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Citation for final published version:

Shackleton, David 2017. The Pageant of Mutabilitie: Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* and The Faerie Queene. *Review of English Studies* 68 (284) 10.1093/res/hgw076 file

Publishers page: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/res/hgw076> <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/res/hgw076>>

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The Pageant of Mutabilitie: Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* and *The Faerie Queene*

Abstract:

By drawing a parallel between Miss La Trobe's pageant in Woolf's *Between the Acts*, and Mutabilitie's pageant in the Mutabilitie Cantos of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, this article elucidates the role played by the *aevum*—an order of duration that lies between time and eternity—in Woolf's last novel. While the fantasy of an aeviternally permanent nature is a comforting one for Lucy Swithin, this inherently conservative temporal fiction carries a troubling politics, and is deeply problematic from the perspectives of gender, empire and class. It threatens to petrify exploitative gender, colonial and class relations in a changeless nature, with no prospect of emancipatory historical change. Recognizing Woolf's use of the *aevum* serves to challenge Brechtian readings of the pageant, and to qualify recent interpretations of Woolf that depict her as holding a revolutionary materialist conception of history, similar to that of Walter Benjamin.

The pageant in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941) is most immediately, as Jed Esty has made clear, a version of the 'modern pageant-play'. This is a genre that was established by Louis Napoleon Parker in 1905, and includes T. S. Eliot's *The Rock* (1934), and E. M. Forster's *Abinger Pageant* (1934) and *England's Pleasant Land* (1938).¹ The pageant in Woolf's last novel also resembles other theatre forms: critics have drawn suggestive parallels with ancient Greek drama, Elizabethan theatre, and Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre.²

Here, I will place the pageant in a new context, and read it alongside Mutabilitie's pageant in the Mutabilitie Cantos of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1596, 1609). By comparing Miss La Trobe's pageant to that of Mutabilitie, set at Arlo Hill in Ireland, I will elucidate the role played by the *aevum* in *Between the Acts*. The *aevum* was, as Frank Kermode informs us, conceived by scholastic philosophers as an order of duration that lies between time and eternity. It 'does not abolish time or spatialize it; it co-exists with time, and is a mode in which things can be perpetual without being eternal'.³ In the Mutabilitie Cantos, the *aevum* is the state that helps Nature to triumph (somewhat ambiguously) over Mutabilitie, who had claimed that all is susceptible to change and decay. The ambivalent portrayal of the *aevum* is one of the means through which anxieties about the instability of New English colonial rule in Ireland in the face of possible rebellion, and the threat of a Catholic monarch succeeding the ageing Elizabeth, are explored. In a different historical context, Woolf makes similar use of the concept of the *aevum*. In Miss La Trobe's pageant, nature is aeviternal, and remains constant throughout the vicissitudes of history. Although its portrayal is similarly ambivalent, aeviternal nature offers a reassuring sense of stability to those at Pointz Hall who are threatened by the rise of fascism, the disintegration of the British Empire, and the prospect of a violent World War.

That Woolf thought innovatively about history and historiography from a feminist perspective is not in doubt. By drawing on the famous suggestion in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) for students to 're-write history', which 'often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided', and her own repeated plans to write a work on 'the Lives of the Obscure', critics such as Rachel Bowlby and Melba Cuddy-Keane have convincingly elucidated some of the feminist aspects of Woolf's views on history and

historiography.⁴ Addressing her portrayal of an aeviternal nature in *Between the Acts* serves to reveal further feminist aspects of her vision of history. However, what is more open to debate is how Woolf's innovative views of history relate to class. While the tendency in recent criticism has been to portray Woolf as holding a revolutionary materialist conception of history, similar to that of Walter Benjamin, her use of the *aevum* in *Between the Acts* suggests instead that she thought of history more conservatively, in terms of stability and the continuity of tradition.⁵

I. Spenser's and Woolf's Pageants

Towards the end of her life, around the time that she was working on *Between the Acts*, Woolf took great interest in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.⁶ She read Spenser's epic poem in 1935, remarking in her diary on 23 January 1935 that: 'I am reading the Faery Queen—with delight. I shall write about it'.⁷ She took notes on the first four books of the poem in what is now known as 'Reading Notebook XLV'.⁸ Therein, she recorded in an entry dated 11 March 1935 that 'I have decided to stop reading FQ./ at the end of the 4th book/ because I am completely out of the mood'.⁹ After a break, she decided to return to the poem, noting in her diary on 13 June 1935: 'I will now go on with the F. Queen. & finish it. The mood has come back'.¹⁰

As planned, Woolf did write about Spenser's poem. She wrote an essay called 'The Faery Queen', which was first published posthumously by Leonard Woolf in 1947. Therein, she remarked that Spenser, though 'remote from us in time, in speech, in convention', yet 'seems to be talking about things that are important to us too', and that in his poetry are 'qualities that agitate living people at the moment'.¹¹ She also wrote about Spenser and *The Faerie Queene* in her late unfinished project, which was to be 'a Common History book'; in particular, Spenser features prominently in 'Anon', which was to be the first chapter of this work.¹² In preparation for writing this

book, she took more notes on *The Faerie Queene*, in what is now known as ‘Reading Notebook XXXVII’.¹³

We can be sure that Woolf encountered the Mutabilitie Cantos, as part of her reading of *The Faerie Queene*. These posthumously-published Cantos stand in a somewhat vexed relationship to the other parts of the poem. They were first published in 1609 under a title that was probably supplied by their printer, Matthew Lownes: *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie: Which, both for Forme and Matter, appeare to be parcell of some following Booke of the Faerie Queene, Under The Legend of Constancie*.¹⁴ They appear under this title, following the first six books of *The Faerie Queene*, in J. Payne Collier’s edition of Spenser’s *Works* (1862), which is the edition of Spenser that Woolf used.¹⁵ Woolf quoted two lines from the Mutabilitie Cantos in an early version of ‘Anon’:

Spenser heard the rhymers and the mummers. . . .

And after her came jolly june arrayed

All in greene leaves, as he a player were.

He had seen the man at the festival, and noted his green leaves when the Queen saw the masque at Kenilworth.¹⁶

As Silver points out, the two italicized lines are a quotation from VII.vii.35: they describe the allegorical character ‘June’, who processes as one of the ‘Monthes’ in Mutabilitie’s pageant.¹⁷ Woolf’s comment below, following J. Payne Collier’s gloss, suggests that this character was inspired by a masque that Spenser might have seen at Kenilworth in 1575, at which Queen Elizabeth was present.¹⁸

However, more than simply showing that Woolf knew the Mutabilitie Cantos, these lines invite a comparison between Mutabilitie's pageant and that of Miss La Trobe in *Between the Acts*. It is significant that Woolf quoted lines that describe June's role in Mutabilitie's pageant, given that Miss La Trobe's pageant is held on 'a June day'. Moreover, *The Faerie Queene* is explicitly mentioned in *Between the Acts* as one of the books that Isa notices whilst browsing in the Pointz Hall library.¹⁹ Bearing in mind these suggestive connections, the similarities between the two pageants can be pursued.

In the Mutabilitie Cantos, Mutabilitie challenges Cynthia and Jove, ambitiously claiming dominion over heaven and earth on the grounds that both are subject to change. Jove agrees to meet her challenge, and their dispute is presided over by 'great dame Nature' on Arlo Hill. In response to Mutabilitie's request, Nature calls forth a pageant of the Seasons, the Months, Day and Night, the Hours and finally Life and Death, all of which process before the gathered assembly. However, Mutabilitie's challenge is ultimately unsuccessful, and Nature asserts her power over her: 'Cease therefore, daughter, further to aspire,/ And thee content thus to be rul'd by me'. In the two stanzas of the 'unperfite' eighth canto, the poet reflects on Nature's verdict, and although he concedes that Mutabilitie was unworthy to rule Heaven, yet holds that 'In all things else she bears the greatest sway'.²⁰

Miss La Trobe's pageant is, like that of Mutabilitie, centrally concerned with the question of change over time. In the Pointz Hall pageant, although the seasons do not process as allegorical characters in front of the audience, their passing is conveyed by the villagers' songs: 'summer and winter and spring; and spring and winter again; ploughing and sowing, eating and growing; time passes'. The audience are led to

ponder the issue of continuity over history. For example, during one of the intervals, Mrs Lynn Jones contemplates the disappearance of the Victorian home:

Time went on and on like the hands of the kitchen clock. (The machine chuffed in the bushes.) . . . Change had to come, she said to herself, or there'd have been yards and yards of Papa's beard, of Mama's knitting. Nowadays her son-in-law was clean shaven. Her daughter had a refrigerator.²¹

The scene is comic: collapsing the issues of long-term change between historical ages and short-term change within an age, she humorously imagines that a world without change would be one in which the Victorian home of her childhood 'would have remained; and Papa's beard . . . would have grown and grown'. Nevertheless, the question of historical change is exactly that which is involved in Mutabilitie's pageant. Mrs Lynn Jones's awareness of the effect of 'Time', which she associates with the going 'round and round and round' of the hands of a kitchen clock, and which is also suggestively aligned with the historical time of the pageant through the parenthetical remark that the 'machine chuffed in the bushes', parallels Mutabilitie's observations that 'Time on all doth pray', and that 'Times do change and move continually'. Her acknowledgement that '[c]hange had to come' is similar to Mutabilitie's claim that 'Change doth . . . reign and beare the greatest sway', and that 'nothing here long standeth in one stay'.²²

Mrs Lynn Jones goes on to contrast historical change with the changelessness of 'Heaven' in a manner that further resonates with the Mutabilitie Cantos. In these Cantos, Nature points ahead to the eschaton, when change will be replaced by a changeless eternal state: 'time shall come that all shall changed bee./ And from

thenceforth, none no more change shall see.’ Again, developing Nature’s suggestion, the poet in the very last stanza of the poem looks ahead to the

time when no more Change shall be,
 But stedfast rest of all things, firmly stayd
 Upon the pillours of Eternity,
 That is contrayr to Mutabilitie;
 For all that moveth doth in Change delight:
 But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
 With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight.²³

Mrs Lynn Jones similarly contrasts change and eternity, and imagines a changeless Heaven: ‘[w]hat she meant was, change had to come, unless things were perfect; in which case she supposed they resisted Time. Heaven was changeless’.²⁴ While both Miss La Trobe’s and Mutabilitie’s pageants are centrally concerned with the issue of change across history, they also both dramatize an aeviternal state that resists change. As we shall see, the aeviternal perpetuity of Nature in *The Faerie Queene* finds a close analogue in Miss La Trobe’s pageant.

