



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Queer Entomology: Virginia Woolf's Butterflies

Benjamin Bagocius

Modernism/modernity, Volume 24, Number 4, November 2017, pp. 723-750  
(Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mod.2017.0061>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/677101>



## Queer Entomology: Virginia Woolf's Butterflies

**Benjamin Bagocius**

Virginia Woolf shares with Victorian entomologists a fascination with maleness as neither a fixed form nor an established fact, but as an uncertain anatomy. In this article, I explain the ways Woolf's voracious reading of popular Victorian entomology—from Charles Darwin's studies of butterflies to Eleanor Ormerod's specialized work for agriculture and F. O. Morris's popular tracts on butterfly collecting—provides her vocabularies to reimagine maleness not as a conclusive but as a debatable form. In her essay "Old Bloomsbury" (1941, posthumously), Woolf perceives, for example, E. M. Forster more as a butterfly specimen than as a man. She emphasizes his "erratic, irregular" motion more than his maleness. As suddenly as the Forster butterfly flits into the scene, it disappears. Woolf never discusses Forster in the memoir again:

And once at least Morgan [Forster] flitted through Bloomsbury lodging for a moment in Fitzroy Square on his way even then to catch a train. . . . I felt as if a butterfly—by preference a pale blue butterfly—had settled on the sofa; if one raised a finger or made a movement the butterfly would be off. He talked . . . And I listened—with the deepest curiosity, for he was the only novelist I knew. . . . But I was too much afraid of raising my hand and making the butterfly fly away to say much. I used to watch him from behind a hedge as he flitted through Gordon Square, erratic, irregular, with his bag, on his way to catch a train.<sup>1</sup>

The difference between viewing a man and viewing a butterfly comes down to a matter of perspective. It is not that a man is exactly like a butterfly specimen but, rather, that observing a

MODERNISM / *modernity*  
VOLUME TWENTY FOUR,  
NUMBER FOUR,  
PP 723–750. © 2017  
JOHNS HOPKINS  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

**Benjamin Bagocius** is an Assistant Professor of Literature at Bard High School Early College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is working on a book that explores the ways literary modernists join Victorian life science writers in reimagining bodies and sexualities released from categories of gender.



724 man can feel like observing a butterfly. While at first glance this passage may seem to be homophobic commentary on Forster's insubstantial manliness (he might be said to be "light in his loafers"), I am captivated by the energy and wonder Woolf infuses into her narration of Forster's substance. Watching Forster's unpredictable body fills Woolf with "deepest curiosity." In describing Forster as male, Woolf is limited to three identitarian categories: subject ("he"), object ("him"), and possessor ("his"). But the vast range of descriptors Woolf uses to account for Forster's motion overwhelm categories of gendered identity and underscore Forster's activity, not sex: flitting, catching, pale blue (as in a color that fades or brightens), carrying, settling, being off, talking, flying, and erratic irregularity.<sup>2</sup> In other words, Woolf's attention to Forster's motion is three times greater than her identification of him as sexed male. Woolf perceives Forster less through the optic of sex and more through the optic of improvisational motion.

The dearth of signals Woolf uses to gender Forster in contrast to the plethora of verbs she uses to describe his mobility suggests that Woolf considers gender a more limited, less satisfying organizational frame for representing Forster than motion is. She associates his rarity—"the only novelist I knew"—with someone who moves unpredictably. When she inserts male pronouns, it is only briefly, for her interest in Forster's motion predominates. While Woolf gives language to her interiority ("I felt"), she does not psychologize Forster. He moves; he does not identify. Woolf's preference to see Forster as freewheeling, "erratic, irregular," off to "catch a train," releases him from domestic capture. Woolf laments only pages before that the home traps and "snatch[es]" bodies into the "horrible" "fate" of "love and marriage" ("Old Bloomsbury," 192, 191). Forster's body in motion occasions his escape from the home at the moment when the sexed "he" might trap him within prescribed narratives: that he will settle down, marry, and father, embodying the figure of the patriarch instead of flitting away to an open future.

In queering Forster's body—that is, accentuating his mobility and downplaying his maleness to release him from heteropatriarchy—Woolf aestheticizes what we might call the body in motion—the ever-shifting explanatory principles of male bodies recognized by an observer.<sup>3</sup> Woolf narrates the ways motion often overtakes male bodies to the degree that their maleness is no longer as important as the surprising motility their bodies express. Bodies coded as male, then, do not stay male unceasingly in the thread of Woolf's literary art I follow here. Although initially perceived as males, these bodies are released, even if only temporarily, from categories of sex into surprising, mobile formations that remove them from dangers of sexed narratives. In this instance, Woolf emphasizes not Forster's sex but his capacity for movement and release—much like the "erratic, irregular" butterflies whose moves are "curiously irregular" in their "zig zag flights" in "Kew Gardens" (1919).<sup>4</sup> Certainly butterflies may be said to be sexed, but their sex does not interest Woolf. The "curiously irregular" zig-zagging motion they express is what fascinates her.

