

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-88289-7 - Virginia Woolf and the Victorians  
Steve Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE VICTORIANS

Criticism of Woolf is often polarised into viewing her work as either fundamentally progressive or reactionary. In *Virginia Woolf and the Victorians*, Steve Ellis argues that her commitment to yet anxiety about modernity coexists with a nostalgia and respect for aspects of Victorian culture threatened by radical social change. Ellis tracks Woolf's response to the Victorian era through her fiction and other writings, arguing that Woolf can be seen as more 'Post-Victorian' than 'modernist'. He explains how Woolf's emphasis on continuity and reconciliation related to twentieth-century debates about Victorian values, and he analyses her response to the First World War as the major threat to that continuity. This detailed and original investigation of the range of Woolf's writing attends to questions of cultural and political history and fictional structure, imagery and diction. It proposes a new reading of Woolf's thinking about the relationships between the past, present and future.

STEVE ELLIS is Professor of English Literature at the University of Birmingham.

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-88289-7 - Virginia Woolf and the Victorians  
Steve Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE  
VICTORIANS

STEVE ELLIS



Cambridge University Press  
 978-0-521-88289-7 - Virginia Woolf and the Victorians  
 Steve Ellis  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521882897](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521882897)

© Steve Ellis 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Ellis, Steve, 1952–

Virginia Woolf and the Victorians / Steve Ellis.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-88289-7 (hardback)

ISBN-10: 0-521-88289-3 (hardback)

1. Woolf, Virginia, 1882–1941 – Criticism and interpretation. 2. Woolf, Virginia, 1882–1941 – Political and social views. 3. Social values in literature. 4. Sentimentalism in literature. 1. Title.  
 PR6045.O72Z62678 2007 823'.912 – dc22 2007016483

ISBN 978-0-521-88289-7 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-88289-7 - Virginia Woolf and the Victorians  
Steve Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

*To Patrick*

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-88289-7 - Virginia Woolf and the Victorians  
Steve Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

‘I say Ethel what a happy life you had – in the very cream and marrow of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. I had a glimpse too, but not a long look.’

Letter to Ethel Smyth, 14 April 1939

## Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page viii
<i>List of editions and abbreviations used in the text</i>	x
Introduction: Post-Victorian Woolf	1
1 Reclamation: <i>Night and Day</i>	12
2 Synchronicity: <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	43
3 Integration: <i>To the Lighthouse</i>	78
4 Disillusion: <i>The Years</i>	110
5 Incoherence: the final works	140
Conclusion: reclaiming the shadows	171
<i>Notes</i>	181
<i>Index</i>	207

## *Acknowledgements*

First and foremost I thank my colleagues at the University of Birmingham with whom I have discussed and, in organising together the sixteenth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf held in June 2006, practically ‘lived’ Woolf over the last few years: Anna Burrells, Deborah Parsons and Kathryn Simpson. Thanks also to, among other colleagues, Andrzej Gasiorek and Marion Thain. Papers relating to earlier stages of this research were given at the twelfth and thirteenth Annual Woolf Conferences held at Sonoma State University and Smith College in 2002 and 2003 respectively – I am grateful to the conference organisers for allowing me to develop and test ideas by these means, also to Emily Blair, Joe Kreutziger, Patricia Moran, Elizabeth Shih and Nick Smart (and other delegates) for helpful suggestions and conviviality at these events, likewise to Christine Rauer and John Drakakis for inviting me to speak to research seminars at the Universities of St Andrews and Stirling. I am indebted to the advice and support of Jane Goldman, Laura Marcus, Susan Sellers and Stan Smith. I should also like to thank the staffs of the Birmingham Central Library, the British Library and the libraries of the Universities of Birmingham and Sussex (Monk’s House Papers) for unfailingly helpful and considerate support, and, in the latter case, for permission to quote from unpublished material. Every effort has been made to secure necessary permissions to reproduce copyright material in this work, though in some cases it has proved impossible to trace copyright holders. If any omissions are brought to our notice, we will be happy to include appropriate acknowledgements in any subsequent edition of this book. Thanks also to Barbara Blumenthal at Smith College

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-88289-7 - Virginia Woolf and the Victorians  
Steve Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

*Acknowledgements*

ix

for providing me with the cover-image for this book. To the Arts and Humanities Research Council I am indebted for a Research Leave Award that supported this work in its latter stages, and to Ray Ryan, Maartje Scheltens, Rosina Di Marzo and Caro Drake at Cambridge University Press, and to the Press's anonymous readers, for their encouragement and advice. As always, I'd like to thank my wife, children and friends, who made sure I continued to live many things besides Virginia Woolf; if I have not always achieved that 'wholeness' that Woolf herself complained is generally sacrificed to specialised study, the dedication of this book to my younger son signals fulfilling periods spent away from its pages.



*List of editions and abbreviations  
 used in the text*

Place of publication here and in the notes is London unless otherwise stated.

- BA*      *Between the Acts*, ed. Stella McNichol, introd. Gillian Beer (Penguin, 1992)
- CDB*      *The Captain's Death Bed: and Other Essays* (Hogarth, 1950)
- CSF*      *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. Susan Dick, rev. edn (Hogarth, 1989)
- D*        *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell, 5 vols. (Penguin, 1979–85)
- DM*      *The Death of the Moth: and Other Essays* (Hogarth, 1942)
- E*        *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie, 6 vols. (Hogarth, 1986–)
- F*        *Flush: a Biography*, introd. Margaret Forster (Hogarth, 1991)
- JR*      *Jacob's Room*, ed. and introd. Sue Roe (Penguin, 1992)
- L*        *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols. (Hogarth, 1975–80)
- LS*      *The London Scene: Five Essays* (Hogarth, 1982)
- M*        *The Moment: and Other Essays* (Hogarth, 1947)
- MD*      *Mrs Dalloway*, ed. Stella McNichol, introd. Elaine Showalter (Penguin, 1992)
- MOB*    *Moments of Being*, ed. and introd. Jeanne Schulkind, 2nd edn (Hogarth, 1985)
- ND*      *Night and Day*, ed. and introd. Julia Briggs (Penguin, 1992)
- O*        *Orlando*, ed. Brenda Lyons, introd. Sandra M. Gilbert (Penguin, 1993)

*List of editions and abbreviations* xi

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <i>P</i>         | <i>The Pargiters: the Novel-Essay Portion of 'The Years'</i> , ed. and introd. Mitchell A. Leaska (Hogarth, 1978) |
| <i>PA</i>        | <i>A Passionate Apprentice: the Early Journals 1897–1909</i> , ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (Hogarth, 1990)             |
| <i>RF</i>        | <i>Roger Fry: a Biography</i> (Hogarth, 1940)   |
| <i>RO, TG</i>    | <i>A Room of One's Own [and] Three Guineas</i> , ed. and introd. Michèle Barrett (Penguin, 1993)                  |
| <i>TL</i>        | <i>To the Lighthouse</i> , ed. Stella McNichol, introd. Hermione Lee (Penguin, 1992)                              |
| <i>TY</i>        | <i>The Years</i> , ed. and introd. Jeri Johnson (Penguin, 1998)   |
| <i>VO</i>        | <i>The Voyage Out</i> , ed. and introd. Jane Wheare (Penguin, 1992)   |
| <i>W</i>         | <i>The Waves</i> , ed. and introd. Kate Flint (Penguin, 1992)   |
| <i>W &amp; W</i> | <i>Women and Writing</i> , introd. Michèle Barrett (The Women's Press, 1979)                                      |