II. The Aevum

In his *Summa Theologiae* (1274), Thomas Aquinas advanced the concept of the *aevum* as a third order of duration that ‘lies somewhere between eternity and time’, and measures things such as heavenly bodies and angels.²⁵ It provided him with a rationale for the peculiar mode of existence of angels, who are neither eternal nor fully temporal, but rather inhabit this third order, and though immutable as to substance, are capable of change by acts of will and intellect. The concept of the

aevum soon acquired political and juristic functions outside the narrow confines of scholastic philosophy, and thereby took on a ‘politics of time’. Most notably, it was employed in the theory of ‘the King’s Two Bodies’. According to this legal theory, the king’s ‘natural body’ was distinguished from his ‘body politic’; while the former was time-bound, the latter was conceived as aeviternally perpetual, giving rise to the idea that the monarch ‘never dies’. As Ernst Kantorowicz puts it, the body politic of kingship ‘represents, like the angels, the Immutable within Time’.²⁶

The concept of the *aevum* is, as Frank Kermode and Richard McCabe have shown, of great importance to *The Faerie Queene*.²⁷ In the Mutabilitie Cantos, the concept of the *aevum* facilitates Nature’s (ambiguous) triumph over Mutabilitie. In her verdict on the dispute at Arlo Hill, Nature concedes that all things are subject to change, yet rejects Mutabilitie’s arguments by, as McCabe puts it, ‘discovering intimations of eternity within the recurrent cycles of generation, decay and death’. Significantly, her verdict echoes the presentation of the Garden of Adonis in the third book of *The Faerie Queene* which is, as McCabe points out, Spenser’s ‘most subtle and imaginative exploration of the *aevum*’.²⁸ Spenser’s Nature inhabits the *aevum*, and is like Adonis in being ‘eterne in mutabilitie’.²⁹ She is, as Kermode puts it, ‘the goddess of what lives and changes in time under the conditions of a kind of immortality which is by definition of time’.³⁰

Spenser’s aeviternal Nature finds an analogue in *Between the Acts*. Although ‘Nature’ is not personified in Miss La Trobe’s pageant, nevertheless, as the Rev. Streatfield astutely points out, ‘nature takes her part’. Notably, as planned by Miss La Trobe, swallows participate in the pageant. To the excitement of the audience, ‘real swallows darted across the sheet’ during the Victorian picnic scene; they return later in the ‘Present Day’ scene, dancing ‘[r]ound and round, in and out they skimmed.

Real swallows’.³¹ Tellingly, when the Rev. Streatfield offers his interpretation that ‘nature takes her part’ in the pageant, the ‘swallows [swept] round him. They seemed cognisant of his meaning’.³² That the same swallows appear in scenes representing different historical epochs forges a sense of continuity over time. That is, swallows synecdochically stand for a nature that triumphs over mutability.

Lucy Swithin embraces the sense of continuity that the swallows bring. During one of the pageant’s intervals, she watches the swallows swooping from rafter to rafter in the barn, and remarks how the swallows ‘come every year . . . the same birds’ from Africa, ‘[a]s they had come, she supposed, when the barn was a swamp’. She extends her conceit across the whole stretch of geological time about which she has been reading in her Wellsian *Outline of History*:

“Swallows,” said Lucy, holding her cup, looking at the birds. Excited by the company they were flitting from rafter to rafter. Across Africa, across France they had come to nest here. Year after year they came. Before there was a channel, when the earth, upon which the Windsor chair was planted, was a riot of rhododendrons, and humming birds quivered at the mouths of scarlet trumpets, as she had read that morning in her *Outline of History*, they had come.³³

By linking the remote geological past to the present day, the swallows provide Lucy with a reassuring sense of historical continuity. The great changes that the earth has undergone in this period, conveyed by Lucy’s imaginative juxtaposition of a riotous primeval forest and the Windsor chair that is currently urbanely planted on the lawn at Pointz Hall, throw into relief a deeper continuity of nature: that of swallows migrating year after year from Africa. Her idea that ‘the same birds’ have been coming since the

remote past is the idea of an aeviternally perpetual nature, which corresponds to Nature's aeviternal existence in *The Faerie Queene*.

Mrs Manresa is sceptical of Lucy's conceit. She 'smiled benevolently, humouring the old lady's whimsy. It was unlikely, she thought, that the birds were the same'.³⁴ In one sense, Mrs Manresa is quite correct: given a swallow's life-span, it cannot literally be the same birds that have been coming for thousands of years. However, in another sense, her remark overlooks the permanence of birds when they are conceived of as subsisting in the *aevum*. Aeviternal swallows may, like Adonis in his garden, and like the monarch according to the theory of the king's two bodies, 'never die'. Lucy's conceit thereby accords subtly with the pageant, and its fiction of an aeviternal nature.

The swallows in *Between the Acts* suggest a continuity and stability within history, which is nevertheless overshadowed by the prospect of a devastating war. In the 'Present Day' scene of the pageant, the swallows seem to foretell peace and prosperity:

[t]he swallows—or martins were they?—The temple-haunting martins who come, have always come . . . Yes, perched on the wall, they seemed to foretell what after all the *Times* was saying yesterday. Homes will be built. Each flat with its refrigerator, in the crannied wall. Each of us a free man; plates washed by machinery; not an aeroplane to vex us; all liberated; made whole.³⁵

That the swallows—or martins—'have always come', suggests again the idea of an aeviternal nature. They promise a continued stability into the future, by seeming to foretell the previous day's optimistic news stories: that there will not be war ('[e]ach

of us a free man'), but instead economic growth and prosperity ('[h]omes will be built'). Of course, such optimism is ironically misplaced, given the subsequent outbreak of war. This irony is intensified by the mention of martins. As Gillian Beer notes, the 'temple-haunting martins' are an allusion to *Macbeth*, and to the 'temple-haunting martlet', which ironically is interpreted to be a good omen by Banquo, shortly before the King is murdered.³⁶ To redouble the irony in *Between the Acts*, while the swallows or martins seem to foretell that there will be 'not an aeroplane to vex us', this turns out not to be the case. Later in the pageant, twelve 'aeroplanes in perfect formation' interrupt the Rev. Streatfield's speech, and foreshadow war.³⁷

The combination of aeviternal continuity and a devastating war in *Between the Acts* is fully consonant. As Kermode and McCabe point out, the concept of the *aevum* played an important role in harmonizing developments in the interpretation of secular history. It was employed historiographically to harmonize Aristotelian cycles of recurrent events with linear Church history that was given pattern by an ending—apocalypse.³⁸ Indeed, this is the shape of history in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*. Nature both asserts an aeviternal permanence, and points forward to the eschaton. Similarly, in *Between the Acts*, the aeviternal continuity of nature symbolized by the swallows is combined with the prospect of war, which at times assumes apocalyptic proportions. William Dodge speaks bluntly to Isa of "[t]he doom of sudden death hanging over us . . . There's no retreating and advancing".³⁹

More subtly, apocalypse also appears in the novel in a darkly comic mode. Through an ambiguity between the discourse time and the story time of the pageant, Giles perhaps inadvertently wishes for there to be no future:

'Another interval,' Dodge read out, looking at the programme.

‘And after that, what?’ asked Lucy.

‘Present time. Ourselves,’ he read.

‘Let’s hope to God that’s the end,’ said Giles gruffly.⁴⁰

The same ambiguity between the end of the pageant and the end of the world allows for further comedy:

[i]t was an awkward moment. How to make an end? . . . Then there was a scuffle behind the bush; a preliminary, premonitory scratching. A needle scraped a disc; chuff, chuff chuff; then having found the rut, there was a roll and a flutter which portended ‘God . . .’ (they all rose to their feet) ‘Save the King’.⁴¹

Here, the ‘roll and a flutter’ herald either the playing of the National Anthem, or, as the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels, apocalypse. Similarly, the word ‘God’ is ambiguously either the first word of the National Anthem, or it refers to God, and thereby suggests the second coming and the end of history.⁴² Aeviternal nature thereby offers a picture of constancy which is fully compatible with an end to time in both *The Faerie Queene* and *Between the Acts*.