Woolf's literary application of butterflies to narrate escape and survival echoes Darwin's science. Woolf intimately knew—and treasured—Darwin's work. As Gillian Beer notes, Woolf returned to the wreckage of her bombed-out home in Tavistock Square during World War II to retrieve items of value—her volumes of Darwin in-

cluded among other beloved objects like her diaries.<sup>5</sup> Woolf's art, Beer finds, "is full of Darwinian echoes and Darwinian references" (*Virginia Woolf*, 16). In Darwin's theory of evolution, rare species of winged creatures—such as certain genres of moths—adopt characteristics of butterflies to save their lives. In *The Origin of Species* (1859), Darwin names this transspecies adoption of butterfly characteristics "analogical resemblance."<sup>6</sup> By imitating butterflies, moths are likelier to escape capture from predators, Darwin explains. "The mockers," or species of insects which "imitate other butterflies" of more abundant species, are "invariably rare insects; the mocked in almost every case" have escaped danger and "abound," Darwin finds. "The mocking forms" are "rare" and "hence they must suffer habitually from some danger" to their survival. "If a member of one of these persecuted and rare groups were to assume a dress so like that of a well-protected species," such as the butterflies he studies, "that it continually deceived . . . predacious birds and insects," then it would "often escape destruction" and would be "oftener preserved" (*Origin of Species*, 465, 466, 467). A member of a rare and endangered species that moves like a butterfly, then, is likelier to evade danger and have its life spared.<sup>7</sup>

Deploying ideas of entomology, Woolf capitalizes on men's capacities to resemble "erratic, irregular" butterfly motion so they "may escape destruction" and be "preserved." The concept of "man" disturbs Woolf because it connotes an unusual degree of stasis and threat: it narrows the range of motion for male bodies and destroys them. As Woolf details across her essays, novels, and life writing, the concept "man" captures male bodies in the constraint of biological sex to naturalize their conscription into violent heteropatriarchal patterns of marriage and war. Men were an increasingly rare and endangered species in a Victorian and modern Britain habitually enlisting them into ravages of empire and war: the Crimean War, the Boer War, World War I, the Spanish Civil War, and World War II, to name the most prominent. We have seen that Woolf rarifies—makes sacred—Forster by valuing him for the unique place he fills in her life as "the only novelist" she knew. Privileging his butterfly-like motion over his biological sex does not just release Forster from the capture of "love and marriage," but it may preserve his sacredness by rescuing him from interpellation into cycles of violence that may kill him.

Of course, motion and male bodies are not mutually exclusive. Male bodies move—but too often in appallingly restrictive ways. Socially sexed, men enter "educations" that "bred in them defects," Woolf writes, that limit rather than open their and other's motions, narrowing their bodies' ranges of motions to "instincts for possession," to "rage for acquisition which drives them to desire other people's fields and goods perpetually; to make frontiers and flags; battleships and poison gas; to offer up their own lives and their children's lives."<sup>8</sup> Far from releasing men's bodies into surprising formations, the concept of "man" constricts the body's motion into intractable "instincts," "rages," and "drives."

Woolf will not accept the immobilizations thrust upon bodies that happen to be male. On the eve of World War II, Woolf describes looking at a photograph of a "figure of man," a sexed shape "called in German and Italian Führer and Duce; in our own

726 language Tyrant or Dictator" (*Three Guineas*, 168). This "figure of man," whether at home or abroad, Woolf announces, must be revised, since assenting to this figuration sanctions masculinist violence, "the ruined houses" of private life as well as the destruction of communities and lives, "dead bodies of men, women and children." "We are not," Woolf declares, "passive spectators doomed to unresisting obedience" to that "figure of man," but "we . . . can ourselves change that figure" (168).

