

Fall 2024. ENGL 1740. Jean-Michel Rabaté: Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot in Dialogue.

It seems counter-intuitive to pair Woolf and Eliot given the usual impression of the American poet as being conservative and religious, whereas the British author was a feminist, an atheist, and much more on the left. However, for two decades, they were close friends who saw each other regularly and respected the other's judgments. Woolf printed two of Eliot's books herself and often deferred to his literary pronouncements. They met at the end of the Great War in 1918 and kept their dialogue open and dynamic until the untimely demise of Woolf in 1941. However, even if she deferred to Eliot's esthetic pronouncement, Woolf never shared his views on a "dissociation of sensibility" that would have been brought about by the English revolution. Her own historiography of England resulted in a different effort at rewriting subjective positions, which entailed pushing against gender boundaries. After a comparative biographical introduction, the class will focus on major texts by Eliot such as *Prufrock and other observations*, *The Waste Land*, *Hollow Men*, *Ash Wednesday*, *Murder in the Cathedral* and the *Four Quartets*, and by Woolf such as *Night and Day*, *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, *The Waves*, and the posthumous novel *Between the Acts*. We will compare their abundant output in literary criticism and assess their fundamental philosophical tenets while surveying the main themes they treated, like memory, desire, war, cities, neurosis, history, gender and sexuality.

Woolf-Eliot class syllabus

- 8/27: Introduction: parallel lives, meeting points, and zones of divergence.
- 8/29. Woolf before they met: Bloomsbury, marriage, *Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*.
- 9/1. Watch *Tom and Viv*, 1994 film by Brian Gilbert.
- 9/3. Eliot before they met: Paris 1911, Harvard, dissertation, marriage. Discussion of *Tom and Viv* in class.
- 9/5. Eliot before 1918: Early poems: *Inventions of the March Hare* and the "Prufrock" cycle.
- 9/10. *Jacob's Room* (1).
- 9/12. *Jacob's Room* (2).
- 9/17. "Tradition and the individual talent," Eliot's work at the *Egoist* and *The Sacred Wood*.
- 9/19. Woolf's critical essays.
- 9.24. *The Waste Land* (1).
- 9/26. *The Waste Land* (2).
- 10/1. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1).
- Break
- 10/8. *Mrs. Dalloway* (2). **First paper due.**
- 10/10. Eliot's *Poems 1909-1925*.
- 10/15. *The Hollow Men*.
- 10/17. *Sweeney Agonistes*.
- 10/22. *To the Lighthouse* (1).
- 10/24. *To the Lighthouse* (2).
- 10/29. *Ash Wednesday*
- 10/31. *Orlando* (1)
- 11/3. Watch *Orlando* (1992 film by Sally Potter).
- 11/5. *Orlando* (2). Discussion of the film in class.
- 11/7. *A Room of one's own*

- 11/12. *The Waves*. **Second paper due.**
 11/14. *Flush*.
 11/19. *Coriolan* and *The Rock*.
 11/21. *Murder in the Cathedral*.
 11/26. *The Years*.
 11/28. *Burnt Norton*.
 12/1. Watch *The Hours* (2002 film by Stephen Daldry).
 12/3. *Between the Acts* and discussion of *The Hours* in class.
 12/5. Conclusion and synthesis. **Final paper due.**

Attendance and Class Participation – The success of such a course is based on the students’ consistent preparation, regular attendance, submission of assignments, and active participation. Students’ contributions to the learning process are expected on a regular basis, therefore, attendance is mandatory. Students will be permitted to miss 2 classes maximum with excused absences before points will be deducted.

Evaluation and Grade – Grades will be determined in the following manner:

| <u>Item</u> | <u>% of Grade</u> |
|--|-------------------|
| Weekly Reading Questions on Canvas: | 10 % |
| Oral presentations: | 20 % |
| Reflective Essays (2 ea. @ 20%, 5 pages each): | 40 % |
| Final Paper on a common theme (7-8 pages): | 30 % |
| TOTAL | 100% |