III. Gender and the Politics of a Changeless Nature

While Miss La Trobe’s pageant portrays nature as subsisting in the *aevum*, Woolf was acutely aware of the abusive roles that ‘nature’, and particularly changeless nature, could be made to play with gender. In *Three Guineas* (1938), she turned a critical eye to the concept of ‘Nature’, and its deployment in misogynistic arguments, such as those that sought to deny women the right to a university education: ‘Nature was called in; Nature it was claimed who is not only omniscient

but unchanging, had made the brain of woman of the wrong shape or size'. Even once admitted to the universities, it was claimed that the brain of woman was 'not the creative brain; the brain that can bear responsibility and earn the higher salaries'.⁴³ Sexual difference is here inscribed in an unchangeable nature, and used as a pretext for keeping women out of the universities and out of the professions.

Sexual difference, supposedly inscribed in nature, took a particularly alarming turn under fascist regimes. Woolf's narrator remarks in a note to *Three Guineas* that

[t]he nature of manhood and the nature of womanhood are frequently defined both by Italian and German dictators. Both repeatedly insist that it is the nature of man and indeed the essence of manhood to fight. Hitler, for example, draws a distinction between 'a nation of pacifists and a nation of men'. Both repeatedly insist that it is the nature of womanhood to heal the wounds of the fighter.⁴⁴

The gender roles constructed by fascism, then made out to be 'natural'—man as fighter, and woman as healer—are deeply problematic, and Woolf's narrator welcomes the contestation by pacifist movements of the supposedly "natural and eternal law" that man is a fighter. The narrator is similarly undaunted by Julian Huxley's warning, in his *Essays in Popular Science* (1926), that 'man and woman differ in every cell of their body in regard to the number of their chromosomes . . . [which] have been shown by the last decade's work to be the bearers of heredity', and that 'any considerable alteration of the hereditary constitution is an affair of millennia, not of decades'.⁴⁵ Nature here is viewed not as eternal and unchanging, but, through the lens of twentieth-century evolutionary biology, as permitting hereditary change at a glacial pace, over the course of millennia. Undeterred, Woolf's narrator comments

wryly in response that ‘as science also assures us that our life on earth is “an affair of millennia, not of decades”, some alteration in the hereditary constitution may be worth attempting’.⁴⁶

In all these cases, Woolf is acutely critical of conceptions of nature that are used to legitimate gender inequality, such as the exclusion of women from the universities, or to define the roles of men and women in a bellicose fascist society. Such conceptions of nature, whether as eternal and changeless, or only as admitting change at a minute rate over the course of millennia, are to be challenged. ‘And must we not’, writes Woolf, ‘and do we not change this unalterable nature?’⁴⁷ The paradoxical formulation of this defiant call to change the unchangeable invites suspicion concerning formulations of an unchangeable nature: such a ‘nature’ turns out to be artifice, and moreover, one that can be challenged and rejected.⁴⁸

The aeviternally changeless nature depicted by Miss La Trobe’s pageant is similarly problematic. While Lucy finds the fiction that the same swallows have been visiting since the time when the barn was a swamp a comforting one, swallows also possess more sinister connotations in the novel. As Jane Marcus, Gillian Beer and Jane de Gay have made clear, swallows are associated in the novel with rape, violence and murder. All of these critics have drawn attention to the novel’s allusions to Algernon Swinburne’s poem ‘Itylus’, which is based on the myth of Procne and Philomena.⁴⁹ As Bart leaves the barn where Lucy has been contemplating the swallows, he mutters the first line of ‘Itylus’ — “Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow” — a line that he repeats and modulates when Lucy joins him in his room. Probably reflecting Bart’s perspective through free indirect discourse, Lucy is figured as a swallow: she ‘perched on the edge of a chair like a bird on a telegraph wire before starting for Africa’.⁵⁰ His murmuring the first line of Swinburne’s poem

encourages the identification of Lucy with Procne, who in the myth was transformed into a swallow after her sister Philomena was raped by Tereus. In turn, as Marcus and de Gay point out, the allusions to ‘Itylus’ echo the account of the rape of a girl by guardsmen, which Isa reads in *The Times*, and which haunts her throughout the day.⁵¹

The violent associations that surround swallows warrant circumspection for the aeviternal nature depicted by the pageant. Lucy sees in the swallows a continuity of nature, and her own figuration as a swallow places her in this order. However, as Bart’s association of Lucy with Procne suggests, this supposedly natural order is one of patriarchal aggression and rape. Just as much as the ‘natural and eternal law’ that fascists invoke to claim that man is essentially a fighter, the aeviternal continuity of nature in Miss La Trobe’s pageant naturalizes the patriarchal order and its incipient violence. Here, Woolf might be thought of as responding to the complex portrayal of nature in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*. While Nature ostensibly triumphs over *Mutabilitie*, it is not the case that Spenser was simply a panegyrist of a timeless Elizabethan *aevum*. On the contrary, the inset tale of Faunus and Molanna keeps sexual violence in view, as well as exploring punitive chastity through the figure of Diana. While this tale is most immediately a reworking of Ovid’s rendition of Actaeon seeing Diana bathing naked in the *Metamorphoses*, it is also an adaptation of a piece of local folklore, in which Maurice Fitzgerald, second Earl of Desmond, was reported to have raped the goddess Áine after watching her bathe naked in the River Camoge.⁵² There are parallels between Faunus seeing Diana bathing naked and Woolf’s ‘brawl in the barrack room when they stripped her naked’, and between Diana and Lucy Swithin as vengeful figures.⁵³ Nature is aeviternally constant in both the *Mutabilitie Cantos* and *Between the Acts*, but it is by no means an idealized nature: rather, in both cases, it is one of incipient sexual violence.

In *Between the Acts*, Isa's circumspect attitude towards the idea of an aeviternal nature creates a further ambivalence within the novel towards such a fiction. Unlike Lucy, Isa does not embrace the idea. During one of the pageant's intervals, she wanders through the gardens at Pointz Hall, and picks a rose. In one of her poetic reveries, she thinks of herself wandering where

there grows nothing for the eye. No rose. To issue where? In some harvestless dim field where no evening lets fall her mantle; nor sun rises. All's equal there. Unblowing, ungrowing are the roses there. Change is not; nor the mutable and lovable.⁵⁴

The 'harvestless dim field' that she imagines displays the characteristics of the *aevum*. In language that echoes that of the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, the field is depicted as one where '[c]hange is not; nor the mutable'. It has a peculiar temporal character, and is seemingly stuck in a state of stasis: 'no evening lets fall her mantle', and no 'sun rises', as if the dim field existed in a state of perpetual dusk.

Through its aeviternal stasis, Isa's field resembles the Garden of Adonis (III.vi) in *The Faerie Queene*. In her reading notes on Spenser's poem, Woolf copied the following lines which describe the Garden of Adonis: 'There is continual Spring, & harvest there/ Continual', after which she wrote: 'why this beauty?'⁵⁵ These lines depict the Garden of Adonis as one in which 'Spring' and 'harvest' never pass, but coexist, both 'meeting at one tyme'. They reflect the garden's aeviternity which, as a state that lies somewhere between time and eternity, permits such a changeless coexistence of different times. Isa's 'harvestless field' both echoes and modulates Spenser's lines. That her field is 'harvestless' suggests a similarly aeviternal state in

which the passing of the seasons is suspended, but in contrast to the Garden of Adonis, where there is ‘harvest . . . Continuall’, Isa’s field is ‘harvestless’. While the Garden of Adonis conveys nature’s fertility and generative power, Isa’s field is one of sterility. In this respect, Isa’s field more closely resembles the Bower of Bliss, which Guyon and Palmer visit in the second book of *The Faerie Queene*, and which stands as the sterile counterpart to the Garden of Adonis.

Whereas the Garden of Adonis celebrates the generative power of nature, and the sexual union of Venus and Adonis, the Bower of Bliss poorly imitates nature, and is a place of destructive and fruitless lust. The rose that Isa picks, and the ‘roses’ that she imagines in her field, resonate with a song that is sung in the Bower of Bliss, the following lines of which Woolf copied in her reading notes on *The Faerie Queene*:

So passeth, in the passing of a day,
 Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre,
 Gather therefore the Rose, whilest yet is prime,
 Gather the Rose of love whilest yet is time,
 Whilest loving thou mayst loved be with equall crime.⁵⁶

In *The Faerie Queene*, this *carpe diem* song about gathering ‘the Rose of love’ before it is too late is fittingly sung as Acrasia lies in a disheveled state on a ‘bed of Roses’, having recently seduced a young knight, Verdant.⁵⁷ However, in the wider context of the canto, Acrasia’s love, and the Bower of Bliss more generally, are shams through which Guyon sees. Unlike the ‘goodly flowres’ which ‘dame Nature’ uses to beautify the Garden of Adonis, flowers in the Bower of Bliss are artificial and gaudy.⁵⁸ The ‘large and spacious plaine’ where the Bower is situated is adorned ‘too lavishly’ by

Art with flowers ‘as half in scorne/ Of niggard Nature’; their artifice is conveyed by their description as ‘painted flowres’.⁵⁹ The ‘ungrowing’ roses of Isa’s field are like the painted, artificial flowers of the Bower of Bliss.

