies, Memoirs, Etc.}" (1939 catalogue)\]

In Appendices A and B, I offer full comparative lists of those titles that appeared in the catalogue and those that I have identified as belonging to this category. I find that the Biography, Autobiography section was actually more prominent than in the

\(^6^9\) See Appendix A for a detailed comparative list of the titles I have included. I indicate in this table those titles that were included in the Catalogue and the headings under which they appeared. Willis, in his categorized chart of the number of publications in each genre by year, maintains the catalogue’s divisions and offers 31 as the total number for biography and autobiography (403).
catalogue, accounting for closer to 12% of the Press’s total output rather than 8%. While this is still a fairly small proportion, the diversity of books that the Press published means that even the biggest category (Politics, Economics, History, and Sociology, at 22%) comprises less than a quarter of the Press’s total output on its own. Far from being a list dominated by a single category, the variety of the Press’s output is apparent from the distribution of the texts across genres. Specializations in Fiction, Literature and Criticism, Politics, and Poetry are apparent from the chart above, with Biographies, Psycho-Analytical texts, and Translations of Foreign Classics emerging as prominent categories as well, but none of these single groups emerges as the dominant focus of the Press.

Any quantitative analysis based on subjective categorization is inevitably contingent, particularly, Leonard Woolf himself observed, given the insufficiency of categorization as a means of understanding texts. I provide these details not to suggest that they be read as definitive explanations of the distribution of the Press but as an attempt to show more concretely how diverse and varied the output actually was. Quantitative results in studies of categorization or grouping can give an appearance of authority that may be misleading when representing subjective categories, but, the contingency and fluidity with which genre was treated at the Press underpin the results above. It is for this reason that I include graphic representation of the Press’s output as

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70 I am deliberately more tentative in my conclusions than Franco Moretti, whose Graphs, Maps, Trees is a pioneering study for the use of numerical analyses in the humanities that nevertheless, I argue, treats subjective categories as pieces of numerical data in insufficiently qualified ways. Particularly, in his discussion of a genre graph, his qualifications are not about what makes the categories viable in the first place, but rather about those genres that he chooses to omit (31). Since the purpose of the present study is
it is represented in the catalogue, and supplement it with my own lists and genre
designations in Appendix A. Since, as I have argued, categorization is often fraught and
subjective, and is a way of ordering and making sense of literary texts for the purposes of
reaching audiences, I could easily have grouped the books differently and it is quite
possible that other readers might have different ideas about where individual texts
belong. My purpose here, then, was to give a general sense of the greater significance of
Biography and Autobiography to the Press than it even acknowledged in its own
publicity materials, but also to show the way in which the Press organized works, and to
show the great number of kinds of work that the Press published. My second chapter, on
the theoretical implications of these genres, will explain some of the reasons why genre
ends up being a complicated way of grouping texts, despite its practical necessity. While
here I show the Press using genre as a tool for organizing its catalogue, I do so with the
awareness that there are biographical and autobiographical elements in other categories
as well, and that prefatory lives, author biographies, and later biographical accounts that
consider the Press are all important in shaping the discourse around these genres in the
context of publishing history.

Where quantitative data are more reliable and are frequently used in book-history
studies is in describing the economics of the book trade in the form of analyses of print
run numbers, sales figures, and retail prices. Appendix B offers these figures for the
biographical and autobiographical publications at the Press. Given the effect that pricing
to interrogate the very idea of categorization, it would seem overly simplistic to assign categories in just
the arbitrary way that the Press itself questioned.
could have on a book’s placement in book stores, its readership, and its categorization in the publishers’ lists, selecting a work’s list price strategically could affect the way in which its genre was received in the marketplace. As my Appendices show, broadly biographical and autobiographical works were published by the Press at a variety of price points and using a variety of different modes of production, and this flexibility of practice within a single genre demonstrates the way in which the Press was negotiating and refining categorical affiliations.
Chapter Two: Debates about Biography and Autobiography

Different ages seem to have different literary forms which peculiarly suit or appeal to them. In 1600 the writer almost inevitably wrote a play, in 1800 a poem, in 1900 a novel. At the present moment it looks as if we are passing from the age of the novel into the age of the biography. One sign is the enormous number of biographies that are being written, another is the fact that critics are beginning to write about the history and art of biography instead of about the history and art of the novel.

– Leonard Woolf “The Science and Art of Biography” (1929)

In declaring that in the late 1920s literary culture was “passing from the age of the novel into the age of biography” (882), Leonard Woolf reiterated an argument made frequently around the same time by reviewers and critics. Ford Madox Ford, for instance, wrote in *The English Novel* (1929) of “the present vogue of what I will call novelized biography” (qtd in Saunders 455) and Lord David Cecil argued for the special importance of biography for literary studies because “it is the only new genre” (5), by which he meant that for the first time, in the modernist period, biography came to be treated specifically as literature, rather than as a branch of history. Autobiographies were similarly poised to take on the spirit of the age, according to Woolf, who remarked on the popularity of both genres on several occasions in his weekly “World of Books” columns in the *N&A* between 1923 and 1929. That Woolf bases his argument on the two-fold observation that the genre is both being produced in increasing number, and also being increasingly theorized in critical discourse suggests a characterization of the genre as at once broadly appealing and culturally respectable. Chapter One nods at the first aspect of Woolf’s

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71 This is an easily contested view with reference to the place of eighteenth-century biographies in literary culture. The lineage that Saunders has traced from Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits* through to the New Biography indicates, too, that the late Victorian influence on fictional experimentation in autobiography was substantial, but I quote Cecil here as an indication that the modernists themselves considered the biographical writings of their moment to be innovative, and to be newly included under the heading of “literature” rather than as evidence for any such argument of my own.
claim, the “enormous number” (882) of biographies and autobiographies, and argues for an expansion of the scope of studies of biographies and autobiographies to explore the less frequently studied but no less delightful books buried in publishers lists. In this chapter, it is Woolf’s second observation that “critics are beginning to write about the history and art of biography instead of about the history and art of the novel” (882) that I wish to address in order to identify some of the major features of biographical and autobiographical theory contemporary with Hogarth Press publications and to explain how Hogarth Press publications actually contributed to the proliferation of writing about “the history and art of biography” (882).

What, then, did biography and autobiography mean to Hogarth Press authors? How were the genres characterized in literary and cultural debates of the period, and how did these conversations manifest themselves in the works produced by the Hogarth Press? I acknowledge real-world networks and connections, and I focus here on the theorists and critics who have some meaningful historical connection to the Press and its intellectual context in the world of literary modernism. Although the rest of the thesis deals with works that were actually published by the Press, this chapter’s frame of

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72 Nicolson offers the figure that upwards of 500 biographies were published annually in England between 1900 and 1915, and it is safe to assume that this number increased into the 1930s (The Development of English Biography 156).

73 While the scope of this project is focused on this particular Press, my work on the subject of the Hogarth biographies and autobiographies has led me to the strong sense that there is immensely valuable future work to be done on the broader status of biography as a genre in the early twentieth century, particularly in relation to publishing history. The excellent work that is presently being done on the production of distribution of the novel during the period (by, for instance, Hammond, Wilson, Nash and others) could and ought to be augmented by further examination of biography and its role in constructing the book world. Not only would such an exploration doubtless uncover all sorts previously unknown material in the publisher’s archives, it would also likely illuminate and complicate the present understanding of such questions as cultural hierarchy, the labeling of works in the period, and the relationships that might be traced between and within genres.
reference is somewhat expanded to include Lytton Strachey because of his importance in modernist debates about biography.

Some evidence to support Woolf’s claim for the prevalence not only of biographies themselves but also of critical reflections on biography appears in the intellectual weekly review periodicals. Remarks, both enthusiastic and derisive, about the ubiquity of biographies and autobiographies abound in Leonard Woolf’s weekly “World of Books” columns. The rise of biography as a popular genre through the twentieth century indicates that Woolf was right to suggest that the directly personal forms of literature would come to have increasing importance as time went on.\textsuperscript{74} The prominence of biographies and autobiographies in the advertisements and reviews of the \textit{N&\textsc{a}} is striking and seems to support his claim for the great many books that were being published, by a diverse range of publishers, in these genres and that these were occasioning lively critical responses. Indeed, by Dickens’s count, the number of words devoted to reviewing “Biographies, Memoirs, Letters” in the October 1926 issues of the \textit{N&\textsc{a}} was greater than to any other genre, and the number of publications reviewed was second only to fiction (54).\textsuperscript{75} The same is true, according to Dickens, of the October 1926 issues of the \textit{TLS}, a publication for which Leonard and Virginia Woolf both wrote

\textsuperscript{74} Although other historical narratives, including Altick’s \textit{Lives and Letters}, suggest that biography was superseded by novels in the late nineteenth century as a popular form, I argue that the surge of biographies and autobiographies leading up to and coming out of the second world war indicate that the heyday was only just beginning with such figures as Gosse and Strachey, and continued to gain ground throughout the modernist period.

\textsuperscript{75} Dickens suggests the relevance of the intellectual weeklies in assessing the state of the book trade during the modernist period and notes particularly that “Biography figured prominently in the intellectual weeklies, a fact that has implications for studies of biography during this period” (“Bringing Books to the Public” 228). She also drew my attention to the “World of Books” columns that surveyed the annual publishing lists for Fall and Spring between 1923 and 1929. She selects Fall of 1926 for her figures for comparative study across intellectual weeklies.
reviews, but one that lacked the direct influence of Leonard Woolf’s editorship (55). These figures indicate that in the intellectual review periodicals, biographies and autobiographies were not only being advertised and reviewed in great numbers, they were also taking up more word space than any other genre in the periodicals for which Dickens offers figures. Although the advertisements in the review periodicals support Leonard Woolf’s claims for the significant presence of biography and autobiography on the literary scene (and his claims were most likely to have been based on the evidence he saw himself in the same periodicals), what is perhaps more important for the study of the Hogarth Press than “the flood of biographies” (Woolf “Who Goes Home?” 299) during the period is Leonard Woolf’s own sense that they were desirable, important, and viable genres.

In examining contemporary critical discourse about the development of biography and autobiography, it is possible to go some way to explaining why, in some cases, the Press published the books they did, and to indicate what Hogarth Press authors thought was specifically modern about the kinds of biographies and autobiographies they were writing and publishing. I argue in this chapter not that modernist biographies and autobiographies were using entirely different methods from their literary predecessors, but rather that the critical discourse around biographies and autobiographies emphasized iconoclasm, newness, and experiment. Writers and critics characterized these genres as

76 To describe biography of the period as “modern” is not an anachronism. Many critics refer both dismissively and favourably to the features and trends of “modern” biography as a distinct species of writing, even sometimes contrasting the kinds of works produced by writers like Strachey and Nicolson from things like the prefatory lives, two-volume Victorian commemorative books and biographical dictionaries that were still being published during the period.
opportunities for a number of different kinds of literary and intellectual exploration. The perception of modernity and newness in biographical practice – especially of a view like Leonard Woolf’s which aligns the genres with the spirit of his own age – is particularly relevant to the selections and priorities of the Hogarth Press. It was a publisher that explicitly aimed to produce innovative works that challenged existing literary practices and introduced discussion about the nature of intellectual culture.

The task of defining and characterizing modernist biography and autobiography is, like the task of assembling unifying features of any corpus that involves a great number of very different books, a difficult and even counterintuitive one. Not only does the diversity and volume of publications in the genres render it misleading to offer a too-sweeping characterization of the categories, but the very idea of a modernist biography or autobiography offers some possible contradictions. Modernist fictional narratives often sought to present alternative temporal frameworks and to focus on moments of significance rather than on developmental chronology. Since biography is often understood, drawing on the definitions of conventional Victorian biography I mentioned in my Introduction, as the story of the life of an individual told from birth to death, there is some question of how this genre could hope to keep up with shifts in thinking about the nature of human experience as transient and ephemeral. What especially interests me here is not so much the fundamental nature or definition of biography and autobiography as genres, or the essence of personality or character that might be conveyed by these genres, but the attempts to explore the discursive and rhetorical possibilities that they offered. I examine works that extend the critical focus on Virginia Woolf’s “The New Biography” to include Leonard Woolf and Harold Nicolson’s views on the state of the
genre. All three critics confirm the hypothesis that perhaps the single most common statement about biography during the period is that it was undergoing development and was open to “new” and “modern” methods.

This chapter is divided into three sections, each of which addresses an important aspect of the contemporary debates about the genre. The first section will examine Virginia Woolf’s two frequently-cited essays “The Art of Biography” and “The New Biography” to answer the question of what, exactly, was considered to be “new” about “The New Biography.” I will position Woolf’s essays in the context of writers from whose works she drew her arguments, Harold Nicolson and Lytton Strachey, as well as in the context of the Press’s publications in the fields of biography and autobiography. The second section will return to this chapter’s opening example, reading Leonard Woolf as a theorist of biography by examining his comments on the genre in his weekly review essays in the N&A and arguing for his inclusion as an additional voice in the theoretical and historical construction and characterization of the genre during the period. The final section focuses on Harold Nicolson’s *The Development of English Biography*, which was published by the Press, and which is one of the fullest articulations of the status of biography in the period. This last section indicates the ways in which the Press itself was encouraging cultural debates about these genres not only by publishing biographies and autobiographies, but also by publishing treatises that theorize and historicize them.

What Was New About “The New Biography”? Woolf’s phrase “The New Biography” has now become a kind of shorthand for modernist and specifically Bloomsbury biography. Most of the critical works on
biographical and autobiographical writing in the modernist period have both used this phrase and quoted the essay itself. This section will explore the views of Woolf, Harold Nicolson, and Lytton Strachey and identify the features of their theories and practices that came to define “The New Biography.” Analogous to essays such as “Modern Fiction” and “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” in the fictional realm, “The New Biography” (1927) has become, along with Woolf’s later essay, “The Art of Biography” (1939), among the most frequently quoted articulations of modernist literary aims and definitions of genre. These two pieces offer slightly different perspectives from one another on the state and nature of biography and on the progression of the genre over the decade between the late 1920s and late 1930s. Written twelve years apart and both published initially as book reviews, the first is a review of Harold Nicolson’s Some People and the second is a posthumous retrospective analysing Lytton Strachey’s literary career. One essay belongs to the Woolf of Orlando, the other, to the Woolf of Roger Fry.

The essays were, like the overtly iconoclastic works they describe, part of modernism’s rhetoric of the new, and they both emphasize the kinds of accomplishment that could be expected from modernist biographers that had not been achieved by their Victorian predecessors. In her 1923 novel, Told By An Idiot, Rose Macaulay offered a tongue-in-cheek description of all the newness that seemed to characterize early twentieth-century labels: “What with the New Humour, and the New Earnestness, and

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77 “Of all modernist engagements with life-writing, Virginia Woolf’s is the most visible, and her work represents the most sustained and diverse exploration of the relation between fiction and auto/biography” (Saunders 438).

78 Simon Joyce argues that the Bloomsbury group damaged the reputation of Victorian biographers by distinguishing themselves too starkly from their predecessors by overstating the aesthetic differences between one generation and the next.
the New Writers, and the New Remorse, and the New Woman, and the New Drama, and
the New Journalism, and the New Child, and the New Parent, and the New Conversation,
and the telephone, and the gramophone, and the new enormous sleeves, there was a great
deal of novelty about” (qtd in DiBattista 6-7). Perhaps it was inevitable, in this kind of
environment, that biography would eventually be described as “new” as well, and it was
Woolf’s essay that made the declaration. Like her famous claim in “Mr. Bennett and
Mrs. Brown” that “On or about December 1910, the human character changed,” (343)
Woolf’s statement in “The New Biography” that at the turn of the twentieth century, “a
change came over biography, as it came over fiction and poetry,” (231) and in “The Art
of Biography” that “towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was a change […]
widows became broader-minded, the public keener-sighted; the effigy no longer carried
conviction or satisfied curiosity” (CE 4: 222). The attempt to rehabilitate a possibly
dead genre about dead people contained in enormous tomb-like books seems to require a
polemical approach, and the strength of the arguments is understandable when Woolf’s
sense of the vitality, excitement, and difficulty of the genre is as palpable here as it is
elsewhere in her works. It should not be forgotten, however, that a great part of Woolf’s
own pleasure in biographies and autobiographies came from highly traditional accounts
of past lives and from the pleasures of vicarious living that were to be found in them.
Woolf notes that the question with which she opens “The Art of Biography” – “is

79 Saunders argues that even Woolf’s statement in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” can be taken as a
comment on biography as much as on fiction, particularly with reference to the key word “personality”
which she often figures as the holy grail of both biography and fiction (438).

80 Woolf’s comments about the enjoyment of reading biographies and autobiographies are numerous in her
works, and find clear expression in “The Lives of the Obscure” (CE 4: 120-129) and “A Talk about
Memoirs” (CE 4: 216) among several other instances in her private diaries and letters.
biography an art?” – seems “ungenerous certainly, given the keen pleasure that biographers have given us” (CE 4: 221). Not all Bloomsbury biography or autobiography was “new” in Woolf’s sense, and the modernists’ denigration of more traditional biography has, I think, often been overstated. Whether an enjoyable reading experience came from Strachey or from the memoir of Lady Georgiana Peel was, perhaps, not as important to Woolf as it might initially seem to be if her polemical, term-coining essay is taken as the last word.

Read together, “The New Biography” and “The Art of Biography” do propose several clear departures from Victorian methods, as Woolf figures them. “The New Biography” introduces what she describes as “the whole problem of biography as it presents itself to us today. On the one hand there is truth; on the other there is personality” (CE 4: 229). This somewhat surprising dichotomy – “personality” as an opposite to truth, rather than the more predictable opposition of “fiction” – indicates that there is something ineffably real and charismatic about biography that might go beyond what fiction can offer, and also beyond the realm of fact. The opposition, however, invokes the important question of what the dividing line is between fiction and biography in terms of representational methodology. If “personality” might be found in both fiction

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81 Critics have taken varying positions on Woolf’s theories of biography and autobiography, and the boldness of her claims and the directness with which she addresses the definition of modernist biography have led scholars to use these two essays both as starting points for studies of the genre during the period and also as springboards for attacks on Bloomsbury methods. Many scholars point to a lack of sophistication in Woolf’s articulation of the genres. Ray Monk, for example, has argued that Woolf’s ideas about biography read almost indistinguishably from her views on fiction. This is a perspective with which I strongly disagree, since Woolf clearly identified specific difficulties and delights involved in the writing and reading of biography and her treatment of that genre as a distinct category is evident in many of her private and public writings. Elena Gualtieri’s reading of these two essays, which, while still critical of what she sees as Woolf’s overly dichotomized division between “truth” and “personality,” makes a strong case for the kinds of problems that Woolf saw as specific to biography and for her treatment of non-fictional stories as distinct entities.
and biography, might the two genres not share certain representational and aesthetic tools? Virginia Woolf, like Leonard, was a believer in the validity of the contractual nature of non-fiction, in which a reader agrees to trust that he or she is being introduced into either a real world or a fictional one.\textsuperscript{82} The divide might be reformulated, for Woolf, as a separation between biographies, which contain truths that are verifiable by other people, and fictions, which contain truths answerable only to the artist him or herself. Woolf’s distinction between fact and fiction and her seemingly traditional adherence in her critical writings to the conventions of the genres seems to relate oddly to her own often hybrid experiments combining the conventions of biography and its external references with the imaginative work of fiction.\textsuperscript{83} “Personality,” however, becomes the value that can characterize both successful fiction and successful biography. I would argue that for Woolf one of the bridges between fact and fiction comes in the form of parody. The conventions of biography, with all of their contractual elements, formal features, and habits of voice find their place in fiction when they are framed as rhetorical strategies and devices brought to bear on an imaginative landscape.

What Woolf proposes as the two crucial elements of the genre, more evocatively figured later in the essay as the “granite-like solidity” of fact and the “rainbow-like intangibility” (\textit{CE} 4: 229) of personality, are decidedly at odds with one another; they are “antagonistic” (\textit{CE} 4: 234). This opposition, in part, I think, because of the vivid

\textsuperscript{82} Leonard Woolf had a slightly less succinct articulation of the view that is now most often associated with Lejeune’s “autobiographical contract” (11). In “The Science and Art of Biography,” he wrote that in every case “the biographer says to his reader: ‘The central figure of this book was a real man (or woman). I am going to give you the facts about his life. I am going to recreate him and his life for you; to show you the tragedy and comedy of what he did, thought, felt’” (882).

\textsuperscript{83} I address Woolf’s own hybrid practices in detail in Chapter Six.
metaphor, has become synonymous with Woolf’s own approach to the biographer’s craft. It is, however, an association that deserves to be questioned, considering the extent to which Woolf’s own biographical works play with the boundaries between fact and fiction all the time. They are invoking what she describes as the two “dangerous elements” that Nicolson also employed, and she is constantly putting herself in the precarious writerly situations in which “an incautious movement” could cause genre combustion, the book “blown sky high” (CE 4: 233). So how is it possible to reconcile the hyperbolic and metaphorized antithesis that Woolf poses between the intangible aspects of personality and the concrete elements of fact, and her own approach which consistently employs fictional narrative strategies in biography and biographical techniques in fiction? One way of approaching the “granite” and “rainbow,” and the colourful, dangerous explosions promised by combinations of fact and fiction in “The New Biography” is to treat the starkness of the binary as an aspect of Woolf’s rhetorical strategy as an essayist. Whatever may be implied by Nicolson’s method of combining fact and fiction in Some People, in Woolf’s figuration, there is no danger of boredom. For Woolf, biographies offer explosions, liberations, dangerous experiments; they offer bright, fanciful possibilities and latent discoveries. Biography can be slight and fleeting and irreverent; it can find expression in a single gesture or in a tone of voice. In Woolf’s richly metaphorical language, the “new” biography, though in her eyes it is a form that is still developing and has yet to be mastered by a living writer, offers just the kinds of exciting possibilities that were available to modernist artists working in other media and other genres. All this emphasis on the dramatic rhetorical gestures of “The New Biography” essay, however, ought to be read in light of what Woolf says of a more
conventional biography, namely that it could be “perfectly satisfactory of its kind” (*CE* 4: 230) but fail to answer the demands of the perceived newness of modernist narrative.\(^{84}\) Alongside Woolf’s praise of Boswell in the essay, whom she describes as “one of those curious men of genius who seem able to break up the stiffness into which the company has fallen by speaking in his natural voice” (230), a more qualified image of past biographies emerges even in an essay that seeks largely to distinguish between past and present.\(^{85}\) Although Woolf uses rhetorical flourishes to argue for the excitement of the new form, she still appreciates older works in the genre. Her understanding of Victorian conventions renders the various possibilities offered by “The New Biography” an alternative to, but not necessarily a replacement for, what Woolf sees as more traditional methods which can, despite their failings, have their own kind of “genius” (230).

A related question that might be asked about “The New Biography,” in addition to asking what was new about it, is the question of just how new “The New Biography” actually was. Part of Woolf’s rhetoric deliberately distances modernist aims from those of the Victorian biographers, whose “parti-coloured, hybrid, monstrous birth[s]” (*CE* 4: 226) were often guilty, in Woolf’s figuration, of suppressing the very “liberties” by which “The New Biography” defined itself. Gualtieri points out, however, that Woolf’s

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\(^{84}\) Here Woolf refers specifically to the works of Izaak Walton and Mrs. Hutchinson as well as to the general phenomenon of “that unknown writer who is often so surprisingly eloquent on tombstones and memorial tablets” (*CE* 4: 230), a remark that shows that although her rhetoric denounces earlier practices, she still recognizes from her own reading the features that Atkinson points out are discernable in obscure biographies and biographical practices of the Victorian period.

\(^{85}\) Many of the features that Woolf offers as examples of the “new” biography are actually features that Altick describes as aspects of Boswell’s style, for instance: “It was the essential person, not external events, that was the true subject matter of biography…Frankness demanded not only the inclusion of many presumably ‘insignificant’ details; it required as well a fearless account of the subject’s weaknesses and vices” (48-49).
very starting point for her arguments in “The New Biography” is a quote from Sidney Lee who defines the genre as the “truthful transmission of personality” (qtd in Gualtieri 551). There is therefore a link between Victorian practices and Woolf’s own understanding of and definition of the form, even if she takes Lee’s statement and makes its two chief components, “truth” and “personality” into antitheses. Despite the distinction that Woolf draws between the new biographers and the Victorian biographers, her own position on the relationship between these works was, in general, much more ambivalent, complex, and shifting. As the examples in Part Two will demonstrate, the Hogarth Press often published works that expressed opposite perspectives on a particular issue as a method for advancing cultural discourse, and often sought out opposing viewpoints in order to encourage lively and productive debate. Antithesis and deliberate polarization were not only rhetorical strategies for Woolf, but also an important value for the Press as a publisher.

Recent scholarly work on Victorian and turn-of-the-century biography has criticized Woolf’s characterization of Victorian biographies as too damning, and has suggested, too, that “The New Biography” “wasn't as new as all that” (Saunders 438). Saunders and Atkinson suggest that a focus on “The New Biography” that takes its claims for revolution at face value ignores a rich tradition of fictional/biographical combinations, of lives of the obscure, of women’s autobiographies, and of many of the kinds of things that Woolf figured as absent from the Victorian tradition. Viewed from

86 There are so many examples of this kind of practice at the Press that I cannot outline them all here, but one instance which exemplifies the practice of setting up oppositions and contradictions at the Press is the Hogarth Letters series, in which the epistolary form encouraged questioning of the institutions and people to whom the letters were addressed (See for instance, Woolf’s Letter to A Young Poet).
the vantage point of Victorian and fin-de-siècle imaginary portraits or women’s biographies, modernist biography, Saunders suggests, “begins to look less new in formal terms, and to be more a matter of a new mode of autobiografiiction, with an ironic tone” (440). The context that both Saunders and Atkinson provide enriches scholarly understanding of the transitions between Victorian and modernist forms substantially and makes it clear that there were Victorian biographical practices that looked quite different from Sir Sidney Lee’s or Leslie Stephen’s in the *DNB*. I argue that biography and autobiography at the Press can be characterized beyond “The New Biography,” and that to see these essays as an end point without examining the broad and interesting corpus of biographical and autobiographical texts that surround them is to miss some of the complexities of modernist biography in just the way that the modernists’ polemical essays have caused critics to miss the diversity of Victorian practices. The other kinds of biographies and autobiographies to which Woolf would have had access, including those published by the Press, provide an additional context to that of Woolf, Strachey, and Nicolson’s immediate literary predecessors. It is worth keeping in mind that “The New Biography,” while it takes on the whole genre, is specifically addressing Nicolson, and might well have identified different features of experiment if it had been a review of a different book.

By 1939, Woolf’s excitement over the potential of biography had cooled somewhat, and while the spirit of experiment remains palpable in “The Art of Biography,” the tone of the essay is more subdued. “The Art of Biography” is in some ways more precise about the kinds of changes that have occurred in biography beyond those she identified in “The New Biography” (namely: diminishment in size, emphasis
on interiority, use of fictional techniques). The characteristic features that Woolf proposes in this later essay are: a willingness to convey the biographical subject’s faults and not only his or her virtues; an ability to employ new chronologies beyond the birth-to-death narrative; inclusions of the lives of subjects who might have been omitted from a traditional Victorian paradigm, including women and ordinary people; a movement away from traditional morality due in part to a changed attitude towards sex and sexuality; and an emphasis on brief, selective narratives over two-volume exhaustive biographies. Some of these features reiterate the features she identifies in “The New Biography” and the same charges of misrepresenting Victorian practices might be leveled against the later essay as against the earlier one.

I have outlined here the various features of “The New Biography” that Woolf presented in her essays and that critics have often used to characterize modernist biography. However, in addition to the spirit of experiment as far as form, genre, and representation were concerned, what was really “new” about the new biography in the modernist period, I would argue, was the possibility of publishing it in new ways, and developing a place in the book world for volumes that would fit the new values and perhaps find new audiences. In producing works that were slight physical volumes or occasional pieces, for instance, the Hogarth Press could take advantage of the trend (following Strachey) of compressed, humorous works. The Press was also able to offer such refined equivocations about genre in the dust jackets that while a book might be

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87 One implication of these slimmer volumes from a publishing perspective is that they could cost less. The cheapest biographies sold by the Press cost only 1s6d for the children’s biographies I will discuss in Chapter Four, while a typical multi-volume Life at a mainstream Press cost at least 12s and often 15s.
neither fiction nor autobiography nor biography, a reader could nevertheless be informed about what he or she was about to encounter. No longer was it necessary, where the Hogarth Press was concerned, to attach biographical or autobiographical writing to a canonizing monument such as a collected edition, or to demand a solid, two-volume Victorian book for the purpose of documenting a life. This is not to say that Hogarth Press practices were standard during the period, but their flexibility and openness certainly offered a forum for publishing biography that detached it from some of its conventional locations such as prefaces to expensive books or entries collected in the DNB.

The extent to which these values hold in the publications of the Hogarth Press varies greatly from work to work; however, the examples in Part Two will demonstrate that some of the ideological aims of “The New Biography” were overtly celebrated by the Press. The memoirs of working-class writers and the focus on female biographical and autobiographical subjects, in particular, are very much in evidence in the list. The publication of the Psycho-Analytic Library makes one of the most significant contributions to the change in attitudes towards sex and sexuality to be made in the world of English-language publishing, and an entire genre – psychoanalytic biography – which

88 Biographical prefaces were often attached to Victorian multi-volume collected works. Virginia Woolf inherited a great many of these kinds of volumes from her father, Leslie Stephen. The Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf is now housed at the University of Washington Archives and its catalogue is published online and in print by Julia King and Leila Miletic-Vejzovic. The Washington archive is an incomplete collection, since many of the Woolfs’ books were destroyed in the bombing of their London house in 1941, and others were dispersed and auctioned off after Leonard’s death in 1969, before the collection as a whole was considered valuable. What remains, however, is a collection weighted towards Leslie Stephen’s own books, since these were mostly housed at the Woolf’s country estate at Rodmell in Sussex, which remained intact through the Second World War. The library provides evidence of Woolf’s extensive experience of biographical prefaces in Victorian collected editions.
focused on the diagnosis of the subject’s neuroses. So many of these works emerged in
the modernist period that by the 1930s psychobiographies were already being frequently
mocked and parodied in newspapers. The Press’s focus on small books and pamphlets
also reinforces the notion that the bibliographic conditions of biography had shifted and
that slim volumes could still contain the kind of singular “figure that lives on in the
depths of the mind” (“The Art of Biography” 247) that Woolf saw as the mark of a
successful verbal portrait. Not all of the works that the Press published were “new
biographies” in Woolf’s terms, but the “liberties” (244) that Woolf saw as integral to a
modernist vision of the genre were also freedoms possessed by an independent publisher
of biography, and the socialist and feminist dimensions of the Press, as well as an interest
in scientific and psychological approaches to the genre, were manifestations of those
liberties.

That Nicolson’s book was the occasion for “The New Biography” is significant in
drawing the relationship between Woolf’s role as a theorist of biography and her role as a
publisher. The Hogarth Press published one of Nicolson’s nine chapters from Some
People as a pamphlet in 1924. A short, comical biographical sketch of a matronly
landlady, Jeanne de Hénaut, was later included as part of Harold Nicolson's important
collection of autobiographical fantasies that Woolf reviewed in 1927. The pamphlet itself
was not done in the Press’s usual way. It was one of only three “privately printed”

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89 Ernest Boyd, for instance, writing in 1932 of a recent biography of George Bernard Shaw, suggests that
“[the biographer] has to decide whether or not the sexual life of his subject is essential to an understanding
of his career. Can that be decided arbitrarily, on the theory popularized by the Freudians, that we are such
stuff as sexual psychoneuroses are made on, our little life is rounded with a complex?” (754).
publications that the Press produced on commission for friends and acquaintances, and it had a very limited run of only 55 copies. The reason for the small run was that it was produced for the Christmas season to give as gifts to friends after an editor at *The Mercury* rejected the piece on the basis that it was “too personal for publication” (HPA 317, 16 October 1924). Nicolson clearly changed his mind about the ideal scale for this kind of “personal” work, however, since *Some People* was eventually published by Constable, a much bigger publisher than the Hogarth Press. The book also received a great deal of publicity, since Woolf’s review appeared initially in the *New York Herald Tribune*, which had a daily circulation of roughly 200,000 in the 1920s, all a far cry from the modest pamphlet that the Woolfs had produced three years earlier. The publication of *Jeanne de Hénaut* four years before Nicolson’s full-length book, Woolf’s essay, and *Orlando* form a lineage that demonstrates the possible influence of even a very slight-seeming pamphlet. Nicolson’s privately printed small-run production suggests that Woolf was acquainted with the possibilities she describes in “The New Biography” for at least three years before she wrote her own fictionalized biographical experiment.

Nicolson’s importance in theorizing and practicing experimental biography and autobiography has been greatly underestimated, and while Max Saunders draws upon Nicolson’s *The Development of English Biography* in his chapter on “The New Biography,” Nicolson is often in the shadow of Woolf and Strachey, despite his

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90 Volumes dedicated to Julian Bell and Hilda Matheson, as well as a collection of posthumously published poems by Cecil Woolf are among the other privately-printed volumes.

91 See Kluger for full details of the paper’s circulation. It worth noting that Woolf’s review appears here in an American paper: this was not unusual since the Woolfs often found the larger circulations of American papers desirable. They paid their reviewers well, and as I will show later in the chapter on Woolf’s novels, the Press’s negotiations in relation to Foreign Rights were often precisely negotiated.
participation in the same debates and treatment of the same questions. Jeanne de Hénaut itself shows the flexibility of the Hogarth Press, especially in its early years, in its ability to privately print a book for a friend that might initially seem too personal for public consumption, but that later had success with a mainstream publisher and led to a collection that became one of the most important experiments in the genre and contributed greatly to Virginia Woolf’s assessment of the state of modernist biography more generally.

The cast of characters in Some People, fictionalized as it may be, exhibits some of the features of inclusiveness in the selection of subjects that Woolf came to see as an important aspect of “The New Biography.” Each of Nicolson’s nine subjects represents quite a different aspect of his own life, and they range in age, social class, nationality and gender. The opening and closing portraits, of Nicolson’s schoolmates Lambert Orme, who became a symbolist poet, and J. D. Marstock, an older boy at school who was an idol for Nicolson, along with Neville Titmarsh, a scruffy and unsuccessful colleague of Nicolson’s at the Foreign Office, are the closest to the author in their social positions and represent the characters that might be expected in an autobiography. Nicolson also, however, represents characters quite different from himself. They include the Marquis de Chaumont, a French aristocrat who learned his English from a cockney nurse and whose poetic aspirations are crushed by obligation to his aristocratic family; Arketall, a valet who continuously loses and finds his bowler hat and who ends his own story by running away and stealing all of his master’s trousers; Miriam Codd, a “completely round” lady from Nashville who is traveling to Tehran; Miss Plimsoll, the governess, and Jeanne de Hénaut, the landlady. Although it might be argued that since these are all personal
acquaintances, or rather fictionalized versions of personal acquaintances of Nicolson’s, the selection of subjects is based on the author’s life experience rather than on a deliberate attempt to diversify the canon of biographical subjects. Nonetheless, Some People’s mix of biography and autobiography results from the combination of a strong first-person narrative voice and a focus on the details of the lives of others rather more than on the life of the narrator-author. Woolf offers another image, in addition to the metaphor of combining granite and rainbow when she describes Some People as a book in which “each of the supposed subjects holds up in his or her small bright diminishing mirror a different reflection of Harold Nicolson” (233). Woolf’s choice of adjectives here indicates a shift from the mirror as a reliable reflection of a person’s appearance, to a kind of distorting, fun-house mirror in which Nicolson is seen in miniature and from a variety of angles. Questioning the nature and accuracy of the mirror in reflecting the proportions and realities of life, rather than trusting it as a straightforward instrument of reflection, indicates another way in which the representational tools of fiction might be applied to a biography or autobiography.

Holding up a “small, bright, diminishing mirror” (233) to the biographical subject would also be an apt way to describe the biographical practices of Lytton Strachey. No exploration of modernist biography would be complete without addressing Strachey’s contributions to the theoretical debates about the genre. As Richard Altick puts it, “after Eminent Victorians, biography could never be the same” (Lives and Letters 281). Strachey’s influence, beyond what Woolf describes – in a fittingly parallel construction aligning representation with honesty – as his ability “to tell the truth about the dead,” “to show them as they really were” and “to recreate them” (CE 4: 223), is, I would argue,
significantly a matter of tone and narrative strategy. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, on the Biography Series, sometimes imitations of Strachey’s style appear even in the most unlikely of subsequent biographies. Altick describes Strachey’s style as “witty,” with “epigrammatic terseness” and “seemingly inexhaustible liveliness” (284). For Altick, the effect of Strachey’s style is to render the reading public impatient with dull prose. Biography could no longer be ponderous or slow. It had to entertain.