Woolf's feminism reimagines the figure of man to rescue bodies from destruction that happen to be coded as male. An extensive body of feminist scholarship addresses the ways Woolf challenges heteropatriarchal order by rewriting women's roles, identities, and sexualities. Woolf's revision of maleness to rescue men from the crushing and deadly pressure of heteropatriarchal ordinances is a sizable blind spot in critical accounts of her feminism.<sup>9</sup> Not only women but men, too, as literary scholar Jessica Feldman states, "have felt themselves crushed" and "made to doubt the legitimacy of their own voices" and experiences under the weight of heteropatriarchal "orthodoxy."<sup>10</sup> Unearthing points of contact between Victorian entomology and Woolf's feminism, I draw out the vocabularies they share to reconfigure maleness as an embodiment of change unshackled from merciless categories of gender and sexuality. In deemphasizing sex to make a male's capacity for irregular motion more pronounced, Woolf destabilizes maleness as a whole identity and thus deprives heteropatriarchy of enlistees. Figures defined by motion could not be enlisted into war, only those organized by sex—men—could be.<sup>11</sup> She turns to the entomological lexicon of winged bugs—particularly the butterfly—to emphasize male bodies' organization around principles of improvisational motion over masculinism.<sup>12</sup> Woolf's queering of the male body—reconfiguring his body to prioritize motility over sex—releases male bodies like Forster's from narratives of heteropatriarchy that destroy and "snatch" away their lives, freeing them instead to pursue queer intimacies.

### **Woolf, Feminism, and Reimagining Maleness**

Important scholarship by Harvena Richter, Christine Froula, and Christina Alt has explored what might be called Woolf's literary entomology, or her aestheticization of entomological figures, writings, and methods. Such scholarship tends to collapse butterflies with moths, focusing on the two insects as figures for female creativity, women's sexuality, or masculinist habituation.<sup>13</sup> Critical studies have not adequately accounted for Woolf's application of the butterfly to reimagine and rescue male bodies from heteropatriarchy. To be sure, Woolf does not pull from lexicons of entomology to release all male bodies into freer mobility. Her strand of male bodies in motion is just one among many forms of masculinity in Woolf's art. She also draws from entomology to observe males propounding rather than undoing masculinist bodies. Critics including Kathy J. Phillips and Alt have followed this strand of Woolf's narration of men, claiming that "the pastime" of insect study "inculcates aggression and acquisitiveness," securing rather than unsettling masculinist bodies (Alt, *Study of Nature*, 98).

But Woolf narrates masculinism as just one thread of male bodily expression in entomology. Alt's and Bonnie Kime Scott's biographical research on Woolf highlights her upbringing as well as her reading of entomological works by Ormerod, Darwin, and Morris exposed her to a variety of Victorian entomological practices in which she participated. Woolf not only hunted for and collected insects, but also enjoyed observing their antics in their natural habitats.<sup>14</sup> Collapsing Victorian entomology with masculinist hunt and capture oversimplifies the complexities that Woolf notices about this rich field and the males who participated in it, as well as distorts her aestheticization of them.<sup>15</sup> Her turn to Victorian entomology to devise a solution to save bodies that happen to be male from the wastes and horrors of heteropatriarchy remains overlooked in studies of her feminism. Woolf's narration of male bodies in motion is a central but critically neglected component of her feminism founded upon what she calls a "human sympathy" that seeks to protect and promote the well-being not just of women, but "all—all" (*Three Guineas*, 170).

In calling upon the butterfly to reconfigure male bodies and sexualities, Woolf inserts herself into a Victorian entomological tradition, but also into an ancient aesthetic one. Butterflies have long been associated with development, maturity, and freedom, and thereby with the awakening of sexuality. From the Greek figure of Psyche—the goddess of the Soul often represented as a butterfly—to William Wordsworth's poem "To a Butterfly" (1801), to Vita Sackville-West's novel *All Passion Spent* (1931), butterflies inspire representations of bodily freedom and sexual liberation. But these representations tend to sustain sex and gender norms that Woolf allows to fall by the wayside. Psyche, for example, falls in love with Eros and they have a baby; Wordsworth's butterfly is a figure that braids together the disparate figures of mother, father, and siblings into a nuclear family; Sackville-West's butterfly bodies inspire a yearning for sexual freedom in Deborah Slane (who is married, albeit unhappily, to the patriarchal Lord Slane).

Woolf gives this tradition a queer twist with the help of Victorian entomological books she read. Woolf's fascination with male bodies' "erratic, irregular" movement aligns her, surprisingly, with narrations of male bugs by Eleanor Ormerod, one of the Victorian era's most esteemed experts on insects. In March 1919, while simultaneously composing *Jacob's Room* (1922)—Woolf's most sustained aestheticization of both butterflies and a single male character, Jacob—Woolf records in her diary reading *Eleanor Ormerod, LL.D., Economic Entomologist, Autobiography and Correspondence* (1904). Ormerod's autobiography charts her development as one of Victorian Britain's most influential economic entomologists. Ormerod specialized in eradicating agriculturally injurious insects, wrote countless pamphlets, and presented lectures; entomological experts and laborers around the world corresponded with her and sought her expertise. Ormerod was so well respected for her contributions to entomology that the board of trustees at the University of Edinburgh made her the first woman to receive an honorary degree in 1901.