Exploring the intertextual echoes of *The Faerie Queene* in *Between the Acts* further, it is significant that, while Isa pictures her harvestless field, her husband, Giles, is possibly being seduced by Mrs Manresa in the greenhouse.⁶⁰ Mrs Manresa becomes Acrasia, the ‘wanton Lady’ and ‘faire Enchauntresse’, and Giles plays the role of Verdant, the young knight whom she seduces.⁶¹ The greenhouse—which had earlier been described as covered by a ‘vine’ with ‘little grapes’—is an apt venue for their assignation: it is like the ‘Porch’ that serves as one of the gates to the Bower of Bliss, and which is ‘Archt over head with an embracing vine’, with ‘bouches hanging downe’.⁶² In another allusion to *The Faerie Queene*, Mrs Manresa is later described as leading Giles away at the end of the pageant, ‘like a Goddess, buoyant, abundant, with flower-chained captives following in her wake’.⁶³ Her triumph is an ironic reversal of the ending of the episode that takes place in the Bower of Bliss, in which Acrasia and her lover are enchained by Guyon and Palmer:

They tooke them both, and both them strongly bound

In captive bandes, which there they readie found:

But her in chaines of adamant he tyde.⁶⁴

In *The Faerie Queene*, it is Acrasia the enchantress who is bound in ‘chaines’ and ‘captive bandes’, whereas in *Between the Acts*, it is Mrs Manresa the seductress who triumphs and ensnares Giles, and leads him away, a ‘flower-chained’ captive.

On the one hand, Isa's imagination of a 'dim harvestless field', read alongside the other allusions to the Bower of Bliss, provides a poetic context for her husband's possible infidelity with Mrs Manresa. Their meeting in the greenhouse takes on the qualities of Acrasia's seduction of Verdant in the Bower of Bliss. This context is possibly a comforting one for Isa, insofar as it casts Mrs Manresa in the role of Acrasia the enchantress who uses her 'sorceree/ And witchcraft' to seduce her 'new Lover' (Giles), who thereby becomes less culpable.⁶⁵

However, on the other hand, the harvestless field also provides an image of aeivernal nature as characterized by destructive and possibly violent lust. Shortly before the door to the greenhouse is 'kicked open' and Giles and Mrs Manresa emerge, Isa in her reverie thinks back to 'the brawl in the barrack room when they stripped her naked'.⁶⁶ The juxtaposition of Giles and Mrs Manresa in the greenhouse, and the girl being raped in the barrack room, intimates that the two situations might be united by a common violence. Isa's image of the harvestless field, combined with the other associations in the novel between swallows and rape, suggests the dangers of the fiction of an aeivernal nature, and, by extension, the dangers of timelessly naturalized gender roles within a supposedly-changeless patriarchal order. An even deeper ambivalence towards the fiction of an aeivernal nature is created in the novel, as sexual aggression is depicted as intertwined with violent imperialism.

IV. Bother in Ireland

Jed Esty has convincingly read *Between the Acts* as one of a number of late modernist works that respond to the instability of the British Empire following the Home Rule Crisis of 1912-1916 in Ireland, by seeking to imagine insular, postimperial forms of English national history and tradition.⁶⁷ The negotiation between imperial and

postimperial forms of history in *Between the Acts* is conducted in part through Woolf's engagement with *The Faerie Queene*.

The setting of the Mutabilitie Cantos in Ireland, alongside Spenser's experience as a New English colonial planter, and his increasingly disaffected view of royal policy in Ireland, has received much recent critical attention.⁶⁸ However, a reading of the Cantos in an Irish context was by no means unavailable to Woolf. W. B. Yeats, whom Woolf admired and knew socially, foregrounded the importance of Ireland in his selection of Spenser's poetry that he published in 1906, and later reworked aspects of the Mutabilitie Cantos in his exploration of historical continuity in poems such as 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' and 'Coole Parke: 1929'.⁶⁹ More directly, Collier drew attention to the Irish context of the Mutabilite Cantos in his note to VII.vi.55, in which Diana, having been compromised by Faunus, decides to leave Ireland: 'Since which, those Woods, and all that goodly Chase,/ Doth to this day with Wolves and Thieves abound:/ Which too-too true that lands in-dwellers since have found'. Following Thomas Warton, Collier connects this stanza to Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, in which 'the massacres committed upon the people of Munster, in Ireland, after the rebellion' are painted 'in the strongest colours'.⁷⁰ In his introductory 'Life of Spenser', on which Woolf took notes, Collier elaborates on the Irish context.⁷¹ He points out that Spenser was appointed Secretary of the Council of Munster in 1588, and that the chief object of this council was 'to repair, as far as possible, the ravages of war and rebellion by re-peopling the province with persons, especially natives of England, who were willing to embark capital in the improvement of the soil, and in the promotion of civilization among the inhabitants'. He further notes that Spenser acquired his estate at Kilcolman—where the Mutabilitie Cantos are set—after the Desmond Rebellions had been put down.⁷² By the time that Spenser

returned to Ireland in 1597, rebellion—this time led by Hugh O’Neill—was once again threatening: ‘the rebellion in Munster, in which Spenser lost the whole of his property, was on the eve of breaking out’. In his commentary on *A View*, Collier identifies Spenser with Irenius, and draws attention to their plans of ‘extreme severity’ by which Ireland was to be ‘brought into obedience, and kept under subjection’. He holds that Spenser ‘rendered himself obnoxious in Ireland’—‘no man living could at that time be more odious than Spenser’—a fact that helps explain the burning of his property in the Munster rebellion of 1598.⁷³

In the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, Spenser’s disaffected view of royal policy in Ireland is registered in part through his deployment of the concept of the *aevum*. While aeviternal Nature ostensibly triumphs over *Mutabilitie*, her victory is by no means certain, and her authority is subtly put into question, not least when she mysteriously vanishes in VII.vii.59, leaving Jove to defend his empire alone.⁷⁴ Although Spenser would have welcomed imperial stability, the *Mutabilitie Cantos* are driven by the conviction that the imperial order in Ireland was anything but stable. Nature’s questionable authority finds a direct correlate in Spenser’s use of the doctrine of the queen’s two bodies—a doctrine underpinned by the concept of aeviternity—to criticize Elizabeth’s policy in Ireland. In Spenser’s letter to Sir Walter Raleigh that stands as a preface to *The Faerie Queene* in Collier’s edition, Spenser remarks that the Faery Queene and her Faery land can be conceived of as ‘our souveraine the Queene, and her kingdome’. Employing the doctrine of the queen’s two bodies, he points out that Elizabeth ‘beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady’, the latter of which is shadowed in the poem as Cynthia or Diana.⁷⁵ However, in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, *Mutabilitie* points out that even ‘faire Cynthia’ was ‘mortall borne, how-so ye crake’:

‘Besides, her face and countenance every day/ We changed see and sundry forms partake’. Earlier, in lines that Yeats echoed in ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’, Mutabilitie had visited Cynthia in her palace in the ‘Circle of the Moone’, yet the contention that Cynthia ‘raignes in everlasting glory’ is undercut by the fact that outside the palace ‘sate an hory/ Old aged Sire, with hower-glasse in hand,/ Hight Tyme’.⁷⁶ As Andrew Hadfield comments, both of these stanzas are warnings to Elizabeth that, although she might appear invincible in her public role as a mighty empress, she is also subject to the ravages of time in her private person, a studied ambiguity which neatly reflects the doctrine of the queen’s two bodies highlighted in the letter to Raleigh.⁷⁷ That is, while these stanzas operate within the paradigm of the doctrine of the monarch’s two bodies, they do not celebrate the queen’s permanent self, but rather draw attention to the impermanence of her mortal body, in a manner that reflects unresolved anxieties about the possibility of a Catholic successor to the ageing and childless Elizabeth. They complement other unflattering portrayals of Elizabeth in the Mutabilitie Cantos, such as Diana’s desertion of Ireland in VII.vi.55, which can be read as a covert criticism of Elizabeth’s apparent withdrawal from the country, leaving it unprotected and open to rebellion.⁷⁸ Nature’s ostensible triumph in the Mutabilitie Cantos is cast into doubt, and the idea of the monarch’s aeviternal permanence is exposed as a fragile one.

Like Spenser, Woolf used her pageant to question imperial power. As Esty points out, the Edwardian pageant play was a genre that channeled patriotic sentiment, and was designed ‘to make the local past play an inspirational role for . . . colonial action’: such pageants would typically end with a round of patriotic speeches, and a celebration of the local town’s colonial daughter cities.⁷⁹ However, the pageant in *Between the Acts* confounds such generic expectations. Notably, Colonel Mayhew

is disappointed that the British Army is not suitably celebrated in the pageant: ‘Why leave out the British Army? What’s history without the Army, eh?’ His wife reassures him, pointing out that ‘very likely there would be a Grand Ensemble, round the Union Jack, to end with’.⁸⁰ However, her expectations are frustrated, and there is no such finale. Instead, imperialism is satirized in Miss La Trobe’s pageant, most thoroughly in the Victorian scene. Therein, Budge the publican appears in the guise of a ridiculous Victorian constable, who proclaims the wonders of Empire while directing traffic in London. He comically embodies many of the arguments made in *Three Guineas* about the complicity between patriarchy and imperialism. For example, in a bawdy satire, the eminently masculine Budge directs ‘the traffic of ’Er Majesty’s Empire’, proclaiming that all must ‘Obey the Rule of my truncheon’. Further, he draws attention to the need of ‘[t]he ruler of an Empire’ to ‘keep his eye on the cot; spy too in the kitchen; drawing-room; library’, echoing the argument made in *Three Guineas* that colonial authority abroad is sustained by an educative regime at home that moulds women who consciously desire ‘our splendid Empire’, and unconsciously desire war.⁸¹