By the time Woolf wrote her review of Nicolson in 1927, Lytton Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians* had already had a tremendous effect on the theory and practice of modernist biography. Published in 1918 by Chatto & Windus, *Eminent Victorians*, as Woolf herself points out, caused quite a stir, and was consequently a tremendous success in the book market: “anger and laughter mixed; and editions multiplied” (*CE* 4: 223). It is the book that most clearly marked the distinction between Victorian biography and what came to be seen as “The New Biography” of the twentieth century. Ruth Hoberman notes that this book, in addition to offering an example of a new practice of biography, also functions strongly as a theoretical text, since “Strachey is generally credited with having articulated the goals and methodology of modern biography” (5). Strachey’s Preface to *Eminent Victorians* criticizes hagiographical biography and is consequently read as a kind of manifesto for the genre in the period, while the four short lives that follow have been seen as a model for looking at biography from a modern perspective. His advocacy of “a subtler strategy” than “straight narration” (9) for biography and his suggestion that “haphazard visions” (9) might yield new perspectives on a great mass of materials are ideas resonates particularly with the Hogarth Press practice of producing small books using diverse narrative strategies.
Strachey’s major contributions to biographical theory and practice accord with Woolf’s identification of the features of “the new biographer,” many of which seem to have been shaped by Strachey himself. The first and perhaps most obvious is iconoclasm – what Altick describes as “the vigorous blast of Lytton Strachey’s horn” (281). Second is the way in which Strachey conveys the interior lives of his subjects, revealing aspects of their personalities that are potentially unflattering, or even unsettling. He calls these, in the case of Cardinal Manning, “the psychological problems suggested by his inner history” (3), and an interest in psychological biography is often seen as one of Strachey’s primary contributions to the field. The third is that in order to convey these interior details, Strachey uses narrative techniques commonly found in fiction, including particularly a combination of free indirect discourse and narration by a third-person biographer figure, a “modern inquirer” whose voice is at once parodic of Victorian biographical style and looser in its adherence to a consistent voice. That Woolf sees his caricatures as “truthful” demonstrates that her own definition of truthfulness was rather broad, given the amount of speculation and imagination required in order to convey the thoughts and sensations of Strachey’s subjects.

Leonard Woolf and the Value of True Stories
Examining a publisher’s list and also, through archival records, the inner workings of the Press’s day-to-day operations, opens up a number of possibilities for the study of the texts that they produce. In addition to the internal aspects of the publishing business – the editorial correspondence, the solicitation and rejection letters, the printer’s invoices, and the publisher’s list itself – the more public record, the reviews and essays that were published in newspapers and periodicals offer an additional and equally crucial way of
understanding publishers and the book world in which they participated. As I mentioned
in passing in Chapter One, both Leonard and Virginia Woolf were professional reviewers
and essayists, and were involved in the world of books beyond their roles at the Hogarth
Press. Much of the scholarly writing that has been done on Virginia Woolf’s views of
biography and autobiography has focused, sensibly, on her essays and reviews, since
these contain some of the clearest articulations of her ideas about the genre. Equally
important for understanding the role of biography and autobiography at the Press, and for
examining the Press’s participation in the literary networks of its moment, are Leonard
Woolf’s critical writings. His many reviews give insight into his eclectic tastes and, most
importantly for the present study, they reveal his fondness for biography.

In “The Science and Art of Biography,” the essay in which Leonard Woolf
posited the hierarchy of genres that provides the epigraph to this chapter, Woolf reviews
André Maurois’s *Aspects of Biography*, which he positions as a congenial study
following on from Harold Nicolson’s *The Development of English Biography*, published
by the Hogarth Press two years earlier in 1927. It is, on the whole, a favourable review.
Yet, Woolf reflects that Maurois has perhaps tried to tackle too many “aspects” of
biography for a single volume and that consequently, “one feels one’s experience has
been that of a traveller in a new country who has had to explore it from the window of an
express train” (882). Maurois’s rapid survey leaves Woolf wishing that the book had

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92 Virginia Woolf’s work as an essayist and reviewer, has received thorough scholarly attention. See
Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, The Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*, and the anthology, *Virginia Woolf
and the Essay*, edited by Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino.

93 As Woolf notes, Maurois’s text was translated from the French, but it was actually initially delivered in
English as lectures in the Clark Lecture Series at Trinity College Cambridge, written up by Maurois in
French, and then re-translated back into English for the publication of the volume.
focused on one particular problem it addresses in the discourse of contemporary biography, “the relation between biography as a science and biography as an art” (882). Woolf identifies this as “the crux of the whole problem of biography as a literary form” (882), and his sense of the centrality of this question is expressed in a variety of ways using slightly different language by a number of critics. For Virginia Woolf, the question was not about whether biography could be seen as a “science” or an “art,” but whether it could be seen as a “craft” or an “art” (CE 4: 227). Characteristically for his “World of Books” essays, Woolf uses Maurois’s notion from Aspects of Biography that the biographer must always deal with facts and is in this respect always a scientist, as a springboard for reflections on the possibilities of the genre more broadly.94 Anticipating Virginia Woolf’s later focus in “The Art of Biography” on the ways in which the biographer is “tied” while the novelist is “free” (CE 4: 221), Leonard suggests that while he agrees with Maurois’s contention that it is possible for the biographer to combine the demands of fidelity to truth with artistry, it is necessary to explore the various “limitations necessarily imposed upon the art of the biographer” (882) in order to understand the craft. One of the chief limitations that he identifies is that if the biographer is considered, as Maurois argues, to be part scientist and part artist, he or she must begin with sufficient material to take an empirical approach to the study of personality. Woolf argues that, unlike the historian, the biographer works on particulars and not on generalities, and that his or her focus in the contemporary moment is chiefly

94 The credulity with which the word “scientist” is associated with objectivity and fidelity to truth and factual work is something of an oversimplification. As I will explain further in relation to Virginia Woolf’s writings on biography, the tendency to discriminate sharply between the factual and the inventive aspects of biography is very common in criticism of the period.
on individual psychology. This being the case, the chief differentiation between successful modern biographies and unsuccessful ones is the selection of the subject. The biographer, Woolf suggests, “must choose a man or woman whose psychology it is really possible to investigate. That rules out a vast number of historical characters, for we have no material from which it is possible to recreate their characters” (882). Woolf’s suggestion that the evidence on which a biography is based is at once central to the possibility for a successful biography, and limiting in what it might offer, explains why Strachey’s *Elizabeth and Essex* is significantly less successful than his *Queen Victoria*: “He has no substance to work on; what he has thought to be marble, he finds to be plastocene, and not even Mr. Strachey’s skill can get over that difficulty” (882). Woolf’s emphasis on the substance of biography, rather than specifically on the form or literary technique, indicates that while there was a great interest in modernist critical discourse about problems of representation, problems of evidence and material were equally crucial, in Woolf’s view particularly, in establishing a successful work.

While “The Science and Art of Biography” focuses on the limitations faced by writers of biography, Woolf’s “World of Books” article “Living Vicariously” takes on the critical perspective of a pleasure-seeking reader and attempts to identify, from that vantage point, the value of biographies in the popular consciousness. In this essay, Woolf attacks the perception that biographies and personal literatures are morally or

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95 On this point, particularly in relation to *Elizabeth and Essex*, Virginia Woolf agreed. She writes in “The Art of Biography” that: “[Strachey’s] Elizabeth never became real in the sense that Queen Victoria had been real, yet she never became fictitious in the sense that Cleopatra or Falstaff is fictitious. The reason would seem to be that very little was known – he was urged to invent; yet something was known – his invention was checked. The Queen thus moves in an ambiguous world, between fact and fiction, neither embodied nor disembodied” (*CE* 4: 225).
aesthetically less valuable than other types of books: “These biographies, we are told, are bad books which cater for some of the lowest passions of the human mind, gossip and snobbery and worse, while from a literary point of view they are worthless rubbish. There may be a certain amount of prejudice on my part, because I share the common taste, but the only adequate answer to this seems to me to be ‘nonsense’” (45). Woolf’s emphasis on the pleasure of “living vicariously” and on what he sees as the pure fun of biography indicates that pleasure is a legitimate aspect of literary consumption and production. What Woolf perceived as the healthy public appetite for biography seems, despite his own fascination with and appreciation for the genre, to have produced derogatory readings. Woolf suggests that the proliferation of biographies met with moral indignation and sneering from the popular Press, who suggest that biographies “are bad books” (45). Woolf himself can muster no such disapproval, and on the contrary puts the criticisms down to “literary Puritanism” (45) that finds moral culpability in fun and entertainment. Woolf goes on in the column to review five recent biographies he has read. He comes to the conclusion that “the five are on a higher level, whether moral or even literary, than any five recently published books which you could select more or less at random from any other department of literature” (45). This argument, that biographies and autobiographies are generally of a higher quality than contemporary fiction, is coupled with the even more extreme view that there is an inherently higher value, both moral and literary, to works in these genres.

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96 The five biographies were: Diary of a Country Parson by James Woodforde, ed. John Beresford; Seventy Years a Showman by George Sanger; Recollected in Tranquility by Janet E. Courtney; Naphtali by C. Lewis Hind, and Hubert Parry by Charles L. Graves.
Woolf’s “World of Books” essays address the challenges facing writers of biography and the reasons why readers are interested in them. By adopting both perspectives, Leonard Woolf indicates the importance of aesthetic production and consumption to a publisher, and brings readers into the theoretical discourse by legitimizing enjoyment as a valid reason for reading. In his role as literary editor of the *N&Å*, Leonard Woolf kept close track of lists of new publications produced bi-annually by the Publishers’ Association and had an up-to-date sense of important publications in several different fields. The Hogarth Press frequently advertised, alongside several other publishers, in the pages of the *N&Å*, and their publications were frequently reviewed under Woolf’s watch. Woolf’s roles as a publisher, reviewer, and literary editor enhanced and informed one another. Far from provoking charges of conflict of interest, Woolf’s practice of occupying more than one role in the publishing industry and the literary discourse was normal in the trade. Indeed, in his autobiography, Woolf links his editorial role with *N&Å* to his editorial role at the Press:

All sorts of literary fish, some the same as and some different from the *Nation’s* shoals, swam in and out of the Hogarth Press in Tavistock Square. It was possible to help the budding (and sometimes impecunious) Hogarth author by giving him books to review and articles to write; and, if one came across something by a completely unknown writer, which seemed to have something in it, one could try
him out with articles and reviews before encouraging him to write a book (*DATW* 130).\(^97\)

The strength of Leonard Woolf’s conviction about the value of biography in combination with the clear intersections between the critical positions that Woolf outlines in his *N&A* articles and his selections as an editor at the Press provide perhaps the strongest arguments for the consideration of Hogarth Press biographies and autobiographies as a group of texts that were particularly relevant to the venture’s overall aims. Nicolson’s *The Development of English Biography*, as I shall explain below, offers just one way in which a Hogarth Press publication intervened in the literary debates staged in the *N&A*.

*The Development of English Biography*

Published in 1927 in the *Hogarth Lectures on Literature* Series, *The Development of English Biography* is one of the most significant contemporary full-length studies of biography by a modernist writer, and its place at the Press was likely part of what occasioned Leonard Woolf’s remark that critical work was beginning to be done on the nature and history of biography. Nicolson traces a teleological narrative of development that runs from “The Origins of English Biography” (5) through to “The Present Age.” It is this last section that is most relevant to the contemporary debates about biography that I trace in this chapter, but I will also consider Nicolson’s opening remarks on his own methods of inclusiveness and on his definitions of the genre.

\(^{97}\) While it would be a separate project to undertake this investigation, it would be possible to trace the correspondences between Hogarth Press authors and reviewers at the *N&A* during Leonard Woolf’s editorship by comparing signed reviews with the Hogarth Press author’s list and by combing *HPA* documents for mentions of *N&A* articles undertaken simultaneously by authors while the Press published their books. One notable example is Edmund Blunden, who began as a reviewer at the *N&A* and went on to write two books for the Press.
I mentioned in my introduction that Nicolson conceived of biography, deriving from his reading of the *OED* definition, as “a truthful record of an individual composed as a work of art” (8). In addition to declaring that there was a need to distinguish among the “cognate forms” associated with biography, Nicolson also wrote that part of the task of any historian of biography was to decide what works should be included and which excluded from what he terms the “elastic category” (8) of broadly biographical works. The very elasticity of the category has relevance to the Hogarth Press’s classifications. Like the publishers in their practical assignment of categories, like the Woolfs in their general sense of the importance of the non-fictional contract, Nicolson believed it was important to see biography as a distinct form with a particular development and history.

Nicolson’s suggestions about what makes “pure” and “impure” biography, however, have less to do with features of external genre categorization and more to do with technique. He suggests that the three main features of impure biography are the desire to celebrate the dead, and the desire to compose the life of an individual to fit a particular theory or concept, the imposition of “undue subjectivity in the writer” (10) on the biography. While Nicolson’s attention to the dangers of hagiography in biographical writing agrees with Virginia Woolf and Strachey’s indictments of Victorian practices, his other two criteria were features of a great deal of modernist biography. Nicolson suggests that despite Strachey’s tremendous and undeniable influence, he nevertheless wrote *Eminent Victorians* based on a “personal thesis” (153) and was therefore guilty of

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98 One Hogarth Press example of a biography written to fit a particular theory is the *Psycho-Analytic Library* publication, Laforgue’s *The Defeat of Baudelaire: A Study of Charles Baudelaire’s Neuroses* (1932).
the third feature of “impure” biography – the excessive interference of the author’s personality and style.

When it comes to autobiography, Nicolson sees the genre as one that “occupies an intermediate position between pure biography on the one hand and mere self-portraiture on the other” (15). By suggesting that autobiography, too, could fit the basic definition of biography as a truthful record of an individual composed as a work of art, he does not imply that this inclusion is without complexity. He asks “has any autobiographer yet attained the detachment necessary to convey truth convincingly?” (15). This question can be fruitfully read alongside Nicolson’s technique of presenting himself through the stories of others in Some People, and of attempting to allow them to hold up mirrors to him (to recall Woolf’s image) in order to achieve external perspectives on the self. Nicolson goes on to justify his focus on biography rather than autobiography in his historical study by arguing that although he “foresee[s] a promising future for English autobiography” he “do[es] not pretend that it has had a great past” (16-17).

Upon arriving at “The Present Age,” Nicolson’s own rhetoric undergoes a self-conscious shift. He writes “I have throughout [the lectures] adopted the convention of speaking (as if I really believed in such things) of ‘influences’ and ‘innovators,’ of ‘reactionaries’ and of ‘pioneers’” (132). By undermining his own critical language and by questioning not only the “development” he has traced in his study but the very idea of “development” and teleology as accurate ways of describing history, Nicolson opens up the possibility of a more contingent and qualified rhetoric when speaking of his own age. He writes that the chief reason that his talk of successive development from one age to
the next seems false is that it implies that biographers were more aware than Nicolson believes they were about the effects and values of their own methods. Rather, he supposes, the story of biography is the history of “that intricate weaving and unweaving of taste and distaste, that kaleidoscopic and continuous reshaping of intellect and indifference, of surprise and expectation” (134) that forms the characterization of any age. Nicolson’s emphasis here on the intricacy and plenitude of intellectual culture at any given moment seems at odds with developmental narratives that trace a causal lineage of a form through history. In other words, his remarks seem to undermine his very project. If, as Leonard Woolf argues, the prevalence of biography in the modernist period is made visible by writing about the genre, it seems necessary for Nicolson to write his history, even if his account questions its own rhetorical strategies. Nicolson himself suggests that despite the pitfalls of the causal language of “influence” and “lineage” and “development,” to trace biographical history in England is nevertheless to indicate “an impression of growth” (135), an escalation that culminates in the present moment. Nicolson’s brief summary in the final chapter of this development is one that orients the history of biography so that it is directly facing the reader: “the development of biography,” he writes, “is primarily the development of the taste for biography” (135). This statement fits with Leonard Woolf’s consistent attention to readers’ interests in and appetites for biography. Both critics see biography as a genre particularly invested in and dependent on its audience. For this reason, I argue, it is a genre that is fruitfully examined with reference to the process by which a work reaches a reader: through a publisher.
It is fitting that the moment at which Nicolson draws attention to the pitfalls of his own style and method of representing biographical history is also the moment at which he turns to the present day. If the history of biography is best explored as the history of its readership, Nicolson suggests that the contemporary interest in the form is drawn from “the somewhat indolent interest taken by the library public in the more personal side of history” and “from a really intelligent and cultivated relish for psychology” (141). The alignment, again, of an interest in modern biography with an interest in interiority and personality agrees with both of Leonard Woolf’s characterizations of biography as a pleasurable genre that allows its readers to “live vicariously” and a genre written by authors who act at once as scientists and artists. Nicolson’s sense is that the future of biography will be fragmented into various kinds – scientific biographies that insist on veracity and may end up in the domain of specialists, and literary forms of biography which, Nicolson suggests, “will wander off into the imaginative, leaving the strident streets of science for the open fields of fiction” (155). Nicolson’s tone at the end of the volume is hopeful, however, despite his declaration that “pure” biography in his initial sense is likely to disappear and be replaced by a multiplicity and variety of forms that do not quite fit his own definition. The rhetorical strategy of setting out what appears to be a fairly stark distinction between “impure” and “pure” biography, only to renounce the validity of these categories in describing the modernist age, is one that, like Woolf’s hyperbolic separation of “The New Biography” from Victorian methods, decidedly sets twentieth-century literature apart from its predecessors and suggests its resistance to simple characterization. Nicolson argues that whatever the experiments to come, and however the trajectory of biography continues
from the modernist period, the ultimate achievement of the forms may be to “discover a
new scope, an unexplored method of conveying human experience” (157).

Speculations on the nature of biography and autobiography by reviewers and
critics have not always been taken by more recent scholars as signs that the genres have
an important role to play in defining and characterizing modernism as a field of study.
While critics like Marcus, Saunders, and Hoberman have argued for the richness of the
field and have advocated for its inclusion in studies of modernism more broadly, even
contending that to account for biographies and autobiographies is to refine our
understanding of how modernism can be characterized, biographies and autobiographies
still seem to play a relatively small role in current critical discussions about the period.99
Part of the reason for this, perhaps, is that the canons of modernist biography include at
present a relatively small number of books, “paradigmatic texts” (2), as Marcus calls
them, usually Lytton Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians*, Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography
of Alice B. Toklas*, and some of Virginia Woolf’s personal writings. The focus on these
texts causes, Marcus argues, “the idea of the model or exemplary life” to be “transmuted
[by literary critics] into that of the model or exemplary text’ (2). The move away from
“exemplary” criticism seems essential in discussing modernist works that rejected
Victorian “model” lives in favour of more diverse narrative methods and kinds of people.
While it would be misleading to suggest that Strachey’s work was anything other than a

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99 Part of my sense that there is a bit of a gap in the field in this respect comes from the frequent absence of
biographies and autobiographies in textbooks about modernism, in introductions to the period, or on
undergraduate syllabi. See for instance Ayers, Tew and Murray, Childs, and Lewis, none of which includes
biographical or autobiographical examples, nor do any of them mention these genres in their outlines of the
major terms and concepts of modernism. In each of these cases, not even Strachey makes the cut. Chris
Baldick’s *The Modern Movement* is one recent textbook that does offer a section on life writing.
paradigm for modernist biographies that followed it, the refinements and developments of Strachey’s theories and of the notion of what was possible in “The New Biography” can be illuminated with reference to less-discussed critics of the genre, like Leonard Woolf, and to less-discussed texts such as the Hogarth Press books I analyse in Part Two. Paradigmatic works are often used to stand in for modernist biography and autobiography as a whole category, and while *Eminent Victorians*, in particular, had a tremendous influence on the subsequent biographies and on theoretical understandings of modernist biography, the diversity of works published in the period is not quite captured by an exploration of Strachey’s methods alone, just as it would be obviously reductive to imagine that modern novels could be characterized systematically with reference only to Joyce. As the present study demonstrates, and as Dickens’s work on the intellectual review periodicals also shows, biographies were extensively circulated in important modernist networks, and were considered to be at least as important if not, as Leonard Woolf argues, more so than novels to contemporary characterizations of the period’s literature. Rather than offering a coherent, unified theory of the genre, therefore, I argue that the clearest overall impression is that ideas about the role of biography and autobiography and the nature of their developments were sometimes contradictory, and that this conflicted critical world mirrors the complexity that biographers and autobiographers sought to convey in their refashioning of the genres. The many different ways of writing lives and of theorizing that act necessitate the same kind of plurality of critical perspectives that the Press, as I argued in the previous chapter, offered in its selection of works. I argue here and throughout the thesis that the act of publishing biographies and autobiographies – the process of selecting, editing, producing and
marketing particular books in the genre – is in the case of the Hogarth Press an act that also indicates particular values in defining the genre. The practices of the Press contribute to the discourses exploring the meaning of the genre for the period, and the ideals that modernist writers expressed for the form were intimately connected to the ways in which the books were introduced to readers.

What a study of these debates also demonstrates is the importance of relational approaches in the study of biographies and autobiographies. The act of publishing personal writings is, I argue, also a theoretical act: a necessary negotiation of the interface between public and private that posits particular values in the realm of autobiographical and biographical representation. In each of the examples in the following section, there are different ideological and aesthetic motivations for the publisher’s production of the work. I emphasized in the previous chapter the positive value that the Press placed on publishing works by a variety of authors writing on a variety of topics in a variety of ways, and this interest in debate, dialogue, and diversity extends to the use of contradiction as a feature of rhetorical strategy in “the history and art of biography” (“The Science and Art of Biography” 882) written by Hogarth Press authors.
Part Two: Case Studies


A novel? Nonsense! Literature? A fig for literature! This is life. And when was life neat, congruous, rounded-off?

– Vita Sackville-West, “Tolstoy” (1928).

Vita Sackville-West’s exuberantly punctuated comment ranking literature below the more complicated pleasures of “life” comes from a brief biographical article that appeared in the N&A to mark the centenary of Tolstoy’s birth. The essay moves beyond a characterization of Tolstoy himself to a series of general reflections on the representation of personality in literary writing. Sackville-West argues for the particular kind of authenticity that can be achieved by embracing incongruity. Her sense that narrative, if it is to say something meaningful about “Life,” ought not to be overly “neat, congruous, rounded-off” (729) is one that reflects the ethos of the Hogarth Press’s earliest biographies.

These biographies, published between 1920 and 1924, came to the Press as part of a larger project of translating works of Russian literature for the first time into English. Four of the eight Russian works translated during this period were biographies of Tolstoy: Maxim Gorky’s Reminiscences of Leo Nicolayevitch Tolstoi (1920), The Autobiography of Countess Sophia Tolstoy (1922), A. B. Goldenveizer’s Talks with Tolstoi (1923) and Paul Biruynkov’s Tolstoi’s Love Letters (1923).100 In the 1927

100 As well as the four biographies of Tolstoy, the Press published translations of Gorky’s The Note-Books of Anton Tchekhov Together with Reminiscences of Tchekhov (1921), Leonid Andreev’s The Dark (1922),
Hogarth Press catalogue, they occupy their own section, the “Books on Tolstoi.” This chapter focuses on the “Books on Tolstoi” in order to argue that the Hogarth Press was publishing works that employed a variety of biographical methods from the very beginning of its time as a commercial publishing enterprise. The four works take drastically different approaches not only to the scandal of Tolstoy’s departure from his family near the end of his life, but also to the practice of biography. The Press’s publication within the space of four years of four different accounts of the same life, each of which employs distinctive methods, allows for contradictory versions of a life story to exist alongside one another.

Chronological placement is an aspect of the significance of the “Books on Tolstoi.” They appeared towards the end of a period of intense interest in Russian literature among modernist writers, and towards the beginning of a deep critical engagement, in similar intellectual circles, with biography and autobiography. They were published right before the period that Leonard Woolf described as “the age of biography” (“The Science and Art of Biography” 882), which indicates that ideas about

I. A. Bunin’s *The Gentleman from San Francisco and Other Stories* (1922), and Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Stavrogin’s Confession and The Plan of the Life of a Great Sinner* (1922).

101 Shortly before his death in 1910, Tolstoy left his family and his home, renouncing material possessions in favour of an ascetic existence.

102 I explain more about the culture of “Russian fever” later in this section. To say that these works are poised between the fad for Russian culture and the critical interest in biography in modernist literary circles is not to suggest an absolute periodization of the interest in Russia on the one hand and biography on the other. However, in the pages of the *N&A* and other intellectual weeklies, as well as in self-referential comments about intellectual culture in novels and stories of the period, it is clear that there were peak moments for clusters of articles on particular subjects. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, there were a great many articles on Russia, while in the late 1920s, moving into the 1930s, there was a focus on biography.
biographical form were being published by the Press before they were overtly expressed in the essays I discussed in Chapter Two.

That Sackville-West, also writing during the heyday of essays about biography, in 1928, celebrates open-ended and complex life stories is therefore not surprising, since her essay refers to the Hogarth Press books in order to fashion an image of Tolstoy. As a close friend of the Woolfs, a strong supporter of the Press in its early days, and a Hogarth Press author herself, Sackville-West would doubtless have been familiar with the “Books on Tolstoi.” The biographies were the first English versions of the works and they remained the only available translations at the time of Sackville-West’s essay in 1928. She quotes from Gorky in the essay to evoke a vivid metaphor for Tolstoy’s reputation: “So naturally we think of him as he was in the last years of his life, when he stretched, as Gorki said, ‘like a vast mountain across our nations [sic] path to Europe,’” (729). Her use of the collective pronoun “we” subtly indicates her implied reader’s familiarity with Tolstoy’s significance but also, by association, with Gorky’s memorable description. Sackville-West’s essay serves not only as a commemorative piece about Tolstoy, but also as a kind of retrospective advertisement: a reminder about the merits and values of the earlier Hogarth Press publications.

**Russian Translations at the Hogarth Press**

S. S. Koteliansky brought all four “Books on Tolstoi” to the Press, beginning with Maxim Gorky’s *Reminiscences of Tolstoy* to the Hogarth Press in 1920. It was an

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103 Koteliansky was a friend of the Woolfs and of Katherine Mansfield who immigrated from Russia and maintained connections with literary and political networks there. He brought all of the works mentioned in this chapter to the Press and was involved in all of its literary translations from the Russian.
important title in the early list: Leonard Woolf suggests in his autobiography that “the success of Gorky’s book was really the turning point for the future of the Press and for our future” (DA 67). Because it was the first book to be outsourced to a commercial printer, Gorky’s Reminiscences was produced in greater numbers than the early hand-printed books, and sold more than 1700 copies in the first year, making it by far the most profitable volume to be produced at the Press by 1920. It marked the beginning of the Press’s transition from an amateur operation to a full-scale publishing house.

The Russian translations, all commercially printed like Reminiscences, comprised approximately a quarter of the Press’s total output between 1920 and 1924. In addition to shaping Tolstoy’s reputation and image, at least for the readers and reviewers of the N&А, the Russian translations hold a crucial place in the history of the Press’s own development as a business and an institution. Willis points out that the Press’s early Russian translations

loom large in number and importance, overshadowing all other [early] titles except those of Woolf and Eliot. Following their timely interests in the Russians and using to their advantage the offerings of S. S. Koteliansky, the Woolfs […] made Hogarth an important, if small-scale, publisher of Russian letters in the immediate postwar, postrevolutionary period (101).

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104 See Appendix B for exact profit and sales figures.

105 Willis and Luftig note that the move to a more commercial enterprise was not a straightforward decision for the Press and cite Virginia Woolf’s private worry, articulated in her diary, that the shift to commercial production might be a decision that “marks some step over a precipice” (qtd in Willis 80) into the commercial world.
In Willis’s categorized list of the Hogarth Press publications and in the Press’s own 1939 catalogue, the translations are included in their own separate category (403). The fact that most of the Russian translations are autobiographical and biographical partly accounts for the under-representation of these genres in the categorized lists. The Press also published several books and pamphlets on the subject of Russian history and politics after 1924, along with literary translations from other languages (though the major translation project of the Press shifted to the works in the Psycho-Analytic Library in the mid-1920s). The publications in the field of literary translation up to the mid-1920s were more successful from a commercial point of view than the later ones.

When it came to the act of translation from the Russian, the general practice was for Kotelyansky to write the literal translation, and for Leonard or Virginia to smooth out the language. Both Woolfs began to learn Russian during this period, and the process of collaborating on the translations gave them a strong sense of investment in the works. Without Kotelyansky, the Press would never have published the Russian translations, and his role in the development of British modernism has been recovered and defended recently. In addition to Gayla Diment’s new biography of Kotelyansky, there have been several articles arguing that he ought to be viewed in his own right as an important figure of literary culture. Claire Davison-Pégon, in a recent special issue of Translation and Literature on English modernist translations of Russian literature, argues that

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106 As in many instances with Press categorizations, sometimes these works appear twice: once in the “Biography, Memoir, Etc.” section and once in the “Translations” section. Their shifting categorizations over different advertising materials indicates their ability to be marketed in a variety of ways.

107 These included Aneurin Bevan’s What We Saw in Russia (1931); Maurice Dobb’s, Russia Today and Tomorrow (1930); John Maynard Keynes’s A Short View of Russia (1925); C. M. Lloyd’s Russian Notes (1932).
Koteliansky’s translations can be read as themselves exhibiting features of modernist aesthetics. She argues that Koteliansky’s selection of his collaborators (who included Katherine Mansfield, D. H. Lawrence, and the Woolfs, among others) and his selection of texts, exhibited an “emphasis on more experimental modes” (339) congruent with modernist aesthetics. Koteliansky’s influence was to bring experimental narratives to the English public and also to provide a “new approach to translation” (343) that allowed a great deal of creative freedom for his collaborators. Davison-Pégon’s analysis of Koteliansky’s translation methods supports the notion that these early works were complex and were involved in some of the more frequently studied aspects of modernist literature.

However, the tendency, until recently, to neglect the “Books on Tolstoi” is perhaps in part because of their somewhat unusual approach to translation. The traditional tendency in literary studies, particularly in those that do not deal with the theory of translation, has been to judge translations based on their “accuracy” on the one hand, and their “accessibility” on the other. On the surface, the Hogarth Press collaborative translations satisfy neither of these requirements, since they are neither literal nor simplified. This means that Koteliansky’s influence is only now being recognized, with the advent of a new critical methodology for analysing translations. Despite the efforts of scholars like Davison-Pégon to argue for a different system of

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108 Rebecca Beasley puts it this way: “specialist studies of translations by scholars of Russian were governed by questions of accuracy and fluency, and had little to say about the cultural significance of translated texts. The increased interest in ‘the field of cultural production’ in literary studies, and the ‘cultural turn’ of Translation Studies, have highlighted areas of shared interest and provided new tools for critics investigating the reception of translations” (285).
values for recognizing important, if not accurate, translations, there is still a tendency to see some of the more idiosyncratic and even amateurish elements of the Hogarth Press translations with a certain level of derision. Richard Davies and Andre Rogachevskii, for instance, exclaim that “someone must have been drunk not to notice that [Koteliansky and Leonard Woolf’s translation of Andreev] had chapters 1-3, and 6-7, but nothing in between!” (83). Errors (even of a rather significant kind like this) are something of a feature of the early Hogarth Press publications, and while unusual variants, and even handwritten corrections, add value to the books as collector’s items, they do not tend to encourage serious scholarly attention, especially in a critical culture that values accuracy and precision. It is therefore as collectors’ items and as aspects of the Press’s history that the Russian translations have tended to be read.

Rather than focusing on the mechanics of translation here, I read the “Books on Tolstoi” for their approach to biography. This chapter therefore does not aim to read the translations in comparison to the Russian originals, which is work that Davison-Pégon and others have begun to do, nor does it explore the personal relationship between the Woolfs and Koteliansky, which has been addressed by biographers of all three figures. These works are particularly relevant to the study of biography and autobiography at the Hogarth Press because they indicate the Press’s selection of and support for innovative biographical methods and a female autobiographical author. That English writers and critics of biography in the period following the early 1920s would have encountered these models of biographical and autobiographical form makes the Hogarth Press texts important contributors to the debates about biography that were occurring in England during the period.
Leonard Woolf was interested in Gorky’s biographical work not only because it was about Tolstoy, or because it seemed saleable, but because it was, in his view, “one of the most remarkable biographical pieces ever written” (DA 67). Given Woolf’s special interest in the genre, his enthusiasm for Reminiscences, and his eagerness to publish it reinforce the argument that the Hogarth Press’s investment in biography started early. The Russian translations were therefore important in defining the character of the early Hogarth Press not only due to their commercial nature, but specifically because they are autobiographies and biographies.

“Russian Fever”

That the Press published four biographies of the same person in the space of four years suggests that there was a significant enough interest in Tolstoy as a public figure to justify an extensive exploration of his life, which there certainly was. The first translations of the novels of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov into English began to appear in 1885. By 1920, nearly all of the canonical works of Russian fiction were available in England. Through several exuberantly positive reviews of new English translations in periodicals and newspapers in the 1910s and 1920s, Russian literature became extremely popular in England, so much so that the vogue for reading Russian fiction was described as “Russian fever.”109 Constance Garnett, a friend of the Woolfs, was the most important translator of Russian novels during the period and over her career

109 See Gilbert Phelps for an extended discussion of this phenomenon.
translated 73 volumes into English. Several well-known modernist writers were swept up in the trend. Lytton Strachey, for instance, wrote an article about Dostoevsky in 1912, and several of Virginia Woolf’s early reviews and published essays focused on Russian fiction.

Roberta Rubenstein identifies the decade between 1912-1922, the years directly pre-and post-revolution, as the most intense period of influence for Russian literature on English culture (2). The series of revolutions that began in 1917 (the year of the Press’s origin, as well) and went on to form the Soviet Union had wide-ranging implications for left-leaning politics across Europe. The historical and sociopolitical books on literature published by the Hogarth Press, like their diverse range of books on other topics, represented a number of different perspectives on the successes and failures of Russia under socialist government.

By the time the Hogarth Press published its own Russian translations, the high regard in literary culture for Russian fiction had become so widespread as to occasion an interest, too, in Russian literary lives. Marcus, drawing from Willis’s earlier claims, argues in her introduction to her recent edition of Virginia Woolf’s Russian translations that one of the functions of the publications was to “reinforce the cult of personality surrounding Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and others” (“Translations” xii). Because Virginia Woolf herself translated mostly fiction at the Press and wrote reviews of Russian novels

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110 Garnett’s achievement as a translator is often celebrated, though she remains a fairly minor figure in general discussions of literary modernism. See Orlando Figes, Edna O’Brien, and Richard Garnett for recent appreciations of Garnett’s work in literary journalism and biography.

111 For a thorough account of Woolf’s early reviews and essays on Russian writers, see Rubenstein, 4-16.
and short stories, a great deal of scholarship on her own interest in Russian literature so far has focused on fiction.¹¹² I would like to extend the scope of inquiry to suggest that the Russian biographies, especially those with which she would have come into contact at the Press, exemplify many of her values and ideals for biographical form as she later expresses them in her essays and as metadiscursive comments in her biographical fiction. The atmosphere of “Russian fever” seems an ideal climate in which to publish literary biography. The Hogarth Press publications served the purpose of at once satisfying a public appetite for intimate accounts of literary celebrities and encouraging further interest in them. Marcus’s remark goes some way to explaining why most of the Press’s early translations of previously unpublished Russian writings were biographies and autobiographies: the great success of earlier translations of fiction had paved the way for an interest in the lives of the authors who wrote them.

The vogue for interest in Russian works eventually faded and the Press’s initial commitment to these translations became less intense as time passed and as the Woolfs began to see different possibilities for publishing exciting new kinds of work commercially. Even as early as 1923, Leonard Woolf accepted the Goldenveizer work from Koteliansky “with some hesitation” (HPA 595, 22 February 1923). Part of his reluctance to publish *Talks with Tolstoi* had to do with Koteliansky’s persistently meddlesome attitude towards the business of American rights,¹¹³ but it also had to do

¹¹² Rubenstein’s detailed study, for instance, explores Woolf’s journalistic writings about Russian literature and examines, too, her attitudes towards the fiction of writers such as Chekhov and Dostoevsky, translations of whom were published by the Press.

¹¹³ See Rogachevskii who argues that the relationship between Koteliansky and the Woolfs was a complicated and sometimes even antagonistic one, despite its more frequent representation as a friendship.
with the Press’s desire to maintain the diversity of its list, and the sheer number of translations that Kotelyansky was suggesting was in excess of what the Press could produce at a profit. None of the translations was as successful as the very first one, of Gorky.

The complicated biographical strategies employed by Gorky and others published by the Press, despite their position in the context of “Russian fever,” are far from exhibiting an attitude of straightforward literary fandom. Some of the biting, honest descriptions of character and the fragmentary narratives that can be found in these early Hogarth Press works exhibit features of “The New Biography,” despite the positioning of these publications in a generally reverent literary-critical discourse on the subject of Russian literature. While the importance of Russian fiction in shaping the practices of literary modernism is clear from the studies mentioned above, the influence of Russian biographies and autobiographies has yet to be addressed in modernist scholarship.

“Carelessly Jotted Down”: Maxim Gorky’s Biographical Method

The Hogarth Press published two editions of Gorky’s *Reminiscences*, the first in 1920 and the second in 1921. The second edition contains some additions to the fragmentary reflections and an expanded “Translators’ Note.” Kotelyansky describes the work, in both editions, as the “Authorised translation from the Russian” (ME 1, 18). From looking at Kotelyansky’s manuscripts in relation to typescripts of the Russian texts he was translating, found in the ME papers at UCLA, it appears that Kotelyansky

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114 As Woolmer notes, the second edition was published in January of 1921, but the title page statement reads “Second Edition, November 1920” (9).
reproduced the original format as far as the numbered sections and the ordering of the extracts. The editorial changes that both Woolf and Koteliansky made as far as Gorky’s language is concerned are more complex than I am able to assess in this chapter. However, the overall form of the book is one that is so significant for biographical practice that it is worth assessing in this frame. I read the text here in its English version and for its relevance to English biographical theory without attempting a comparison to the Russian version of the work, and I refer to Gorky as the author of this biography, even though, as I explain above and as Davison-Pégon’s work shows, Koteliansky and Woolf had a hand in shaping his reception for an English audience.