Ormerod's writing made an impression on Woolf as well. In 1919, Woolf began drafting a short story she would call "Miss Ormerod" (1924), and which she later inserted into a longer essay, "Lives of the Obscure" (1925). In "Miss Ormerod," a hybrid biographical

728 and fictional account of the titular protagonist's life, Woolf narrates Ormerod's developing love for entomology, from her first encounter as a toddler with insects "gyrat[ing] slowly round and round in the tumbler," to her studies of Hessian Fly and Bot pests, to the "Lady Entomologist's" death documented in *The Times* in July 1901.<sup>16</sup> Upon completing *Jacob's Room* in June 1922, Woolf compares the literary experiments in *Jacob's Room* with those in "Miss Ormerod": "If [critics] say" that *Jacob's Room* "is all a clever experiment" and that "your fiction is impossible, I shall say what about Miss Ormerod, a fantasy."<sup>17</sup> Woolf associates the "impossible" and "clever experiment" of *Jacob's Room* with the "fantasy" of Ormerod. This impossible experiment that Woolf connects with Ormerod is the destabilization of male form.

Ormerod and Woolf share a fascination with sex. Ormerod writes about sexual anatomy and activity almost more than anything else in the lives of bugs. Historian Suzanne Le-May Sheffield asserts that Ormerod "convinced her public and her scientific colleagues that her womanhood remained untainted by her entomological work," upholding expectations of Victorian bourgeois woman as asexual philanthropist and helpmate to men's endeavors.<sup>18</sup> But Woolf notices the ways Ormerod does more than aid men's scientific knowledge. Ormerod also paves a way for women to enter debates about male bodies and sexualities. "Under the microscope," Woolf writes, Ormerod "clearly perceive[s] that these insects have organs, orifices, excrement; they do, most emphatically, copulate." "This is excrement," Woolf imagines Ormerod pointing out; "these . . . are the generative organs of the male" ("Miss Ormerod," 129). Scholars including Scott analyze the importance Ormerod's writings play for Woolf's rethinking of gender roles for women. Scott notes Woolf's interest in Ormerod's "gender-inflected . . . scientific career," which challenges Victorian femininity by staking claims in male-dominated science ("Diversions of Darwin," 65). Alt, too, finds Woolf drawn to Ormerod for the ways the entomologist troubles normative femininity. "Woolf celebrates" Ormerod's "frank, scientific treatment of anatomy, sex, and bodily functions," Alt argues, in a cultural climate in which such topics were considered unseemly for a woman (*Study of Nature*, 140). What gets lost in focusing on Woolf's turn to Ormerod to unsettle gender norms for women, though, is Ormerod's impact on Woolf's revision of maleness.<sup>19</sup>

While a move away from identity toward mobility seems recent in feminist and queer thought, gestures toward this shift appear in psycho-sexological studies from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thoughts of mobile bodies and wayward desires therefore appear contemporaneously with Woolf's life and were ideas with which her art experiments. Studies of sexuality across the fin de siècle grapple with the ways orientations to bodies and sexualities need not presuppose biological sex. "It is a rather amazing fact," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick observes, "that, of the very many dimensions along which the genital activity of one person can be differentiated from that of another . . . precisely one, the gender of object choice, emerged from the turn of the century, and has remained, as *the* dimension denoted by the now ubiquitous category of 'sexual orientation.'"<sup>20</sup> Despite the range of parts of the body, the illimitable sex acts one can practice, and the desires one can undergo, Sedgwick reminds us of the contingency of just one of these—sexual difference—as emerging as the defining feature of modern sexual subjectivity.



Yet even in the growing preference for bodies and sexuality to cohere around sexual difference, across sexology and psychoanalysis an emphasis on bodies' behaviors persisted. Across the turn of the twentieth century, these sciences increasingly studied the bodies of those who practiced non-procreative sexual acts—masturbation, homosexual behavior, and anality, for instance—as developmentally perverted. The perversions were manifested as observable actions and behaviors, which were gradually understood as symptomatic of psychological developmental disruptions. Despite the eventual impulse to match the phenomenological to the psychical, science's physically attentive vocabularies, Sedgwick helps us to see, offer ways to read actions—rather than gender identities—as overlooked but crucial components of nineteenth- and twentieth-century sexualities. Although Sedgwick theorizes unsexed sexuality, she tends to rely on psychoanalytic vocabularies of polymorphous desire, anxiety, or affect to do so. Woolf, differently, specifies the ways in which queerness inheres in the body's physiological capacities to move and change in the strands of representations I trace here.