The critique of imperialism in *Between the Acts* is reflected in the dangers of an aeviternally constant nature. Therein, the concept of a changeless nature, which as we saw above was treated with such suspicion by Isa, is one that unites sexual violence with imperialism. As Esty points out, Mrs Manresa acts as ‘a trigger for sexual and aggressive impulses’ in the novel, inspiring violence in Giles, and rekindling ‘youth and empire’ in Bart, stirring memories of his past working as a civil servant in India.⁸² In an earlier version of the novel, Mrs Manresa is described as making rousing speeches at meetings in the country: “‘Our brave boys,” she would say; and brought the house down’.⁸³ Of course, this is exactly the sort of patriotic

rhetoric that is dissected in *Three Guineas*. Therein, the narrator interrogates the use of the possessive adjective ‘our’ when used in the emotive phrase ‘I am fighting to protect our country’, arguing that it occludes the fact that this country has been largely owned by men, and that women have been treated as slaves throughout the greater part of its history. Mrs Manresa’s rhetoric is blind to any such distinctions, but rather is an example the sort of patriotic demonstration that the narrator of *Three Guineas* counsels the members of her Society of Outsiders to spurn.⁸⁴

While both Woolf and Spenser criticize British imperialism, a great difference between their subversiveness should be acknowledged. The *Mutabilitie Cantos* are critical of Elizabeth’s foreign policy in Ireland, yet they criticize that policy for not being aggressive enough. In the *Cantos*, Jove effectively argues that imperial power is won and sustained by conquest and might.⁸⁵ The intimation, particularly when the *Cantos* are read alongside *A View*, is that a more aggressive imperial policy is needed to ensure peace and stability for the New English in Ireland. In what Collier describes as Spenser’s ‘plans of terror and subjugation’, Irenius recommends that a large English army be sent to Ireland to subdue and suppress the local populace. To avoid risking the lives of English soldiers in open combat, Irenius advocates a scorched earth policy designed to starve the Irish, to the point at which they would be driven to cannibalism.⁸⁶ Again, alarmingly, the poet’s reflections in the closing stanzas of the *Mutabilitie Cantos* on the comfort of an eschatological ‘time when no more Change shall see’, finds a profane political counterpart in *A View*, with Irenius’ proposal for Elizabeth to send an army to subdue the Irish with a ‘strong hande’, and thereby to purchase an ‘eternall quietnesse’, and an ‘eternall peace’.⁸⁷ By contrast, in *Between the Acts*, the possibility of a future for England not marred by the repetition of war,

depends on the rejection of colonial and patriarchal violence. The difference is clearly marked in the novel's portrayal of Ireland.

While British imperialism in general is satirized in the Victorian scene of Miss La Trobe's pageant, there is, more narrowly, a critique of British imperialism in Ireland. Significantly, in his monologue, Budge draws attention to the need, in the midst of all the other tasks that compete for his attention, of addressing problems overseas: '[s]ome bother it may be in Ireland; Famine. Fenians. What not'.⁸⁸ He refers to the 'bother' in Ireland in an off-hand way: the logic that joins 'Famine' to 'Fenians' is one that is as much alliterative as one that acknowledges any underlying connection between famine and resistance to British rule; the whole matter is dismissively undercut by the qualification 'What not'. Nevertheless, the mention of Ireland warrants further attention. Given that Budge is a Victorian policeman, his mention of 'Famine' is read most naturally in the context of the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s, during which, in part as a result of British government policies driven by a commitment to a free market economy, a million people died, and a further two million emigrated.⁸⁹ The pageant causes its audience to think back to Victorian times: '[a]nd everywhere loaves of bread in the gutter. The Irish you know round Covent Garden'.⁹⁰ Glossing these lines in their edition of the novel, Susan Dick and Mary Millar point out that many Irish emigrants from the 1840s famine settled in London, where under English Poor Law they received relief.⁹¹ However, more obliquely, the 'Famine' that Budge mentions can also be read in the context of the earlier famine in Munster in the 1580s, that followed the crushing of the second Desmond Rebellion. In harrowing detail, Irenius describes how, during the 'late warres of Mounster', many perished 'by the extremitie of famine', until 'in short space there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentifull countrey suddainely left voyde of man and

beast'.⁹² In an earlier version of *Between the Acts*, the plight of the Irish emigrants is conveyed even more vividly than in the final version: '[t]he Irish you know—they gnawed bones in the street'.⁹³ In keeping with the novel's theme of the repetition of history, the Irish gnawing 'bones in the street' in Victorian London can be seen as a repetition of the earlier famine in Ireland described by Spenser, in which the Irish, looking like 'anatomies of death', were driven to 'eate the dead carrions, happy where they could find them, yea, and one another soone after, insomuch as the very carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves'.⁹⁴

Isa's Irish ancestry in *Between the Acts* can be interpreted as a further subtle critique of British imperialism in Ireland. Tellingly, unlike the Olivers who are English, Isa is of Irish descent. She is the 'niece of the two old ladies at Wimbledon who were so proud, being O'Neils, of their descent from the Kings of Ireland'.⁹⁵ While the two unmarried aunts may be being mocked for their inflated sense of self-importance, the family connection to the Kings of Ireland is an interesting one. Not only had various of the Uí Néill ruled as kings of Ireland from the eighth century onwards, but later, Hugh O'Neill's supporters vindicated his rebellion against the English—in which Spenser's house was burnt—on the grounds that he was rightful heir to the ancient high kingship.⁹⁶ Indeed, according to Irenius in *A View*, Hugh O'Neill, the 'arch-rebell', desired to become King of Ireland, setting 'before his eyes the hope of a kingdome'.⁹⁷ It is fitting that Isa, as a partial rebel against Giles and Bart's patriarchal imperialism, should descend from such a family of rebels.

The associations between nature, sexual violence and imperialism in *Between the Acts* suggest that, if there is to be a form of historical continuity into the future, it should be that of a society shorn of its imperial and patriarchal elements. As Esty puts it, the novel opens the possibility of a creative vision of English society redeemed

from imperial and warmongering politics: a way ‘for the pastoral culture of Lucy Swithin to reassert itself against the imperial and patriarchal politics of Bart Oliver’.⁹⁸ However, while there may be much attractive in such a vision, it warrants further scrutiny, not least because Lucy’s pastoralism is sustained by the fiction of an aeviternal nature. While an ambivalence in the novel is created towards such a fiction as regards both gender and imperialism, this is not the case with class, where a suspect tradition of unchanging rural labour is problematically celebrated.

V. Theatre, Epic and Bourgeois

The villagers in Miss La Trobe’s pageant are, like the swallows, portrayed as aeviternally perpetual. A chorus of villagers appears throughout the different historical ages represented by the pageant, winding in and out of the trees, singing. They first appear in the opening scene, which represents the very earliest days of England’s past, and return in the Elizabethan, Restoration and Victorian scenes.⁹⁹

The villagers sing of the fall of empires and world orders in history. At the end of the Restoration comedy, they sing: ‘[p]alaces tumble adown [. . .] Babylon, Nineveh, Troy . . . And Caesar’s great house . . . all fallen they lie . . . Where the plover nests was the arch. . . . through which the Romans trod’. The ephemerality of these once-powerful empires is reflected in the fragility and transience of the song, which is only semi-audible: ‘[t]he words died away. Only a few great names— Babylon, Nineveh, Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, Troy—floated across the open space’.¹⁰⁰ The image of the plover nesting in the crumbling arch is one of the continuity of a nature that persists beyond the rise and fall of civilizations. Its sentiment is similar to that expressed by the sentence of Edgar Quinet, (inaccurately) copied by Léon Metchnikoff, which echoes throughout James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (1940):

*Aujourd'hui comme aux temps de Pline et de Columelle la jacinthe se plaît dans les Gaules, la pervenche en Illyrie, la marguerite sur les ruines de Numance et pendant qu'autour d'elles les villes ont changé de maîtres et de noms, que plusieurs sont entrées dans le néant, que les civilisations se sont choquées et brisées, leurs paisibles générations ont traversé les âges et sont arrivées jusqu'à nous, fraîches et riantes comme aux jours des batailles.*¹⁰¹

However, while the villagers sing of the fall of empires, they themselves take on a type of permanence that resists the vicissitudes of history. They sing: '[s]ummer and winter, autumn and spring return . . . All passes but we, all changes . . . but we remain forever the same'. The villagers 'remain forever the same', living with the seasons, immune from historical change, and to a large extent oblivious to it: 'we see only the clod'.¹⁰² That the same chorus returns throughout the different historical ages reinforces the impression of the villagers' changelessness; this continuity is extended to the present day by the fact that the villagers depicted in the pageant are played by present-day village actors. That is, in Miss La Trobe's pageant, the villagers are assimilated to nature against history, and take on an aeviternal permanence, much like that of Lucy's swallows.

The assimilation of the villagers to an aeviternal nature in *Between the Acts* accords with Woolf's imagination elsewhere of unchanging peasants. For example, as well as resembling the chorus in Greek drama, the chorus of villagers in Miss La Trobe's pageant are a dramatic equivalent to what Woolf saw as Thomas Hardy's 'eternal peasants'.¹⁰³ In her essay 'Thomas Hardy's Novels' (1928), Woolf lauded Hardy's portrayal of the 'peasants' in the Wessex novels, who 'compose a pool of

common wisdom, a fund of perpetual life': '[t]hey drink by night and they plough the fields by day. They are eternal'. By not standing out 'as individuals', and by commenting 'upon the actions of the hero and heroine', these peasants play, for Woolf, a role very similar to that of the chorus in drama, Greek or otherwise.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, in her reading notes on *Jude the Obscure* (1895), which she made in preparation for her essay on Hardy, she explicitly remarked: '[p]easants used as chorus'.¹⁰⁵ By persisting unchanged throughout history, Hardy's supposedly 'eternal' peasants foreshadow her own use of a chorus of unchanging villagers in the pageant of *Between the Acts*.