In the preface to his *Reminiscences of Tolstoi*, Gorky acknowledges the piecemeal form of his reflections, which are “composed of fragmentary notes.” (5) by introducing them as unedited off-the-cuff observations from his time as a personal acquaintance of Tolstoy. He presents the form of the notes as haphazard and casual: “The notes were carelessly jotted down on scraps of paper, and I thought I had lost them, but recently I have found some of them” (5). By acknowledging not only the fragmentariness but also the incompleteness of his own record, Gorky promises at the outset that rather than providing a thorough retrospective biography attempting to reveal the minutiae of Tolstoy’s daily life, he will provide instead spontaneous reflections that were written close to the time of his encounters with his biographical subject.

The collection of these notes into book form, first in Russian and then its two Hogarth Press incarnations, is designed to give a more coherent reading experience than would an encounter with Gorky’s unpublished notes. The act of ordering and arranging
the notes might be seen as a method of structural composition that complicates Gorky’s presentation of the spontaneity of his own work, even as the notes themselves claim authenticity by embracing their own incompleteness. The notes as they are presented in book form appear in small numbered sections, followed by a letter that Gorky wrote after Tolstoy’s disappearance and death. The letter also has an unfinished nature that is celebrated in the preface, and Gorky claims that the document is an unedited one since he “publish[ed] the letter just as it was written at the time, and without correcting a single word. And [he could] not finish it, for somehow or other this is not possible” (5). The extent to which such claims can be believed is questionable, especially for readers of the English translation, which quite obviously cannot replicate the exact wording of the original Russian.115 In a gesture that adds further complexity to the tension between ordered notes and unedited observations, the Hogarth Press published a second edition of the Reminiscences later in 1920, which includes fragments that were omitted from the first version.116 What is significant, though, about the very claim to authenticity through incompleteness is not so much its actual validity as Gorky’s assumption that the text will be valued for its immediacy and rawness, and that its fragmentary, unfinished nature will appeal to readers. The use of fragments can be read as much as a strategy for establishing the intimacy of the author with the biographical subject by insisting that these notes emerged from a personal encounter: a way of establishing trust between biographer and

115 The questionable “quality” of the translation gives his statement a perhaps unintended irony, but it would be beyond the scope of this project to explore the extent to which Gorky edited his own reflections before publishing them in the original Russian version.

116 There is a translators’ preface to the second edition, which does not appear in the first edition, explaining the addition of the extra scenes.
reader by suggesting that the publication of the notes means access to private, untouched reflections.

The contradiction between the fragmentariness of the notes, their claim to authenticity, and the necessarily more polished document of the book itself is apparent in the numbered order in which the notes are presented. The numbering of the miscellaneous notes is a projection of logical sequence onto a group of texts that seems to possess little if any sense of chronology. The notes themselves do not indicate time relative to one another, making the numbered headings appear at odds with the content. Since they often take the form of general reflections on character, there is little to indicate which of the described events came before or after or when the various reflections were written in relation to one another. They seem to be arranged instead for some of their thematic resonances, a notion which is supported by the insertion of the additional notes in the second edition alongside previous entries that match the subject matter of existing selections. Note III, on Tolstoy’s attitude towards other Russian writers (“He treats Sulerzhiskiy with the tenderness of a woman” [10]), is followed in the second edition by “IIIA,” which expands on the episode of the previous note by inserting an extra anecdote (“But once he got thoroughly cross with Suler…” [10]). Similarly, a

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117 The numbering was not an addition to the English translation, but was a feature of the original Russian. The fragments are also numbered in Donald Fanger’s more recent translation.

118 The rare instances in which relative time is mentioned – “yesterday, just before dinner, he came into the drawing-room, just like that, his thoughts far away” (37) – it is unclear when the surrounding undated fragments were written in relation to the “yesterday.” What “yesterday” does indicate is that the reflection was written closely in time to the event itself, which is another way in which the immediacy of the reflections is foregrounded and privileged over the relative temporal sequence of the notes.
precise scene that demonstrates a general observation will sometimes be ordered before
or after a more generalized comment on Tolstoy’s attitudes:

XIX: We walked in the Yussopor Park. He spoke superbly about the customs of
Moscow aristocracy. A big Russian peasant woman was working on the flower-
bed, bent at right angles, showing her ivory legs, shaking her ten-pound breasts.
He looked at her attentively… (16)

XX: Of women he talks readily and much, like a French novelist, but always with
the coarseness of a Russian peasant (16).

Although the numbered sections do seem to have a logical order that is based on theme
and subject matter, and although some of them are precise and visual in their language
rather than abstract, none of the reflections offers any reference point for locating them in
a temporal sequence. The emphasis is, instead, on physical descriptions of Tolstoy
interwoven with generalized reflections on his personality and influence and direct
quotations from Tolstoy himself. Throughout the text, it is implied that any quotation that
appears without reference to a speaker has been uttered by Tolstoy. The quotations are
not recorded unreflexively, however, and Gorky often offers his own interpretation of
Tolstoy’s pieces of wisdom:

“The minority feel the need of God because they have got everything else, the
majority because they have nothing.” I would put it differently: the majority
believe in God from cowardice, only the few believe in him from fullness of soul
(9).
Tolstoy’s iconic and even sanctified status in Russian culture is never far from the surface in Gorky’s recollections, even if he offers his own views as a counterbalance and sometimes as a contradiction to Tolstoy’s philosophical pronouncements.

Just as the thematic organization of the notes precludes a clear understanding of the progression of Tolstoy’s character over time, so Gorky’s relationship to his subject lacks any kind of progressive evolution. Rather than witnessing a development of either Tolstoy’s or Gorky’s character, or even a progression in Gorky’s perspective on Tolstoy, there is a sense instead of a shifting and complicatedly ambivalent attitude of biographer to subject that changes from antagonistic to reverent from one note to the next. Gorky even goes so far as to criticize Tolstoy’s attitude towards women, attributing it to the deficiencies of his sexual life:

He talks most of God, of peasants, and of woman; of literature rarely and little, as though literature were something alien to him. Woman. In my opinion he regards with implacable hostility and loves to punish her, unless she be a Kittie or Natasha Rostov, i. e. a creature not too narrow. It is the hostility of the male who has not succeeded in getting all the pleasure he could (20).

Gorky’s changeable attitude towards Tolstoy is further complicated by a paradoxical approach to the nature of biographical character in the text. Gorky approaches the question of whether character itself is stable or variable in two opposite ways. On the one hand, the form’s resistance to chronological sequence suggests that character might come across differently from scene to scene. On the other hand, the central “image” or portrait of Tolstoy emerges as a dominant feature of the text through repetition. Although
Tolstoy is presented as a genius one moment and as a vulgar misogynist the next, the repeated image of him as “like a god, not a Sabaoth or Olympian, but the kind of Russian god who ‘sits on a maple throne under a golden lime tree,’ not very majestic, but perhaps more cunning than all the other gods” (7) recurs. It also re-emerges in Sackville-West’s essay – evidence that the vivid image endures.

A second way in which the strong image of Tolstoy’s character is achieved is through Gorky’s coupling of reflections on his general character with precise physical descriptions. I will explore the use of precise descriptions of the bodies of biographical subjects in order to convey a vivid sense of their specific personal qualities further in Chapter Four. What it accomplishes here is that Tolstoy has both a voice and a body. Although the notes address Tolstoy’s illness and are far from presenting him as infallible, they conclude at the end of the two mens’ encounter and not at his death. Even Gorky’s final letter to Tolstoy, which refers to him in the past tense and reflects on his death, ends with a recollection of a past impression which is offered in the present tense: “The man is godlike” (76). Because Gorky’s final letter to Tolstoy ends without ending, even in an epistolary sense (there is no conventional sign-off), and cuts off in the middle of a reminiscence, the lasting impression of Tolstoy is of the enduring strength of his present-tense influence.

Given the commercial success of this, the first of the Press’s translations, it is not surprising that the reception of Gorky’s work in English literary review publications was favourable. Perhaps the most pertinent of these reviews for the present study is Virginia Woolf’s own anonymous review of the work, which appeared in the NS in August of
1920. In the essay, unsurprisingly, Woolf praises Gorky’s biographical style and the book in general. What Woolf admires, in particular, is the quality that Sackville-West also identifies as the appeal of Tolstoy’s writing – the willingness to accept the unexplained or unexplored aspects of life, and to refuse to submit to an artificial sense of the “neat, congruous, rounded-off” (Sackville-West 729). What is most important about Woolf’s review is that eight years before “The New Biography,” she was articulating some of the aspects of the biographical theory for which she became known. The embracing of gaps, fragments, and silences is clear from her opening analogy, which compares Gorky to a photographer who takes candid images, catching the subject unaware:

Sometimes by accident an untouched amateur photograph of a great personage will drop out of an album or of an old drawer, and instantly the etchings, the engravings, the portraits by Watts and Millais seem insipid and lifeless. Such is the effect of Gorki’s Notes upon Tolstoi (505).

The contrast Woolf establishes here between Victorian portraiture and amateur photography sets up a series of dichotomies that persist in her later writings on modernism and on biography, in which the memorializing qualities of Victorian biographies are replaced by more vital portrayals. The casual observation or candid

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119 Several critics mention this review as an example of the kinds of professional overlaps that would now be considered conflicts of interest between the world of periodical reviewing and that of publishing (See Rubenstein 5, Luftig 5). One justification that is often offered for the practice is that Virginia Woolf reviewed books that were translated by Leonard, and Leonard sometimes reviewed books that Virginia had had a heavier hand in editing, soliciting, or translating (See Marcus and Clarke). As I mentioned in Chapter 2, however, the overlap between the sphere of periodicals and publishing houses was not considered problematic in a culture of anonymous reviewing, and shaped many of the networks and relationships that gave rise to literary production during the period.
photograph that reveals a great deal about personality sounds a lot like Woolf’s later comment in “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” that character is so difficult to capture as a whole, that most novelists have to be “content with a scrap of her dress or a wisp of her hair” (3). Recalling Gorky’s own statement in his preface to the Reminiscences that the notes themselves were scraps of paper that were lost and then found again amidst his possessions, Woolf takes the haphazard state in which the notes were recorded and uses it as a metaphor for the compositional and formal structure of a desirably candid biography. In biography as in fiction as in visual portraiture, for Woolf, the attempt to convey a whole person using carefully wrought methods and exacting and detailed processes is less likely to produce the vivid effect of capital-L “Life,” in Sackville-West’s terms, than a casual, momentary observation. In Woolf’s framework, Gorky’s admission of the impossibility of completing the biography or of editing or refining his notes lends the work an important credibility:

But even as we choose this and that sentence to show the fascination of Gorky’s book we understand why it is that he writes in his preface to it, “And I do not finish it, for somehow or other that is not possible.” For we have scarcely said that Tolstoi was lonely and withdrawn when we remember how he charmed a room full of different people as if he were “a man orchestra” playing all the different instruments of which he was composed by turn (505).

Woolf here lends Gorky’s comment a more general applicability than it has in its original context in the preface. She uses his statement to suggest that biographers of Tolstoy ought to embrace the contradictory elements of his personality, rather than attempting to
offer a single, finished portrait. Gorky’s preface, by contrast, refers to a specific letter, which he wrote straight after Tolstoy’s “going away” and found himself unable to finish several years later when it came time to publish *Reminiscences* in 1920. Woolf’s interpretation of Gorky’s admission of incompleteness is perhaps just as revealing of her own attitude to biographical composition as of her analysis of this particular book. The idea of the “man orchestra,” however, is one that resurfaces in Woolf’s theory of biography, though it is expressed somewhat differently in essays like “The New Biography” and “The Art of Biography,” as I discussed in Chapter Two. The sense in which a person might have multiple selves that exist differently in different moments and might even directly contradict one another is, for Woolf, played out in Gorky’s biography of note scraps.

Although Woolf’s review in the *NS* is not an overt advertisement for the Press, her praise of the work does draw attention to and advocate for the kinds of biographical innovations that the Press was selling. In highlighting and even hyperbolizing the spontaneous nature of Gorky’s observations and concealing the more conventional elements, Woolf emphasizes the novelty of the work, presenting it not as a carefully constructed translation comprised of collaborative labour, but as an immediate way of accessing Tolstoy as a biographical subject. Woolf is praising the work’s form, and in doing so is indirectly promoting the Press’s general approach. The candid photograph is in some ways akin to the pamphlet or to the slim volume, no less inventive for its seemingly unassuming exterior.
Virginia Woolf was not the only reviewer who had a favourable response to Gorky’s text when it was first published by the Press, though hers was perhaps the most complicated and nuanced review. Her essay is certainly significant in illustrating the benefits of the Press’s intimate professional relations with literary intellectual weeklies. The reception of Gorky’s work in other contemporary reviews, however, also focused primarily on the book’s contribution to the field of biography. In many cases, reviewers took a similar approach to Woolf’s in placing more emphasis on the book’s form as a method of biography than on the book as a source for biographical information about Tolstoy. Maurice Hewlett, in a review of three biographies in the London Mercury in 1920, identifies the Reminiscences as a book that moved biographical work into the realm of idealized art that Nicolson and Woolf valued and marked as an elusive ideal, classifying it definitively as literature:

And now for literature, after so much mere chronicling; for something which pierces life and burns from within; a living thing which becomes that which it inhabits and shines through. Such quality is possessed by Reminiscences of Leo

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120 I note this in part because it indicates that the interest in Russian literature was by this time taken for granted, but also because it shows that these books were treated as more than passive sources for biographical information about Tolstoy.

121 Hewlett was an historical novelist, essayist, and poet. He was not associated with the Woolfs in any way but was caricatured in Max Beerbohm’s A Christmas Garland (1912), though Beerbohm scholar John Hall describes him as “entirely forgotten today” (52).

122 The other two were the war memoir, The First World War (1920) by C. A. Repington and the family memoir, Our Family Affairs (1920) by E. F. Benson.
Hewlett’s figurative emphasis on light and fire resembles Woolf’s notion in “The New Biography” of the potentially incandescent quality of biography that actually captures something animate and produces the effect of art. He offers a curiously catachretic alignment, too, of the biography with life itself. Figuring the book not only as a flame but as “a living thing which becomes that which it inhabits,” Hewlett unsettles the distinctions between the writing of a life and the living of one: perhaps an even more drastic figuration than Woolf’s. By suggesting that the biography has become the subject, Hewlett offers a model for biography in which effective narrative strategies result in the removal of the distance between the act of writing and the experience of the biographical subject by the reader. Hewlett’s review is a far less eloquent piece of writing than Woolf’s “The Art of Biography” or “The New Biography,” or even Woolf’s review of Gorky, but the essay nevertheless indicates that biographical practice and its relation to actual experience was a concern of other reviewers besides the Woolfs and Nicolson. Hewlett concludes by suggesting that the quality of Reminiscences made it appropriate for a broad audience: “Everybody should read this little book. It is the real thing” (121). That Hewlett believes the book to be specifically literary in comparison with the more conventional “chronicles” (121) he addresses in his review, but also recommends it to

123 A clipping of this review from a press cutting service survives in the Leonard Woolf Papers at the University of Sussex (IQ3e).
“everybody,”(121) is a contradiction to the later scholarly notion that the modernists saw broad audiences and innovative literary methods as mutually exclusive.124

*The Autobiography of Countess Sophia Tolstoy*

I noted in the previous chapter that Virginia Woolf frequently solicited the memoirs of her female friends, and her interest in women’s writing is apparent in “Lives of the Obscure,” as well as in “A Talk on Memoirs,” and in *A Room of One’s Own*. It is not my purpose here to present my own feminist analysis of Sophia Tolstoy’s autobiography. Rather, I argue that recognizing the resonances between Tolstoy’s text and Woolf’s advocacy of women’s life writing and her argument for the material conditions necessary for a writer in *A Room of One’s Own* can illuminate aspects of Woolf’s feminism, particularly those that deal directly with female authorship. Sophia Tolstoy’s memoir provides a different perspective on Leo Nicolayevitch Tolstoy than those provided by Gorky and Goldenveiser. It also provides a model of a situation in which female authorship comes into conflict with male authorial “genius” and in which Tolstoy overtly attributes her difficulties in composing her autobiography to the material conditions related to her gender.125 Although the writing of the work was not solicited by Virginia Woolf as were some of the other women’s autobiographies that were later published by

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124 I address this point at length in my introduction and it emerges throughout the thesis in different situations, but it is worth noting here that the reviewer’s recommendation of the book to a broad audience is especially significant for an early Hogarth Press publication, since this period of the Press’s existence is often characterized as a time at which they were an exclusive venture publishing only the works of their friends.

125 Tolstoy specifically is described as a genius at least once in each of the four texts about his life.
the press, the book nevertheless predates many of her later comments in essays and letters about female autobiography.\footnote{126}

Sophia Tolstoy originally wrote her book because it was solicited by a publisher in Russia, S. A. Vegenrov, in 1913. Vegenrov hoped that it might offer insight into the controversy around Tolstoy’s last years in which his radically ascetic ideals interfered in serious ways with his family life and caused what subsequent biographers have described as one of the unhappiest marriages in literary history.\footnote{127} However, the book was never published, and the text itself was discovered among Vegenrov’s papers after his death in 1920. It was subsequently published in Nachala, a Russian review periodical, by Vasilii Spiridonov. The Hogarth Press published the text, again brought to them by Koteliansky, very shortly after the first public appearance of the work in Russia.

The short autobiography is framed by a translation of Spiridonov’s fairly extensive preface to the Nachala text, a translators’ preface written by Leonard Woolf and Koteliansky and a number of notes explaining the contextual details around Sophia Tolstoy’s own account of her life and marriage, which were new paratexts for English readers.\footnote{128} There is so much additional material that Leonard Woolf and Koteliansky acknowledge its cumbersome nature in their preface: “readers may perhaps consider that some of these notes and the documentation generally are over-elaborate” (5). As in the more famous case of The Waste Land, it is possible that the extensive paratexts were

\footnote{126} For example, Castles in the Air (1926), Life as We Have Known It (1931).
\footnote{127} Famously A. N. Wilson, who is repeatedly quoted on the subject.
\footnote{128} The notes are explanatory in nature – glossing names and places and providing some context about Tolstoy’s life and career.
included in part to fill out what would otherwise be closer to a pamphlet than a book. The translators note, however, that English readers should remember that all of the details around Tolstoy’s conflict with his wife had “roused the most passionate interest and controversy in Russia” (5).\textsuperscript{129} It is also a common feature of the Press’s Russian translations that they tend to be heavily annotated, and increasingly so over time.\textsuperscript{130}

A section of the original prefatory materials in the Russian text, reproduced in the Hogarth Press editions, explains its publishing history. One of the exchanges reproduced in Spiridonov’s preface is correspondence between publisher and author regarding the solicitation and development of Tolstoy’s work. In this case, the reader is privy to one side of the conversation – Sophia Tolstoy’s – so that the letters to her publisher become an additional source of autobiographical material. They document her transition from the silent wife of Tolstoy to a published author. That these letters are included as an introduction to her memoir indicates an investment on the part both of the Russian periodical and the Hogarth Press not only in the work itself, but in conveying the conditions under which women’s memoirs were being written and published. The letters, written during the composition of the autobiography, begin with a familiar topos: an anxiety about the value personal reflection and an initial refusal to write autobiography. Indeed, in response to the publisher’s first request for a memoir, Sophia Tolstoy simply declines: “I should hardly be able to write an autobiography, even a brief one” (7). This

\textsuperscript{129} Davison-Pégon identifies the proliferation of notes and appendices as a characteristic element of Kotelyansky’s early translations (341), but the addition of notes and appendices, especially to very short texts was also a feature of the Hogarth Press’s habitual practice.

\textsuperscript{130} Leonard Woolf lost patience with S. S. Koteliansky’s seemingly indefatigable interest in publishing these works and annotating them, to the extent that part of the contract of \textit{Talks with Tolstoi} was that the selections were not to exceed 120 pages in total (HPA 595).
protestation gains a certain complexity when it becomes clear that throughout her adult life, Sophia Tolstoy was composing a seven-volume private autobiography in her notebooks.\(^{131}\) Tolstoy does begin the process of writing, but she repeatedly complains that there is not much to say and the task is proving “difficult” (11) because of the “placid” (12) and “domestic” (13) nature of her existence. She describes the challenge of writing her life in a publishable form as a consequence of her gender. She writes that she is unable to find other women’s memoirs to read in order to position her own: “To-morrow I shall be sixty-nine years old, a long life, well what out of that life would be of interest to people? I was trying to find some woman’s autobiography for a model, but have not found one anywhere” (12). Her complaint about the lack of women’s memoirs sounds very much like Woolf’s repeated lament that there are not more of them in circulation, and the Press’s championing of Tolstoy’s memoir is an indication of its stake in the production of more women’s autobiographies.

The explanation that the Countess gives to her publisher about her difficulties in producing a valuable work is more complicated than her initial complaint would suggest. The problem is not only one of making everyday domestic life exciting to readers, or of having very few examples from which to draw her work. The pressing demands of everyday life were coupled in this case with the sense that Tolstoy’s husband had already written their lives in the form of his novels. Perhaps more unusually, Sophia Tolstoy explains that their lives were lived within his fictions as these were being written: “In so

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\(^{131}\) It is this work which was recently published for the first time in a complete edition in English as *My Life*. Tolstoy explains in the shorter HP *Autobiography* that the writings in *My Life* were unavailable to her as they had been deposited in a library to which she did not have access, along with her husband’s papers (25).
far as I could tear myself from domestic matters, I lived in my husband’s creative activity and I loved it. But one cannot put into the background a baby who has to be fed day and night, and I nursed ten children myself” (17). The tension between domestic and creative life is figured by Sophia Tolstoy as an obstacle to her own writing, both at the time of her marriage to Leo Nicolayevitch Tolstoy and later when she tried to write retrospectively. The reasons Tolstoy offers for her difficulty in writing about domestic life also resonate strongly with Woolf’s feminist project as she explained it in A Room of One’s Own, which she delivered at Cambridge in 1928, six years after the publication of Sophia Tolstoy’s memoirs by the Press. Rather than meditating on the tension and analysing it from a distance, as Woolf later did in A Room of One’s Own, Tolstoy represents the immediate experience of frustration that accompanied a certain kind of female domestic life and rendered female authorship more difficult to achieve.

Sophia Tolstoy’s status as a well-educated woman and, prior to her marriage to Tolstoy, a woman with writerly aspirations, makes her an even more noteworthy figure in relation to A Room of One’s Own. In Sophia Tolstoy’s case, all her literary and autobiographical efforts were literally destroyed as she entered her married life: “[Leo Tolstoy] read my story some time before our marriage and wrote of it in his diary: ‘What force of truth and simplicity.’ Before my marriage I burnt the story and also my diaries, written since my eleventh year, and other youthful writings, which I much regret” (28). It is an act that, for a reader of Woolf, cannot help but call to mind the example in A Room of One’s Own of Shakespeare’s imaginary sister, who “scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or to set fire to them” (47). Tolstoy offers no clear explanation for her destruction of her papers, and she, like Shakespeare’s
sister, burnt the stories and diaries herself. The implication is that her marriage came to replace her own authorial presence, and that her husband’s work took precedence over her own.

Unlike Gorky’s fragmentary notes with their non-chronological structuring, Sophia Tolstoy’s autobiography demonstrates a specific evolution over time of her opinions on female autonomy. While her accounts of her early life depict her as a follower of her husband, as the copyist of his works and the mother of his children, when she describes Tolstoy’s departure from the family she indicates that even before he left them, her own views diverged from her husband’s. This divergence was, she argues, the cause of her demonization in the popular Press:

I and my life remained the same as before. It was he who went away, not in his everyday life, but in his writings and his teachings as to how people should live. I felt myself unable to follow his teachings myself (65).

She figures Tolstoy’s renunciation of family life as a betrayal of her devotion to him. She also begins to write more about her own literary endeavours after she mentions her disagreement with her husband’s views, and she admits that although she “always regarded [her own] literary work with a certain contempt and irony, considering it in the nature of a joke,” (75), she nevertheless liked to write and here acknowledges for the first time in the narrative her lengthy existing autobiography, “the seven thick note-books under the title My Life” (75). The attention to her own authorship at the very moment of Tolstoy’s “going away” suggests that although she wrote her private memoirs over
several years while she was married, she only considered herself to be an author with a potential career before and after her marriage.

One of the other complexities of Sophia Tolstoy’s account is that her depiction of her early married life is described as being a happier time than that at which she asserted her independence from her husband’s views, particularly since her assertiveness was intended to maintain the structure of their family life. Far from idealizing independent material conditions that allowed her to write, she sees her independence as a sad condition. She writes that part of the reason for which she has difficulty remembering sufficient anecdotes for the purposes of writing her memoir is that she “passed through different experiences in which [she] had to pay with sorrow and tears for former happiness” (58). The nostalgic recollection of their early marriage also serves to strengthen her own defense of her resistance to Tolstoy’s radical politics, since she portrays their early marriage vividly and often visually, the peaceful, even pastoral scenes of “plant[ing] apple trees and other trees and ta[king] pleasure in watching them grow” (62) transitioning into the immaterial realm of the “spiritual going away” (69), which she figures in primarily abstract depictions.

Following the text of the memoir itself (again reproduced from the Russian original in the Hogarth Press edition) is an appendix that provides perhaps the most striking example of the embracing of contradictory values in a single publication. It is a rather extreme example of the provision of multiple perspectives within one book. “Appendix I” consists of a letter from Leo Tolstoy to his daughter and extracts from his diary that serve to counterbalance Sophia Tolstoy’s complaints about her husband’s
departure. The letters are included, according to Spiridonov’s editorial commentary, to “enable the reader to see something of his side of the question” (98). They make for a striking contrast to Sophia Tolstoy’s defense of her position as a devoted wife and mother negotiating the complexities of female authorship. Tolstoy writes that “all her acts towards me not only do not express love but are inspired by the obvious wish to kill me” (99). In light of these sinister accusations, Sophia Tolstoy’s autobiography serves the purpose of telling her own side of the story and of defending herself against Tolstoy’s many cultish followers. For English readers, however, the work would have been received somewhat differently. Although the atmosphere of “Russophilia” was generally reverent, and although there was a great deal of general respect for Leo Tolstoy, there was on the other hand a significant advocacy, particularly on the part of the Woolfs, for the writing of women’s lives and for women’s agency, and for the publication and dissemination of multiple sides to controversial questions.\textsuperscript{132} It is perhaps most notable that although Spiridonov included Leo Tolstoy’s letter as an appendix in order to frame Sophia Tolstoy’s account by undermining it, using it to “completely refute the false accounts which she persisted in publishing everywhere from the day of Tolstoy’s death until the present time” (100), Koteliansky and Leonard Woolf, the translators, make no such judgment. The translators offer no editorial comment telling readers which side of the story ought to be believed.

Sophia Tolstoy’s autobiography therefore serves the dual purpose of making available a woman’s account of late-nineteenth-century Russian life and of articulating

\textsuperscript{132} This relates back to the question of Leo Tolstoy’s misogyny, which Gorky points out as an unattractive feature of his character and which also would have been counter to the attitudes and ideals of the Woolfs.
the challenges that faced female autobiographers. Despite the overtly gendered content and the representation of female subjectivity in the memoir itself, the work nevertheless exhibits the characteristic complexity of the early Hogarth Press biographies by presenting aggressively contradictory perspectives in the appendices. For these reasons, *The Autobiography of Countess Sophia Tolstoy* is an important Hogarth Press work. It follows the Press’s practice of publishing works that might not otherwise find a publisher, in this case extending the reach of such a work by translating it into English for a new audience. Tolstoy’s autobiography also reflects on the very conditions that might lead autobiographical works by particular kinds of people never to be published, or, in even more extreme situations, never to be written in the first place.

**Tolstoi’s Love Letters and Talks with Tolstoi**

I have focused primarily in this chapter on Sophia Tolstoy’s autobiography and on Gorky’s *Reminiscences*, because those two works offer the clearest contrast and also relate most closely to the theories of the genres I addressed in Chapter 2. However, I would like to briefly address the two other works on Tolstoy here in order to give a sense of the diversity of methods that were employed in these four texts.

Tolstoi’s *Love Letters*, as Luftig points out, has a title that might be described as a “shrewd marketing decision, for the love letters (of which there were only fourteen) comprised little more than one-third of a 134-page book. Most of it actually consisted of Paul Biryukov’s foreword and the closing ‘Study of the Autobiographical Elements in Tolstoi’s Work’” (5). Biryukov takes a fairly uncomplicated approach to biographical criticism, stating simply that “the work of a creative artist is always in the wide sense of
the word his biography” (73), and proceeding to read Tolstoy’s novels in that light. The
love letters themselves address an early part of Tolstoy’s life and offer one side of his
correspondence with his first love, prior to his marriage to Sophia Tolstoy.

_Talks with Tolstoi_, as its title would suggest, takes the form of a traditional table-
talk. It consists primarily of Goldenveizer’s transcription of Tolstoy’s own statements
and general thoughts.\(^{133}\) While Gorky’s _Reminiscences_ contains elements of table-talk
since it offers some transcriptions of Tolstoy’s speech, Goldenveizer’s work adheres
more closely to the conventional model. Unlike Gorky’s more rebellious narrative voice,
which I explored in the previous section, Goldenveizer’s remains that of a reverent
disciple of Tolstoy, recording the wisdom of the master. He notes that since the extracts
were drawn from his diary, he “adopt[ed] no method and attempt[ed] to supply no
connection between one entry and another” (6). While Gorky’s thematic grouping of
notes, coupled with the persistence of his own narrative voice, suggests a certain order
even as the author denies the text’s constructedness, the order of _Talks with Tolstoi_ reads
as actually random. Though Goldenveizer himself appears in the recorded conversations
(he was a renowned Russian pianist and met Tolstoy initially because he was asked to
play for the family), he is usually a listener, and the book therefore offers the type of
curiously multi-layered autobiographical biography that table-talk often produces. It is a
form in which Tolstoy is presented through his own statements, but the statements
themselves come from another autobiographical source: Goldenveizer’s diary.

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\(^{133}\) As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, _Talks with Tolstoi_, as the last of the “Books on Tolstoi” was less
enthusiastically accepted by the Press. It also did less well financially. It is the only one of the four works
on which Virginia, rather than Leonard, Woolf collaborated with Koteliansky for the translation.
The “Books on Tolstoi” allow contradiction in the representation of a single personality. They all, to different degrees, foreground their fragmentary and incomplete nature. These are “notes,” “talks,” “reminiscences” which posit fragmentariness as a fundamental aspect of biographical composition. This sense of the truthfulness of accounts which are not “neat, congruous, rounded-off” (Sackville-West 729) occurs at the level of the individual texts, in which indecision, spontaneity, and contradiction are stylistic choices that heighten the authenticity of the biographical voice. Gorky’s biographies exhibit many of the features that later become explicitly aspects of “The New Biography,” and the memoirs of Sophia Tolstoy directly address some of the problems of female autobiographical authorship that have come to be associated with Woolf’s feminism. The four works on Tolstoy offer a range of biographical and autobiographical method. They include: a narratively straightforward autobiography, some fragmentary recollections, some biographical literary criticism, diaries, letters, and quotations. Taken together, all these versions of Tolstoy might offer slices of “Life,” but they resist a single authoritative account and a single method of presenting such an account.
Chapter Four: The Publisher as Theorist: Biography Series, 1934-1937

History is not only dates and facts, but Life itself, and it goes on creating itself every day, not as an abstract thing, but as the natural consequence of the characters and feelings and ambitions of the people we read about every day in the papers.

– Vita Sackville-West, *Joan of Arc* (1937)

Publishers’ series, from one point of view, are marketing ploys. These multi-part, often uniform sets of books can be considered to be explicit attempts, using what Isabelle Olivero describes as “consumer-oriented marketing methods,” to “present literary material not as individual works of art but rather as commodities” (72). Like a subscription sales method, a series suggests to a reading public that a given set of volumes has received the publisher’s seal of approval and has been grouped in such a way that the same readers might be interested in a whole set of books that share common ground. The efficacy of publishing books in series, especially uniform series, as a marketing strategy is clear. Many people still like to buy boxed sets and to collect uniform volumes, and they certainly did in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\(^{134}\) By the 1930s, series were often associated with cheaply produced and affordably priced general knowledge publications and reprints of classic literary works. The rise of *Penguin Classics*, Benn’s *Sixpenny Poetry* series, *Everyman’s Library* and the *Modern Library*, all in the 1920s and 1930s, is indicative of the proliferation of

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\(^{134}\) The American Antiquarian Society Library website describes the phenomenon as a “marketing gimmick” (O’Keefe par. 1) and notes that uniform series, often called “libraries” (par. 3) were so prominent in the 19\(^{th}\) century that a new library cataloguing field was developed to indicate books of this kind.
affordable books and reprint series during the period. It is tempting to dismiss series books as market-driven publications with little to offer the literary scholar, especially since there is a prevalent argument, as Jay Satterfield points out, that “commercial success and cultural prestige rarely [go] hand in hand, especially in the publishing world” (2). However, the reprint series of literary “classics” often explicitly aimed to combine these two seemingly disjointed things, and represents one way of negotiating the supposed divide between modernist literature and a mass reading public.

Altick and Leslie Howsam’s book-history studies of nineteenth-century series have been followed up in recent years by S. Eliot and Nash, among others, who argue that publishers’ series, particularly of the nineteenth century, are an especially revelatory phenomenon in demonstrating how the strategies and practices of publishers relate to cultural history and to ideas about taste, class, gender, nationalism, experimentalism and modernity. The current scholarly interest in publishers’ series is embodied in the recent two-volume collection of essays edited by John Spiers, *The Culture of the Publisher’s Series* (2011). The eclectic mix of series examined in these essays is testament to the value of self-contained series as groups of books that often offer more coherent criteria for inclusion than do regular publishers’ lists, and that therefore offer precise insights into the broader questions of taste-making and readership that interest book historians and scholars of modernism.

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135 Mary Hammond describes the phenomenon of the cheap “classics” (89) reprint series and their implications for late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century reading culture. Although many of the issues around reprint series are a bit different from those discussed in this chapter, the rise of cheap uniform sets is an important development in the broader history of production that informs the Hogarth Press case study.
This chapter will focus on the two short-lived biography series that the Hogarth Press published in the 1930s, a bit later than the period from the early nineteenth-century up to the end of the first world war that much of the existing scholarship on publishers’ series covers. Series publications were frequently the ventures of much larger firms, so examining the productions of a small press like the Hogarth Press requires a slightly different approach.\textsuperscript{136} The Hogarth Press series, for one thing, invite a less cynical attitude than that suggested by Olivero’s remark that series are marketing ploys designed to encourage consumers to purchase books as decorations for their bookshelves. It may be true in some cases that series, especially reprint series, were money makers as much as anything else. For the Hogarth Press, however, series provided a way of taking a collective approach to a topic, a method or an area of intellectual life and offering a number of perspectives and styles in conversation with one another. Market concerns were obviously still important and were not neglected in the formation of the series, but it seems that the aim of these ventures for the Press was nothing less grand than the ambition to self-consciously articulate, define, and even shape modern culture.

The Hogarth Press series took several forms. Series publications comprised 184 titles in the Press’s list, approximately 35\% of its total output.\textsuperscript{137} Uniform format and typography within each series was the usual practice. Frequently, the publications would

\textsuperscript{136} There were direct connections between the Hogarth Press series and mainstream series in at least two cases, since \textit{Darwin} and \textit{Socrates} were reprinted in the Puffin Story Books series in 1947 (HPA 334, 16 August 1946).

\textsuperscript{137} The series included the \textit{Hogarth Letters} and the \textit{Hogarth Essays}, the \textit{Hogarth Lectures on Literature}, the \textit{Hogarth Living Poets}, the \textit{Hogarth Stories}, the Merttens Lectures on War and Peace, as well as the Day-To-Day Pamphlets, the Psycho-Analytical Epitomes, the Sixpenny Pamphlets along with the two biography series, \textit{WMWS} and \textit{BTEC} (See Woolmer 134-155 for a complete list of titles in each of the series).
have a single artist-designed illustration that would appear on each of the volumes, sometimes printed in different colours of ink or on different colours of paper to distinguish between volumes. Additionally, many of the books explicitly advertised their affiliation with the Press by calling themselves, for instance, the *Hogarth Essays.*

While biography and autobiography were occasional topics that cropped up in other series – Harold Nicolson’s *The Development of English Biography*, for example, was in the *Lectures on Literature* series, and Theodora Bosanquet’s *Henry James at Work* (1924) was a *Hogarth Essay* – the Press also undertook two series specifically dedicated to biography. In 1934 and 1937, the Press began two short-lived ventures, *Biographies Through the Eyes of Contemporaries (BTEC)*, and *World-Makers and World-Shakers (WMWS)*, a series of short biographies that aimed to teach young people about history through the lives of great individuals. This chapter will use these two series as case studies for understanding the Press’s practices for conceiving of and executing series and for explaining the relevance of these kinds of publications to the ideas about biography that were circulating at the Press.