Arguably, *Between the Acts* does provide a critical perspective on agricultural labour in a colonial context. A criticism that Lucy has evidently made of Giles in the past, and that clearly still rankles, is filtered through his free indirect discourse at lunch. She was

always, since he had chosen, after leaving college, to take a job in the city, expressing her amazement, her amusement, at men who spent their lives, buying and selling—ploughs? glass beads was it? or stocks and shares?—to savages who wished most oddly—for were they not beautiful naked?—to dress and live like the English?¹⁰⁶

Lucy's criticism of Giles' job as a stockbroker intimates the complicity between capitalism and imperialism, and more particularly, through the mention of 'ploughs', the connection between an imperialist capitalism and agricultural labour in the colonies. Even more explicitly in a draft version of this passage, we read that the various items are sold for the 'savages' to 'dress *or plough* like the English'.¹⁰⁷ Here, a comparison can usefully be drawn with Spenser's role as a planter in Ireland, and the

conditions of agricultural labour in that country, where the exportation of English agricultural methods played an important role in colonial domination.

Collier drew attention to the connection between imperialism and capitalism in Ireland, by pointing out that Spenser's role as Secretary of the Council of Munster involved re-peopling the province with persons who 'were willing to embark capital in the improvement of the soil'. In *A View*, Irenius condemns the pastoral nature of Irish agriculture, in which the native Irish live a nomadic life, following herds of cattle around the country.¹⁰⁸ Unlike this supposedly savage form of agriculture, Irenius' more civilized methods of husbandry would involve an element of tillage: he recommends that ordinances be passed to the effect that anyone who keeps twenty cattle 'should keep a plough going, for otherwise all men would fall to pasturage'. Not only would his preferred form of husbandry generate more revenue for the crown, but it would also help to subdue the native population, being a form of production 'most enemy to warre'. As may be gleaned from Irenius' proposal that the savage Irish be forced to the plough, and 'driven and made to imploy that ableness of bodie, which they were wont to use to theft and villainy', the conditions of agricultural labour under English colonial rule were anything but idyllic.¹⁰⁹ Further, it should be pointed out that the consequences of agricultural failure in colonial contexts were inevitably suffered predominantly by the colonized, rather than by the colonizers.¹¹⁰ Indeed, in *Between the Acts*, the reference to the later Irish famine of the 1840s could be interpreted as a further latent indictment of British colonialism, particularly given that colonial governance in Ireland had created an agricultural system that made day labourers, cottier tenants and smallholders vulnerable, unable to cope with shocks such as the striking of potato blight in 1845. Moreover, when famine did strike, this crisis was treated as an opportunity to restructure Irish society through relief

operations, and to transform the nonmarket social formations associated with small subsistence-based landholding into market economies, at the cost of dispossession and depopulation.¹¹¹ However, while *Between the Acts* thus presents agricultural labour in colonial contexts in a critical light, this forms a contrast with its nostalgic and sentimental celebration of a timeless tradition of English peasantry and rural labour.

Recognizing that Woolf employed the *aevum* as a temporal fiction in *Between the Acts* serves to challenge Brechtian readings of Miss La Trobe's pageant.

Numerous critics have compared Miss La Trobe's pageant to Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre.¹¹² For example, Catherine Wiley suggests that Miss La Trobe's pageant constitutes an 'epic theatre piece', which 'succeeds in alienating its audience to the point of criticism' by 'using many of the methods espoused by Brecht'. Specifically, she suggests that the acting parallels that of Brecht's epic theatre, in which the actors 'show the process of acting out the character', and that the cheap costumes and unrealistic stage setting of the pageant parallel Brecht's technique of portraying 'the stage as an artificial and temporary environment'.¹¹³

Critics such as Karin Westman, Georgia Johnston and Angeliki Spiropoulou have used the analogy between Miss La Trobe's pageant and Brecht's epic theatre to suggest that the pageant, and the novel more generally, advance a broadly Marxist version of history. They thereby portray Woolf in a flatteringly politically-engaged and class-conscious light. For Westman, the alienation effects of Miss La Trobe's pageant form part of Woolf's supposed 'feminist materialist historiography', and her 'materialist perspective upon the individual's relationship to lived experience within British patriarchal society'.¹¹⁴ Johnston argues that the central alienation effect of Miss La Trobe's pageant—achieved by reflecting the audience's image back to itself with mirrors in the 'Present Day' scene—shows the audience 'as participants in [the]

pageant of England' rather than as 'ahistorical'. She contends that this 'alienation effect' deflects 'acceptance of class victimization into an awareness of the historical production that creates class construction'.¹¹⁵ Finally, Spiropoulou holds that the innovative formal techniques of Miss La Trobe's pageant which so resemble those of Brecht achieve 'a destruction of tradition'. Her invocation of Brecht's epic theatre thereby supports her wider argument that Woolf, like Walter Benjamin, temporalized history as the destruction of tradition.¹¹⁶

However, rather than champion Woolf as a quasi-Marxist, it is important to note the marked disanalogies between Miss La Trobe's pageant and Brecht's epic theatre. Although many elements of Miss La Trobe's pageant superficially resemble the alienation techniques of epic theatre, they operate in a completely antithetical manner: they function unhistorically rather than historically.¹¹⁷ As Wiley, Johnston and Spiropoulou all point out, Brecht aligned the alienation effects of epic theatre with a Marxist theory of history.¹¹⁸ In 'A Short Organum for the Theatre' (1948/1953), he claimed that the technique of alienating the familiar

allows the theatre to make use in its representations of the new social scientific method known as dialectical materialism. . . . It regards nothing as existing except in so far as it changes, in other words is in disharmony with itself.¹¹⁹

Elsewhere, he claimed that the alienation effect in German epic theatre was 'principally designed to historicize the incidents portrayed', and was part of a new way of thinking: 'the historical way'. In turn, by prompting the audience to think historically, epic theatre aims to inspire its audience to take political action: '[h]uman behaviour is shown as alterable; man himself as dependent on certain political and

economic factors and at the same time capable of altering them'. The spectator of epic theatre is encouraged to adopt a critical attitude towards the social conditions portrayed, and is prompted 'to justify or abolish these conditions according to which class he belongs'.¹²⁰

It should be stressed that what critics have compared to Brecht's alienation techniques in *Between the Acts* actually serve to reinforce the pageant's unhistorical depiction of aeviternal villagers. For example, what Wiley describes as the actors' splicing their roles 'onto their own identities' does not, as in Brecht's epic theatre, serve to historicize the situations portrayed.¹²¹ On the contrary, at least in the case of the chorus, it reinforces the fiction of an aeviternal continuity by showing the similarity of the present-day village actors to their ancestors whose parts they play.

Similarly, the costumes in the pageant do not, as Wiley and Spiropoulou claim, function like Brecht's alienation techniques. The chorus of villagers appear in the opening scene of the pageant dressed in 'shirts made of sacking', and later appear in the Victorian scene dressed in 'Victorian mantles', yet sing of their fundamentally unchanging nature.¹²² The superficial change in costume between historical ages serves to reveal what is supposedly a fundamentally unchanging human nature that lies beneath. Tellingly, waiting for the actors to change costume between scenes, members of the audience comment on the actors' 'dressing up', and are led to discuss the question of 'historical change':

[d]you think people change? Their clothes, of course. . . . But I meant ourselves . . . Clearing out a cupboard, I found my father's old top hat. . . . But our selves—do we change?¹²³

Lucy Swithin's answer to this question is that people do not change. Watching the pageant, she muses that she does not believe that 'there ever were such people' as '[t]he Victorians': '[o]nly you and me and William dressed differently'. Summing up this unhistorical view, William responds: '[y]ou don't believe in history'. Further, if Lucy's attitude is anything to go by, the pageant does not induce the socially-critical attitude that was the purpose of Brecht's epic theatre. Far from inspiring her to take revolutionary political action, the pageant prompts her to muse 'with her odd little smile' on the constancy of human nature, just as it had earlier provided her with a reassuring view of the aeviternal permanence of swallows.¹²⁴

Rather than resembling epic theatre, the pageant in *Between the Acts* conforms more closely to the unhistorical 'bourgeois theatre' against which Brecht counter-defined his own practice. In particular, the villagers who persist unchanged through the ages of the pageant are like the 'Man' of bourgeois theatre who is 'eternally unchanged'. The villagers' changing costumes, which serve to reveal the unchanging human nature that lies beneath, accord with Brecht's characterization of bourgeois theatre as one in which '[a] few circumstances vary . . . but Man remains unchanged'. Correspondingly, the pageant's fiction of an aeviternal order underpins a conception of history much like that which sustains bourgeois theatre: 'such a thing as history exists, but it is none the less unhistorical'.¹²⁵

Of course, the conception of history animating the pageant should be distinguished from that of the novel, and again from that of Woolf. While Lucy seemingly embraces the pageant's portrayal of timeless villagers, Dodge's remark to her that '[y]ou don't believe in history', intimates that he does not necessarily share her unhistorical view. Nevertheless, the novel does not render problematic the pageant's portrayal of aeviternal villagers—which is suspiciously similar to Woolf's

fantasies elsewhere of ‘eternal peasants’ — as it does the fiction of aeviternal swallows.