Despite the importance of contextualizing these two biography series in the broader publishing phenomenon of the uniform series, it should be noted that they, like many Hogarth Press examples, are atypical, and although they intersect with some aspects of the broader context I have sketched above, they also have their own unusual merits and failings. The two biography series, unlike even the Press’s own more long-

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138 The naming of the series after the Press reinforces Elizabeth Gordon’s argument that the Hogarth Press “imprint” lent significant cultural capital to any book that bore it, the imprint functioning as “a conduit of distinction” (Under the Imprint 5).
standing ventures such as the *Hogarth Essays* and the *Lectures on Literature*, and certainly unlike mainstream cheap editions and reprints, did not offer the usual advantages of series publication, though they did adhere to many of the principles of these kinds of ventures. Neither series achieved enough sales to go to a second impression and neither lasted long enough to really offer the appeal of acquiring the whole set to build a personal library. Appendix B offers an overview of the print run numbers, profit and loss figures, and price information for the publications in the two series, to give a clearer sense of the scale of the ventures. The cheap price of the *WMWS* books, as well as their use in schools, meant that they had greater initial print runs than the *BTEC* series. As I will discuss below, the *BTEC* series ended up being a kind of specialized quasi-academic series, so its print runs were relatively modest. Both series, in the scheme of the Press’s overall productions, can be described as roughly medium-sized: a far cry from the fine limited editions of 150 copies, but not approaching the bestseller circulation of some of Woolf’s and Sackville-West’s novels. *BTEC* had comparable production numbers to the *Hogarth Essays*, whose print runs were typically around 1000 in the first series and 2000 in the second series, and *WMWS* had a much larger run than did most of the other ventures. The series, unsurprisingly, were small by comparison to the mainstream trade in cheap uniform series. Everyman Library publications, for instance, were produced at a rate of between 100 and 160 titles a year and typically had first impression print runs of 10,000 sets of unbound sheets, which were then bound based on incoming orders (Krygier par. 2). While the number of titles in

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139 See Appendix B for sales figures. The only other record of the series’ relative market success is what can be inferred from the foreign rights correspondence below, and also from Blunden’s wry remark that there seemed to be “no danger of a second impression” (HPA 27, 1 October 1935).
each series was minuscule compared with Everyman’s (the Press’s total output, including all publications, series and non-series, for 1937, was 20 books), the print run numbers for the *WMWS* were approximately half of an Everyman run, and 5000 copies in 1937 was not a terribly small print run for a literary book.

Whatever the print run numbers might suggest about the Press’s hopes for the circulation of the series, the short-lived nature of the ventures can be explained with reference to the sales figures. Neither series was profitable for the Press. Every title lost money, with the exception of E. M. Delafield’s *The Brontës* (which, as I will explain later in the chapter, had a pre-determined audience in the form of the Brontë Society). The *WMWS* actually sold between 600 and 1000 copies per title in the first six months, less than one fifth of the titles’ print runs. Even Vita Sackville-West, who generally did well for the Press (her *Pepita*, published in the same year as her series biography, netted the Press a sizeable profit) brought in losses on her short biography of Joan of Arc.¹⁴⁰

Why, then, explore series publications that were clearly unsuccessful in the commercial marketplace? I argue that examining its series publications reveals a great deal about the Hogarth Press’s aims and methods. While, as I have argued in my first chapter, one of the defining features of the Hogarth Press list was its diversity, the series that they published allowed for more controlled and coherent groups of books and pamphlets to be disseminated under their imprint, even as they continued to produce writings of many types that they considered to be “of merit” (*VW L 2*: 242). The aim of

¹⁴⁰ See Stephen Barkway’s work on Sackville-West’s contributions to the Press’s fortunes (which I address further in my Conclusion) and the profit figures in Appendix B.
this chapter, then, is to show that while recognition of the diversity of the Press’s list is an important way of understanding its output, the series that did offer consistent selection principles and shared aims. Despite the absence of a prescriptive mandate for its whole list, and despite its celebration in its own self-characterizations of the haphazard and varied nature of its selections, the Press did undertake more deliberate ventures in the form of uniform series.

The two biography series make a case for keeping “Biography” as a distinct category, even as the solidity of the genre might be unsettled by some of the Press’s individual publications that play with hybridity of form. The co-existence of seemingly contradictory views on Biography narrowly defined on the one hand, and indeterminately labeled hybridity on the other characterizes the Press’s approach. The more traditional and definitive categorization of these books as biographies, however, does not mean that their formal and narrative techniques always adhered to traditional practices. The series are a good example of the use of a more circumscribed view of the genre to produce experiments and innovations.

In addition to viewing series publications as aspects of a publisher’s marketing strategy, exploring the aims of series can also allow the publisher to be read as a kind of theorist, presenting a view of a subject, or, in this case, of a genre, and then publishing works that fit that view according to a deliberate program. While not all of the books on the Hogarth Press list can be read as having quite such clear theoretical underpinnings, the two series examples that follow demonstrate some of the theories of biography that were circulating in the contemporary debates I addressed in Chapter Two, and that align
in interesting ways with the Woolfs’ own ideas about the genres. Both of the series I
discuss here offer comments on the contemporary debates about biography that the
Woolfs saw in the book world at large, and both seek to address perceived gaps in the
literary market. That in both of the following cases there were discontinuities between
the theories presented in the planning documents for the series and the market success of
the series themselves once they were published only serves to highlight the frequent
disjunction between ideals and actualities in the publishing of biographies, the
negotiation between theory and practice which remains a central methodological problem
for these genres.

**Biographies Through the Eyes of Contemporaries**

The books in the first of the Press’s biography series were composed using a method that
Leonard Woolf described as “obviously by far and away the best way of writing a
biography” (HPA 27, 7 December 1933). The books consisted of quotations and
fragments written by biographical subjects’ contemporaries and compiled by biographer-
editors. The series, which went by the somewhat clumsy and problematically ambiguous
title of *BTEC*, was modeled on a French publisher’s series based on a similar principle.
Only two such books were ever actually published, one on Charles Lamb by Edmund
Blunden, and one on the Brontës by E. M. Delafiel.141 The grandeur of Woolf’s claims
for the series and the great height of his expectations do not appear to have been borne
out by publishing success, but Woolf himself was satisfied with the books and remained

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141 The only scholarly treatment of either of these series to date is in Melissa Sullivan’s article on E. M.
Delafiel’s writings for the Press. Delafiel is a pseudonym for Edmée Elizabeth Monica De La Pasture,
later Dashwood (Woolmer 114).
convinced of the unparalleled merits of their method. The story of how the series came to be shows some of the ways in which an experimental method can be taken from concept to production and execution, and in this case also shows what happens when the resulting publications are not as marketable as the publisher thinks they ought to be.

The evidence for the early stages of the series’ development can be found in solicitation letters to potential authors. Edmund Blunden, then a lecturer at Merton College, Oxford, who also wrote *Nature in English Literature* (1929) for the Press and was a frequent reviewer for the *N&A* during Leonard Woolf’s editorship, was the recipient of Woolf’s first solicitation letter for the series, and became the first contributor to the series. Blunden worked as a journalist, biographer, and literary scholar, and is now best remembered as a war poet associated with Siegfried Sassoon. The choice of Blunden as a possible biographer for the series indicates that Woolf sought experience in research. Woolf describes the books as compilations of “contemporary accounts and documents such as birth certificates, reports by secret police and the military authorities” (HPA 27, 21 February 1933). Since these biographies aimed to show contemporary documents without accompanying narrative, the entire value of the projects depended on the quality of the research. The choice of academic specialists as authors, therefore, was appropriate. In order to be of interest, the documents and quotations would have to be either new finds or compelling excerpts in themselves, and judicious selection of

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142 Blunden was a specialist in the work of the romantic poets and essayists. He had published one other volume on Lamb (based on the Clark lectures which he delivered at Cambridge in 1932) and proceeded to write a subsequent biography in the 1950s. See *Charles Lamb and His Contemporaries* (1933) and *Charles Lamb* (1954).
materials, in the absence of a narrative voice, becomes the extent of the biographer’s task.

Blunden’s reply was enthusiastic. He wrote that the proposal was “attractive in every way” (HPA 27, 28 February, 1933) and proceeded to list existing publications that might interfere with the volume. The most pressing of the conflicts was a lingering although seemingly dead-end agreement that Blunden had made with Beaumont, a bookseller in Charing Cross Road, to produce a slim volume on Lamb (HPA 27, 28 February 1933). In the end, however, Blunden was released from his obligation to Beaumont and the Hogarth book went ahead, with Blunden promising to incorporate some materials that E.V. Lucas, the most recent biographer of Lamb at the time, “didn’t use and perhaps didn’t find” and to produce “an orderly collection of materials quite quickly” (HPA 27, 28 February 1933).

E. M. Delafield, the second author for the series, was, as Sullivan explains, a “middlebrow” (69) writer whose academic writings were published by the Press (she went on to publish the academic study of women writers and domestic traditions, *Ladies and Gentlemen in Victorian Fiction* with them in 1937). According to Sullivan, the publication of Delafield’s academic works was part of the Press’s attempt to support and encourage the academic aspirations of female writers working on female subjects in “an alternative social forum for women writers free from the pressures of the editors and

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143 Recent scholarship on the “middlebrow” label by members of “The Middlebrow Network,” led by Faye Hammill, Mary Grover and Erica Brown is one of the strongest trends in book history scholarship focusing on the early twentieth century. It is not my intent to interrogate the label or to specifically delineate the “brows,” but the work of Cuddy-Keane, Maria DiBattista and Lucy McDiarmid, Brown and Grover, along with the contemporary documents such as Russell Lynes that outline the debate about “brow” stratification that has characterized much of the criticism of literary hierarchies.
publishers of the mainstream literary establishment” (69). This book seems to offer a convincing example of the kind of feminist scholarship that Sullivan describes as a feature of the Press’s list. A letter from the Brontë Society requesting 350 copies at a discounted price to be sent to its members gives some indication of the kind of audience for this particular book, and literary enthusiasts seem the most likely target readers (HPA 63, 16 March 1935). The book therefore entered the market with a guaranteed group of Brontë fans, which explains why it was the only one of the series publications to make a profit, albeit a rather small one.

In his solicitation letter to Blunden, Leonard Woolf explains his idea and also offers the model of a French series taking a similar premise in order to clarify his purpose. Woolf describes the method for the series with reference to an existing French venture:

I do not know whether you know a series of biographies in French which consist entirely of contemporary records about the biographee. For instance there is STENDHAL “raconté par ceux qui l’ont vu” and VOLTAIRE “raconté par ceux qui l’ont vu.” […] The French ones that I have read seem to me to be fascinating, and I do not know any similar biographies in England about English people, and I have been meaning for some time to try some here (HPA 27, 21 February 1933).

In order to help Blunden understand the premise of the series, Leonard Woolf mailed him a copy of the French book on Stendhal to use as an example.¹⁴⁴ The impulse to publish

¹⁴⁴ Woolf’s loan of the book is evident in a letter from Blunden, finally returning the book after the series was published (HPA 27, 1 October 1935).
an English version of a continental European publishing scheme was also the motivation behind J. M. Dent’s much larger-scale Everyman series, so the prevalence of publishers’ series was not exclusively, and, indeed, not predominantly, an English practice. For the Hogarth Press, adopting a French model for the series also accords with its specialization in English translations of European literary works and biographical and autobiographical publications. Leonard Woolf’s awareness of contemporary French publishing ventures can therefore also be read as an additional aspect, beyond the translations, of what Marcus describes as the Press’s role as “an important site and conduit for the European and internationalist dimensions of modernist cultural production” (“The European Dimensions of the Hogarth Press” 328).

As well as the modeling of the publishing techniques on French practices, the influence of French experiments in biography throughout the early part of the twentieth century is also broadly significant: Strachey writes in the “Preface” to Eminent Victorians of what he perceives as the sad state of the English biographical tradition compared to that of France: “We have had, it is true, a few masterpieces, but we have never had, like the French, a great biographical tradition; we have had no Fontenelles and Condorcets, with their incomparable éloges, compressing into a few shining pages the

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145 Dent wrote in his autobiography of the development of the Everyman series that he “had felt that in England we had no library of classical literature like the French “Bibliothèque Nationale” or the great “Reclam” collection produced in Leipzig, of which you could buy a volume for a few pence…I knew that there were promiscuous collections of popular reprints, some very well done as far as that went […] but none covered the great field of English Literature let alone that of the world” (qtd in Hammond 91). Recent work on French “bibliothèques” by Wallace Kirsoop indicates the need for attentiveness in book history to “practices that are copied and spread from one place to others” (Kirsoop 64). Eliot, Nash and Willison also point to the need for the development of an “international perspective” on book history in their introduction to Literary Cultures and the Material Book, a collection that attempts to refocus what “had largely been conceived as a nation-based discipline[…] into a much broader, international context” (1).
manifold existences of men” (viii). Strachey seeks to create his own specifically English biographical tradition that exhibits some of the features of what he saw as French masterpieces in the genre, and publications like Nicolson’s *The Development of English Biography* also sought to rehabilitate a specifically English tradition that was perceived as having a disreputable lineage but a promising future: “[biography] possesses a most unfortunate heredity, it suffers from many congenital defects; and its collaterals behave with such frequent vulgarity as to bring it to disrepute. And yet English biography, in spite of its shabby relations and its mixed ancestry, is in fact a perfectly respectable branch of literature” (16). Leonard Woolf attempts a similar addition to English biographical history when he models the Hogarth Press series on the French one, taking a technique for composing biographies that has been successful in France and introducing it for English readers as a way of enhancing the form.

The form of the French books, though, provides an extreme case, and its extremity may well have prompted Leonard Woolf’s superlative admiration for it. While Strachey seeks to compress the “manifold existences of men” to “a few shining pages” (viii), Woolf adopts the idea of removing the biographer altogether, and offering not a narrative, but a collection of organized contemporary documents. That both, despite coming in at opposite ends on the spectrum of narrative license for the biographer, take French models, shows a desire to expand the purview of the English biographical tradition, and in the case of the *BTEC* series, also tests the limits of biographical form.

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146 As Caws points out in *Bloomsbury and France*, Strachey’s interest in French literature was intense. He frequently visited France, and his first book was a study of French literature (29-32). The Woolfs were also well read in French literature and Caws suggests that they often took trips to France to escape the pressures of the Hogarth Press (51).
As for the actual French series on which the Hogarth Press version was based, and which Leonard Woolf used to explain the premise of the undertaking to Blunden, it was published by Stock, and consisted of eleven volumes up to 1931. While there is no correspondence indicating that Leonard Woolf wanted to produce the series collaboratively with Stock or to set up any direct connection in this instance, the two publishers did have a professional relationship centred on the publication of Virginia Woolf’s works in France. The full title of the series was “Les Grands Hommes: Racontés Par Ceux Qui Les Ont Vus,” and a list of all the other books in the series appears in the front matter of each of the volumes, a conventional practice that the Hogarth Press also used in its own series publications. Leonard Woolf makes no secret of the Press’s practice of modeling its own series on its French counterpart, and the two kinds of books look outwardly very similar. The Hogarth books, however, address more specifically literary subjects, and alter the “grands hommes” criteria by including female writers, while the French series included historical and political figures as well as literary ones and treated only male subjects. This feminist stance was a particularly significant rewriting of Stock’s idea for the Press’s own purposes, since one of the sticking points relating to the publication of Woolf’s works in France was that *A Room of

147 Stock was a mid-sized and well-established Parisian publishing firm that was founded in 1708. A history of Stock mentions their translations of English modernist works including the novels of Virginia Woolf and F. Scott Fitzgerald, and the stories of Katherine Mansfield (de Bartillat 227).

148 Stock published the French translation of *Mrs. Dalloway* in 1927 and later undertook translations of some of Woolf’s other works into French, though the relationship between the two firms was not always congenial. Stock initially rejected *Orlando* on the grounds that it was “a book for which the public will not have the key” (qtd in Marcus “The European Dimensions of the Hogarth Press” 330-31).

149 The complete list of subjects in the French series up to 1931 is: Stendhal, Victor Hugo, Robespierre, Racine, Louis XV, Chateaubriand, Diderot, Napoleon, Molière, Lamartine.

150 Books in both series are Crown 8vo and approximately 230-250 pages in length.
One’s Own was flatly refused by publishers, and according to one French translator, the reason was that “the interest of women is the last concern of men over here” (Gueritte qtd in Marcus, “The European Dimensions of the Hogarth Press” 331). Some of the key differences between the French and the English series reveal the Press’s overall values, and while the books for the most part take similar approaches, the Hogarth Press ethos nevertheless pervades the BTEC series.

The French book on Stendhal that Leonard Woolf sent to Blunden as a model was compiled by Pierre Jourda. Unlike the Hogarth Press series, in which the compilers wrote their own prefaces, Jourda’s volume contains an introduction by Paul Hazard, a professor at the Collège de France. Hazard’s preface contains a well-defined argument for the compilation approach to biography:

Tous les critiques qui ont retracé [la] biographie[de Stendhal], depuis qu’on lui a rendu justice et que se sont verifiés ses prophéties sur sa gloire à retardement; tous les peintres qui l’ont obligé bon gré mal gré à prendre la pose, ont du l’interpréter, et d’une manière plus ou moins consciente le tirer à eux: ils lui ont imposé leur manière et leur style; ils ont fait des portraits dont on ne sait plus au juste lequel est le véritable, et qui ne se ressemblent pas. Quel plaisir de trouver

151 An irony in this situation is that a source for some of the ideas in A Room of One’s Own are expressed in a book of French criticism Woolf reviewed in 1920 (E 192-5). The attitude of the male-dominated publishers and translators quoted here was clearly not shared by feminist writers in France, but their dismissive attitude indicates the importance of Presses with feminist values in promoting works that might be rejected by a frequently misogynistic mainstream industry in England as well as in France.
ici, au contraire, un Stendhal instantané, un Stendhal sans retouches, saisi sur le
vif et au naturel (ix)!^152

In one way, Hazard’s privileging of an immediate biography that allows a figure to be viewed from several angles at once could be described as distinctly modernist and in keeping with contemporary experimental ideas about breaking up the hegemony of a single-author, straight-narrative biography, which Hazard equates with too much authorial involvement. Conversely, the books (both the Stock and the Hogarth versions) are organized chronologically by the events in the life of the subject (rather than the date of the quotation), and Hazard’s praise of the authenticity and power of the documents sounds hyperbolic, over-reaching the capacity of any written account to present a complete sense of a person. Hazard seems to be suggesting that multiple perspectives on a subject are valuable when those perspectives belong to his or her contemporaries, but misleading when they belong to a number of later biographers. The argument that literary biographical style obscures the biographical subject suggests that the very formation of a narrative by a biographer is bound to impose the writer’s style at the possible expense of a real expression of the subject. This is a biography that denounces the very notion of biography.

^152 All of the critics who have rewritten [Stendhal’s] biography since we recognized his importance and belatedly realized his glory; all the painters who forced him willy-nilly to take a pose, have had to interpret him, and have more or less consciously taken possession of him: they have imposed their manner and their style; they have made portraits of which we no longer know which is the truest likeness, and which do not resemble one another. What a pleasure to find here, by contrast, an immediate Stendhal, an untouched Stendhal, seized on the spot and in reality! (My translation)
The notion that a written work belongs in part to the character of the author is now a common one and a complicated idea in discourse about biography, and part of the aim of the French series is to remove the personality of the writer in order to attempt to show the subject “sans retouches” (ix), without the interventions of any kind of narrator. The very idea, however, that direct access to a real biographical subject is possible at all is one of which many modernist theorists of biography, including Virginia Woolf, were often skeptical, and the Hogarth Press versions of these volumes make less sweeping claims about the power of the document to give an unmediated, full account.¹⁵³

A preface like that to the Stendhal volume must be taken with a grain of salt, since the series was, after all, intended to be sold, and the marketing of its premise was an important part of ensuring its continued success. Hazard’s claims for the superiority of the book are difficult ones to swallow when it could equally be argued that the process of selecting, excerpting, ordering and grouping the materials could reflect the compiler’s preferences and predilections, just as a more conventionally narrated or painted portrait might reflect something of its maker. In the view of biography that values the genre as a “work of art” (Nicolson 8), this reflection is essential and can be a positive quality rather than a failing. The argument presented in the French volumes that these books present a paradoxically unmediated portrait of the subject is qualified and toned down in the

¹⁵³ There are many instances where Woolf expresses her skepticism about the possibility for complete success in the form, but perhaps the most often quoted instance is the end of “The New Biography,” in which she states that she cannot “name the biographer whose art is subtle and bold enough to present that queer amalgamation of dream and reality, that perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow. His method still remains to be discovered” (234–35)
Hogarth Press books. The promotional blurb, repeated at the front of each of the volumes, describes the books as follows:

a series of biographies which aim at presenting their subject entirely through the eyes of his contemporaries, that is, from contemporary descriptions by those who knew him. It is a method which would seem to have many advantages over the conventional biographical form. From the records – familiar and unfamiliar […] there emerges an extraordinarily vivid picture (Delafield front matter).

Although this description resembles Hazard’s in emphasizing the vividness of the method and the superiority of this form over other biographical practices, the more tentative “would seem,” and the less exuberant punctuation temper the promotion of the books enough to leave room for other biographical methods to exist alongside them. The sentiment remains in the Hogarth Press books that, as Blunden puts it, the job of the compiler is “to avoid interference” (13) with the materials, but Blunden also acknowledges his own editorial inventions when he explains that “lengthy passages have been split up in order that information might go to its chronological billet” (13).

Arranging materials that were written at various times according to the chronology of the subject’s life is an important structural choice, and one that inevitably affects the presentation of the subject’s development and character. The pitfalls and delights of representation, it seems, are unavoidable in biography, even when non-intervention is taken to an extreme, and the biographer’s narrative voice only lurks in the paratextual shadows.
Leonard Woolf was enthusiastic about the premise for the series, for all its contradictions. Woolf clearly thought that casting the biographer in the role of a silent observer was a fresh way of presenting important figures. He also found the French books delightful to read. The lively and often unusual selections offer a different kind of appeal than a narrative does. The English series carried over this delight in the amusing and immediate qualities of contemporary documents. The sweet irony, for instance, of Charlotte Brontë’s 1825 school report, which declares that she “writes indifferently” (qtd in Delafield 20), is left without comment for the reader to appreciate. However, the series presented a number of practical difficulties when it came to publication, and ultimately it seems clear that the books were hard to sell: not everyone agreed that quotation of fragmentary, table-talk excerpts and fully transcribed birth certificates represented “by far and away the best way of writing a biography” (HPA 27, 7 December 1933).

Some of the difficulties that might account for the series’ short life at the Press are matters that are very familiar in the everyday activities of a publishing house, but are not issues that are often considered by readers. Before a book of the kind that uses extensive quotation can even be published, for instance, permission must be granted to reproduce and in this case republish copyrighted materials. The permissions process can be time-consuming and expensive for authors, and while it would be necessary to seek permissions for any kind of quotation in a biography, one that consists entirely of quotations from private archival materials and previously published accounts presents a special case in this respect. The files in the HPA demonstrate that Delafield wrote the many requests herself. It does not appear as if there were any objections to the use of the quotations, and the publishers and estates varied in their requests for fees, but the very
process of ensuring that copyright was not being violated was a meticulous one and more than usually so when quotations comprise the entire fabric of the book.

Once all the permissions had been sorted and the books had been published in England, the next step was to see if they could be marketed internationally. The Hogarth Press had associations with several American publishers and brokered deals on a book-by-book basis. They often went so far as to sell leftover sheets that would be shipped overseas to be bound, marketed, and sold by American publishers. The Press approached Harrison Smith and Robert Haas with Edmund Blunden’s book on Lamb, in which the New York publishers were disappointed. However, the misunderstanding leading to their rejection of the book for the American market shows the possible pitfalls of translating a French series title into an English one, and also the importance of words like “modern” and “contemporary” in literary lexicon of the period. Initially, Smith and Haas expressed an interest in the book and asked for a copy to read, which the Hogarth Press sent to them. Once they had read it, Smith and Haas replied with a firm rejection:

Frankly, we are disappointed in it – not because it is not a fine book of its type, but because it is not the book which we had hoped for […] you referred to the book as “Edmund Blunden’s Charles Lamb, in the series of Biographies through the Eyes of Contemporaries.” Unfortunately, we did not understand from that title that the series was anything other than straight biography by modern writers (the word “His” was omitted); and acting on that assumption, we cabled you as we did

154 A lengthy correspondence between the Press and Macmillan about the possibility of arranging this for Delafield’s book appears in HPA 63, though nothing ever came of it.
on January 9th. Now that we have had an opportunity to see just what this book is, we very much fear that its appeal over here would be very limited indeed; so limited, in fact, that we do not believe we could undertake to publish it or other volumes of the same nature with the enthusiasm necessary to satisfactory results (HPA 63, 18 January 1935).

Not only is the English version used by the Press not a literal translation of the French, but the ambiguity of the word “contemporary” in this instance proves to be a problem. For Smith and Haas, “contemporary” means “modern,” whereas in the series it means contemporary with the historical subject. The implication here is that the “modern” biography is desirable, since it provides the kind of innovative “modern eye” with which Strachey looked at his historical subjects (xii). For Smith and Haas, the present observing the past is desirable, and the past looking at itself is not. The American publisher’s priorities, then, are at odds with Leonard Woolf’s view of the high quality of the books and go against the idea that fragments of contemporary reflection would be desirable books for potential readers.

Despite Smith and Haas’s rejection of Blunden’s book, the Hogarth Press tried again by offering Delafield’s book on the Brontës to Harcourt. It, too, was declined. Donald Brace, in a letter to Margaret West (who was the Hogarth Press manager for a brief time in the 1930s) wrote that “the idea is most interesting, and certainly there is refreshing and unusual material not to be found in other biographies or studies. However, I am afraid we couldn’t hope to publish this successfully, and I think we must resist its temptation” (HPA 27, 2 March 1934). In Brace’s brief and polite, but definite refusal, he
describes the values of the books as essentially being those of a good academic study: fresh and newly uncovered material, presenting an “interesting” argument through its form. Like an academic study, though, this kind of book seemed unlikely to work out well financially for the publisher. While Leonard Woolf’s enthusiasm about the idea meant that the possibility of a limited audience did not deter him from publishing the series, whatever the outcome financially, the larger, more conventionally commercial American publishers did not see fit to take the same risk. Without the support of a readership like the Brontë Society, these quasi-academic compilations seem to have had little appeal on the literary market, and even less so in the United States than in England.

*World-Makers and World-Shakers*

Despite the fact that only two publications ever made it to print in its first biographical series, the Press subsequently attempted a new and different series in 1937. This later series was intended for children, and undertook to publish books about famous and important historical figures. *WMWS* consisted of four biographies, of Socrates, Darwin, Joan of Arc, and Garibaldi, Mazzini and Cavour, and sought to teach children about history through individual life stories.

In the case of the *WMWS*, there is a particularly rich set of materials in the HPA that traces its development from its initial conception through to negotiations for American rights after the four books had been published in England. Among the

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155 Further negotiations to secure an American publisher were undertaken but none of them were successful. The most promising appeared to be with Macmillan, who considered buying unsold sheets from the Press, but they could not find a mutually agreeable price per copy, so they did not follow through with the deal (See HPA 27, 22 March, 23 March, and 6 June 1934)
documents are two undated, unsigned sheets that sketch out ideas for the series.\textsuperscript{156} The first is a typed document that bears the title “Biographies for Young People.” It describes the series, beginning with the selection of biographical subjects:

I suggest that the subjects of these biographies should be people who influenced the course of history, either through what they did, or through what they were: for this purpose, they may be admirable, or the reverse, they may have been active innovators of change; or the passive resisters to it. They should be people whose lives were sufficiently eventful to make a good story. Their names should be familiar enough to young people to make them want to read about them, but not so familiar through school histories or text-books as to seem too much like lessons (HPA 579, n.d).\textsuperscript{157}

The premise for the series, then, is not to undertake lives of the obscure, but the reverse: recognizable figures known for their significant, history-changing contributions. The definition of “influential” (HPA 579, n.d) here is relatively capacious, suggesting that the figures need not be conventional military heroes or politicians, but might come from a diverse range of fields, perspectives, and dispositions. The very selection of influential figures as biographical subjects might be read as a return to Victorian biographical practices of exaggerated hero-worshipping praise, but there are obvious qualifications in this description that carefully remove it from what might be perceived as the kind of

\textsuperscript{156} It seems likely that the planning documents were composed shortly before the series was begun in earnest with the solicitation letters described below, in the autumn of 1936.

\textsuperscript{157} There is no indication of who wrote this document, but my own theory is that Leonard Woolf was invested in the series and based on his editorial correspondence with the authors was likely involved in some way in the creation of the planning documents.
Victorian ideals that Bloomsbury biographers mocked and criticized. It is the effort not to seem Victorian, or old-fashioned, that ends up being one of the defining features of the series. That the figures might be “admirable, or the reverse” (HPA 579, n.d) is an obvious departure from overly reverent biographies, though the series itself conspicuously lacks despicable subjects. It is worth noting that although all of the chosen subjects were admirable, they are never described as “heroes” here or in any of the promotional materials, presumably since that word calls up too many associations with Victorian biography. As I will discuss further, the subjects are often praised in complicated and seemingly circuitous ways in the biographies and in the dust jacket descriptions, perhaps in order to avoid calling them “heroes.” “World-Makers and World-Shakers,” is just this kind of circumlocution, and it has, like many of the biographies, a kind of predominantly leftist revolutionary tone congruent with many of the political pamphlets that the Press was producing at around the same time.\footnote{Willis describes the 1930s as a predominantly political phase for the Press (235). Although socialist politics was an important element of the Press’s agenda, and doubly so with a genre such as biography that is so concerned with identity politics, it also published in this sphere, as in many others, a variety of perspectives to support the view that the audience should be exposed to many sides of political perspectives. Among the Press’s political publications was, for instance, the first English translation of Mussolini in 1933.}

Coupled with the equivocal treatment of heroism in this planning document is an equally qualified approach to fame. The subjects are to be famous, but not too famous. The fine balance between recognizable names and overexposed historical subjects with whom children would already be familiar goes some way to explaining the somewhat curious mix of subjects (each book deals with a figure or figures from a different country and each represents a different era) that ended up being part of the series. The quite
specific level of notoriety required for a subject to fit the series’ mandate also explains why some proposals that the Press received for new volumes in the series were rejected outright, and some were filed, instead, for possible future use.\textsuperscript{159}

The subjects’ carefully calibrated levels of fame combine with the series’ cautiously pedagogical aim, that the books should not “seem too much like lessons” (HPA 579, n.d), but should still communicate the significance of these figures and should teach young people about history. These biographies were not the only books that the Press published that had a broadly educational purpose, and many of the books and pamphlets that it published in this field displayed a similar uneasiness about the state of education in England.\textsuperscript{160} Of particular relevance to the pedagogical goals of the WMWS is an especially damning book by Mark Starr, entitled \textit{Lies and Hate in Education} (1929), which gives samples of the textbooks from England and other countries to “show how widely spread, and in what variety, are the dangers of a mental dictatorship, often wielded by its agents and received by its victims unconsciously” (11). Starr concludes that the most significant prejudices are nationalistic and class-based, and demonstrates the glorification of war and the underrepresentation of the working classes in history textbooks. While the primary subjects of these biographies are not working-class people,

\textsuperscript{159} Some rejections were specifically based on the proposed biographical subject, for instance, Christopher St. John wrote to suggest St. Francis of Assisi, and Leonard Woolf replied that the Press had “not reached the stage of deciding the next lot, and I rather doubt whether St. Francis would be one of the next. If, however, the time comes to include him, I will communicate again” (HPA 579, 11 November 1936).

\textsuperscript{160} Titles included \textit{English Village Schools} (1931), \textit{Challenge to Schools: A Pamphlet on Public School Education} (1934) and L. B. Pekin’s \textit{Public Schools: Their Failure and Their Reform} (1932), \textit{and Progressive Schools: Their Principles and Practice} (1934), and two later pamphlets, \textit{The Military Training of Youth: An Enquiry into the Aims and Effects of the O. T. C.} (1937) and \textit{Co-Education} (1939). See also Willis (242-3) for a summary of the “curiosity” among the education books, W.H. Auden and T. C. Worsley’s \textit{Education Today and Tomorrow} (1939).
the attitude towards the working classes, especially in the biography of Socrates, is one that attempts to be inclusive and to redress some of the problems that Starr specifically outlines. The WMWS books aim to go beyond existing textbooks, and the generally negative view of set texts and school readers in the educational publications of the Press is an important context for understanding the creation of the series. Leonard Woolf takes up Starr’s challenge to improve the educational materials available for children when he writes in his solicitation letter to Stephen King-Hall that “it is notorious that there is a dearth of history books for schools which take a modern and enlightened view of the past” (HPA 579, 23 April 1936). The suggestion that the books ought to be “modern” and to replace the unsatisfactorily old-fashioned existing history textbooks aligns with the Press’s more general interest in cutting-edge, unusual publications that are notable for their newness.

L. B. Pekin, author of the Darwin biography for WMWS, was better known for his non-fiction writings on the subject of educational reform. His advocacy of progressive education and coeducation, and his opposition to traditional English Public education exemplify the “modern” and “enlightened” (Woolf HPA 579, 23 April 1936) attitudes expressed in the series. Pekin’s writings on education focus more on general reform than on books, and his views on pedagogical practice inevitably would have informed his approach to the writing of an educational biography. The qualities of gender and class awareness, in particular, accord with the broader attitudes toward educational reform that characterize the Press’s publications in this field.

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161 L. B. Pekin was the pseudonym of Reginald Snell, an educator and education reformer.
Having established the kind of biographical subject that was desirable for the series, and that the primary purpose of the books should be to entertain and to instruct in a modern and socially progressive way, the planning document goes on to explain who should write these biographies. The books “should be written not so much by experts on any particular period or subject, as by people who understand young people and can write simply, and vividly, without writing down to their supposed readers” (HPA 579, n.d). The desire for the books to be entertaining and written in the appropriate tone goes back to the document’s initial requirement that the subjects’ lives should be interesting enough to make good stories. Good stories, told in a simple, immediate, and respectful way, sounds like a fairly straightforward requirement, and does not sound so very far from the Press’s overall mandate to publish writing that is “of merit” (VW L 2: 242). The interest in having storytellers rather than experts as biographers is one way in which WMWS differs from the BTEC series, which was written specifically by experts in the literary fields of which their subjects were part. The niche markets to which each of these series was catering were clearly quite different, and in the case of the WMWS series, the target audience was much more clearly defined.

The final important aspect of the WMWS planning document deals with physical format and material considerations, including size, word count, binding and price. The books were to be cheap, slim volumes: “a book of about 15,000 words, bound in limp cloth, to be sold at 1/6, or, at the most, 20,000, at 2/- - I incline to the former” (HPA 579, n.d). These specifications would make the books shorter (at around 80 pages each) and less expensive (by about half) than the other book series published by the Press, and position it somewhere between the pamphlet series and sturdy hardbacks. In this way, the
*WMWS* books are just the kind of “small books” (Woolf “The Hogarth Press” 1) with which the Press began, and their short and snappy nature is an important feature that accords with the general aim of holding children’s attention, and also with Strachey’s ideal of “becoming brevity” (viii) in biographies. This initial vision of the material books was carried out almost exactly as planned, with the addition of a uniform dust jacket, which was designed for the whole series by John Banting, and a single illustration as a frontispiece at the beginning of each volume.

More information about the development of the series comes, as in the case of the *BTEC*, in the form of solicitation letters to potential contributors. The planning document contained a list of possible biographers, and the frequently reiterated statement when writing to possible authors that Leonard Woolf was “very anxious to begin the series with the right people” (West HPA 579, 27 April 1936). The “right people” clearly referred to the reputation of the biographer as well as the familiarity of the subject. In several letters, the solicited author replies to the Press declining to write for the series but suggesting a young unknown writer as an alternative, and the Press refused these on the grounds that “the earlier volumes in the series will have to be by people whose names are already known to the public, in order to establish the series. Later on, this consideration will be less important” (West HPA 579, 19 October 1936). While, as I mentioned in Chapter One, the Press often promoted unknown writers, in the case of the series publications, the Press only published works from known writers in order to establish the premise of the series. In this case, then, the subject matter and idea for the series was considered important enough that reputation of the authors is used in order to promote the experiment. Unlike the case of the *BTEC*, biographical authorship is here
emphasized and the qualities of the biographer are expected to play an important role in the success of the books.

The series was publicized and a brochure was produced listing each of the publications alongside descriptive blurbs. The Press also took out advertisements in the *NS* and *The Observer*, and petitions were made to have the books included on the list of approved textbooks in several countries. There was a significant misunderstanding after the books were advertised and published, however, about the intended audience for the series. While the planning document had indicated that the series was to be written “for young people” and while the solicitation letters to authors accorded with that view, ultimately the intended audience was not limited to children in the initial advertisements. Vita Sackville-West, having seen the advertisement in the June 19th issue of the *NS* which stated that the series was “for schools and adults,” wrote to Leonard in dismay, since she had gone so far as to have “a child of 14” (HPA 579, 1 January 1937) read through the proofs in order to ensure that the book would be comprehensible for its audience. Sackville-West expresses the view, too, that these books for youth might be out of keeping with the kind of seriousness expected of the Hogarth Press in the periodical forums in which it was advertising:

Surely no author in their senses would have dreamt of writing one of those little books in words of one or two syllables for adults? [sic, underlining in pencil on typescript] I hope that you will not think me impertinent for suggesting that you

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162 The Press, like most publishers of the period, created its own advertising materials and wrote the copy for both the circulars it distributed to its own subscribers, customers, and booksellers, as well as those that appeared in newspapers and periodicals.
are misleading your public by not making it clear that they are primarily for children, especially in an advertisement in a paper like the New Statesman, where adults are very much adults (HPA 579, 21 June 1937).

The difference between Sackville-West’s take on the broader marketing of the series and Leonard Woolf’s assessment of the possible demographic had partly to do with ideas about what made a good children’s book, and with his own feeling from having read the books that adults might enjoy them, but also his sense that it would be “absurd to cut out a perfectly legitimate sale” to “certain kinds of adults” on the basis that the books were “for children only” (HPA 579, 22 June 1937). Woolf cited contemporary reviews to support his feeling that it would be appropriate to market these books to adults as well as to children. Woolf did, however, change the advertisement in the NS to reflect Sackville-West’s concerns, and the ad taken out in the June 26th issue amends the description to read simply “Suitable for schools,” including the review quotation to support the argument for a broader audience:

![Figure 5: The New Statesman, June 9th 1937](image)
Having analyzed the premise for the series and its implications, I will now explain how the books themselves measure up to the expectations outlined in the various stages of planning, soliciting, writing, and marketing. According to the initial vision for the WMWS series, the intended stylistic features of the publications were an approachable tone for a young audience, an entertaining story, and vivid characterizations of the biographical subject and of the historical period in which he or she lived. In examining the books themselves, it is clear that these aims were kept very much in mind, and it is also easy to see why Vita Sackville-West would have been a bit perturbed at the idea that these books were being marketed to adults as well as children and teenagers.

One way of achieving an accessible and immediate sense of character is through physical description, and two of the volumes (Socrates and Darwin) have photolithographs of portraits in the frontispieces to the books (in the cases of Joan of Arc and Garibaldi, Mazzini, and Cavour, there are maps). However, the illustrations are
supplemented by vivid and exaggerated verbal caricatures. Socrates is described repeatedly as a “scrubby ugly little man” (37) with an “ugly ridiculous face” (41). The bluntness of the characterization becomes, in this volume, at once a way of providing a relatable picture of Socrates and also the vehicle for a moral lesson about strength of character:

The other boys all laughed at [Socrates] because he was so squat and ugly, with his snub nose and sticking-out eyes; he looked ridiculous in the palaestra. But no one bullied Socrates. For one thing he was very tough, and for another he had a way of staring out at you under his tufty eyebrows which was frightening (28-9).

There is an obvious imaginative leap on the part of the biographers in describing the look of Socrates’s eyes, and in their assumption that other schoolboys were frightened of him. This imaginative account contrasts with the lack of narrative voice in the BTEC books. However, like the exaggerated characters in Strachey’s Eminent Victorians, this version of Socrates is an easy one to picture and a hard one to forget. The shift to the second person “you” implicates the reader in the feeling of being looked at, but it also creates a sense of participation and immediacy. It also adds a straightforwardness to the tone that reminds readers implicitly that this is no stuffy history book. The “tufty eyebrows” (29) of a great Greek philosopher might not tell a student very much about his ideas, but it might serve the purpose of giving human detail to an otherwise inaccessible figure, and might just be amusing enough to keep a student reading in order to arrive at the sections of the books that deal with philosophy and history, the key points of which are explained in Socrates in similarly simplified language.
Darwin gets a similarly vivid physical depiction. However, rather than the kind of conjecture that appears in *Socrates*, Pekin instead describes the evidence before him: he summarizes in words the key features of existing artistic portraits. In a childhood portrait, Darwin appears as “a sturdy person in a velvet coat with shiny buttons and a lace collar, clasp[ing] (prophetically) a plant in a pot, with firm round face, hair hanging over his forehead, bright eyes and the Darwin nose already plainly formed, and good, well-chiselled lips” (10). There is still considerable poetic license in these descriptions, and Pekin’s focus on the “bright eyes” is an attempt, like that describing Socrates’s fearsome stare, to explain Darwin’s way of looking at the world. In a later portrait, Pekin continues, Darwin “was still clean shaven, but now wore luxuriant side-whiskers, and his heavy overhanging brows gave him a thoughtful, ‘beetling’ expression. The top of his head was hairless, and showed his great domed forehead to its full advantage” (30). Here, the “thoughtful” expression and the “great domed forehead,” emphasize Darwin’s apparently massive brain. Finally, the most well-known portrait of Darwin “shows him looking rather sadly out from under a big soft black hat, with a long black cloak wrapped round him. Indoors he wore two peculiar garments: a shawl over his shoulders, and large loose fur-lined boots which he could slip over his shoes” (52). Physical descriptions are just the kind of details that are often dismissed in biography as trivialities of a gossipy and insubstantial sort. However, the physical caricature is an important aspect of these portrayals, if only because the small details and the emphases on these important historical figures’ less attractive qualities are part of an attempt to produce a funny, memorable image. As in the case of Gorky’s Tolstoy, being able to picture the
formidable countenance of the biographical subject is an important aspect of the work’s experiential value.

Part of the reason for attempting to provide mocking and imaginative depictions of the biographical subjects’ appearances is the fear of biographies that fail to capture the character of the subject because they are too reverent. In her biography of Joan of Arc, Vita Sackville-West uses an analogy that will be familiar from Virginia Woolf’s essay “The Art of Biography,” (1939) in which Woolf compares “the majority of Victorian biographies” to “the wax figures now preserved in Westminster Abbey” (72). Woolf argues that these kinds of biographies bore only “superficial likeness” (73) to the people they were meant to describe, and contrasts the superficiality of Victorian portrayals with Strachey’s more vivid verbal portraits. Strachey himself used the waxwork analogy nineteen years earlier when he wrote about Queen Victoria’s memorialization of Prince Albert in Queen Victoria (1921):

By a curious irony an impeccable waxwork had been fixed by the Queen's love in the popular imagination, while the creature whom it represented – the real creature, so full of energy and stress and torment, so mysterious and so unhappy, and so fallible and so very human—had altogether disappeared (119).

Strachey’s additive list of qualities, with the parallel “so” repeated for emphasis, serves to illustrate the disjunction between the Queen’s reverent, loving image of her late husband and the man himself. By the time the WMWS came along in the 1930s, “waxwork” biographies were judiciously avoided, and the image is self-consciously called up in order to guard against the pitfalls of a biographical method that would
produce such figures. As Woolf does in “The Art of Biography”, in Joan of Arc, Sackville-West echoes Strachey’s image to explain the difference between well-realized biographical portrayals and less convincing historical descriptions:

Many historical figures appear to us rather stiff and unreal, like waxworks with strange and beautiful clothes arranged upon them, and a few dates and facts attached to their names; but Joan of Arc, for those who take the trouble to know something of her, is not at all like that. She is not wax, but a real living person with her faults as well as her virtues (8).

Though it is likely that both Woolf and Sackville-West were echoing Strachey, Sackville-West’s appears to be the first use of the analogy to suggest idealized “waxwork” images as the products of history and biography, rather than of personal mourning or of unsuccessful fiction. Although, at first glance, there appears to be no direct relationship between “The Art of Biography” and the WMWS books, parallels like this between the ideas for which Virginia Woolf is now famous and those expressed in the other books published by the Press indicate that Woolf’s theories of biography were part of a larger conversation, and that examining these other works can illuminate and provide additional contexts for Woolf’s essays.

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163 The phrase appears to have a long history, and according to the OED, the first usage to describe literary characters who lack imaginative persuasiveness is Gladstone’s declaration in 1858 that “Homer gives us figures that breathe and move. Virgil usually treats us to waxwork.” (“waxwork” 2a). Virginia Woolf uses wax figures as an analogy elsewhere to describe Lucy Ashton from Walter Scott’s The Bride of Lammermoor as “a doll with sawdust in her veins and wax in her cheeks” as compared to Defoe’s Moll Flanders (“Phases of Fiction” CE 2: 66). She also reflects on a visit to the waxworks display in the Abbey in “The Fleeting Portrait” (CE 4: 204-206).
The main argument in these comparisons of Victorian biographical subjects to waxworks is the familiar one that excessive praise and the omission of personal faults from a biography will never give an accurate picture, and that warts-and-all biography is more revealing than straight admiration. L. B. Pekin makes a similar argument in Darwin, but compares overly idealized subjects to statues:

It is difficult to catalogue a man’s virtues like this without appearing to stiffen him into a statue – what the world calls a plaster saint, and generally, perhaps wholesomely, dislikes. But there is little stiffness in Darwin: with all his “greatness,” which in a way seems to take away from a man’s ordinary humanity, he is a delightful, salty, human and often humorous character (8).

Pekin here explicitly states that inaccessibly great or formidable characters can be an impediment to convincing biography, and that if a person seems faultless, the public is bound not only to disbelieve the portrayal, but also to dislike the overly virtuous figure. The emphasis on the “humanity” of the biographical subjects in the series is frequently reiterated and relates back, as well, to the idea that the subjects ought not to be too famous, since if this were the case they might already have “stiffened” (8) into statues or to have become waxworks in the public imagination. The attempt to explain the contributions of “world-makers and world-shakers” and to praise their achievements without presenting boring hagiographical accounts often results in these heavy-handed and imaginative portrayals focusing on the subjects’ minor endearing foibles.164 These

164 It could be seen as particularly difficult to avoid hagiography in the case of Joan of Arc, who was canonized as a Catholic saint in 1920, and of whom there are and were many actual statues.
descriptions are often, as in the one of Darwin above and in Sackville-West’s depiction of Joan of Arc, in the present tense to imply the enduring nature of character. The emphasis on what is “human” and “ordinary” (Darwin 8), also connects with what critic Liesl Olson has described as the characteristically modernist desire to “retain and amplify a world of ordinary experience and everyday things” (“Virginia Woolf” 47) while maintaining a focus on interior lives.

As well as attempting to bring seemingly inaccessible figures imaginatively to life, the WMWS books aimed at a broader historical vividness. Biography as an instrument for teaching history is clearly part of the premise of the series. In cases of geographical or temporal distance, analogies, often clumsy ones, are made between historical settings and life in England in the mid-1930s. Presumably these gestures are intended to make Ancient Greece and Medieval France accessible to young modern readers. However, these politically inflected comparisons often seem rather absurd and tend to have unintentionally comical results:

fewer men were killed in their wars than are killed in our modern civilized wars. And if you wanted to destroy your enemies’ town you carried off the treasure and statues and things instead of dropping bombs on them and smashing them. And you sold the women and children into slavery, which was very unpleasant, but not quite so bad as being gassed (Socrates 10).

The use here again of the second person “you” to evoke a kind of fellow feeling and to implicate the reader in the everyday practices of Athenian warfare, along with the casual vagueness of “treasures and statues and things” exemplifies perhaps a less successful
attempt at a chatty and relatable account of history. The description of selling women and children into slavery as “very unpleasant, but not quite so bad as being gassed” seems now like misguided historical comparison, but the basic point – that the technologies of warfare have developed to an alarming degree by the 1930s – was one that accorded with the pacifist agenda of the Press.

In addition to the comparison of modern to ancient warfare, the comparison between England of the late 1930s and Athens of antiquity was used in the service of socialist ideas about the visibility of the working classes in historical narratives. *Socrates*, in particular, aims at expressing an understanding of history as an uncertain and equivocal subject, not a coherent narrative of facts. In a section entitled “Our Picture May Be Wrong,” there is a particular emphasis on the unknown lives of the working classes and on the lives of craftsmen and labourers whose lives are not part of a conventional historical record:

In the last chapter we tried to show you what it felt like to be an Athenian in the time of Pericles. Of course that sort of general impression can be very misleading. For instance, you could not make people a thousand years hence know what it feels like to be an Englishman in 1937, because it feels quite different to be a coalminer in Durham and a noble lord in Mayfair […] However clever you were, you would know nothing of the thoughts and feelings of the cowman, or the butcher, or the coalminer, because you had no records of how they lived […] The writings which we still have give us a hopelessly one-sided view of life, mostly
from the point of view of the educated nobles, and the archaeologists don’t
discover enough things to fill up the gaps for us (23).

By presenting many possible identities for “an Englishman,” Mitchison and Crossman
provide an antidote to the lack of attention to working-class life that Starr perceived, in
*Lies and Hate in Education*, to be so glaring in existing historical textbooks. The view
that current textbooks give “a hopelessly one-sided view of life” resonates very much
with what Starr describes as the “mental dictatorship” of biased historical accounts.

How, then, did American publishers and child-readers react to Socrates’s tufty
eyebrows and Darwin’s salty countenance? The evidence for actual reader reactions to
the series is, as in many instances, unfortunately rather thin on the ground. There
remains, however, a collection of letters to the Press from high school students in Canada
who had read *Joan of Arc* in school. Jack Hodders, from Nepean, Ontario, wrote
requesting an explanation for the dust jacket:

> Our High School class is using your short biography of Joan of Arc by V.
> Sackville-West of the World-Makers and World-Shakers series, as one of our
> Literature text books. We are quite puzzled, and divided in our opinions, of the
diagrams on the front and back of the wrapper of this book and would like to
know the meaning of these diagrams. (HPA 579, 5 December 1939).

Three similar letters from high school students in rural Ontario to the Press all ask the
same question, about the meaning of John Banting’s cover.
None of the students mention the content of the books or offer any critical reactions, but John Banting wrote a reply to the students, offering his best attempt at an explication of his work:

As the cover was to be used for a series of biographies of characters who differed considerably, I found myself in the awkward position of having to be very non-committal [sic]: to represent no one specially and yet to generalize for all. So the cover is not an illustration but an embellishment which is best regarded as one does the patterns upon fabrics, china or architecture. […] On the back are shapes like walls receding in violent perspective under a sky full of such baroque cloud outlines that it might well be a great canopy of spaghetti […] After all the world is composed of things just as strange (HPA 579, n.d).

Banting suggests, unsurprisingly in the case of a modernist artist, that his work is primarily non-representational, but his effort to capture the broader aim of the series also
indicates the necessity of keeping the whole in mind. Since the cover confused the students enough to make them want to ask about it, it seems that the quirky design was unusual for textbooks, and that the Hogarth Press’s aesthetic distinctiveness was perhaps as much a part of experiencing the books as was the reading of the experimental narratives.

The *WMWS* series gives the strong impression of trying to connect the past with the present, and of refocusing history through the lens of a distinctively modernist narrative. Sackville-West’s suggestion that “history is not only dates and facts, but Life itself, and it goes on creating itself every day, not as an abstract thing, but as the natural consequence of the characters and feelings and ambitions of the people we read about every day in the papers” (*Joan of Arc* 9) emphasizes both modernity and personality. The suggestion that intimacy with vividly depicted historical figures is one of the chief aims and the chief pleasures of biography is prevalent throughout the series, and the simplified language directed at a target audience comprised mostly of students makes these connections striking.

Publishers’ series offer a way of accessing, in terms that are simplified for the purposes of articulating them clearly in order to market uniform series, some of the ideas about biography that were circulating at the Press. The *BTEC* series comments on the state of the biographer’s authorship and attempts to provide a biographical portrait without the presence of a distinctive narrative voice. It also takes some of the socially problematic conventionality of the French series on which it was based and inserts female writers and female subjects – an important ideology at the Press. The *WMWS*, in
directing itself primarily at a young audience, offers some simplified explanations and enactments of Stracheyan biographical experiment, and provides humorous characterizations of important historical figures by combining new and old methods for an ultimately pedagogical aim. *WMWS* also attempts to solve some of the problems identified in the Press’s earlier educational publications and to view history from a socialist perspective. Since both series were characterized more by their approach to biography than by their subject matter, they overtly enact some of the techniques that were associated with modernist biographical theory. While the two series took wildly different, even opposite approaches to biographical methodology – particularly in relation to the prominence of the narrative voice, with one privileging expert research and the other storytelling – both series demonstrated an insistent concern with what was “modern” about biography, and with the kinds of innovations that were possible through modernist biographical methods at the Press.
Chapter Five: The Reticent Autobiograftions of Henry Green and Christopher Isherwood

Reticence in autobiography is probably fatal. If a man goes into the public confessional, he must be prepared to shout the ultimate “peccavi,” to tear off the last poor rag that hides the nakedness of his own miserable soul. It is notorious that very few people have succeeded in this masochistic form of literature, though thousands have tried.

– Leonard Woolf, “Reticence” (1929)

The idea of a reticent autobiographer seems paradoxical. Leonard Woolf’s sense that in order to write a successful autobiography, one must bare all and submit oneself to the world’s judgment is an expression of the view, derived in part from the genre’s confessional aspects, that writing autobiography is necessarily an act of extreme personal exposure. Woolf goes on to suggest that “the autobiographer must be either reticent or irreticent; he cannot have it both ways; but over and over again people who write their autobiographies (or even letters) practice a pseudo-irreticence, posing before the world and themselves, trying to hide with one hand what they uncover with the other” (“Reticence” 17). Woolf’s notion that autobiographers ought to wear their hearts on their sleeves, or even go so far as to not wear sleeves at all, is questioned and complicated by two writers who published autobiographical works at the Hogarth Press

165 An additional context for the description of “reticent” biography is the use of this word to describe Victorian methods in which such details as the private and particularly the sexual lives of the subjects were suppressed in order to convey more wholesome moral images. Rosenbaum uses the word in this sense to describe Leslie Stephen’s biographical tactics as the practice of writing “reticent lives” (BG 53). The self-conscious rhetorical appropriation of reticence as a narrative posture is, I think, historically a feature of autobiography, particularly (in the form, for instance, of modesty topoi) and its usefulness as a framework for thinking about narrative voice need not end with the usual interpretation of reticence as a means of covering up shameful secrets. A lack of reticence, as Edmund Gosse points out, is more usually associated with modernist biographers and autobiographers than reticence is, and, as he puts it, “the first theoretical object of the biographer should be indiscretion, not discretion” (114). The ways in which Isherwood and Green reclaim privacy and reticent narrative postures but maintain frankness about sex, for instance, indicates a development in autobiographical practice through the modernist period that results in a focus on the nature of selfhood but at the same time an ability to be coy and playful about the ways in which that selfhood is expressed in published narrative.
between 1938 and 1940. Christopher Isherwood and Henry Green both published autobiographical accounts of their educations in the 1920s, and both did so in a way that reclaimed reticence as a posture that offers stylistic as well as ethical possibilities for the autobiographer. Green’s and Isherwood’s perspectives on and works in the genre of autobiography present counterexamples to some of the earlier views of the genre, like Leonard Woolf’s, that were circulating at the Press, and anticipate the development of autobiographical writing in the late 1930s and early 1940s. One way of maintaining reticence as an autobiographer is to clothe one’s work in the garb of fiction, and the two books I address in this chapter are presented, both by their authors and by their publisher, as decidedly “autobiografictional.”

**Autobiografiction**

The crossover between fictional forms and autobiographical ones has been the most common subject recently for critics of modernism and of biography. Major modernist novels like *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* invite readings of this kind by implicating the conventions of biography and autobiography in their titles and by engaging with and sometimes even parodying the forms. As I explained at length in

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166 Henry Green was the pseudonym of Henry Yorke.
167 See my Introduction for a brief summary and Saunders (167-179) for a detailed exploration of the origins of this term.
168 The most recent example of this approach, as I explain below, is Saunders’s *Self Impression*, which is not a study of “formal” or “contractual” autobiography, but ways of combining autobiography with fiction in the modernist period and directly beforehand (5). Earlier critics, like Suzanne Nalbantian, take writers of fiction, like Proust, Woolf, and Joyce and read them through autobiographical theory.
169 The negative attitude towards autobiography and the personal, in particular, expressed as a response to the kind of biographical criticism that links the events in a novel with the life of the protagonist, is most famously associated with Eliot but is also one reason why biography and autobiography have not been adequately acknowledged as important genres in the development of modernism (See my Introduction for further details).
Chapter Two, for Woolf the writing of autobiography or biography always necessitates a certain balance of fiction and fact, of “granite and rainbow,” (“The New Biography” 478) or, as Leonard Woolf puts, it of “romance” and “solidity” (“The Promise of Spring” 849). Fiction and autobiography were rendered even more indistinguishable by contemporary literary critics who aligned authors’ biographies straightforwardly with events in novels, and who consequently often read fiction as if they were reading autobiographies. The use of inventive modes of narration (including imagined dialogue and free indirect discourse) in autobiographies also complicated the distinction between the two genres and resulted perhaps in a legitimization of a view that non-fictional texts could be artfully manipulated to the same degree as fiction could, although on a different register.

Max Saunders employs Stephen Reynolds’s term “autobiografiction” (qtd in Saunders 13) to write about fictional works that use autobiographical tropes, conventions, and narrative techniques. Saunders treats fictional works that are central to the modernist canon, and argues that “modern English literary history is shaped by conflicting responses to life-writing” (10). While Saunders’s work focuses on fiction and its relationship to the “autobiographical,” rather than with what he calls “formal” or “contractual” autobiography, his exploration of Reynolds’s term and his persuasive argument for the importance of these genres in understanding the literary culture of the period informs the works I address in this chapter, which are themselves dealing with the
complex relations between autobiography and fiction. While my own work in this chapter addresses some of the questions that frequently concern critics writing about fictional autobiographies, the emphasis here falls on works whose “autobiographifictional” status is derived in part from the publishing practices under which they were produced. I also argue, though, that denial of straightforward autobiography in these works offers reticence, in the narrative voice, in generic affiliation, and in self-presentation, as a positive value. One way of writing a reticent autobiography is to pretend that one is writing a novel, or that the lines between the two are entirely indistinguishable. The three works I discuss in this chapter, Henry Green’s Pack My Bag (1940) and Christopher Isherwood’s Lions and Shadows (1938) and Goodbye to Berlin (1939) were marketed by the Hogarth Press under the publisher’s category of “Fiction,” and all offer protestations against their autobiographical natures, but at the same time offer indications that they were considered to be autobiographical by their authors, their reviewers, and their readers.

Green and Isherwood arrived at the Hogarth Press at a difficult time. Day-to-day production was increasingly challenging in the years between Isherwood’s Goodbye to Berlin in 1938, just before the war, and Green’s Pack My Bag in 1940, at the height of the material effects of the second world war on publishers. Contextualizing these two writers’ experimental outputs in terms of wartime publishing is especially important since they both take first-hand experience of war (or, in Isherwood’s case, the

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170 Saunders refers to the kind of “contractual” autobiography outlined by Lejeune, which, in the context of On Autobiography, is defined as a work in which the name of the protagonist is identical to the name of the author: "in order for there to be autobiography[...] the author, the narrator, and the protagonist must be identical" (5).
profoundly-felt lack of first-hand experience in The First World War and the dreaded anticipation of the Second World War) as a central subject in their works, and cite their fears of war, or their guilt about not participating in war, as reasons for writing autobiography. This chapter will begin by explaining the broader changes that were occurring at the Press that affected the production of these works, addressing, in particular, the difference between Isherwood’s pre-war text and Green’s mid-war text. The chapter will then analyse their publication histories and explain the contributions of their reticent and highly relational approaches to the development of autobiographical theory. This chapter aims to show, too, the singular aspects of autobiography as far as a publisher is concerned, and to demonstrate some of the practical differences between biography and autobiography from the publisher’s point of view.

John Lehmann and the New Face of the Hogarth Press

In 1938, John Lehmann purchased Virginia Woolf’s half of the Hogarth Press and became a full partner in the business with Leonard Woolf, a role in which he remained until 1946. Lehmann’s innovations and contributions to the Press’s list came mostly in his introduction of a new generation of authors who are now called the late modernists or “thirties writers” – including Auden, Isherwood, and Stephen Spender – to the Press. The Woolfs sought to revitalize their list and to stay relevant to the wider cultural scene by engaging with a younger group of mostly socialist writers whose ideals aligned with their own. Henry Green was a kind of peripheral member of the group that Lehmann introduced, since he was less vocally socialist and was also working, throughout the 1930s, as a factory manager, rather than writing full-time or working in a literary profession. As Lehmann put it in his autobiography, “[Green] had never been associated
with the left-wing intellectual movement of the thirties, and yet in *Living* he seemed to have solved, without any political undertones, many of the problems that had exercised us about ‘proletarian’ writing” (76).

As historians of the Press (including Leonard Woolf and John Lehmann themselves) have noted, the relationship between the two partners was often tense, and, increasingly, Woolf came to feel that he was being treated as an irrelevant old fogey, while Lehmann felt that he was treated as a subordinate and not as an equal partner in the firm.\(^{171}\) Personal conflicts notwithstanding, Lehmann’s influence on the Press’s selections increased through the later 1930s and into the 1940s, and a full treatment of the Hogarth Press necessitates an examination of his role in its development as a firm.\(^{172}\) With Lehmann’s encouragement, the two autobiographers I treat in this chapter came to the Press, and it is clear from the editorial correspondence and from Lehmann’s autobiography that Isherwood and Green were Lehmann’s selections. Leonard Woolf did not write to Henry Green at all about his works, and Lehmann was the main correspondent on the Press’s end for both of them.\(^{173}\) It is possible that part of the reason

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\(^{171}\) Most often quoted in support of the argument that Woolf and Lehmann’s relationship was less than harmonious is an exchange of letters in which Lehmann writes to Woolf: “you are badly out of touch and your interventions either (and increasingly) irrelevant or petulant,” (LWP IQ2a, 15 October 1943) and Woolf replies that he feels he is being treated by Lehmann with “the grossest rudeness” (LWP IQ2a, 23 October 1943). While this particularly heated dispute does indicate the major point of contention between them, nowhere else in their professional correspondence are quite such hostile views expressed, so this should be viewed as an anomaly rather than an exemplary exchange. In both of their autobiographies, they treat each other with a tone of measured bitterness.

\(^{172}\) Snaith recently acknowledged Lehmann’s role in promoting internationalism at the Press (“Conversations in Bloomsbury” 151), and a growing interest in his contributions seems to be resulting from an expanded view of the Press as a full-scale publisher, and an interest in its later activities.

\(^{173}\) Leonard Woolf did solicit more of Isherwood’s writing for the Press in 1937 after it had already published *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, and eventually “Sally Bowles” as a pamphlet. Woolf’s negotiations led to the publication of *Goodbye to Berlin* by 1939 (HPA 197, 16 March 1937).
for which Henry Green, in particular, is a relatively less studied Hogarth Press author is that he was aligned with Lehmann rather than with the Woolfs, and interest in the Press has often stemmed from an interest in understanding the Woolfs’ immediate social and cultural circles. While Isherwood has a longer-standing critical reputation and has received more attention and popular recognition than Green, both writers make substantial contributions to the genre of autobiography that deserve attention, particularly where the perpetual and pressing question of drawing the line between fiction and non-fiction is concerned. Isherwood and Green take up Reynolds’s portmanteau genre of “autobiografiction” in ways that both connect with and resist their predecessors. The turn inward to the personal and autobiographical from the biographical is also a sign of things to come in the literary world – there are many who would argue that the middle and later twentieth century saw a flourishing of the broadly confessional and autobiographical, or, as Saunders puts it, “the quintessential postmodernist genre,” (3) if postmodernism is allowed to have a genre.174

“A Convenient Ventriloquist’s Dummy”: Lions and Shadows and Goodbye to Berlin

“A Berlin Diary,” the opening story of Goodbye to Berlin, begins with a series of descriptions of depressingly interchangeable objects that the protagonist encounters when he arrives as a lodger in Berlin: “street leading into street of houses like shabby monumental safes crammed with the tarnished valuables and second-hand furniture of a bankrupt middle class” (9); the repeated whistled signals of prostitutes in the street,

174 See, for instance, Stephen Heath on the possible conservatism of genre theory that is potentially at odds with poststructuralist figurations (169).
“lascivious and private and sad” (9); the “various marks and stains left by lodgers who have inhabited this room” (12). The replicable nature of the traces of life left around the protagonist lead him to reflect on his own insubstantiality as a subject:

Where are all those lodgers now? Where, in another ten years, shall I be myself? 
[...] How many pairs of shoes shall I wear out? How many thousands of cigarettes shall I smoke? How many cups of tea shall I drink and how many glasses of beer? (13-4).

With its echoes of T. S. Eliot’s “I have measured out my life with coffee spoons” (l. 51) the passage draws attention at once to the immediacy of the narrative voice and to the dullness of the objects by which a person’s life can be measured and documented. This highly material beginning at once introduces “Herr Issyvoo,” as the autobiographical subject of the book, and subordinates him to the objects around him. The declaration “I am a camera with its shutter open” (9) is misleading in the suggestion that the narrative is unmediated, as if the narrator is nothing but a transparent recorder, as several critics have noted and the protestations in the book that attempt to push “Herr Issyvoo” to the side of this narrative are gestures of reticence that characterize Goodbye to Berlin, even as they reveal a more complex autobiographical authorship than the statements themselves offer.  

David Thomas was one of the first to try to oppose literal readings of Isherwood’s documentary or photographic method, arguing that the enduring or generalizable values of his descriptions defied the highly specific single moment that a snapshot would imply (44). More recently, Andrew Monnikendam has used the reception of Isherwood’s phrase as a starting point for understanding the rise and fall of his literary reputation (125).
Goodbye to Berlin is a collection of connected short stories addressing, through the “lens” of Isherwood’s strong first-person narration, the “lost” (Preface i) lives of people who are in one way or another marginalized by society. The book could be and has been seen to resist the autobiographical label, but its first-person narration, the alignment of the protagonist’s name with the author’s, and the diary form with which it plays, invite reflections on autobiography, if only in order to discover what Isherwood accomplishes by denying and ironizing the first-person voice he uses. In the prefatory note to Goodbye to Berlin, Isherwood writes that “Because I have given my own name to the ‘I’ of this narrative, readers are certainly not entitled to assume that its pages are purely autobiographical, or that its characters are libellously exact portraits of living persons. ‘Christopher Isherwood’ is a convenient ventriloquist’s dummy, nothing more” (i). The figure of the author’s name as a “ventriloquist’s dummy,” or, in Isherwood’s other figuration, the instrumental mediator of the camera lens, complicates the status of the work’s genre, since protesting against autobiographical readings is not a surefire way of preventing them and can even sometimes have the opposite effect.

Publishers were and are aware of the potential for different markets for different genres, and often make decisions about where a book should fall based on an anticipated readership. In one of his literary reviews, Leonard Woolf explained the practice of calling ambivalently biographical or autobiographical works “Fiction” from a publisher’s point of view and noted its prevalence. In an assessment of the pricing and categorization of books, Woolf compares a biography of Charles Dickens and a novel with the same subject that were published in the same week in September of 1928 in his column “Truth and Fiction”:
If the one is a biography and the other is a novel, then the only difference between truth and fiction has been reduced by the publishing trade to the difference between 16s. and 7s.6d. – and I must honestly say that I do not think the difference is worth the additional 8s. 6d (794).

He goes on to argue that while the novelist under review does use some techniques of fiction, like inventing dialogue, he is doing nothing different than what the “modern biographer” (794) often does with historical material. Although Woolf disliked the “novel” about Dickens, he admitted that “to vamp up a life of Dickens out of this material and call it a novel is legitimate bookmaking, according to modern standards” (794). Woolf’s assessment of the situation emphasizes the importance of the book trade and of the publishers in determining genre, but it also presents a mildly skeptical view of publishers’ attempts to sell “modern” autobiography as fiction, a tactic that the Press itself employed in the cases of both Isherwood and Green.

That the autobiographical elements of *Goodbye to Berlin* do not vanish with the author’s prefatory protestations is perhaps most starkly obvious in the legal implications of basing a literary work so closely on real people. Lehmann had expressed worries about libel in Isherwood’s autobiographical writings when he was considering publishing “Sally Bowles” section in *New Writing* in 1936, and had asked Isherwood, as Willis notes, to “seek approval from the original Sally Bowles, Jean Ross” (292). This Isherwood did before presenting the work to the Press in 1937, and Leonard Woolf accepted it and eventually published *Sally Bowles* as a pamphlet in 1937. The fears of libel resurfaced, however, when *Goodbye to Berlin* seemed poised to reach beyond its
initial audience at the Hogarth Press. In the publishing season of 1939 in which it appeared, the book sold 4000 copies (at the standard price of 7s6d), a relatively small circulation in mainstream terms. However, in 1940, it was selected to be produced by the Press as a Reader’s Union Edition of 23,000 copies, to be sold by subscription through the Union at the cheaper price of 2s6d (HPA 195, 12 October 1939). Correspondence between John Lehmann and H. W. Oberndorfer at Penguin when the book was to be reprinted for an even larger audience as a Penguin paperback in 1944 indicates that as it reached beyond its initial audience at the Hogarth Press, the book’s autobiografictional nature made it a possible risk for libel suits. Oberndorfer wrote to Lehmann to suggest that Isherwood’s prefatory note would not waive his liability were he or the publisher ever to get sued for personal damages:

It would be equally serious if the portraits are libellously inexact [underlining in original]. Only two of the portraits appear to be dangerous, namely, Sally Bowles and Peter Wilkinson […] If any living person could claim to be identified with either of these characters, it might be very awkward and expensive (HPA 195, 6 December 1944).

Oberndorfer’s concern that the wider circulation of the Penguin series might mean that one or other of the real people on whom Isherwood’s characters were based would be more likely to come upon the book is one that explains, in part, why the Hogarth Press were less worried about legal action taking place in relation to their semi-fictional works about living people, since their circulations were generally smaller than those of the
mainstream publishing houses that had legal departments. There is no reply in the files to Oberndorfer’s letter in the archive, but since Goodbye To Berlin appeared as a Penguin paperback in 1945, the fear of libel must not have prevented its publication in the reprint series.

In addition to worries about libel, the larger circulation that resulted from the reprint series of Goodbye To Berlin by the Readers’ Union and later by Penguin also resulted in more vocal readers offering reactions to the book. The Readers’ Union magazine from the period, “Open Forum,” invited readers to write in with their opinions on the works they read as part of the program, and the reviews of Goodbye to Berlin were decidedly mixed. However, whether or not they liked the book, readers were consistently interested in the question of whether or not it was fictional. Peter Gamble, in an assessment entitled “Isherwood: The Man Who Uses His Eyes” describes the author as “a breathless, elusive creature, this Isherwood […] There is a sort of autobiography, but it is really a novel, and you can’t tell” (10). Not all of the reactions to Isherwood’s shadowy authorial persona, or to the content of his works, were quite so admiring. D. M. Young from Glasgow wrote to the publication to say that he hoped that the Union would “never again distribute to your subscribers a book of this description. […] We want good, clean reading […] it is not for you to distribute a book of this nature of even slightly touching upon such a subject. If your readers want to read such literature they

176 The Press did face some difficult decisions regarding libel and legality, and although its smaller circulations and staffing structure meant that they did not have a systematic way of dealing with legal questions until quite late, the repercussions of a major lawsuit would have upset the delicate balance of their finances as a small independent publisher. A libel suit was also filed against Vita Sackville-West by her aunt for the misrepresentation of certain details in Pepita (HPA 422, 8 December 1938). The Press was insured against libel late in 1938 in order to protect against these kinds of cases.
can buy it themselves in a book shop” (1). This kind of negative reaction is one example of a case in which the shift from a small press publication to a larger circulation can lead to a diverse set of opinions about a given book.

*Lions and Shadows: An Education in the Twenties* is in some ways a more overtly autobiographical narrative than *Goodbye to Berlin*, but one that nevertheless denies its own affiliation with the genre. In the note “To the Reader” that prefaces the book, Isherwood defines autobiography by distancing his book from himself: “I had better start by saying what this book is not: it is not, in the ordinary journalistic sense of the word, an autobiography; it contains no ‘revelations’; it is never ‘indiscreet’; it is not even entirely ‘true’” (1). Here Isherwood provides a definition comprised of negatives – his assumption that autobiography must involve indiscretion, revelation, and truth, offers a particular idea of autobiography that associates the genre with journalism, ordinariness, complete fidelity to truth, and extreme exposure of the subject. This association of revelation with autobiography agrees with Leonard Woolf’s definition of the genre and by arguing that he is writing fiction, Isherwood denigrates autobiographical tactics, rather than overtly claiming to expand the possibilities available to the autobiographer in terms of a narrative voice.

A pressing question about Isherwood’s criteria for autobiography in light of the experiments with the form, such as Harold Nicolson’s *Some People*, and even, perhaps, in light of his own ambivalently autobiographical work in *Goodbye to Berlin*, is why Isherwood seems to deny the contemporary theoretical discourse and the practical experiments that suggest a more expanded possibility for the autobiographical genre.
Why does he imagine, even writing *Lions and Shadows* as late in 1938, that in order to be classified as an autobiography, a work must be “entirely ‘true’” (i)? Isherwood’s placement of “truth,” like “revelation” and “indiscretion” in quotation marks indicates that to some degree the term and perhaps the ontological category is contested, even if it seems to him to be a requisite feature of autobiography. Isherwood continues his address to the reader by providing a further distancing from the exposures and expectations of fidelity to truth that might ordinarily accompany an autobiography by suggesting that the protagonist of the book is simply to be viewed as “a young man” and the fact “that the young man happens to be myself is only of secondary importance: in making observations of this sort, everyone must be his own guinea-pig” (i). The paradoxical positioning of himself as the primary subject, and at the same time suggesting that he represents a kind of fictionalized everyman or anonymous “young man” suggests an ambivalence about the project that is followed up by a decisive and abrupt imperative: “Read it as a novel” (i). In his preface, therefore, Isherwood has managed to admit that he is both the subject and the author of his own work (a classic adherent to Lejeune’s autobiographical “contract”), and also to suggest that this coincidence of author and subject should not prevent readers from approaching it as a novel.

The attempt to remove the autobiographical subject from its own narrative continues as *Lions and Shadows* begins in earnest. The opening section, describing life in a boys’ public school, is written predominantly with a plural pronoun, implicating all the schoolboys in the story: “We couldn’t laugh wholeheartedly at Mr. Holmes, because even laughter would put us, we felt, under a kind of obligation to him” (10). As the work continues, Isherwood shifts points of view and styles of narration frequently, sometimes
using the first-person singular, sometimes the first-person plural, and sometimes the third-person limited omniscient. Perhaps the most unusual of Isherwood’s self-distancing techniques is to characterize and analyze his past self in its various phases as the protagonists in his early unpublished autobiographical novels: “I mustn’t be too hard on poor Christopher [Garland]. With all his faults, he was an advance on Leonard Merrows” (124).