While the pageant’s depiction of English villagers is opposed to Brecht’s epic theatre, it is, more broadly, in direct conflict with a Marxist conception of history. Contrary to countervailing interpretations of history, Marxist historiography holds that the prevailing social and economic conditions of production at any given time are not static and changeless, but rather are inherently unstable, driven by dialectical contradictions. Whereas Miss La Trobe’s pageant portrays the agricultural labouring class as frozen in an aeviternal stasis, dialectical materialism holds that nothing is exempt from change and history, and particularly not the existing class structure and the dominance of the ruling class.

Historically, we saw that the *aevum* carried a politics of time through its application in the doctrine of the monarch’s two bodies, where it was employed to consolidate the monarch’s position of power at the head of a feudal society. In the *Mutabilitie Cantos*, this doctrine was treated sceptically, as part of a critique of Elizabeth’s foreign policy in Ireland. However, in *Between the Acts*, the fiction of the *aevum* was redeployed in an ideologically-suspect manner. Here, the *aevum* is employed not to entrench the monarch’s position of dominance at the top of the class structure, but rather to fix agricultural labourers in an aeviternally-frozen state of subordination at the bottom of that structure. The chorus of villagers who wear sacking cloth, plough the fields and tend the land according to the seasons, are idealized as changeless over history. Such a portrayal of agricultural labourers petrifies the existing class structure in an unhistorical and changeless stasis, and thereby conceptually forecloses the possibility of emancipatory political action. The

fiction of an aeviternal nature in *Between the Acts* carries, when it comes to class, a deeply suspect politics of time.

I would like to thank The Society of Authors as the literary representative of the Estate of Virginia Woolf for permission to quote from the Monks House Papers. I am also grateful to Michael Whitworth, Colin Burrow, Bart van Es and Julie Taylor for their helpful comments on this essay.

¹ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, 2003), 54-61. See also Ayako Yoshino, 'Between the Acts and Louis Napoleon Parker—the Creator of the Modern English Pageant', *Critical Survey*, 15 (2003), 49-60.

² For example, on ancient Greek drama, see Melba Cuddy-Keane, 'The Politics of Comic Modes in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*', *PMLA*, 105 (1990), 273-85, 274-5. On Elizabethan theatre, see Brenda R. Silver, 'Virginia Woolf and the Concept of Community: The Elizabethan Playhouse', *Women's Studies*, 4 (1977), 291-8. On epic theatre, see below.

³ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, new edn (Oxford, 2000), 70-2.

⁴ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own; Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford, 1992), 58. Bowlby has argued that 'Woolf's challenge to what she identifies as a masculine history (great wars, great nations, great men) anticipates the principles and practices of explicitly feminist history' (*Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh, 1997), 31). Cuddy-Keane has drawn attention to feminist aspects of Woolf's 'pluralistic approach to history': see her 'Virginia Woolf and the

Varieties of Historicist Experience’, in Beth Carole Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino (eds), *Virginia Woolf and the Essay* (Basingstoke, 1997), 59-77.

⁵ See, for example, Angeliki Spiropoulou, *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History: Constellations with Walter Benjamin* (Basingstoke, 2010), and Sanja Bahun, *Modernism and Melancholia: Writing as Countermourning* (Oxford, 2013), 144-94.

⁶ The first page of the first draft of what was to become *Between the Acts*, which is headed ‘Summer Night’, is dated ‘2nd April 1938’ (see Virginia Woolf, *Pointz Hall: The Earlier and Later Typescripts of Between the Acts*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (New York, 1983), 33). Arguably, the first allusion in Woolf’s diary to *Between the Acts* occurs on 19 January 1935: ‘I have an idea for a “play” Summers night’ (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (London, 1977-84), vol. 4, 275).

⁷ Woolf, *Diary*, vol. 4, 275.

⁸ Virginia Woolf, ‘Reading Notebook XLV’, Sussex, University of Sussex, Monks House Papers, B.2m. As Brenda R. Silver points out, Woolf’s notes on *The Faerie Queene* in this notebook were taken between 20 January and 11 March 1935 (*Virginia Woolf’s Reading Notebooks* (Princeton, 1983), 211).

⁹ Woolf, ‘Notebook XLV’, 11.

¹⁰ Woolf, *Diary*, vol. 4, 321.

¹¹ Virginia Woolf, ‘The Faery Queen’, in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie and Stuart N. Clarke, 6 vols (London, 1986-2011), vol. 6, 487-92, 488, 491.

¹² See Virginia Woolf, ‘“Anon” and “The Reader”’: Virginia Woolf’s Last Essays’, ed. Brenda R. Silver, *Twentieth Century Literature*, 25 (1979), 356-441, 389-92.

¹³ Virginia Woolf, 'Reading Notebook XXXVII', Monks House Papers, B.2c, 22-3.

According to Silver, the notes in this notebook date from between 12 September 1940 and 28 March 1941 (*Notebooks*, 184).

¹⁴ See Jane Grogan, 'Introduction', in Jane Grogan (ed.), *Celebrating Mutabilitie: Essays on Edmund Spenser's Mutabilitie Cantos* (Manchester, 2010), 1-23, 1, 18.

¹⁵ *Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. J. Payne Collier, 5 vols (London, 1862), vol. 4, 241-86, 241. All references are to this edition.

¹⁶ Woolf, 'Anon', 416-7, my italics.

¹⁷ Silver, 'Anon', 417; Spenser, *Faerie*, VII.vii.35, in *Works*, vol. 4, 274.

¹⁸ See Silver, 'Anon', 417.

¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*, ed. Mark Hussey (Cambridge, 2011), 55, 14.

²⁰ Spenser, *Faerie*, VII.vii.5, VII.vii.59, VII.viii.1, in *Works*, vol. 4, 263, 284, 285.

²¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 91, 88, 124-5.

²² Woolf, *Acts*, 125; Spenser, *Faerie*, VII.vii.47, in *Works*, vol. 4, 280.

²³ Spenser, *Faerie*, VII.vii.59, VII.viii.2, in *Works*, vol. 4, 284, 286.

²⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 125.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Questions on God*, ed. Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (Cambridge, 2006), 101.

²⁶ See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1997), 8, 171.

²⁷ See Kermode, *Ending*, 70-81, and Richard A. McCabe, *The Pillars of Eternity: Time and Providence in 'The Faerie Queene'* (Blackrock, 1989), 36-8, 127-30, 132-53.

²⁸ McCabe, *Pillars*, 208, 138. Ayesha Ramachandran draws attention to the conceptual and rhetorical similarity between the portrayal of the Garden of Adonis and the Mutabilitie Cantos, and points out that '[t]he seeds of the Mutabilitie Cantos are in

fact already evident in the stanzas describing the Garden, where Spenser imagines the place of Time within the seemingly eternal stasis of garden's generative cycles'

('Mutabilitie's Lucretian Metaphysics: Scepticism and Cosmic Process in Spenser's *Cantos*', in Grogan (ed.), *Celebrating Mutabilitie*, 220-245, 224-5).

²⁹ Spenser, *Faerie*, III.vi.47, in *Works*, vol. 2, 469.

³⁰ Kermode, *Ending*, 79.

³¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 138, 129, 118, 131.

³² Woolf, *Acts*, 138.

³³ Woolf, *Acts*, 74-5, 79.

³⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 74.

³⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 131.

³⁶ Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Edinburgh, 1996), 171; the allusion is to *Macbeth*, 1.vi.4.

³⁷ Woolf, *Acts*, 138.

³⁸ See Kermode, *Ending*, 68, 74, and McCabe, *Pillars*, 36-7.

³⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 83.

⁴⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 126-7.

⁴¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 139-40.

⁴² See Revelation 8:6.

⁴³ Woolf, *Guineas*, 359-60.

⁴⁴ Woolf, *Guineas*, 412.

⁴⁵ Woolf, *Guineas*, 412, 410-1, 413; the quotations are from Julian Huxley, *Essays in Popular Science* (London, 1926), 64-5. In context, Huxley is rejecting Mathilde and Mathias Vaerting's view in their *The Dominant Sex: A Study in the Sociology of Sex*

Differentiation, tr. Eden and Cedar Paul (London, 1923), that the ‘biological differences between the sexes in man are negligible’ (63).

⁴⁶ Woolf, *Guineas*, 413.

⁴⁷ Woolf, *Guineas*, 361.

⁴⁸ Similarly, on St Paul’s use of the ‘argument from nature’, Woolf’s narrator writes: ‘[t]he argument from nature may seem to us susceptible of amendment; nature, when allied with financial advantage, is seldom of divine origin’ (*Guineas*, 392).

⁴⁹ Marcus suggests that Woolf rewrote Swinburne’s poem in *Between the Acts*, retrieving the myth’s ‘original claim of the power of sisterhood over the patriarchal family’, and turning it into a tale of ‘sorority and revenge for rape’ (*Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington, 1987), 76, 80, 93). Beer draws attention to Swinburne’s poem, and points out that the swallows ‘who sweep constantly across the barn recall the myth of Procne and Philomela in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*’, and thereby allude ‘to rape, violation, and murder’ (*Common Ground*, 136-41). de Gay considers the allusions to ‘Itylus’ alongside alternative versions of the Procne and Philomela myth (*Virginia Woolf’s Novels and the Literary Past* (Edinburgh, 2006), 205-7).

⁵⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 80, 84-5.

⁵¹ See Marcus, *Patriarchy*, 93-4; de Gay, *Literary Past*, 205. As Stuart Clarke has shown, the rape about which Isa reads was a real case, which occurred on 27 April 1938, and was reported in *The Times*: see his ‘The Horse with a Green Tail’, *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, 34 (1990), 3-4.