*Lions and Shadows* is, therefore, a revisionist metanarrative, describing and subsuming the author’s first unpublished attempts at writing novels and diaries, which he began in his undergraduate years. Isherwood quotes frequently from his diaries and early writings, often humorously to undermine them as embarrassing juvenilia: “[my Diary] was to be modeled upon Barbellion’s *Diary of a Disappointed Man*. My chief difficulty was that, unlike Barbellion, I wasn’t dying of an obscure kind of paralysis – though, in reading some of my more desperate entries, you would hardly suspect it” (97). Isherwood frequently criticizes his tendency to mimicry and his unwillingness to write honestly: “The Sainte-Chapelle I privately thought hideous, but Mr. Holmes told us that it is one of the wonders of Europe, so I dutifully noted in my diary (needless to say, I was keeping a diary of our tour; how I wish I had put down one interesting, one sincere, one genuinely spiteful remark): ‘a marvelous example of the colouring of medieval cathedrals’” (28). By underscoring the obvious insincerity of his diary by annotating it with recollected feelings that directly contradict what he says, Isherwood at once criticizes his youthful dishonesty and also opens up questions about how much of the new *Lions and Shadows* might be read skeptically. Isherwood’s treatment of his early literary endeavours seems akin to his reading out loud of his first Cambridge tutorial essay: “I writhed with
embarrassment, coughed, made spoonerisms, gabbled through the worst bits [of the essay] with my face averted” (*Lions* 59). Shy self-consciousness is such an essential part, according to Isherwood, of his early autobiographical writings that he and his friend Chalmers invent a word for it, “‘quisb’ – a standard word in our vocabulary corresponding roughly to ‘shy-making’” (80). Isherwood’s treatment of his own early writing both enacts and thematizes the self-conscious, embarrassing, and reticent aspects of the autobiographer’s work, and perhaps nowhere more so than when he writes about his first attempt at a novel, *Lions and Shadows*.

It is worth quoting at length from the passage in which Isherwood describes the early *Lions and Shadows*:

“the novel,” I might almost call it; for it was much less a work of art than a symptom – of a certain stage of pubic development in a member of a certain class, living in a certain country, and subjected to a certain system of education. *Lions and Shadows* was, in fact, a very typical specimen of the “cradle-to-coming-of-age” narrative which young men like myself were producing in thousands of variations, not merely in England, but all over Europe and the United States. It was based, of course, upon a day-dream about my Youth – *le vert paradis*, from which I felt myself, as did my great army of colleagues, to be hopelessly and bitterly excluded (74-75).

Here Isherwood describes himself, as he did in *Goodbye to Berlin*, as one among “thousands of variations,” (74) and his dismissal of his early novel is nevertheless ironized by his use of the title *Lions and Shadows* for the book in which this dismissal
appears. Isherwood also notes that “such novels were written in equally large numbers prior to 1914, but with this difference: we young writers of the middle ’twenties were all suffering, more or less subconsciously, from a feeling of shame that we hadn’t been old enough to take part in the European war” (74). Isherwood’s self-analysis clearly offers a kind of psychoanalytic approach to war psychology, which is exemplified, too, in his use of diction that brings to mind medical (“suffering,” “symptom”) and scientific (“specimen” or “guinea-pig”) contexts. However, the threat of the impending war, coupled with the residual guilt about the previous one, was something that clearly affected Henry Green as well, and became a kind of impetus for and justification of autobiographical writing. Indeed, Isherwood declared that if he had realized that this “subconscious” shame was the motivating force behind his work, his early novel might have been a kind of success, “a genuine, perhaps a valuable, work of art” (75). The title of Lions and Shadows, therefore, was reclaimed in the 1938 publication as an account overtly concerned with personal reactions to war.

“A Long Intimacy Between Strangers”: Henry Green’s Pack My Bag
Isherwood’s books paved the way for Henry Green at the Press, and John Lehmann frequently cited Isherwood as a successful author whose sales might be emulated by Green. In attempting to convince Green that he ought to consider excerpting Pack My Bag in the New Writing series before it appeared as an individual publication, for instance, Lehmann used Isherwood as an example of the tactic’s success: “In several cases, notably in that of Goodbye to Berlin, publication of sections some time before the book was published as a whole, created just that interest and expectancy which is so very important – perhaps the most important thing in publicity – for a book’s success” (HPA
The high sales figures of *Goodbye to Berlin* meant that *Pack My Bag* could potentially follow in its footsteps, since the two take similar subjects and could, Lehmann thought, be targeted at similar audiences. As I will explain, *Pack My Bag* did not meet Lehmann’s expectations, since its sales ended up being somewhat disappointing.  

With the beginning of the second world war came a number of major changes for the Hogarth Press in addition to Lehmann’s increased role as partner and manager, and a sharp decline in the number of publications that they produced annually. Not least of the consequences of the war was the imposition of paper rationing in 1939, which severely restricted the Press’s list and meant an increasing number of rejections of authors whom they would ideally have liked to publish. In an article on the publishing industry during wartime, Cecil Day-Lewis writes of the double-bind in which publishers found themselves: “Paper rationing means that they are only able to produce a limited number of books every year: at the same time, they have never had less difficulty in selling their books” (22). With the demand for books high and the supplies with which to make them low, publishers’ decisions during wartime were unusually difficult, and the books they selected during this period must have seemed to them to be extraordinarily good. Disappointing sales like those for *Pack My Bag* would therefore have been especially

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177 Lehmann was the editor of the Press’s *New Writing* series (published in paperback by Penguin), and it was through this series that he promoted the work of many of the “thirties writers” (See Willis 292-293).

178 It had only sold 700 copies by 1942 at the regular price of 7s. 6d, and the remaining 700 sets of sheets were bound up and sold for 5s in the Hogarth Crown Library in that year in an attempt to clear the Press’s stock (HPA 148, January 10 1942).

179 Day-Lewis was a Hogarth Press author and a friend of the Woolfs, and he mentions the Press, including a photograph of Woolf and Lehmann in an editorial meeting, in the article (“Do We Read Better Books in Wartime?” 23).
frustrating when a great deal of paper was used for books that did not sell. As John Lehmann writes in his autobiography, small presses were more affected by rationing of supplies than mainstream publishers:

The chief trouble of the Hogarth Press during the war was finding paper; a difficulty severely aggravated by the extreme smallness of its quota as soon as rationing began to be strictly applied. [...] We bought up a certain amount of paper at the outbreak of war (not much because we didn’t dare take too big a risk), but by the middle of 1940 there was scarcely any of that left. Unfortunately, in the twelve months that were chosen as a yardstick by the Paper Control we had ordered comparatively little; and when it came to being allowed only forty per cent of that we were reduced to something well under ten tons a year. In fact, I believe it was nearer five tons (86).

To put this amount of paper in context, Lehmann notes that Virginia Woolf’s books alone required 4.5 tons of paper for production to meet demand. Since Woolf’s writing was always a mainstay of the Press’s income and promoting and distributing her work was also one of their main reasons for existing, what was left for the Hogarth Press was very little after the Psycho-Analytical series and Virginia Woolf’s books were published. All of this is to say that 1939-1945 was a challenging period for the Press, as it was for many publishers, and there were frequently long delays in the production process, a problem that affected Green’s work. In the case of Pack My Bag, Lehmann wrote to Green when the book was delayed for a full publishing season, offering a tense but somewhat tongue-in-cheek reassurance: “I don’t think you need worry; we shall only be
deterred from producing such a good book by the general collapse of business – or London” (HPA 146, 17 January 1940).

Despite Lehmann’s reassurances, however, *Pack My Bag* was not only a disappointment sales-wise but was also an extreme case of mixed reviews. One reviewer, Richard Church, wrote two pieces on *Pack My Bag*, one recommending the book and one denouncing it. This resulted in a highly awkward scenario for the publisher, and Lehmann wrote to Church to complain: “You gave the book a rather good review in John of London, and you subsequently gave it rather a bad review in The Spectator […] it makes the job of my advertising department rather difficult, - as you may have seen from our quotation in the advertisement of *Pack My Bag* next door to your own review in The Spectator” (HPA 148, 7 November 1940). Church replied to apologize, but suggested that they were “two reviews for two entirely different kinds of reader, and thus gave bent to both sides of my own reaction to the book” (HPA 148, 3 December 1940).

As a pseudonymous author with a highly mysterious persona and an enigmatic style, it is not surprising that Green’s works and self-presentation divided opinion. There are many eccentricities about *Pack My Bag*, but I agree with the statement in a recent article by Marius Hentea that the book is “not only a significant achievement in its own right but of great interest to readers intrigued by the varieties of modernism and theories of autobiography” (38). That Green requires critical championing in this way is

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180 Hentea reads the work primarily as an interplay between guilt and innocence. I do not see this interplay, as Hentea does, as the central organizing feature of the book, though I do wholeheartedly agree that Green’s work deserves more “deep reading” (38) and seek to add to the growing body of scholarship on *Pack My Bag*. 
perhaps due in part to his elusive style, but his evasiveness is a central feature of his contribution to autobiographical discourse, and is apparent in his treatment of names and naming in the book.

Green wrote in *Pack My Bag* that he was “in a difficulty with names” (55). He expressed a common dilemma among autobiographers about “whether he will mention the living, if he is to call them by their real names when he does mention them and, if he chooses to alter the names they are known by whether he will disguise the place it all happened to him and so perhaps find himself writing fiction” (55). In this methodological passage, naming is at the heart of the generic distinction between autobiography and fiction. In positioning naming this way, Green creates an emphasis, too, on developing a considerate approach that is respectful of the real people in his life while still telling the truth about his relationships. Green suggests his own definition of what we would now call relationality in his frequent emphasis on the fundamental autobiographical narrative of “how one changed from boy to man […] [which] boils down to people” (9). Green questions not only the way in which the self is formed by and acted upon constantly by others, but also about the kind of relational self that can be performed in an autobiography. Green’s unusual solution to quite a common problem, and the solution that he claims matches closely with his “way of living,” (55) is to remove names altogether from his book, and this ends up being a complicated strategy that offers its own theory and practice of autobiography.

So, what exactly does this namelessness and evasiveness achieve and how can this paradoxically private method of publicly expressing personal connections contribute
to critical ideas about relationality and the reticent autobiographer? Despite Green’s associations with Oxford and Eton, his exploration of his own social position does not explicitly call familiar connections into play. While Isherwood takes a more conventional approach of fictionalizing the names of living people and keeping place names intact, Green’s erasure of names altogether is a more extreme gesture. In Green’s figuration, it is best to avoid associating him with the obvious characterization of a person who would have been one of the Old Boys or the Bloomsbury set. Green’s ambivalent approach to the social and literary networks in which he participated also highlights the Hogarth Press’s complex and diverse list of publications, a list which, I have argued, contains known and unknown authors alike. However, Green’s denial of what is obvious and overdetermined about networks doesn’t mean that his role as a Hogarth Press author fails to contextualize his own methods in his autobiography. Green’s emphasis on the underdetermined or unnamed aspects of personal connections makes the stress fall on the ephemeral and often indescribable nature of what it means to relate to another person, rather than the immediate presuppositions that might accompany the person’s social or literary position.

Green’s work provides a counterexample, then, to the tactics undertaken in some of the Press’s other ventures, like the *WMWS* Series and even in Isherwood’s case, in which the Press specifically seeks to capitalize on the fame of the author or subject of a book. Isherwood’s persistent use of his own name and simultaneous denial of its signification still allows Isherwood the author to be imaginatively superimposed on Isherwood the character, albeit in complicated and shifting ways. While the Press, as I mentioned in Chapter One, used different tactics to market different kinds of books by
different kinds of writers, Green presents an unusual case in refusing to name the connections to famous acquaintances that might help to promote his book. Green’s interest is the content of relationships and connections rather than their external signification, which reveals him to be a writer whose work is valued for its unusual and experimental nature, rather than for its instant marketability.

The nameless relationality that Green develops in *Pack My Bag* offers a theory and practice of autobiography that stands in opposition to some of the publisher’s interests. The literary ideas he presents about relationality sit uncomfortably alongside the demands of the real-life modernist publishing networks in which he also participated, but on the other hand present a paradoxically suggestive kind of anti-marketing that cultivates Green’s own mysterious appeal as an author. While Green’s autobiography fits the basic definition of a “relational self” in asserting the importance of other people and external contexts in defining and explaining one’s self, his evasion of some of the gossipy specificity that is traditionally compelling about autobiography creates a kind of ethics and aesthetics of shyness. This evasiveness, unsurprisingly, extends to his attitude toward publicity and marketing in the book trade. Green’s own suggestion that “surely shyness is the saving grace in all relationships” (80) applies to his stylistic and theoretical methods as well as to his secretive persona in the publicity associated with his work.

Autobiography is not typically a timid literary form, as Leonard Woolf points out, and Green’s unusual way of expressing the personal presents a challenge to the very genre in

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181 Green’s approach stands in contrast to other Hogarth Press authors who use their connections to their advantage. The most extreme example of fame-mongering approach is Jane Harrison, whose *Reminiscences of a Student’s Life* (1925) reads almost as a catalogue of famous people that Harrison met in her student days.
which he writes. I argue, however, that far from proving “fatal” (Woolf “Reticence” 17) in an artistic sense, Green’s evasiveness is an important gesture that establishes reticence as a possible stance for the autobiographer. Although his tactics may have proved “fatal” from a sales point of view, Green’s *Pack My Bag* offers a sophisticated example of autobiographical form.

The lurking presence of an aesthetic or social ideal for prose is a feature of much of Green’s writing. He is now often described as an odd and difficult writer and his style is so spare as to be at times disorienting, particularly in its frequent lack of definite articles. In a review of Jeremy Treglown’s biography of Green, Adam Mars-Jones describes it this way: “His prose isn't difficult as difficulty is normally understood, but it is demanding. Grammar is loosened disconcertingly, punctuation light, so that the reading brain must constantly reassess the relationships between parts of a sentence” (par. 1). Green’s “disconcerting” style can be explained by some of the ideals of distance and shyness that he values in his autobiography, and its indirection reflects a series of ideals for expression and for prose itself. In a glowing contemporary review of Green’s novel *Loving*, for *The Observer* in 1945, Alan Pryce-Jones writes:

One may suppose that the circus artist, moving from feat to feat, dreams of a total virtuosity. The trapeze and the tight-rope are pretexts, it may be; looping the loop

182 James Laughlin, an editor at *New Directions* Press, wrote to John Lehmann that he read Green and felt “unable to ‘get’ it. I had the feeling that something British was going on which I did not know about” (HPA 195, 10 August 1948). Interestingly, despite this comment, Green’s reputation in the United States was actually better than in England, and he was hailed especially in the later twentieth century as a “writer’s writer” (Treglown 17) by John Updike, among others.
next year on a chromium bicycle, or spinning out of the cannon’s mouth, will be nothing but decorative figuration lagging behind an ideal accomplishment.

Pryce-Jones goes on to compare Green explicitly to the circus artist, his books each representing a new feat of marvelous prose contortion, producing surprise and delight. It is an aptly chosen image in its echo of Green’s own description of his young adult years in Pack My Bag when he suggests that the 1920s were a time when “people sp[u]n like tops completely out of control” and “blossomed into a circus world that could only rationally be discussed half drunk” (121). As well as suggesting that Green’s books are each quite different from one another, and that the vitality and experimentation of Green’s work is a kind of ambitious spectacle, Pryce-Jones also recognizes Green’s idealism about how pliable the prose medium is, how well an “ideal of perfection” can ultimately be appreciated by an audience. In Pack My Bag, Green’s style is looser and friendlier than in many of his novels, and he wears his “dreams of a total virtuosity” on his sleeve. He declares his ideal relationship with his reader and imagining autobiography as a means of making the connection, even if he later described the book itself in the editorial correspondence to John Lehmann as “awkward & silly in places” but added that he would not make further corrections since “[he] hate[s] smooth books” (HPA 148, 14 April 1939).

The narrator of Pack My Bag also defines himself in relation to an implied reader who becomes a kind of offstage character in the autobiography. The reason Green gives for removing names from the book is not only to protect the living people about whom he writes, but also to eliminate what he perceives as a possible obstacle between his
implied reader and himself. He suggests that the specificity of naming real people is a kind of social shorthand that interferes with more profound relationships: “Prose [...] is a gathering web of insinuations which go further than names however shared can ever go. Prose should be a long intimacy between strangers with no direct appeal to what both may have known” (55). By removing the names that Green sees as obstacle between himself and his reader and replacing specificity with a “web of insinuations,” (55) Green opens up a space for the more profound connections that he suggests can be missed by assuming too much about a person from the outset. For Green, prose should be a way of creating relationships and not simply a mode of expressing them. These connections, however, are based in Green’s view on a paradoxically unexpressive and non-specific series of connections: “[Prose] should slowly appeal to feelings unexpressed, it should in the end draw tears out of the stone, and feelings are not bounded by the associations common to place names or to persons with whom the reader is unexpectedly familiar” (56). What all this goes to show, in a way that is central to Green’s philosophy, is that refusal to small-talk or make things socially easy is not by any means a refusal of intimacy or connection. Quite the opposite. The experiences that seem to be the most meaningful for Green are those that have additional complexity due to their unexpressed nature. The process of growing up for Green seems to be the discovery of ways to form relationships based on connections formed in difficulty and across silence. He writes that his lack of understanding of people when he was a young man was due in part to his sense that he “had not yet found the Robinson Crusoe in two people temporarily islanded by their exchanges, lying no doubt but always with half-truths like truffles just under the surface for one or the other to turn up to find the inkling of what human beings treasure,
rather than what they think they know of themselves” (56). Indirection and a stripping away of previous knowledge and associations in order to reach “the inkling of what human beings treasure” (56) seems crucial both to Green’s ideas about social life and to his literary style.

Relationality in autobiography, though, exists at several levels within and outside the diegetic world of the text itself, and goes beyond the intentions or stated worries of the author. Green attempts to maintain relationships by protecting his friends and partners with namelessness, and additionally creates an overtly relational development of authorial identity that depends on an imagined reader. In addition to the relational structures inside the text, a relational structure is involved in the publishing of a book. As in the case of Isherwood, Green’s protestations against his own autobiographical authorship necessitate a particular set of negotiations by the publisher to make the book marketable. Lejeune’s discussion of the autobiographical contract in which “the deep subject of the autobiography is the proper name” (11) and in which what Genette, in *Paratexts*, calls “thresholds of interpretation,” (1) the prefaces and title pages and dust jacket blurbs, produce a relationship of trust between reader and text on the matter of fidelity to either a fictional or non-fictional category. Lejeune suggests that the fundamental defining feature of autobiography is that the name of the author is the same as the name of the subject, and thereby excludes pseudonymous writing from his understanding of the form. While Lejeune’s explanation of readers’ desire for honesty has been useful in defining this difficult genre and in explaining the kinds of negative reactions that readers have had to sham-biographical and misleadingly fictional works posing as autobiographies, there is a danger with Lejeune’s approach in oversimplifying
the complex relationship between author and reader. Saunders takes a more qualified approach when he concedes that there is “something deeply paradoxical about the idea of an anonymous or pseudonymous autobiography” (114) but does not discount it as a legitimate exercise in the form, and distinguishes it too from more overtly fictionalized autobiographies.

Archival documents relating to the publication of Pack My Bag by the Press, contemporary reviews, and Green’s own experimentation with naming as he writes under a pseudonym, render “intimacy between strangers” a highly specified and mediated experience, itself more complicatedly relational than Green’s nameless closeness to his reader would allow in theory. In response to letters requesting information for profiles in magazines and newspapers, even for many years after the book’s publication, the Press’s secretary would reply elliptically: “Mr. Green does not care for personal publicity, and we have no photograph or notes which we could send you” (HPA 143, 24 November 1950); “The only piece of information we are able to divulge is that ‘Henry Green’ is a pseudonym concealing a double identity” (HPA 143, 7 January 1952). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Green’s evasions served more to produce interest in his personal life and in his true identity than to suppress it, as letters to the Press from readers, reviewers, and scholars requesting further information about this mysterious author indicate. In the presentation of the author, as in the formation of relationships in Pack My Bag, the deliberate avoidance of revelation invites deeper inquiry. At the heart of the paradox of simultaneous mystery and exposure in the presentation of Green by the Press is the fact that, as in the case of the WMWS books and the Russian translations, Green’s own notoriety as a novelist was a reason that the Press gave for interest in his work. On the
dust jacket of Pack My Bag, his novel Party Going is described as “one of the successes of the last autumn season.” Green’s position as a successful novelist was important in the Press’s consideration of his autobiography – the assumption being that interest in literary autobiography is contingent on the success of its author in other literary spheres, and the importance of his contribution to literary modernism as a “highly original” (dust jacket) thinker and novelist. As it turned out, in a reversal of the fortunes of the series publications, which were not taken seriously by American publishers, Green’s work ended up being more popular and saleable when it was purchased from the Hogarth Press by publishers in the United States than it was in England, for reasons that are hard to explain with any certainty. Richard Church, in his favourable review of Pack My Bag in John O’London’s Weekly, even recommends the book “because of [Green’s] occasional oddities of social reaction” [my italics] which, the reviewer argues, contribute to “this remarkable essay in self-assessment” (23). In perhaps an unexpected turn, then, anti-marketing becomes a useful marketing tool and a positive literary feature.

In the case of Pack My Bag, Lejeune’s contract is never invoked by its publishing context, since the work was actually sold as fiction. Despite the subtitle, “A Self-Portrait,” and the non-committal paratexual explanation that Green “made this delightful book out of the material he had collected for an autobiography,” the Hogarth Press chose to publish the work as fiction. In a correspondence between John Lehmann and Green regarding the genre categorization of the book, it is apparent that the choice of genre was left to the author, though the publisher’s interests were made clear: “if you like we can publish PACK MY BAG as a Biography […] I’m inclined myself to think that it would be better in the “Fiction” class as far as sales are concerned – i.e. like [Isherwood’s]
LIONS & SHADOWS. But I leave it to you” (HPA 148, 17 November 1939). Green agreed to this suggestion. As I explained in Chapter One, selecting the right price point for a particular book might be more likely to encourage a good reception. In this case, although it was unsuccessful, the attempt seems to have been to replicate as closely as possible the tactics adopted for the sale of Isherwood’s works. There remains, however, a much more earnest emphasis on the autobiographical nature of Pack My Bag both in the text itself and in the claims to autobiographical truth in the paratexts than Isherwood ever expresses. Near the opening of the book, Green offers a kind of apology for his foray into autobiography when he writes that his experiences “otherwise would be used in novels, material is better in that form or in any other that is not directly personal, but we I feel no longer have the time. We should be taking stock” (1). It is this sense, almost oppressively present throughout the book, that Green is anticipating his own death in the war that explains why a writer with such an interest in elliptical and indirect methods would write an autobiography in the first place. It is also this urgency that makes the book, with all of its refusals, so poignant.

Lehmann, however, was of the opinion that Green’s worry about the impending war was excessive since none of them was actually dead yet, and wrote to Rosamond Phillips who was reviewing the book for the Press that he found Green’s fear of death “almost a bit silly” in the book (HPA 148, 7 November 1939) and urged him to tone down “the psychology of the outbreak of the war” (HPA 148, 7 November 1939). Green refused to do so. Even the original dust jacket blurb that Green wrote for the Press emphasized the war as the reason for writing the book, which caused Lehmann to write in ink on its typescript “this is hopeless” (HPA 148, 24 April 1940). Although Green was
not killed in the war, which inevitably makes the book read differently than if he had been, the impetus for the autobiography remains sincere, and affirms Jonathan Bolton’s argument that midlife, or what he calls “mid-term” autobiographies were “the most significant literary phenomenon arising out of the experience of the second world war” (156).

The final and perhaps most obvious gesture that sets Pack My Bag up as a fundamentally although unconventionally relational book is the shift of pronouns that occurs at the end of the text. Green’s emphasis shifts here to an understanding of relationality that gives pride of place to romantic attachment, and at this point becomes a “we” narrator instead of the singular “I.” In his last sentence, Green suddenly addresses the narrative to a specific reader, his wife, when he writes that he had arrived, after many years of schooling and work, at “life itself at last in loneliness certainly at first, but, in that long exchange of letters then beginning and for the ten years now we have not had to write because we are man and wife, there was love” (152).

Henry Green’s and Christopher Isherwood’s ambivalently fictional autobiographies comment on the impulse to write autobiography in wartime, on the possibility of a modest, reticent, self-ironizing autobiographer, and on the publishing contexts that interact with and complicate autobiographical self-fashioning. These authors were perhaps the two most important figures at the Press in the late 1930s and moving into the 1940s, and they contrast with but at the same time build upon many of the Press’s earlier publications and the broader discourses of experimental autobiography and biography during the period. Although Isherwood’s success story in book sales with
the Press was not repeated in the case of Green, and although they both had mixed receptions by critics and readers, the two writers taken together offer examples of pre- and post-war autobiographies that question the value of uninhibited confession while upholding the sincerity and radical relationality that characterizes their ethical perspectives on the genre.
Chapter Six: Marketing, Seriousness, and Invention: *Flush, Orlando* and *Roger Fry*

Our age is, as we all know to our cost, an ethical age, that is always asking itself, “Is such and such a thing permissible, and, if so, subject to what conditions of method, time and place?”

– Leonard Woolf, “Imaginative Biography” (1928)

The “thing” to which Leonard Woolf refers in his remark on the ethical nature of his own age is the combination of fancy and fact in imaginative biography. The essay begins by quoting the preface to such a work by Egerton Brydges: “By Imaginative Biography, I mean an Imaginary Superstructure on the known facts of the Biography of eminent characters” (qtd in Woolf “Imaginative Biography” 45). In a characteristic move, Leonard Woolf transports his exploration of ethics and literature to the realm of the book trade, which is always informed by practical considerations, and remarks that in the literary marketplace, ethical considerations often fall by the wayside: “It is little use stressing the points of good taste, and respect for family feeling. Publishers on the look out for saleable matter, and authors lacking a job, are never greatly affected by such nebulous considerations” (46). It is unlikely here that Woolf means to include himself among the “publishers on the look out for saleable matter” (46) since the Hogarth Press aimed to produce precisely those works that other publishers did not accept. However, the “nebulous considerations” of genre, and particularly of the degree to which a writer of biography could take liberties with facts, were still persistently coming into contact with practical and economic demands of the book trade for the Hogarth Press, and

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183 *Imaginative Biography* (1834).
Leonard Woolf’s role at the Press and the N&A simultaneously made him intensely aware of the potential for disagreement when literary or social ideals conflict with the world of books. Although at first glance Woolf’s comment might appear to convey a cynical, corporate-minded attitude towards his fellow publishers, not to mention a highly pragmatic approach to genre, his view stems from the more provocative reading of imaginative biography with which Woolf concludes his essay: “All biographies are ‘imaginary superstructures’ – and admit of reconstruction” (46).

Leonard Woolf’s remarks on imaginative biography of 1928, have particular relevance to Virginia Woolf’s Orlando, which was published that same year. This chapter turns to Woolf’s own book-length biographical writings. I will focus particularly on her three major biographical or fictionalized biographical works, each of which possesses a wildly different tone, subject, and approach: Orlando (1927), Flush (1933), and Roger Fry (1940). I will argue that the ethical question that Leonard Woolf suggests that biographers must – regrettably in his view – ask themselves when they experiment with the form, “is such a thing permissible?” has fundamentally different answers for each of these three texts. While Flush, as a work of fiction, takes enormous, almost absurd liberties with biographical form, Roger Fry has the purpose of honouring a dear friend with living relatives, and consequently the “conditions of method, time, and place” weigh significantly on the work. The variability of approaches and particularly of tones, I will demonstrate, also sometimes produced confused reactions by readers and booksellers, particularly in the case of Orlando. The books were also treated in different ways by the Press, and were produced and marketed using methods that suited their approaches to biographical composition.
Ideas about biographies and autobiographies are scattered throughout Virginia Woolf’s writings, sometimes voiced by the characters in her novels, sometimes in her essays, sometimes in her diaries and personal writings. She was, like Leonard Woolf, an avid reader of biography and autobiography and, like him, she saw inherent value in stories about real life. “As you know,” she wrote to Hugh Walpole, with a characteristic parenthetical pause for consideration, “of all literature (yes, I think this more or less true) I love autobiography most” (L 5: 28 Dec 1932). Her essay “Lives of the Obscure,” reads as an ode to hidden, neglected volumes of Lives nestled in dusty library shelves, and many of her essays and reviews contain miniature biographies of authors. As Alice Staveley has recently shown, Woolf counted works in these genres specifically as bedtime reading. Staveley examines Woolf’s contribution to a column entitled “‘My Twenty Bed-Books: Famous Men and Women Send Their Lists to ‘John O’London’s Weekly.’” (March 10, 1923, qtd in Staveley “Pulling Back the Covers” 3). Woolf writes that her pleasure reading at night and in the early hours of the morning would “not include any poem, play, or novel; but I find that I have read the following books at such times: 1. Fitzgerald’s Letters. 2. Cowper’s Letters 3. De Goncourt’s Journals 4. Boswell’s Johnson 5. Memoirs of Mrs Pilkington 6. Pascal’s Pensees 7. Scott’s Diary 8. Lord Hervey’s Memoirs 9. Benjamin Constant’s Journal Intime 10. Flaubert’s Letters 11. Pepys 12. La Bruyere 13 Rogers’s Table Talk 14. Spence’s Anecdotes as well as a number of books of no celebrity chosen for the most part at random from the biographies, autobiographies, letters and diaries current at the time” (qtd in Staveley 5).

184 There has been no shortage of criticism on Woolf as a theorist of biography and autobiography. See for instance, Olson, Nalbantian, James Harker, and Georgia Johnston.
Staveley argues that Woolf’s relegation of these books to the bedside table suggests Woolf’s effort to “clearly distinguish a genre hierarchy homologous to a spatial-architectural hierarchy: there are books you take to bed, and there are books—novels, plays, and poems—that one never reads under the covers […] There is a first order of literature, and a second, and the second gets the bedroom” (3). Staveley’s analysis here seems to equate pleasure reading with a lower status in literary hierarchies, an alignment that, I argue, the Woolfs would have been unlikely to accept. Even if Woolf is placing biographies and autobiographies in the bedroom, their association with the act of reading for pleasure does not diminish their value. In light of Leonard Woolf’s comments on the importance of pleasure in literature in “Living Vicariously” and of the Hogarth Press’s serious advocacy of the forms, the critical assignment of biographies and memoirs to the “second order” of literature seems at odds with the flexible way in which the Woolfs themselves viewed genre.

In “The Leaning Tower,” and on several other occasions, in spite of the great proliferation of biographies and autobiographies during the period, Woolf called for the writing of still more works – “until we have more facts, more biographies, more autobiographies, we cannot know much about ordinary people, let alone about extraordinary people” (CE 2: 162). Her own autobiographical practice was piecemeal and often consisted of unpublished, fragmentary documents, but her biographies were among the most important publications for the Hogarth Press. They enhanced her own reputation, made the Press a lot of money, and complicated the distinctions between fact and fiction that were also at stake for Isherwood, Green, and a number of other Hogarth Press authors. One of the aims of this project has been to show that many of the ideas
Woolf expresses in “Lives of the Obscure,” “The Art of Biography,” “The New Biography,” “A Talk On Memoirs,” and in other occasional writings on the subject of biographies and autobiographies were in dialogue with books published by the Press, and that the Press itself was contributing to the flood of autobiographies and biographies produced throughout the period, partly due to both of the Woolfs’ admiration for the forms.

Since Woolf was involved herself in the running of the Press, and since it existed in no small part for the production and dissemination of her own works, her relationship with it is, naturally, of a rather different kind than that of the authors about whom I have written in the previous chapters. Much of Woolf’s interaction with Leonard and with John Lehmann therefore likely occurred in informal conversation. It could generally be assumed that anything Woolf wrote and wanted to publish would be accepted by the Press, so the files in the HPA regarding Woolf’s own works contain slightly different materials from the files regarding authors who were less involved in the running of the Press. Perhaps unsurprisingly, various types of materials that appear in other authors’ files, such as revised typescripts, editorial correspondences, solicitation letters and authorial contract negotiations are not generally present in the Woolf files, and Woolf the correspondent appears more often in the role of editor or a solicitor of works, or as an author replying to readers’ queries, than as a recipient of editorial suggestions or

185 I would argue that this is one reason why studies of the Press that focus on Woolf’s authorship do not necessarily indicate the usual practices for the publisher.
revisions. Much of the material concerned with the early stages of production for Woolf’s works appears instead in her own author’s papers and in informal personal reflections in her now published letters and diaries. However, the HPA still has much to reveal about Woolf’s own relationship with the Press as an author (and even more to reveal about her role as an editor). The files on her works tend to be more scrupulous about tracking her reputation and in detailing the marketing of her works than they are for other authors. A great many of the papers in the files are concerned with reprinting selections, broadcasting excerpts on the radio, and negotiating periodical publication in relation to the volumes published by the Press. This chapter therefore focuses rather more on the texts’ treatment of biography and on their marketing and reception than on their origins, since the question of how Virginia Woolf’s books came to be published by the Press is not at stake here in the same way as it is for other examples.

“No One Wants Biography”: Classifying Orlando

In the case of Woolf’s Orlando (1928), the Press’s willingness to experiment with playful genre hybridity proved difficult once the book entered the wider market. While the book was being produced, there seemed to have been no question that it would be sold and marketed as a novel. It was so clear to the Woolfs that Orlando was, broadly speaking, a work of fiction that it came as a surprise when booksellers received it rather

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186 The one exception to this general rule is the case of proof corrections. Woolf frequently corresponded about corrections of her own works with the printers.

187 See HPA 567 for production sheets that suggest that the printing orders were placed for a book priced at 9s, a price designation which I will explain further below. In this case, unlike for Flush, the order was never amended, so it is clear that the Press didn’t waver on the format for this particular book.
differently. In an observation that indicates just how important genre categorization was for success (both literary and financial) in publishing, Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary:

No one wants biography. But [Orlando] is a novel, says Miss Ritchie. But it is called a biography on the title page, [the booksellers] say. It will have to go on the Biography shelf. I doubt therefore that we shall do more than cover expenses – a high price to pay for the fun of calling it a biography. And I was so sure it was going to be the one popular book! (198)

Figure 8: Dust Jacket for Orlando

As it turned out, Woolf was pleasantly surprised that partly because of the book’s sham-biographical nature, Orlando was indeed a tremendous success, and proved to be a turning point in the sales of Woolf’s own fiction. Even after the book’s initial run of

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188 Alice Ritchie was the book traveller for the Press, and was, incidentally, the first female book traveller in England (Willis 384). She also published a novel with the HP, The Peacemakers (1928).

189 To the Lighthouse, published in the year before Orlando, had an initial run of 3000, and went into a second impression of 1000, and a third to 1500, so the total number of copies printed was 6500, compared with Orlando’s over 11080 within the first year (Woolmer 60).
5080 copies, the Woolfs had to have a second impression of 3000 additional copies printed in October 1928, and a third of 3000 copies in January 1929 (Woolmer 69).

Woolf’s statement that “No one wants biography” seems initially contradictory when it is placed in the context of Leonard Woolf’s enthusiastic support of the proliferation of books in the genre during roughly the same time period. Should Woolf’s statement be read with the implicit qualification “no one” but us “wants biography”? Were readers and book-buyers not as interested in the genre as Leonard Woolf’s analysis of the publishers’ lists would suggest? There are a number of possible aspects of Orlando’s appearance and affiliation that might have created problems for selling it as a biography. For one thing, “Orlando” is not a recognizable or famous figure, and for another, the volume was priced at 9s, which was slightly above the regular price for novels (7s6d) and slightly below the price of a typical biography (12s). For buyers of serious biographies, the book might seem to be too insubstantial and too unfamiliar, and the in-between pricing (the slight increase over standard novel price was likely justified by the inclusion of the illustrations) places the book immediately in a grey area between the genres. As the case of Roger Fry will demonstrate further, part of the perceived problem in this instance might not have been so much with the serious label of biography more broadly, but with the label of biography for a book that has been produced by the publisher to fit the specifications of illustrated fiction in terms of size, prize, and format. Although Orlando contains several illustration plates that imitate the material form of conventional biographies, to which I will return in a moment, the lower list price per title means that in order for a fictional work at 9s to make as much money as a biographical work at roughly 12s, it would have to sell more copies to make up the difference in list
price that Leonard Woolf remarked was sometimes the only dividing line between the
genres. Virginia Woolf’s concern about the book’s reception makes sense given the
book’s complex position in the literary and economic marketplace, even if the genre
designation did not, in the end, prove to be problematic for sales.

Although the initial confusion about where to place the book in the bookshops
clearly subsided relatively quickly and did not harm sales enough to prevent the work
from being a financial success for the Press, confusion about its status remained for
individual readers long after the work had been reviewed and celebrated in the 1920s. A
letter to Leonard Woolf from reader Stanley Scott in 1948 asks the following uninformed
question:

I am so puzzled by [Orlando’s] illustrations that with some reluctance I write to
ask if you will be so kind as to give me what information you can about them. I
will not risk criticism without knowing more of the authority for their use; the
apparent anachronism of quite recent photographs purporting to be of the subject
‘on her return to England’ and ‘in 1840.’ It is easier to explain resemblances of
the dedicatee. I am embarrassingly conscious of the possible impertinence of
writing to you personally, but other references and enquiries have failed; and at
worst I hope to get off with no more enduring reproach than consignment to the
waste-paper basket (HPA 567, 28 November 1948).

Scott’s was not the only letter from a reader querying Woolf’s historical accuracy in
Orlando. For instance, a reply from one of the Press managers on Woolf’s behalf
indicates that readers tended to nitpick about historical accuracy in any work that
contained historical referents: “[Mrs Woolf] cannot recollect that she had any authority for saying that Lord Cumberland founded almshouses; she thinks it probably that having some recollection of old almshouses in that neighbourhood, she fathered them upon Lord Cumberland on the spur of the moment” (HPA 567, 27 August 1932). Woolf also notes in the “Preface” to Orlando that “a gentleman in America […] has generously and gratuitously corrected the punctuation, the botany, the entomology, the geography, and the chronology of previous works of mine and will, I hope, not spare his services on the present occasion” (6). This remark, in its context, seems likely to be a hyperbolic reference to the kinds of letters of correction Woolf received, although the HPA shows that she frequently did make corrections in subsequent editions based on reader suggestions, and that readers certainly did not “spare [their] services” when it came to correcting Orlando. Scott’s letter, however, occupies an especially strange position, since it indicates that its author was familiar enough with the Hogarth Press to know to write to Leonard Woolf, and to recognize Vita Sackville-West from a photograph. It is somewhat surprising, given that he had a certain amount of inside knowledge and that he recognized the temporal inconsistency, that Scott could have missed the joke, particularly more than twenty years after the work was originally published. Leonard Woolf’s weary personal response indicates, nevertheless, that he preferred to set the record straight than to ignore a reader’s query: “It is difficult to answer your letter, but I think that all one can

190 This reply was possibly dictated by Woolf, and, as Cuddy-Keane pointed out to me, the tone sounds very much like Woolf’s epistolary style. The Press’s practices in relation to dictation of letters were not consistent: some documents say “dictated but not signed by Mrs. Woolf” (or “Mr. Woolf,” depending on the letter) and others, like the above, are simply signed by the Press managers on behalf of the business.
say is that the illustrations were not intended really to be serious” (HPA 567, 3 December 1948).

*Orlando*’s humour is hardly subtle: even its apparatus, including its “Preface” designed to thank those who helped with its historical aspects (a list of acknowledgments, it should be noted, that includes a great many Hogarth Press authors), begins by thanking the author’s dead “friends,” “Defoe, Sir Thomas Browne, Sterne, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Macaulay, Emily Bronte, De Quincey, and Walter Pater” (5). As Southworth has recently noted, the Preface’s joke is not a new one, but rather it “draws on a long tradition of parodic prefaces such as Miguel de Cervantes’s preface to *Don Quixote* and Laurence Sterne’s preface to *Tristram Shandy*” (“Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*” 76). The book’s index, similarly humorous, contains such entries as “A., Lord,” “Canute, the elk-hound,” and “Frost, the Great” (229) and “Railway, The” (230). The illustrations, likewise, play with gender, time, and identity by providing portraits of several different people to represent the biographical subject. Even the aspects of the material text, therefore, that imitate biographical book conventions, position *Orlando* as comic fiction, as long as a reader or bookseller looks closely enough, even at the paratexts.

*Orlando* also thematizes the question of “what is permissible” in biography through the voice of the biographer-narrator. Ira Nadel describes it as a “metabiography,”

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191 Southworth’s recent article on the *Orlando* Preface interprets it, through network theory, as “a map of sorts. The names contained therein constitute a virtual gathering and reveal much about the networks of cultural, financial and social capital in which Woolf was enmeshed. Woolf’s coterie, partly identified in the Preface, suggests how such groups formed and functioned at the time” (75).
occupying the positions of fiction and criticism at once. Even the biographer’s method, though, shifts as the novel progresses, changing with the ages as the time of the novel does. The narrator’s metabiographical comments run the full range of biographical types, from the fact- and detail-oriented Victorian ("the first duty of a biography is to plod, without looking right or left, in the indelible footprints of truth; unenticed by flowers; regardless of shade; on and on methodically till we fall plump into the grave and write finis on the tombstone above our heads" [47]) to the modernist biographer who, by 1928 in the time of the novel, is reflecting that "the true length of a person’s life, whatever the Dictionary of National Biography may say, is always a matter of dispute" (211). In Orlando, Woolf reiterates many of the critical positions she offers in her essays, as Elizabeth Cooley has argued, and by voicing these positions at times through the narrator and at times through Orlando, and at times using free indirect discourse that conflates the two voices, she uses narrative strategies that reflect the metabiographical commentary. There are many examples of this kind of commentary, but one that has particular relevance to the expression of ontological uncertainty that characterized Woolf’s perpetually inquisitive approach to writing biography is Orlando’s “pause” before she takes up her pen to continue the writing of her poem, “The Oak Tree” (55). The narrator transforms Orlando’s moment of stillness into a reflection on the composition of biography from a combination of invention and empiricism:

Nature, who has played so many queer tricks upon us, making us so unequally of clay and diamonds, of rainbow and granite, and stuffed them into a case, often of the most incongruous, for the poet has a butcher’s face and the butcher a poet’s; nature, who delights in muddle and mystery, so that even now (the first of
November 1927) we know not why we go upstairs, or why we come down again, our most daily movements are like the passage of a ship on an unknown sea, and the sailors at the mast-head ask, pointing their glasses to the horizon; is there land or is there none? (55)

The “pause” therefore, and its inclusion in the biographer’s framework, offers a verbal echo of Woolf’s description of biography in her essay, but it also allows for a moment in which the “perfect rag-bag of odds and ends within us” (55) is not explained or accepted with certainty. The emphasis here on the frequent disjunction of physical appearance with interior character gives an embodied quality to the disjunction between interior and exterior. Far from seeing the “muddle and mystery” of the reflective pause as prohibitive or outside the realm of the “permissible,” the biographer-narrator celebrates the interrogative. The ordinary everyday activities of Orlando are excavated for their associative meaning, and Orlando’s act of sitting alone and thinking “agitate[s] a thousand odd, disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting, like the underlinen of a family of fourteen on a line in a gale of wind […] our commonest deeds are set about with a fluttering and flickering of wings, a rising and falling of lights” (55). Woolf’s figurative play with ephemeral movements, with her accumulation of verbs, first participles, “hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting” and then gerunds “a fluttering and flickering,” creates a complex metaphorical dynamic in which the movement of the objects – first laundry on a line, and then as wings – is the most evocative aspect of the comparison. The playful reference to undergarments evokes, too, an idea of biography’s intimate aspects, and of the indefinable, shifting nature even of the most private of experiences. These images of
movement provide figures for Woolf’s attitude to biography, which she sees neither as representing fidelity to facts, nor as abandoning imaginative work. Attempting to capture changes of light and aspect, and simultaneously acknowledging the difficulty of doing so is a crucial part of the biographer’s task.

“Not a Poet but a Red Cocker Spaniel”: *Flush* and the Problem of Seriousness

In the context of the playful and generically ambivalent works I have explored in the preceding chapters, Woolf’s imaginative biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s dog fits in well. It plays with the label of “Biography” and with the genre’s conventions, just as *Orlando* does, and these two were by no means the only works that the Woolfs published at least partly for fun. The Press often produced playful books in slim volumes, including another animal-oriented work, *The Marmosite’s Miscellany*, a poem by Robert Graves focalized through a scholar’s pet monkey. There are many other examples of sentences or episodes in Hogarth Press books that provide examples to support the argument that the Woolfs valued funny writing. Books that might, at first glance, be considered too silly to be published elsewhere were another kind of publication that “the ordinary publisher” (*L* 2: 242) might refuse and consequently that Press might undertake if the humour was good enough and if, as was the case with many humorous publications produced by the Press, there was an underlying insight or commentary in the work that was realized with a light touch. These playful books had a great deal of serious importance to say about, for instance, the nature of biographical form, and the Press’s

192 The poem was published under the pseudonym of John Doyle.
undertaking of them was doubtless in part to demonstrate that there is a variety of
degrees of reverence with which one can approach literary writing.

Flush mimics many of Orlando’s mock-biographical tactics, especially where the
physical book is concerned. By the time Flush came along, the success of Orlando’s use
of a playful genre subtitle had paved the way for another such “Biography.” Indeed,
readers of Orlando might even have come to expect by 1933 that for Woolf, biography
was shorthand for fictional biography. In any case, the positioning of Flush’s genre was
even clearer than Orlando’s from the paratexts. The fanciful nature of a biography of a
dog would have been immediately obvious in the bookshop, although, as I will explain
later, some readers still insisted on reading the book seeking an historically accurate
account of the conditions of Barrett Browning’s life. Its initial appearance of levity and
silliness has also caused the book’s sincere expression of what Snaith describes as
“[Woolf’s] ideas on the reception of women writers and the links between sexism and
other discourses of control” (“Of Footnotes” 614-15) to be overlooked by subsequent
critics and contemporary readers alike.

While Orlando has received, like most of Woolf’s novels, a great deal of critical
attention, Flush was, for a long time, excluded from studies of Woolf’s works, and
Pamela Caughie, who in 1991 wrote the first article attempting to rehabilitate the work
for literary scholars, proposed two possible reasons why. The first is that scholars, siding
with some of Woolf’s own anxious remarks in her diaries and letters about the possibility
that the book would be dismissed as frivolous, are generally not interested in “silly
fiction” (47). The second is that the opening of the canon to include “other experiences –
black, female, Native American, postcolonial,” (49) did not at that time extend to the inclusion of animals. We may, Caughie writes, want to “draw the line at the canine” (49) in our openness to the exploration of a variety of subjectivities. However, the field of animal studies, pioneered in recent years by political philosophers Peter Singer and Martha Nussbaum, has now argued strongly and seriously for the inclusion of canine, and many different kinds of animal subjectivity in philosophical thought. *Flush* remains more or less on the margins of the canon, however, despite having been rehabilitated from the perspective of animal studies in a recent article by Craig Smith, who places it in the context of a subgenre he calls “literary animal fiction” (348). A third argument for the exclusion of *Flush* from the Woolf canon is that it was one of her most popular books, and that its popularity seems to have deterred serious scholarly interest in it.¹⁹³ This notion of the supposedly mutually exclusive qualities of literary seriousness and popular success returns to the sometimes dismissive approach to cheap mass market paperback series I mentioned in Chapter Four, and reflects a crucial debate in modernist studies about the relationship between the popular and the literary. Snaith, in her recent reconsideration of *Flush* in light of Woolf’s anti-Fascist discourse, suggests that the work, like many of the other seemingly quirky Hogarth Press titles has been neglected or decontextualized because of its “supposed anomalousness” (“Of Footnotes” 615). Read alongside other Hogarth Press works, and in a frame that views these works as authentically varied and complex, particularly in their approaches to narratives of identity, *Flush* does not seem strange or frivolous at all.

¹⁹³ This returns to the comment that Jay Satterfield makes, regarding the series publications, about the perceived disjunction between popular success and literary merit: “commercial success and cultural prestige rarely [go] hand in hand, especially in the publishing world” (2).
Despite the difficulties that the slim, successful book has presented for critics of Woolf, the volume itself contains some of the debates about “The New Biography” that persist throughout the period. Further, its initial purpose as “a joke with Lytton” (L July 31, 1932) indicates that in the early 1930s, Strachey’s biographical methods were still at the forefront of Woolf’s thinking about the genre, even if her treatment of them was, in the case of *Flush*, parodic rather than overtly theoretical. I would argue that part of the reason for *Flush*’s popular success is the fact that it parodies, as *Orlando* does, a genre that was, as I explained in Chapter Two, culturally important and highly visible in the book world throughout the late 1920s and into the 1930s. As Linda Hutcheon argues, “parody changes with culture” (xi), reflecting the preoccupations and interests of its historical moment, and the popularity of *Flush*, a parody of Victorian literary biography, offers another indication, in addition to the numerous advertisements, reviews, and publications in the genre, of the prevalence of biography in the early-twentieth century.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was a writer who did not escape the biographical focus of the period. Snaith places Woolf’s treatment of Barrett Browning in the context of the vogue for “sensational biography” (“Of Footnotes” 616) of Browning, embodied in Rudolph Besier’s play, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. Snaith also notes Woolf’s own complicated reaction to Winfred Holtby’s biography of her, the first such treatment Woolf had received (“Of Footnotes” 617). Snaith writes that Woolf “feared the focus of biography” (617), and this was, I argue, a reaction that supports rather than refutes the argument for Woolf’s deep investment in the genre. Since she viewed biography as an intensely difficult undertaking for a writer, and one that invited innovation, her concern about being monumentalized or turned into a Victorian waxwork, as she thought that
Barrett Browning had been, reflects her view, also, that several versions of the same life must be considered in order even to approach an understanding of a biographical subject. Woolf’s sense that the biographer “must go ahead of the rest of us, like the miner’s canary, testing the atmosphere, detecting falsity, unreality, and the presence of obsolete conventions” (CE 4: 226) sounds like a tall order, but also explains, in part, why approaching Barrett Browning from a new perspective, from the intimate gaze of her pet, might encourage readers to “admit contradictory versions” (CE 4: 226) of the same biographical subject. It is also a view that highlights the ridiculousness of overly and even disrespectfully earnest portrayals of the personal lives of literary figures.

In a number of ways, *Flush* adopts narrative techniques that resemble Strachey’s, and that take experimental biography to an extreme. As a work of fiction, *Flush* does not read as if it was particularly restricted by the kinds of ethical considerations that Leonard Woolf mentions in his “Biographies and Autobiographies” essay. It seems to push the limits of the “permissible” in the selection of the biographical subject, and to question the very nature of those limits by taking up the rich interior life of the spaniel and presenting it using characteristically shifting modernist narrative techniques. As in Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians*, the narrative is polyvocal and combines the authoritative tone of the biographer-narrator with instances of free indirect discourse, and of focalization through the dog. The shifts of narrative focalization occur frequently and freely, as in the following example when Flush wishes he could speak in words and become a writer, and the biographer-narrator jumps in to undercut the seemingly earnest presentation of canine desires:
When [Flush] heard [Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s] low voice syllabling innumerable sounds, he longed for the day when his own rough roar would issue like hers in the little simple sounds that had such mysterious meaning […] And yet, had [Flush] been able to write as she did? – The question is superfluous happily, for truth compels us to say that in the year 1842-43 Miss Barrett was not a nymph but an invalid; Flush was not a poet but a red cocker spaniel; and Wimpole Street was not Arcady but Wimpole Street (28).

The shift from the third person singular to the mock-authoritative “we” of the narrator’s factual interjection grounds the flights of the dog’s fancy. The repeated correlative conjunctions contrasting the highly literary ideals of the nymph, the poet, and the Arcadian landscape with mundane realities of invalid, spaniel, and Wimpole Street, offer an antithetical relationship between literary ideals and biographical details. In this sense, like Strachey’s eminent figures whose exterior greatness is undercut by pitiful failings of character, Flush and Elizabeth Barrett Browning are presented here not as poet and ornamental, idealized companion, but as an ordinary pet-and-owner pair on an ordinary day.

It is no surprise that a book written with the initial premise of parodying Strachey would employ similar narrative techniques to those of *Eminent Victorians* and *Queen Victoria*. While *Flush*’s popularity can and has been seen as a detriment to its canonical status, it is worth noting that *Eminent Victorians* was also immensely popular at the time of its publication and throughout the early-twentieth century, although it was and is considered to be a revolutionary work of biography and a subject of a great deal of
scholarly attention. *Eminent Victorians* did not suffer the same period of critical marginalization as *Flush*.194

From the Press’s point of view, marketing *Flush* was a high priority. Leonard Woolf attempted to secure serialized publication of *Flush* in *Good Housekeeping* magazine before the book appeared, a practice that the Press had successfully undertaken for *A Room of One’s Own* in 1928. Woolf also wrote a series of short essays that were grouped under the title of “The London Scene” for the magazine in 1933 (Scott 233). The fact that the publication procedures for *Flush* mimicked those of *A Room of One’s Own*, both in print production and in serial rights tactics, despite their different subjects and purposes, indicates that the size of the volume and the length of the story were significant for the publisher, at least as far as material format and marketability were concerned. Publication of *Flush* in *Good Housekeeping* would have meant that a large readership would have been secured before the book had even been produced, since the monthly magazine had a circulation of nearly one million copies (Young 300), placing it beyond the reach of the Hogarth Press’s largest circulation, which remained in the tens of thousands. *A Room of One’s Own* and “The London Scene” essays were lucrative for Woolf and they increased her popularity in America (Scott 233). However, as it turned out, *Good Housekeeping* was unable to commit to printing the whole of *Flush* before the book came out, although they attempted to negotiate the publication of it in a kind of “shortened form” (HPA 556, 17 February 1933), an idea to which Woolf agreed in theory, depending on the cuts they suggested. *Good Housekeeping* eventually declined

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194 *Eminent Victorians* was published by Chatto & Windus in 1918 in several different formats, from a Pelican pocket edition to a signed, limited run.
the offer, though, with the assurance that “Miss Head, by the way, was most anxious that [Miss Pearn]\textsuperscript{195} should say how keenly she is looking forward to the chance of securing for “Good Housekeeping” the continuation of “A ROOM OF ONE’S OWN” if and when this materializes, as discussed with Mrs. Woolf” (HPA 556, 16 March 1933).

The series of events that followed the fruitless negotiations with Good Housekeeping is an example of a frequent occurrence in the HPA files: Leonard Woolf becoming enraged by the activities of a literary agent. David Finkelstein and others have recently pointed out that literary agents were among the new roles created and made prominent by innovations of the twentieth-century book trade, and the “mediating role of the agent as arbiter and evaluator of literary property” (336) was one that Woolf saw as essentially unnecessary and even damaging. While agents were chiefly involved in negotiating such matters as film rights, radio broadcasts, foreign rights, publicity and publishing contracts, the Hogarth Press undertook all of these kinds of mediations itself, and avoided entering into negotiations with agents whenever it was possible to do so. Part of the reason for its distrust of literary agents was that they prevented the Press from negotiating its own financial terms with authors. Another reason, however, for Leonard Woolf’s dislike of dealing with literary agents was that their role was, in general, designed to take away from publishers some of the power to make decisions about the literary and monetary value of works and about copyright negotiations and to help authors to assert their own values in the literary marketplace. However, the Hogarth Press had always acted in the interests of Virginia Woolf as an author, had always

\textsuperscript{195} Richard Greene pointed out to me that “Miss Pearn” is Nancy Pearn, a Curtis Brown agent who later joined the firm of Pearn, Pollinger and Higham.
focused on dissolving some of the traditional restrictions that were placed on authors by publishers, and had affirmed her status and promoted her reputation since its beginning. In this sense, the Press had always acted as her agent, and Leonard Woolf saw no reason, connected as he was to so many important English literary networks, to pay someone else to do a job he felt he could do better.

In the case of *Flush*, Leonard Woolf was extremely displeased when Curtis Brown, a prominent transatlantic agent with whom Woolf had frequent disagreements, attempted to negotiate the serialization of the dog’s biography in the intellectual weekly periodical *Time & Tide*. Miss Pearn, with whom Woolf had been dealing regarding the publication of *Flush* in *Good Housekeeping*, asked after that rejection if she could see whether *Women’s Journal*, a monthly American feminist periodical, would be interested in the piece, and asked if there were any newspapers or periodicals in which the Woolfs would not want *Flush* to appear. Leonard replied that while he would be comfortable with Miss Pearn approaching the *Daily Telegraph* and *Evening Standard*, which were large circulation daily newspapers, on the Press’s behalf, weeklies were not, he felt, usually worth the Press’s while financially. However, Miss Pearn had already gone ahead and asked Curtis Brown if they could approach *Time & Tide*, and the agent had secured a special rate for *Flush*.

Leonard Woolf did not reply himself, but Hogarth Press manager Margaret West wrote of his annoyance at the circumstance:

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196 *Time & Tide* was a left-wing feminist weekly periodical run by the Woolf’s friend Lady Rhodda (who published her book *Leisured Women* with the Press in 1928).
Mr. Woolf wishes me to say that he is astonished and extremely annoyed by your letter of yesterday’s date [...] it is hardly likely that he would have required to ask Curtis Brown to approach papers like *The New Statesman* and *Time & Tide* with which he is continually in touch [...] You have now, he says, put both him and Mrs. Woolf in an extremely awkward position with Lady Rhondda by sounding her without his instructions; and he would now be greatly obliged if you would return the MS of the book to him (HPA 556 17 March, 1933).

In the end, *Flush* never appeared in periodical form before coming out as a book, and the Press’s characteristically strategic and strong-willed negotiations with other forums in which Woolf’s work might appear is indicative of a determination to produce Woolf’s writings on terms that suited her and the Press optimally and to settle for no less.

All of these negotiations with periodicals for serialization rights were in part an effort to capitalize on the potential popularity of *Flush*. The likelihood of good sales was apparent before the book was published, and, as Gordon and Caughie have both argued, the book “was written, in part, to sell” (*Under the Imprint* 87). Willis describes *Flush* as “the big seller for 1933” (266) at the Press. When the production sheets initially went to R&R Clark, one of the many professional printers that the Hogarth Press employed, Margaret West asked for 10,000 copies, to be uniform with *A Room of One’s Own*, and 250 copies in a special limited edition, 220 of which were to be signed and numbered by Woolf (HPA 556). As with several other Hogarth Press publications (including, as I explained in Chapter Five, Isherwood’s *Goodbye to Berlin*), the initial production plans changed somewhat when the Book Society selected *Flush* as one of its books of the
month. Nicola Wilson’s recent article on the Press’s relationship with Hugh Walpole and the Book Society treats the case of *Flush* in detail and explores the significance of the mutually beneficial although sometimes complicated relationship between the two institutions. A subscription service for both English and overseas readers, the Book Society selected a number of Hogarth Press publications for inclusion on its list over the years and increasingly in the 1930s.

In the case of *Flush*, part of the Book Society selection affected not only the readership but also the production of the material book. The Society had particular specifications about the price of the books they selected, which had to have a list price of between 7s6d and 10s6d (HPA 556, 7 February 1933). Since *Flush* was a very slim book, it was initially intended to sell at 5s, the same price as *A Room of One’s Own*. The Book Society therefore requested a special edition in larger format with wider margins and higher quality paper, so that it could be sold at 7s6d (HPA 556, 17 February 1933). The Press put a hold on its own plans and had the special edition produced first, based on the promise that the Book Society would order 7000 copies, and that these copies could be assumed to represent sales on top of what the Press would normally achieve on its own. In October of 1933, 12,680 copies of the large paper edition occasioned by the Book Society selection were produced, with a second impression of 3000 copies later that month (Steeles xxv and Gordon 89). The cheaper uniform edition followed in November. In the first six months, *Flush* sold a total of 14,390 copies (HPA MSR), outdoing *Orlando*, which had been the most successful of Woolf’s novels sales-wise up to that point. The relatively large runs for this book reflect the increase in the Press’s reach and also in Virginia Woolf’s reputation by 1933. As I argued earlier, however, the particular
popularity of *Flush* and *Orlando* likely also related to their biographical nature. Woolf’s other late novels, such as *Between the Acts* and *The Years* did not achieve similarly high sales in the UK.

Jane Goldman has recently argued that all this success in sales was bad for *Flush*’s literary reputation, and that the book’s popularity caused it to be “considered a fall from high-brow grace” (75). Goldman and Caughie both mention that the book was a Book Society selection and an American Book-of-the-Month Club selection. Caughie explains the American context in detail and argues that selection by the Book-of-the-Month Club positioned *Flush* not as frivolous popular literature but as the reverse: a “serious” (57) book. Drawing on Radway’s detailed study of the Club, Caughie demonstrates the significance of the American reception of *Flush* and concludes that “it is precisely [the book club’s] refusal to codify any one approach to literature or to promote one set of values that Woolf shares with a popular aesthetic” (58). I would further argue that what Caughie describes as the breakdown of the cultural categories of highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow in the context of the literary marketplace agrees with the Hogarth Press’s habitual refusal to label its books along those kinds of lines, and with its combination of small-press and commercial practices. By exploring the popular readerships that the Press itself sought, I offer an additional context to the one that Caughie and Radway provide in exploring the role of the American Book Club, and argue for the links between the publisher, the author, and a wide readership. Since the Press organized its own publication practices around the Book Society and sought out large circulation serialization for the work, there is an even stronger argument in support of *Flush*’s place as a text that complicated distinctions between serious and popular
literature, and unsettled the validity of these categories. The detailed negotiations between the Hogarth Press, the periodicals, and The Book Society reveal that the popular success of *Flush* was far from accidental, and its dissemination was managed carefully in order to ensure the right positioning of the book in the literary market, as far as the Press was concerned. Detailed examination of the marketing practices involved in the production of *Flush* suggests that far from valuing the highbrow above the popular, or even from noting a significant distinction between these realms, the Press had habitual practices – its partnership with The Book Society, its production of multiple kinds of editions of Woolf’s works at various price points, its advertisements – and brought these practices to bear on whichever of the works on their list seemed to suit particular tactics.

It is worth noting, finally, in order to appreciate fully the extent to which Woolf valued and corresponded with her readership, and sought out as many readers as she could find, that she often answered readers’ letters to the Press herself on Hogarth Press letterhead. Acting at once as publisher and author, Woolf replied, for instance, to a letter that sets out to correct some of the historical details in *Flush*. Woolf wrote to the writer of the letter, Miss Batchelder, with a response that indicates not only her dual role as author and publisher, but also her interest in the balance of fact and fancy even in fantastical biography. It can be inferred from Woolf’s reply, although the original letter from Miss Batchelder does not survive, that the reader provided Woolf with a list of factual inaccuracies. Woolf wrote, in reply: “I am sorry that I was inaccurate about the

197 The Press frequently managed letters from readers and Leonard Woolf, John Lehmann, or the Press Manager frequently replied on behalf of authors (HPA 139 and 579 for examples, and also see Chapter Four).
date of the window blind,” but maintains that the mistake seemed, to her, rather trivial: “I hope the matter is not of sufficient importance to require alteration” (S 3 November, 1934). Even in a work that proclaims its own fictionality, the very mention of biography brings up the question of what is permissible, and while focalization through a dog’s perspective was, in this particular reader’s view, allowable, historical inaccuracies about window coverings and Barrett Browning’s preferred kinds of cake were not forgivable liberties. Like the reader of Orlando who felt temporally disoriented by the portraits, Miss Batchelder associated biography, even of a dog, with a certain kind of expected historical accuracy.

**Moments of Being in Roger Fry**

The fact that Woolf’s earlier biographical writings focused on an animal and a time-transcending androgynous person has been difficult for critics to reconcile with her later book in the genre, a full-length biography of her friend Roger Fry, published by the Press in 1940. Elizabeth Cooley, for instance, argues that the work compares unfavourably with Orlando, and describes Roger Fry as an instance in which Woolf “failed to emancipate herself from the shackles of tradition” (72) and goes on to suggest even more harshly that “the fictitious biographer of Orlando seems to parody [Woolf’s later biographical voice in Roger Fry], as Woolf voices her doubts about succeeding at her endeavor” (73). Even more bluntly, Nigel Hamilton describes it as “the worst book [Woolf] ever wrote” (162). Cooley’s rather damning description of Woolf as a

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198 As Amber Regis notes, the work’s “failed reputation is borne out in current publishing trends: Roger Fry remains absent from the Penguin and Oxford Classics list, and although Vintage reproduces the text as part of its Lives series, this is a facsimile reprint without a critical introduction or editorial apparatus” (82).
biographer, and Hamilton’s outright denunciation of the text represent a curious shift in the reception of biography as a genre. Rather than questioning the biographer’s right to play with the boundaries between fact and fiction and subjecting the methods of “The New Biography” to scrutiny, recent critics have tended to take Woolf’s tactics in *Roger Fry* as an abandonment of her earlier ideals and consequently as a return to methods that seem, after the prevalence and popularity of Stracheyan and, indeed, Woolfian practices, to be hopelessly unsatisfying. Our age, it seems, reads Woolf as if only the experimental were “permissible” in her biographical practice because of her ideas about the exciting possibilities for the genre. Rather than expecting conventional or straightforward biography, critics have come to expect the modern, the unsettled, and the anti-Victorian from Woolf, to the extent that *Roger Fry* ends up being read, when it is read at all, as a disappointment. The biography is widely regarded as a kind of aesthetic failure, leaving behind the ideals that Woolf explored in her essays and in her earlier fanciful books in favour of what is generally seen as a more conventional approach. Consequently, *Roger Fry* remains the least studied work in the Woolf canon, less studied even than *Flush*, and is often dismissed as a failure of imagination: too much “granite” and not enough “rainbow.”

*Roger Fry* cannot be said to have fallen out of the canon because of its popularity as *Flush* seemed to have done, since it was produced on a smaller scale and marketed as what might be referred to as a “serious book.” The book was priced at 12s6d, the standard price for hardcover biographies at mainstream publishers, and 2530 copies were printed in the first run in July of 1940, with a further 2140 in second and third impressions by November (Woolmer 163). It was not, however, a massive two-volume
memorial of the kind favoured by Victorian biographers, however conventional it is often described to be. There is, unsurprisingly given the nature of the work, no correspondence in the Press’s files about periodical serialization, no mention of book club selection and no negotiations about producing a cheaper edition for wider distribution. Unlike *Flush*, *Roger Fry* was not the beneficiary of the Hogarth Press’s full marketing potential. The copies that did sell were likely sold on the strength of the Press’s advertisements of the work in the backs of its own publications, and on the strength of Fry’s and Woolf’s reputations.

The relatively modest marketing for *Roger Fry* was not dissimilar to the practices employed by the Press in their promotion of Fry’s own publications with the Press several years earlier. Fry published three books with the Press between 1921 and 1927. Regis argues that Woolf’s attention to biography’s status as a “craft” in “The Art of Biography” might be linked to her composition of Fry’s biography and to her immersion in his own ideas about the nature of craftsmanship, especially as these ideas were embodied in Fry’s Omega Workshops. The way in which Regis describes Omega’s craft aesthetic could also be applied to the early Hogarth Press books, for which many Omega artists, including Fry, supplied covers and woodcuts: “there was to be no fixed rigidity of form or appearance; each product would reveal necessary man-made variations. And yet, paradoxically, these products would also cohere, unified under the Omega trademark” (84).

Fry’s critical book about Cézanne was published by the Hogarth Press in 1927, and an additional context for reading the *Roger Fry* biography is the subject’s own role
as a Hogarth Press author. One of Roger Fry’s own early publications at the Press, after his successful *Twelve Woodcuts* (1921), which was one of the early hand-printed books and sold out almost immediately, was an illustrated autobiographical travel narrative about his adventures in Spain. A Sampler of Castile (1923) is a collection of fragments that Fry claims in the preface “was not written for you, my reader, but solely for myself. It was written so that I might let some of all those variegated, vivid, and odd impressions run themselves clear on paper before they become part of the vague mist of blurred images which move like ghosts in the dim world of the past” (v). Initially intending it as a private diary, Fry explains the way in which the book came to be published. By way of a complicated series of metaphors, Fry writes that the book had been solicited by the Woolfs. They (figured in the passage below as “the Devil”) had suggested that since he had written the reflections, he might as well go ahead and publish them:

How then, you will ask, did it ever come into your hands? That is the result of the Devil’s usual little manoeuvre which I trust you know as well as I. One is standing near the edge of an attractive ravine, when he comes up and politely says, “If you are thinking of trying to get down there, I should strongly dissuade you; it is really rather dangerous, and you never know what may happen. But just a little way down there, you see that convenient ledge: from there you can get the whole prospect, and the way is quite easy. There is nothing irrevocable in going down that far: you can always turn back.” Every time this happens one forgets how

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199 Fry published seven books with the Press between 1921 and 1927 and also assisted them in finding artists to work on the woodcuts and hand-painted papers. He did decorative work for them himself, as well, chiefly in the form of marbled papers for book covers.
slippery those ledges are, what an easy slide it is from writing to publishing. So now, I find myself approaching that nasty bump at the bottom, and there is no way out of it. After all, the slide down is pleasant enough while it lasts; in fact, I should feel rather disappointed if the Hogarth Press broke down and I found myself safely back on the brink. I expect the Devil knew that all along (v).

Fry’s preface goes on to imagine who his readers might be, and groups them into two categories – people who have been, and those who have not been, to Spain. He imagines the readers who would disagree vehemently with his assessments of the country and those who would write supportive, agreeable exclamations in the margins. Fry’s address to the reader in a work that was initially written to be a private reminiscence indicates a consciousness of his obligation to the reader but also an acknowledgment that the book might be received in a variety of ways and that there was little that he could or would want to do to control this reception. In her essay “The Patron and the Crocus,” Woolf argues that works like Fry’s were never written to be wholly private in the first place. She argues that “a book is always written for somebody to read” (CE 2: 149), and her reader-oriented approach explains, in part, why the Woolfs were inviting Fry down from the precipice of privacy into the ravine of published authorship. Woolf suggests, however, that a central question “for whom should we write?” (CE 2: 149) is terribly complicated for her contemporaries and that choosing one’s “patron” (CE 2: 149) and through that patron, one’s audience, is a difficult decision. Fry’s admission that he would now be disappointed if the Hogarth Press, his chosen patron for the volume, were to abandon him or leave him up on his unpublished ledge resonates with Woolf’s theory that truly private writing does not offer the same exciting possibilities for communication
that shared work can. Happily, no such thing occurred and the book was published, for a relatively small audience. The Hogarth Press files on *Sampler* are rather sparse, and consist primarily of negotiations with the printer regarding the 16 illustrations by Fry that accompany the written fragments. It was a large-format, small-run book priced at 25s and limited to 550 signed and numbered copies (Woolmer 21).

I examine Fry’s most autobiographical book to be published by the Press here partly because Woolf used a number of his autobiographical fragments to write her own biography, and also because Fry’s awareness of the circumstances of production, his support for the Press, and his consciousness of his readers are all features that resonate with Woolf’s later account of his life. Fry’s ideas about Post-Impressionism and the influence of his aesthetics on Woolf’s fiction have been extensively analyzed by Ann Banfield, among others, and the importance of some of his philosophical concepts—notably his interest in dualist time theory and in Post-Impressionist aesthetics—were extremely important to Woolf’s concept of modernism. After Fry wrote to Woolf praising what he saw as the formal triumph of *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf replied that she wished she had dedicated it to him, but that

> the not-dedication is a greater compliment than the dedication would have been –
> But you shall have a private copy, if you’ll accept it. What I meant was (but would not have said in print) that besides all your surpassing private virtues, you have I think kept me on the right path, so far as writing goes, more than anyone – if the right path it is (*L* 3: 385).

This attempt to express her debt to Fry resulted in a “private copy” as a gift and token of
friendship, one which was significant outside the sphere of publication, and indicates just
the kind of personal inscription that later made Woolf reluctant to sign copies for
strangers reading *Flush* through their Book Society subscriptions. Woolf’s and Fry’s
friendship and professional relationship, therefore, were mediated in various ways by the
Hogarth Press long before the publication of *Roger Fry*.

As the Hogarth Press examples in previous chapters, and as Fry’s own
publications with the Press have demonstrated, straight-faced, full-length biographies
were not necessarily characteristic offerings for the Press, but *Roger Fry* was far from
their only serious non-fiction publication, just as *Flush* was not the only book-length
joke. Silly and serious alike were welcome at the Press, and so much the better if the
works tackled the genre of biography. Additionally, reading *Roger Fry* in the context of
the Press’s diverse list, which advocated a variety of approaches to the same subject,
means that Woolf’s own diversity of styles and approaches in her biographical practice is
similar to the Press’s broader mandate. It was also written with Fry’s family in mind and
at their request. Margery Fry’s somewhat lukewarm endorsement of the final work sits
awkwardly in the form of a letter addressed to Virginia Woolf that is printed under the
heading of a “Foreword.” Fry writes that “as the book is to have no formal preface…
[she has] begged to have this page to tell you of our gratitude to you for having accepted,
and for having brought to completion a piece of work neither light nor easy” (5). The
family’s involvement in the work clearly changed the nature of “what is permissible” in
this particular biography in terms of innovation, and Margery Fry’s passive-aggressive
resentment at being denied a formal preface is one indication that this relationship was
not an easy one.
All the critical talk of the biography’s aesthetic failure (much of the discussion was possibly occasioned by Leonard Woolf’s negative view of the book)\textsuperscript{200} begs the question of how the biography of Roger Fry approaches the genre, particularly in terms of narrative form. The biography takes, it is true, a conventional outward form in moving from the subject’s ancestral lineage to his childhood, more or less chronologically through to his death. It could be argued, however, that both \textit{Flush} and \textit{Orlando} also adopt the conventional biographical chronology, if only to undo it with invented, overly conjectural lineages and theatrical transitions between stages in the subjects’ personal developments. The obvious difference, then, is to be found in the biographer’s tone, and Woolf’s biographical voice in \textit{Roger Fry} is more akin to that of her other novels than to her fanciful experiments in biography.

It would, however, be inaccurate to suggest that Woolf abandons the ideals she expresses in her essays of conveying a person through metaphor, image, and experimental technique. One particularly striking image recurs through the biography and links also to Woolf’s fragmentary autobiography, “A Sketch of the Past,” which she wrote at the same time as \textit{Roger Fry}. Georgia Johnston has argued convincingly that \textit{Roger Fry} heavily influenced Woolf’s own autobiographical practice, incorporating Fry’s aesthetic theories and his “theories of perception to the task of formulating the autobiographical self” (288). In “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf describes her childhood vision of a flower as a formative artistic moment:

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\textsuperscript{200} Virginia Woolf wrote of Leonard’s reaction in her diary: “Its mere anal[ysis], not history. Austere repression. In fact dull to the outsider. All those dead quotations” (D 5: 271).
\end{flushright}
I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; “That is the whole,” I said. It seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that it was the real flower; part earth; part flower (Moments of Being 71).201

The apprehension of the flower is one of the instances that exemplifies Woolf’s idea of “moments of being,” or particularly intense experiences that crystallize character and transcend the mundane aspects of everyday life.202 While Johnston’s argument for the incorporation of Fry’s theories into Woolf’s own text is well supported, her notion that Roger Fry “legitimizes and validates Woolf as a serious writer commissioned to produce a family authorized, weighty, public text, with a traditional structure and coherent façade” (288) seems to overstate the biography’s conventional nature. Roger Fry is not devoid of the kinds of aesthetic “play” (288) that Johnston sees as aspects of Woolf’s autobiographical practice drawn from Fry’s theories but absent from Woolf’s biography of him. Roger Fry opens with a quotation from his own private fragmentary autobiography about the garden of his childhood home; a garden that, he writes, is “still for me the imagined background for almost any garden scene that I read in books” (qtd in Roger Fry 11). As was her way in Flush, Woolf reads this excerpt by using the first person plural to indicate the biographer’s voice, a gesture which verbally includes the intended addressee: “We may pause for a moment on the threshold of that small house at Highgate to ask what we can learn about him before he became conscious […] of the

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201 Cuddy-Keane notes a parallel, too, between this passage in “A Sketch of the Past” and an image in Between the Acts that describes “the flower complete” (8, 155).