⁵² See Richard A. McCabe, *Spenser’s Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference* (Oxford, 2002), 261. The connection between sexual and colonial violence in *Between the Acts* will be addressed below. In the Mutabilitie

Cantos, Faunus's identification with an Irish rebel—either Maurice Fitzgerald or Hugh O'Neill—suggests that violence is perpetrated against the English colonizers. By contrast, in *Between the Acts*, rape is committed by British soldiers, and it is colonizers rather than the colonized who are portrayed as violent.

⁵³ Woolf, *Acts*, 113.

⁵⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 111-2.

⁵⁵ Woolf, 'Notebook XLV', 15. More fully, the lines that Woolf quoted read: 'There is continuall Spring, and harvest there/ Continuall, both meeting at one tyme' (Spenser, *Faerie*, III.vi.42, in *Works*, vol. 2, 458-9).

⁵⁶ Woolf, 'Notebook XLV', 12; Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.75, in *Works*, vol. 2, 329-30.

Woolf omitted the third, fourth, fifth and seventh lines of the stanza. In one of her notes, Woolf expressed her preference for the 'Bower of Bliss' over other parts of the second book of *The Faerie Queene*, including the 'fights' and '[t]he history of Britain' in II.x (12).

⁵⁷ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.77, in *Works*, vol. 2, 330.

⁵⁸ Spenser, *Faerie*, III.vi.30, in *Works*, vol. 2, 454-5.

⁵⁹ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.50, II.xii.58, in *Works*, vol. 2, 321, 324.

⁶⁰ Isa is acutely aware of her husband's possible infidelity: 'Isa was immobile, watching her husband. She could feel the Manresa in his wake. She could hear in the dusk in their bedroom the usual explanation. It made no difference; his infidelity—but hers did' (80).

⁶¹ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.76, II.xii.81, in *Works*, vol. 2, 330, 332.

⁶² Woolf, *Acts*, 82; Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.54, in *Works*, vol. 2, 322.

⁶³ Woolf, *Acts*, 145.

⁶⁴ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.82, in *Works*, vol. 2, 332.

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- ⁶⁵ Spenser, *Faerie*, II.xii.72, in *Works*, vol. 2, 329.
- ⁶⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 113.
- ⁶⁷ Esty, *Shrinking Island*, 37, 54-61, 85-107.
- ⁶⁸ See, for example, Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford, 2012), 369-79.
- ⁶⁹ See Jane Grogan, 'After Mutabilitie: Yeats and Heaney Reading Spenser', in Grogan (ed.), *Celebrating Mutabilitie*, 293-314.
- ⁷⁰ Spenser, *Works*, vol. 4, 261.
- ⁷¹ See Silver, *Notebooks*, 132, 187.
- ⁷² J. Payne Collier, 'The Life of Spenser', in Spenser, *Works*, vol. 1, ix-clxxviii, li, lvii.
- ⁷³ Collier, 'Life', cxxxvii-cxxxviii, cxxvii, cxxx-cxxxii.
- ⁷⁴ See Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Savage Soyl* (Oxford, 1997), 187-90; and *Life*, 372.
- ⁷⁵ Spenser, *Works*, vol. 1, 149.
- ⁷⁶ Spenser, *Faerie*, VII.vii.50 and VII.vi.8, in *Works*, vol. 4, 281, 244. See Grogan, 'Yeats', 308. Yeats' return to Spenser's image of the moon is apposite given that, in the Irish Civil War of 1922-3, British imperial rule was once again at stake, this time contested by the Free State Government and the Republicans.
- ⁷⁷ Hadfield, *Irish Experience*, 189-90.
- ⁷⁸ See Hadfield, *Irish Experience*, 195; *Life*, 376. Compare Irenius' argument in *A View* that 'the continuall presence of their King' is needed 'to containe the unrulie people from a thousand evill occasions' (*Works*, vol. 5, 308).
- ⁷⁹ Esty, *Shrinking Island*, 58-9.
- ⁸⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 113-4.
- ⁸¹ Woolf, *Acts*, 116-7; *Guineas*, 206-8.

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- ⁸² Esty, *Shrinking Island*, 89.
- ⁸³ Woolf, *Pointz Hall*, 65.
- ⁸⁴ Woolf, *Guineas*, 311-4.
- ⁸⁵ Spenser, *Faerie*, VII.vi.33, in *Works*, vol. 4, 253.
- ⁸⁶ Collier, 'Life', cxxx; Spenser, *Works*, vol. 5, 418-9.
- ⁸⁷ Spenser, *Works*, vol. 5, 437, 460.
- ⁸⁸ Woolf, *Acts*, 117.
- ⁸⁹ See David P. Nally, *Human Encumbrances: Political Violence and the Great Irish Famine* (Notre Dame, 2011), 2, 8-15, 132-4.
- ⁹⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 114.
- ⁹¹ Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*, ed. Susan Dick and Mary S. Millar (Oxford, 2002), 160.
- ⁹² Spenser, *Works*, vol. 5, 419.
- ⁹³ Woolf, *Pointz Hall*, 147.
- ⁹⁴ Spenser, *Works*, vol. 5, 419.
- ⁹⁵ Woolf, *Acts*, 12.
- ⁹⁶ See McCabe, *Monstrous*, 36-8.
- ⁹⁷ Spenser, *Works*, vol. 5, 428.
- ⁹⁸ Esty, *Shrinking Island*, 94.
- ⁹⁹ Woolf, *Acts*, 115, 57, 90, 100, 115.
- ¹⁰⁰ Woolf, *Acts*, 101.
- ¹⁰¹ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, ed. Finn Fordham (Oxford, 2012), 281. In a letter of 22 November 1930 to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce wrote in summary of the 'beautiful sentence from Edgar Quinet': 'E. Q. says that the wild flowers on the ruins of Carthage, Numancia etc have survived the political rises and falls of Empires'

(*Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Stuart Gilbert, vol. 1 (London, 1957), 295). As Inge Landuyt and Geert Lernout have shown, Joyce encountered Quinet's sentence through Léon Metchnikoff's *La civilisation et les grands fleuves historiques* (1889): see their 'Joyce's Sources: *Les grands fleuves historiques*', *Joyce Studies Annual*, 6 (1995), 99-137.

¹⁰² Woolf, *Acts*, 100-1.

¹⁰³ Cuddy-Keane has compared the chorus of villagers to the chorus in ancient Greek comedy ('Politics', 280).

¹⁰⁴ Virginia Woolf, 'Thomas Hardy's Novels', in *Essays*, vol. 4, 507-19, 511. The idea of a pool of common wisdom that persists over time foreshadows the anonymous tradition of song celebrated by Woolf in 'Anon'.

¹⁰⁵ Virginia Woolf, 'Reading Notebook XLII', Monks House Papers, B.2j, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Woolf, *Acts*, 34.

¹⁰⁷ Woolf, *Pointz Hall*, 70, my italics.

¹⁰⁸ Spenser, *Works*, vol. 5, 355-6. See Hadfield, *Life*, 214-6.

¹⁰⁹ Spenser, *Works*, vol. 5, 480-1.

¹¹⁰ By all accounts, Spenser lived very well during the famine in Munster, enjoying a diet that included bread, beer, mutton, rabbit, duck, chicken, deer, fish and shellfish. See Hadfield, *Life*, 218-21.

¹¹¹ See Nally, *Encumbrances*, 21-55, 130-73, 211-3.

¹¹² See, for example, Catherine Wiley, 'Making History Unrepeatable in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*', *Clio*, 25 (1995), 3-20; Karin E. Westman, 'History as Drama: Towards a Feminist Materialist Historiography', in Diane F. Gillespie and Leslie K. Hankins (eds), *Virginia Woolf and the Arts* (New York, 1997), 335-43; Georgia Johnston, 'Class Performance in *Between the Acts*: Audiences for Miss La

Trobe and Mrs. Manresa', *Woolf Studies Annual*, 3 (1997), 61-75; Michael Tratner, 'Why Isn't *Between the Acts* a Movie?', in Pamela L. Caughie (ed.), *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York, 2000), 115-34; and Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 151-3.

¹¹³ Wiley, 'Unrepeatable', 6-8. Similarly, Spiropoulou notes that the 'formal techniques' of Miss La Trobe's pageant are 'strikingly reminiscent of Brecht's famous *Verfremdungseffekte*': 'the villagers become actors, and any verisimilitude of scenery and costume is "outraged" to the extent that the latter destroys illusion' (*Constellations*, 152).

¹¹⁴ Westman, 'History as Drama', 335.

¹¹⁵ Johnston, 'Class Performance', 69, 67, 72.

¹¹⁶ Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 208, 151.

¹¹⁷ My argument complements Tratner's contention that '[e]ven though Woolf creates . . . alienating effects [*in Between the Acts*], she still does not seem to do what ultimately Benjamin says is the goal of . . . epic theatre: to destroy completely the aura of art and tradition' ('Movie', 125).

¹¹⁸ See Wiley, 'Unrepeatable', 6-7; Johnston, 'Class Performance', 67; Spiropoulou, *Constellations*, 208.

¹¹⁹ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and tr. John Willett, 2nd edn (London, 2001), 192.

¹²⁰ Brecht, *Theatre*, 96, 86, 139.

¹²¹ Wiley, 'Unrepeatable', 8.

¹²² Woolf, *Acts*, 57, 121.

¹²³ Woolf, *Acts*, 88; her ellipses.

¹²⁴ Woolf, *Acts*, 125.

¹²⁵ Brecht, *Theatre*, 96-7.