202 Johnston draws a parallel between Woolf’s “moments of being” and “moments of non-being” as she figures them in “A Sketch of the Past,” and Fry’s division between “actual life” and “imaginative life” as he expresses this dichotomy in his aesthetic theory in “Essay on Aesthetics” (Johnston 292).
‘large red oriental poppies which by some blessed chance’ grew in his ‘private and particular garden’” (11). The red poppy re-emerges in Fry’s reminiscences and becomes an object of reverence and devotion: “I conceived that nothing in the world could be more exciting than to see the flower suddenly burst its green case and unfold its immense cup of red” (qtd in Roger Fry 16). Woolf takes up Fry’s fondness for garden imagery at a crucial moment later in the biography when she describes his famous lecture at the Post-Impressionist exhibit at Grafton Gallery in 1910:

And there was Roger Fry, gazing at them, plunging his eyes into them as if he were a humming-bird hawk-moth hanging over a flower, quivering yet still. And then drawing a deep breath of satisfaction, he would turn to whoever it might be, eager for sympathy. Were you puzzled? But why? And he would explain that it was quite easy to make the transition from Watts to Picasso (152).

Woolf’s simile returns Fry to the position of observing and attending to a flower, precisely at the moment that he is introducing the Post-Impressionists to the London galleries for the first time. She thereby suggests an image and a significant landscape as an organizing principle for the development of Fry’s career, and as a figure for viewers of modernist art. The stylistic techniques of this passage also contribute to Woolf’s construction of the scene, and the invented dialogue, as well as the repeated “woulds” of the observation suggest that what Woolf describes is not so much an incident in Fry’s life as a condition of being and a general method of interacting with observers of art and with art itself. The childhood garden returns again, this time explicitly repeating the opening
There are certain phrases that recur [in his work], that seem to stress the pattern of the whole. His own words “It gives me pure delight” might serve for a beginning. They bring to mind the little boy who sat in his own private and particular garden at Highgate, watching for the bud to burst into flower […] What was true of the child in the garden was true of the man all through his life. There was always some bud about to burst into flower; there was always some flower that gave him pure delight (294).

This final repetition of the flower image is the clearest example of its role as a metaphor for Fry’s particular way of looking at the world and for his artistic temperament, particularly in relation to artistic experiment and modernity. All this is to say that Woolf’s shifting narrative voices and her attention to patterns and images answer, at least to some degree, her call for innovative biographies that might express the personality of the subject more clearly than a straightforward description of the events of his or her life. Roger Fry is not, despite the book’s hefty, rather than slim physical status, and a serious, rather than a lighthearted portrayal, an abandonment of her ideals for the craft of biography.

The imagistic parallels between Woolf’s “A Sketch of the Past” and Roger Fry offer a common language for explaining artistic interior lives, but these garden scenes also recall another of Woolf’s flower images, in “The Patron and the Crocus,” in which she places these transformative artistic experiences in the frame of public reception: “the
writer who has been moved by the sight of the first crocus in Kensington Gardens has,
before he sets pen to paper, to choose from a crowd of competitors the particular patron
who suits him best” (CE 2: 149). As I mentioned earlier in relation to Fry’s Sampler,
Woolf’s argument is that “the crocus is an imperfect crocus until it has been shared” (CE
2:149-50), and the way of sharing it makes all the difference. It can be trampled or wilted
with the wrong care, but, as Woolf suggests, “the patron we want, then, is the one who
will help us to preserve our flowers from decay” (CE 2: 151). It is difficult not to read
this statement with the Hogarth Press in mind: acting as the communicative vehicle for
both Woolf’s works and also, through her biography and through the publication of Fry’s
own works, for Fry’s first apprehension of his garden. The negotiation between
satisfying Margery Fry, practicing biography in a way that suited her, and honoring her
friend, was one with which Woolf struggled in this relatively low-profile Hogarth Press
book. The way in which the Press dealt with this delicate bouquet was to publish the
book as a commemoratory volume, but one that contained flourishes of the Post-
Impressionist aesthetics in which Roger Fry was invested.

One final context in which Roger Fry might be read with reference to the Hogarth
Press list is alongside other commemoratory biographies that the Press produced. While
Roger Fry was the most substantial of these and was the only one to be sold on the scale
that it was commercially, and the others were mostly slimmer volumes (perhaps as a
deliberate backlash against the “prodigious waste” of the two-volume heft of Victorian
biographies [CE 4: 231]), the Press’s practice of posthumously honoring friends with
publications goes beyond Roger Fry. In 1938, the Press produced a commemoratory
volume for Julian Bell, who was killed while driving an ambulance in the Spanish Civil
War. This text consists of a gathering of Bell’s own essays and poems, which are placed alongside reminiscences by J. M. Keynes, David Garnett, Charles Mauron, C. Day Lewis and E. M. Forster. The inclusion of Bell’s own writings alongside the reminiscences of others is a combination of biography and writings by the biographical subject that Woolf also employs to a lesser degree in *Roger Fry* by including so many quotations from Fry’s own writings. Another commemorative volume, *Hilda Matheson*, was collectively written by Matheson’s friends and colleagues and prefaced with a biographical introduction. Hilda Matheson was an MI5 agent who was stationed in Rome and tasked with bringing together military, naval and commercial forces. Upon Matheson’s return to England she worked for a while as Lady Astor’s political secretary, and then moved to the BBC. As a biographical subject, Matheson represents a strong and important female figure, but also embodies some of the specific interests of the Press in her connections with the African Survey. Although these two commemorative volumes are not often considered alongside the Press’s commercial publications, their methods of presenting friends through the eyes of contemporaries and through their own writings resonates with some of the other biographical practices by Hogarth Press authors.

The way in which Woolf has been treated by critics as a canonical theorist of biography and autobiography, primarily because of her clear articulation of the principles of “The New Biography” – indeed, she is often read as the representative of certain ideals, such as the recovery of women’s lives, an interest in the ordinary as well as the

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203 The Press produced several books on Africa, which Jeanne Dubino connects with Leonard Woolf’s anti-colonial politics. There was a sufficient number of titles for the Press to produce a catalogue specifically devoted to these works (*Africa*).
extraordinary, and advocacy of inventiveness in biography – has affected the reception of her own practices in the genre by holding them up to the ideals she expresses. Woolf’s biographies and mock-biographies are continually assessed against the backdrop of her own theories, and I argue that placing them in the context of the diverse range of biographical and autobiographical writings alongside which her own works were published at the Press provides an equally illuminating context and allows them to be seen as works that were not only written but also published in different styles. The kinds of critical readings that have rendered two of the works I address here less frequently studied in the Woolf canon, of *Orlando* as ambiguous and confusing, *Flush* as an insubstantial joke and of *Roger Fry* as a failure of experimental ambition, can be, to some degree, called into question with reference to the Hogarth Press’s list. The “conditions of method, time, and place” to which experiments in imaginative biography were bound also applied to the publication of these works, and while certain liberties could be taken with fictional, humorous offerings, more serious, intimate works had to be produced and sold in a way that befitted their subjects. These three books by Woolf, in representing three seemingly divergent approaches to biography, are not anomalies in the Press’s diverse output, but three works whose differences in tone, style, approach, and subject are reflected in the practices of their publication.
Conclusion

I have argued that one of the guiding principles of the Woolfs’ approaches to biography and autobiography was to present a variety of ideologies, subjects, approaches, and forms at the Press. By offering a wide range of examples of the genres, the Hogarth Press provides readers with the opportunity to encounter different tones and methods in order to arrive at their own conclusions about genres of personal writing whose status was highly contested in the world of books. Reading a number of different works from the publisher’s list gives a sense of the range of methods and perspectives that might exist on a given subject. The Press’s broad selection principle, of publishing “writing of merit that the ordinary publisher refuses” (VW L 2: 242), heightens the role of genre as an interface between the publisher, the reader, and the book trade, but also complicates it. While genre designations are important in establishing readerships and readerly expectations, the broad categories and labels often prove insufficient when addressing a variety of complex works. Since the Press casts a wide net for selection, the restrictiveness of categorization often proves to be problematic, but it also offers the opportunity for reflections on the nature of genre, of non-fiction, and of representational tactics. Diversity is therefore both the policy and the product of the Press. In the case of biography and autobiography, everything from fictionalized biographies of animals to straightforwardly laudatory biographies of literary figures was published at the Press, each offering a different answer to the question of what it means to be a writer and a reader of life stories.

The fullness of this body of materials extends beyond the specific cases I have examined above. In a study that considers a publisher’s whole list as a context
underpinning the production of specific works, it is necessary to be selective in presenting particular texts. I could equally have explored a number of other texts that relate to biography and autobiography from the Hogarth Press’s list, though I have chosen the examples above in order to show specific relations between contemporary theories of biography and autobiography – particularly the Woolfs’ own – and the act of publishing works in these genres. As I mentioned in the introduction, however, the relatively small size of the Hogarth Press means that gaining a sense of the whole output is possible for one person to achieve, so the broader view of the Press’s output has informed my selections and observations throughout the project, and my construction of the group of books that fall “under the general heading of biography,” (Woolf “Biographies and Autobiographies” 250) even as that heading offers only an initial glimpse of the books’ particular features. The appendices that follow are designed to give a sense of the titles that I could have considered in addition to those I treat in more detail above, but I would like to conclude by suggesting a few other possible groups of texts – in addition to the Russian translations, the biography series, the autobiografictions of the thirties, and Woolf’s own writings – and introducing possible avenues for future work by suggesting how these works might be treated in the context of the Hogarth Press’s broader output and its emphasis on diverse approaches to what both Woolfs clearly saw as an important form.

Perhaps the most famous name on the Press’s list of autobiographers I did not treat in detail is Sigmund Freud. His *An Autobiographical Study* was published by the Press in 1935. The Press published the whole of the Psycho-Analytic Library, and the contribution of Psycho-Analytical methods to the study and practice of biography and
autobiography through the twentieth century is a hugely important and rather enormous subject, which would make for a whole project in itself. However, Freud’s own autobiography is rather unexpected in its approach, since it offers a fairly straightforward take on his career as a psychoanalyst. The book was written as part of a series of short works commissioned to reveal the state of medicine through the autobiographies of its practitioners (the original study was in German). As my chapter on the Hogarth Press’s own series demonstrates, the aims of the original publisher here may have had a great deal to do with the method of composition and with the content of the work. The Hogarth Press context, however, demonstrates that Freud’s autobiography was part of a broader group of similar texts and series concerned with vocation and work as a defining element of biographical character. Not the only work of its kind to be published by the Press, An Autobiographical Study is one of a few vocational autobiographies in which workers in a given field respond to requests for personal accounts of their lives and habits. James Strachey, in his introduction to Freud’s work, suggests that this genre might be called “autoergography.” It would be possible to read some examples of “autoergographies” alongside a literary vocational biography of Henry James by Theodora Bosanquet, which I discuss further below, and even alongside studies of the effect of industrialization on the personalities of factory workers.

One such autobiographical account of working life from 1928, Lancashire Under the Hammer, uses first-hand experiences to describe the life of a cotton worker in Northern England, and the explicit purpose of the book is to “enlighten the stranger” (10)

204 James Strachey’s term does not appear to have caught on, as I was not able to find many additional uses of it, but it derives etymologically from the Greek “ergon” (meaning a person’s collected works or opus).
about the profession. This text leads into another possible group of Hogarth Press books that are written by and about working-class writers. The notion of working-class northern writers addressing a London audience through a culturally renowned London publisher is evident in a number of the works that the Press published, many of which promote the authenticity of autobiographical narratives that “feature the voice of insiders” (Southworth 210). The overt and acknowledged disjunction between the working-class writers who produced these books and the middle-class audiences at whom they seemed to be pitched creates a tension that is difficult to resolve. However, Bowker’s emphasis on the reader as a “stranger” and an outsider to his own experience adds an element of class-consciousness to the common anxiety I discussed in the introduction that real readers are unknowable to authors.

Bowker’s account and the ones that follow in the 1930s demonstrate an interest in working-class writers and especially in autobiography as a mode of expression particularly well-suited to the description of working conditions and of working life. Southworth addresses some of these publications and uses them to argue that the common separation between the Press’s political works and its literary ones was not always such a stark separation (“‘Going Over’” 206). The best-known of these collections is Life as We Have Known It, a series of memoirs edited by Margaret Llewelyn Davies for the Women’s Co-Operative Guild. Virginia Woolf wrote an introduction to the volume, and critics have often complained of its ambivalent endorsement of the writings that follow. The Worker’s Point of View: A Symposium was a similar volume to Life as We Have Known It, a group of autobiographical sketches that were originally gathered for The Human Factor, a journal of the National Institute of
Industrial Psychology and republished by the Press as a single volume. These books reveal, in addition to the difficult relations between working-class writers and their middle-class publishers, the institutional affiliations that the Press had with Labour Movements and with explicitly left-wing political projects (including the Fabians and the British Labour Party), and their production was tied to the special provision of a certain number of copies for the members of the organizations they represented. As Southworth has argued, “it seems clear that [the Woolfs] intended to include those [writers] whose working-class origins or whose distance from London meant that they did not have the credentials or networks available to their middle-class, metropolitan counterparts” (“Going Over” 207). While most criticism has either glossed over these publications altogether, or used them as indications of the Woolfs’ social isolation rather than their engagement, for my purposes these cases are of interest not only because they adhere to the Press’s mandate in a perhaps unexpected way, but also because they demonstrate a trend that I see elsewhere in the Press’s output of works on a particular topic beginning with political, non-fiction pamphlets on a social issue, and becoming “increasingly autobiographical” (Southworth 214). Southworth’s main focus is R. M. Fox, whose autobiography *Smoky Crusade* details his life as a factory worker, and whose collection *Drifting Men* of 1930 describes life in prison and is based on his own experiences when he was incarcerated for being a conscientious objector. As Southworth

205 In a letter to the editor, Margaret Llewellyn Davies, Leonard Woolf describes the arrangement for *Life as We Have Known It* as follows: “we could print 2000 copies and publish at 5/-, provided that the Guild would take a special edition, bound in paper, of 500 copies to be sold at 2/6 to their members only. We would of course give 33% discount to them.” (HPA 62, 8 January 1931)
points out, *Smoky Crusade* appeared in 1937, at the same time as Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier*.  

Another important figure to be published by the Press, although in his case posthumously, was Virginia Woolf’s father, Leslie Stephen. *Some Early Impressions* is a work that, like so many autobiographies, begins reluctantly, with Stephen’s declaration that although he has been “asked to join the great army of reminiscence writers,” (20) Stephen has been reluctant to do so for fear that his own life, and particularly his inner life, would prove insufficiently interesting to readers. What follows, despite his initial protestations, is an account that focuses on Stephen’s intellectual development – following his life through his education at Cambridge and tracing the origins of his position as a man of letters. Reading Woolf’s relationship with her father as a way of understanding her ideas about biography is not a new method, but his work at the *DNB* clearly influenced her own understanding of the meaning of conventional biography.  

*Some Early Impressions*, though, is more akin to Stephen’s unpublished intimate *Mausoleum Book*, and its publication by the Press suggests an interest in the private face of a public biographer. It offers a suggestive example for examining the relationship between biography and autobiography, and for demonstrating the ways in which even

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206 Gollancz, another small literary press often associated with modernism, published this.

207 Much of the existing criticism on Woolf and Stephen is psychoanalytical or biographical, focusing on his mistreatment of his daughters as an oppressive Victorian patriarch. In addition to the many biographies of Woolf, there have also been several scholarly monographs and articles on this element of the relationship, notably Elizabeth Abel’s *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*, and, making the counter-argument, Katherine Hill’s “Virginia Woolf and Leslie Stephen: Literary History and Revolution.” My own view is that one of the most interesting and less examined aspects of their relationship is the specific lineage that can be traced through Woolf’s inheritance of Stephen’s library. For the purposes of this study, her father’s involvement with the *DNB* is a key influence.
Leslie Stephen abandons many of the *DNB’s* more restrictive principles (in terms of length, formality, and level of “greatness” for the subject) when he writes about his own life.

The Press also published a number of works in the broad field of literary biography. Between 1924 and 1928 alone, the Press published four literary biographies: *Henry James at Work* (1924), *Rochester* (1925), *The Character of John Dryden* (1925), and *L.E.L: A Mystery of the Thirties* (1926). Each of these biographies takes a different form. The most traditional and perhaps the most unsophisticated is Alan Lubbock’s *Dryden*. His method is of the kind of which T.S. Eliot would disapprove, since he reads Dryden’s character out of his works, and suggests that an absence of documentary evidence is part of the reason for his shadowy, conjectural characterization: “look for him and he is not there: the lines of the human figure dissolve, as you turn, into those of the literature of his age” (5). As a result of this elusiveness, Lubbock's approach is to characterize Dryden as a man particularly malleable to the fashions of his day and eager to please his audience. Being apparently unable to distinguish Dryden personally from what is known about his historical period, Lubbock decides that Dryden must be an embodiment of his time. While there are obvious drawbacks to Lubbock’s method, there is, in his exploration of his “disappearing” subject, a crucial biographical debate about individual figures as representatives of “the spirit of the age.”
Theodora Bosanquet’s *Henry James at Work* provides an account of Henry James’s working habits from the point of view of his secretary. Bosanquet typed James’s later novels as he dictated, and her comments on his daily occupations as well as the idiosyncrasies of his working style provide insight into one of the chief curiosities that led readers to literary biographies in the first place: an interest in knowing how famous writers go about doing their work. Bosanquet suggests that this common problem of writing a literary biography, that the subject spends most of his time sitting at a desk, is particularly exacerbated with James, since “Many men and women whose prime business is the art of writing find rest and refreshment in other occupations. They marry or they keep dogs, they play golf or bridge, they study Sanskrit or collect postage stamps. Except for a period of ownership of a dachshund, Henry James did none of these things” (22). While the subject of this biography is a canonical, well-to-do male modernist, its author and her field of experience introduce a novel kind of approach to literary biography. Rather than a “man of letters” or a literary scholar as biographer, here Bosanquet’s personal experience working for James provides her with a unique perspective. While she does exhibit some of the features of hagiographical biography in describing James as a man whose features were “all cast in the classical mould of greatness” and in frequently praising his genius, she also takes a more measured approach and recognizes her own love of his work as a reason for her reverent feeling (4). While typing up Henry James’s lengthy ramblings as he paced about the room was obviously not a typical secretarial experience, the focus in this volume on the labour of the typist as well as of the writer indicates a broader vocational interest than is usually

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208 The short volume was published as part of the Press’s *Hogarth Essays* series, as was Lubbock’s *Dryden*. 
contained in literary biographies and connects this volume with the “autoergographies” discussed above. Bosanquet also wrote a biography of Paul Valéry for the Press a few years later in 1933, and this second book is a more conventional literary biography of the French poet.

Alongside the context that Woolf’s own writings provide for Orlando is another group of works that reflect on similar themes. The family memoir spanning several generations is a subgenre that also had a role at the Press. The story of Vita Sackville-West’s family home at Knole and of her aristocratic lineage is well known as the basis for Woolf’s novel, Orlando: A Biography. Despite the fact that the personal relationship between Sackville-West and Woolf has been frequently discussed and is well documented, the role of Sackville-West’s own contributions to the Press have only just begun to receive critical attention. By placing Orlando back in the context of the Press, it becomes clear that Sackville-West’s own family memoir, Pepita, approaches her mother’s side of the family with much the same lightness and joviality as Woolf does Sackville-West’s father’s. The Press accepted the book before Sackville-West had actually written it, and she wrote excitedly to Leonard Woolf upon discovering a trunk full of documents on which she would base her account:

There are descriptions of my grandmother coming out on to the balcony in all the blaze of her youth and beauty to be serenaded by the local band and of asking them all into the house to give them chocolates and liquors and then seizing one of the young men and teaching him to polka. There are other descriptions of family rows and rows with the servants, one of whom was dismissed for having
lost a peacock. Do tell Virginia about this and say I hope she is envious (HPA 422, 19 June 1936).

Sackville-West’s closing comment indicates a shared interest in peculiar family histories and treasure troves of documents that might produce biographical and ancestral accounts. Woolf’s interest specifically in Vita Sackville-West’s family history was by this time evident through <i>Orlando</i>, but the implication that the find was a worthwhile one and the warm response from the Woolfs confirm the sense that these family curiosities would make for a “superb story” (LW qtd in Barkway 247). While there are clear differences in narrative techniques between <i>Pepita</i> and <i>Orlando</i>, both celebrate the natural humour of writing about a large and exuberantly peculiar family and both play with time and generational connections in ways that enact theoretical ideas about time, memory, and family attachments in biography. <i>Nunwell Symphony</i> by Cecil Aspinall-Oglander is a history of the Oglanders of Nunwell, a family from the Isle of Wight whose family estate has housed several generations. Rather than depicting nobility, the book provides “a simple picture of the life of the country squire and his family in the changing times of the past eight hundred years” (10). The lengthy time-span and the focus on a family home through which several generations pass has clear connections to both Sackville-West’s and Woolf’s own writings.

Sackville-West’s <i>Pepita</i> might also be read alongside some other biographical and autobiographical writings by women at the Press. The feminist principles I discussed in relation to Sophia Tolstoy can also be applied to a particular subset of the Press’s output: women’s autobiographies. Viola Tree, with whose etiquette book I began, also
wrote an autobiography providing an account of her career as a singer and stage actress. Jane Harrison wrote an account of her education, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (1925), and Francesca Allinson, who is the subject of Southworth’s current biographical project, wrote a charming autobiography, *A Childhood* (1937), which uses many experimental narrative principles and addresses questions of time, memory, and fictionality. For a reflection specifically on a relationship between women, *The Chase of the Wild Goose* (1936), by Mary Gordon, tells the story of the “Ladies of Llangollen,” an account of the relationship between Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, who lived together for 50 years, and, like so many biographies of the later 1930s, admits that “the reconstruction of their very interesting story at this date demands the use of various artist’s material” (11).

I have traced some of the groups and patterns among the Hogarth Press’s complicated and diverse list, and as the appendices show, there are still more examples to be examined among the publications. What these works and their archives show is that the study of the production and reception of biography and autobiography, like the works themselves, invites a consideration of individual works in detail through the whole process of their conception, production, and distribution. Considering any of these works as individual texts and analysing the ways in which they simultaneously adhere to and reject categories and subcategories inevitably calls up the rich network of associations that make the book world a relational social and literary context. By embracing diversity and debate in its list, the Hogarth Press gave a great variety of readers the opportunity to find, among its publications, “some scene [that] remains bright, some figure [that] lives on in the depths of the mind” (*VW CE* 4: 228).
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Appendices

Appendix A: List of Biographies and Autobiographies and Genre Categorizations

Below is a list (in chronological order) of the works published by the Hogarth Press that have biographical or autobiographical elements. In the case of the appendix I have been as comprehensive as possible, including works that contain substantial autobiographical or biographical prefaces, essays on the genres, poetic experiments with the forms and more traditional biographies and autobiographies, as well. For each title, I include title, author, the Hogarth Press’s genre designation for the work according to paratextual evidence or to the Press catalogues, and the biographical or autobiographical elements I have noted in the work. I have only included the biographical or autobiographical prefaces that go beyond the usual short biographical note that is customarily printed on dust jackets. Since I have necessarily been selective in my case studies and have addressed only a small portion of the Press’s output in this respect, I include this list here to give a sense of some of the other works that could have been discussed within the frame of this project and might offer other scholars some insight into the relationship between the ideologies, ethics, and theories that inform the Press’s selections. I have indicated those works I treat extensively as case studies in the thesis with an asterisk beside the title. I hope that this list will give a different kind of answer to the question of what the Hogarth Press published in the way of biographies and autobiographies, and will be read as a supplement, in particular, to my exploration in Chapter One of the nature and character of the Press’s output.
<table>
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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Talks with Tolstoi*</td>
<td>Goldenveizer, A. B.</td>
<td>1923</td>
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<td>Biographical Notes; Literary Translation</td>
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<td>Fry, Roger</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>“Travel” (1939 catalogue)</td>
<td>Travel Memoir</td>
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<td>Tolstoi’s Love Letters*</td>
<td>Tolstoi, Leo N. Trans. S. S. Koteliansky and Leonard Woolf; Autobiographical study by Paul Biryukov</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>“Out of Print” (1939 catalogue); “with a study of the autobiographical elements in Tolstoi’s work” (subtitle)</td>
<td>Biographical Literary Criticism; Letters; Autobiography</td>
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<td>Letters</td>
<td>Reynolds, Stephen</td>
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<td>“Out of Print” (1939 catalogue)</td>
<td>Letters; Biographical Preface</td>
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<td>Henry James at Work</td>
<td>Bosanquet, Theodora</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Hogarth Essay; “Literature and Criticism” (1939 catalogue)</td>
<td>Biography and study of James’s working habits</td>
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<td>Jeanne de Hénaut</td>
<td>Nicolson, Harold</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>No comment on genre provided; privately printed</td>
<td>Imaginative Biography/Autobiography</td>
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<td>Stephen, Leslie</td>
<td>1924</td>
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<td>Autobiography</td>
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<td>The Character of John Dryden</td>
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<td>Reminiscences of a Student’s Life</td>
<td>Harrison, Jane</td>
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<td>Anonymity</td>
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<td>Rochester</td>
<td>Dobrée, Boname</td>
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<td>Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women</td>
<td>Cameron, Julia Margaret</td>
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<td>Castles in the Air</td>
<td>Tree, Viola</td>
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<td>The Development of English Biography*</td>
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<td>Early Socialist Days</td>
<td>Sanders, Wm. Stephen</td>
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<td>Hogarth Essay; “Literature and Criticism” (1939 catalogue); Literary Criticism about Authorship and Fame</td>
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<td>Voltaire</td>
<td>Riding, Laura</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>“A Biographical Poem” (subtitle); “Poetry and Drama” (1939 Catalogue); Biography in verse</td>
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<td>Orlando*</td>
<td>Woolf, Virginia</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>“Fiction” (1939 catalogue); “Biography” (dust jacket and title page); Fictional Biography</td>
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<td>Proust</td>
<td>Bell, Clive</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>“Literature and Criticism” (1939 catalogue); Literary Criticism; Biography</td>
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<td>L. E. L: A Mystery of the Thirties</td>
<td>Enfield, D. E.</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>“Out of Print” (1939 catalogue); Biography</td>
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<td>Leisured Women</td>
<td>Lady Rhondda</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>“Politics, Economics, History, Sociology” (1939 catalogue); Collective Biography</td>
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<td>A Woman of India</td>
<td>Dutt, G. S.</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>“Out of Print” (1939 catalogue); “Being the Life of Saroj Nalini, the Founder of the Women’s Movement in India” (subtitle); Biography</td>
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<td>The Diary of Montaigne's Journey to Italy in 1580 and 1581</td>
<td>Montaigne, Michel de</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>“papier journal, daily paper […] delightful diary” (Preface v); “Travel” (1939 catalogue); Diary; Travel Writing</td>
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<td><em>Life of Milton Together with Observations on Paradise Lost</em></td>
<td>Racine, Louis</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>“Literature and Criticism” (1939 catalogue)</td>
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<td><em>Letters to Frederick Tennyson</em></td>
<td>Schonfield, Hugh J. (ed.)</td>
<td>1930</td>
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<td><em>Life as We Have Known It: By Co-Operative working women</em></td>
<td>Ed. Davies, Margaret L.</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>“Biography, Memoir, Etc.” (1939 catalogue)</td>
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<td><em>The Defeat of Baudelaire</em></td>
<td>Laforgue, René</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>“a psychoanalytical study of the neuroses of Charles Baudelaire” (subtitle); Psycho-Analytic Library</td>
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<td><em>Paul Valéry</em></td>
<td>Bosanquet, Theodora</td>
<td>1933</td>
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<td><em>Flush</em></td>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>“Biography, Memoir, Etc.” (1939 catalogue)</td>
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<td><em>The Worker’s Point of View</em></td>
<td>Cramp, C. T. Ed.</td>
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<td>1934</td>
<td>Biography Through the Eyes of Contemporaries Series;</td>
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<td>Funeral March of a Marionette: Charlotte of Albany</td>
<td>Buchan, Susan</td>
<td>1935</td>
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<td>1935</td>
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<td>Chase of the Wild Goose</td>
<td>Gordon, Mary</td>
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<td>“The story of Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, known as the Ladies of Llandollen” (title page); “Biography, Memoir, Etc.” (1939 catalogue)</td>
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<td>Can I Help You?</td>
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<td><em>Hilda Matheson</em></td>
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<td><em>Portrait of a Lady, or The English Spirit Old and New</em></td>
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<td>Aspinall-Oglander, Cecil</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>“The story of Nunwell, the Isle</td>
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of Wight home of the Oglander family for 900 years. Told through diaries, letters, and other family papers” (dust jacket)
Appendix B: List Prices, Sales Figures for the first Six Months, Print Run Numbers, and Profit and Loss Figures

The table below takes the titles listed in Appendix A and offers more detailed information about each work’s status at the Press. For each title, I include cover price, initial print run numbers (including additional impressions when these occur within the first year) and profit and loss figures (where these are available) in order to define the character of the works as published artifacts and to give a general sense of the scope of their readership and influence. The figures for profit and loss I include below are recorded from two kinds of sources. The Press kept several copies of financial records, and the figures I use here have been selected from the notebooks and ledgers held at the University of Reading (HPA MS 2750/A, several volumes). In this respect I differ from Woolmer, whose figures in his Checklist come from the University of Sussex ledgers. I have not duplicated his findings here since he has made them available, but have provided, as a supplement, the figures from additional copies of the accounts housed at Reading. The figures below differ also from the ones that Willis provides in his Appendix B, which lists, by year, the total profits and losses for the Hogarth Press as a whole venture. Willis draws his figures from the MSR at Reading, but does not separate them by title. The print run numbers I list here agree with Woolmer’s but have been included to give a general sense of the Press’s expectations as they relate to the actual number of copies sold.

In addition to the miscellaneous royalty statements, author contracts, and production receipts that can be found in individual files, the business ledgers at the University of Reading offer fairly systematic information about the day-to-day accounts
of the Press, including the cost of advertisements, the money made from distribution to bookshops and libraries, and the balance of profits and/or losses for the given year. The handwriting in the ledgers (as compared with the letters by the same individuals in the general HPA files) indicates that the books were kept by managers of the Hogarth Press and, in later years, also by John Lehmann. Leonard Woolf also kept a second set of accounts in his own notebook until 1937. Woolf’s notebook containing profit and loss summaries up to 1937 is the main source for the profits and losses for each of the books below. The accounts kept for each title in Woolf’s notebook were cumulative, so the balance of net profit/loss recorded in 1937 reflects the total profit or loss since the volume’s publication, rather than the figures only for the first year. For works published after 1937, I have included the balance of profit or loss indicated in the business ledger for the last available year. Despite the availability of these figures for most Hogarth Press books, there are still some publications that are in neither the profit and loss summaries nor in the ledgers for their years of publication. In these cases I have simply indicated that the figures are unknown.

Leonard Woolf’s notebook of profit and loss summaries also includes a table containing the number of copies sold in the first six months for most Hogarth Press publications. I have included these alongside the profit and loss figures, since the number of copies sold right away indicates something about the size of the initial audience that a given book might have reached (although the number of books bought cannot be assumed to correspond to the number of actual readers of the works), whereas profits and losses take into account production costs, author royalties, labour costs and other expenses and offer the overall financial outcome of a book as far as the publisher is
concerned. It should be noted also that these two types of figures also represent different time scales. While the profits and losses are cumulative, the sales figures represent only the first six months, though it is usual for the numbers to trail off quite quickly after this time unless something exceptional happens (for instance, a book club selection, a laudatory review in a prestigious venue, or a literary prize).

In some instances, such as Harold Nicolson’s *Jeanne de Hénaut*, and some of the commemorative volumes, it can be assumed that the texts are omitted because the books were printed for personal reasons and were therefore not considered to be part of the Press’s business. In other cases, it is not clear why certain titles are not included in the records, though the omission of some publications from the 1939 Catalogue would indicate, perhaps, that these omissions are simply due to incomplete records or misplacement of documents (some Hogarth Press records, for example, were destroyed in the Blitz).

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<th>Title</th>
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<th>List Price</th>
<th>Number of Copies Sold in First Six Months</th>
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<td>Tchekhov’s Notebooks</td>
<td>Trans. Leonard Woolf and S. S. Koteliansky</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>5s</td>
<td>564</td>
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<td>Autobiography of Countess Sophia Tolstoi</td>
<td>Tolstoy, Sophia. Trans. Leonard Woolf and S. S.</td>
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<td>Talks with Tolstoi</td>
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<td>1923</td>
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<td>Tolstoi’s Love Letters with a study of the</td>
<td>Tolstoi, Leo N.</td>
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<td>5s</td>
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<td>The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum by</td>
<td>Avvakum Trans. Hope Mirrlees</td>
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<td>Some Early Impressions</td>
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<td>In Retreat</td>
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<td>Birrell, Francis and F. L. Lucas (editors)</td>
<td>1930</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>Ed. Davies, Margaret L.</td>
<td>1931</td>
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[only Psycho-Analytic publication to make a]
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<td>Irvine, Lyn</td>
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<td>1933</td>
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<td>1933</td>
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<td>Freud</td>
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<td>The “Dreadnought” Hoax</td>
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<td>Tree, Viola</td>
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<td>7s6d</td>
<td>942</td>
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<td>Sally Bowles</td>
<td>Isherwood, Christopher</td>
<td>1937</td>
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<td>2132</td>
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<td>Socrates</td>
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<td>Pekin, L. B.</td>
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<td>Strachey, Marjorie</td>
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<td>928</td>
<td>5050</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>The Amberley Papers</td>
<td>Eds. Bertrand and Patricia Russell</td>
<td>1937</td>
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<td>A Childhood</td>
<td>Allinson, Francesca</td>
<td>1937</td>
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<td>Pepita</td>
<td>Sackville-West, Vita</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>10s6d</td>
<td>14983</td>
<td>9962, second impression 2926, third impression 2696, fourth of 3000</td>
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<td>Lions and Shadows: An Education in the Twenties</td>
<td>Isherwood, Christopher</td>
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<td>7s6d</td>
<td>1699</td>
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<td>Goodbye to Berlin</td>
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<td>Julian Bell: Essays, Poems and Letters</td>
<td>Bell, Quentin (editor)</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>12s6d</td>
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<td>Roger Fry</td>
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<td>12s6d</td>
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<td>Pack My Bag</td>
<td>Green, Henry</td>
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<td>7s6d</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>Hilda Matheson</td>
<td>Various</td>
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<td>Portrait of a Lady, or The English Spirit Old and New</td>
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<td>Admiral’s Widow Being the Life and Letters of the Hon. Mrs. Edward Boscawen</td>
<td>Apinall-Oglander, Cecil</td>
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<td>12s6d</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>Nunwell Symphony</td>
<td>Apinall-Oglander, Cecil</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>15s</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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Appendix C: Profits and Losses by Genre

In one of Leonard Woolf’s account books housed at Reading (HPA MS 2750/A/12), total profits and losses are organized by genre. The first records are up to the end of 1927 and the last ones are up to the end of 1931. Unlike Appendix A and Appendix B, which are organized and selected based on my own principles, the tables below represent transcriptions of tables found in the account books. I transcribe these tables here partly to indicate the relative financial success of different genres at the Press, but also to indicate the Press’s own practice of keeping track of the figures along genre lines. The tables also indicate a shift and an expansion over time in the different kinds of books being published at the Press and the 1931 chart indicates the recognition of the *Hogarth Essays* series and the *Hogarth Lectures* series as separate entities. The tendency to categorize records along genre lines continues in the rest of the account books and the aggregate profits and losses when they are broken down by title tend to be divided in this way. It is interesting to note that with one exception, the Education category in 1931, each of the individual categories comes out at an average net profit (rather than loss) per title, which indicates that more successful books in each section were carrying the less successful books in that same class, rather than, for instance, the Psycho-Analytic Library’s profits funding the literary publications. The headings and classifications as I have them below in the tables match the headings used in the account book.
### To End of 1927

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Class of Book</th>
<th>No. Published</th>
<th>No. % showing loss</th>
<th>Average Net Profit per Book Published</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Politics</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psycho Analysis</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature &amp; Criticism</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>81</strong></td>
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<td><strong>19</strong></td>
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### To End of 1928

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<th>No. % showing loss</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Art</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Biography</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psycho Analysis</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature &amp; Criticism</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>96</strong></td>
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<td><strong>23</strong></td>
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### To End of 1929

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>28.5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>Class of Book</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Fiction</td>
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<td>Politics</td>
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### To End of 1930

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<tr>
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<td>37.5</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>Politics</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>95</td>
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<td>Literature &amp; Criticism</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>78</td>
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### To End of 1931

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<td>37.5</td>
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<td>Biography</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
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<td>Hogarth Essays</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<td>16</td>
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