Woolf's revising of maleness embarks on territory that feminist scholars of science are beginning to explore. Sociologist of medicine, Cynthia Daniels, for instance, stresses that feminism requires a revision of male physiology: masculinist organizing principles of the male body constrain female bodies because they also constrain men's. In Daniels's view, medical sciences must consider male physiology along culturally-coded feminine corporeal principles of receptivity and vulnerability to “undermine assumptions of gender difference” that prevent men from accessing necessary medical care.<sup>21</sup> Woolf's writing from as long as a century ago might serve as a resource for what this reconceptualization of maleness can look like for the twenty-first century. Feminist philosophers, too, have turned to the life sciences to imagine embodiment released from gender identity. Elizabeth Grosz, for example, finds models for rethinking bodies in the field of biology. Grosz's concept of “volatile bodies,” or the body's “capacity to act” and change, describes bodies as biologically agential, not merely reactionary to discursive formulations of gender and sexuality.<sup>22</sup> Grosz finds in Darwin's writings on evolution a theory for bodies' biological capacities to act and move, motions that “undo the stabilities of identity” and “elaborate” alternative ways to perceive and experience the body and its sexualities outside categories of gender.<sup>23</sup>

Grosz believes that maleness is one of the most important identity categories feminism must rethink. The feminist study of male bodies is important to Grosz because maleness has “always been hidden under the generality of the universal, the human” and therefore evades analysis.<sup>24</sup> Because of this ideological blind spot, “the great mystery, the great unknown, of the body comes not from the peculiarities and enigmas of female sexuality . . . but from the unspoken and generally unrepresented particularities of the male body” (*Volatile Bodies*, 198). Grosz considers the male body a mystery because “there is virtually nothing—beyond the discourses of medicine and biology—on men's body fluids,” particularly semen (198). Woolf's work provides a rich literary archive on the fluidity of the male organism as a whole, not just his semen. Woolf thus corrects what Grosz considers a dearth of feminist analysis on male bodies. In so doing, Woolf shares with Grosz the belief that nineteenth-century biology is a generative resource for feminists to reimagine the male body beyond frames of identity.



730 With the butterfly, Woolf considers alternative male constitutions that evade violence. Her art labors to rescue young men—and those who love them—from what Sarah Cole has called “the incalculable pain and waste” of war by reconfiguring organizing principles for male bodies adhering in motion.<sup>25</sup> Reimagining maleness is fundamental to ending war for Woolf. Woolf’s art aestheticizes a rescue plan to save irreplaceable beloveds who happen to be men. She condemns the belief that it is “the nature of man and indeed the essence of manhood to fight”; Woolf desires to “emancipat[e] man from the old ‘natural and eternal law’ that man is essentially a fighter” and free him into whimsical mobility—to flit “off” like a butterfly from weighty laws of maleness (*Three Guineas*, 220–21n48).

Woolf finds in the entomological method of observing butterflies a way for women to destabilize masculinism without participating in masculinist methods and perceptions. As we shall see across her essays, short stories, and longer works, Woolf applies the unique positions of women narrators as observers of male behavior who discover that change and mobility are chief features of male bodies. Woolf thereby destabilizes heteropatriarchy by adopting a new frame of perception for men as moving not within masculinism but released into improvisation. Woolf’s perception of men as odd specimens rather than given forms not only questions the stability of sexed bodies, but also, drawing on Ormerod, reorganizes the male body as a feminist project. Indeed, the entomological tradition allowed women such as Ormerod to participate in discussions about sexual anatomy and behavior in bugs—topics from which they were otherwise barred in discussions about humans.<sup>26</sup> Tracing Woolf’s engagement with entomology to revise maleness illuminates the ways women writers have innovated explanatory features of male bodies and sexualities that destabilize heteropatriarchy by unsettling its sexed foundation.

### The Difference a Butterfly Makes

Men are released from gendered identity through the figure of the butterfly in a number of Woolf’s works, including *Jacob’s Room*, *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *Moments of Being*. But her fascination with moths is mined by critics far more frequently than is her attraction to butterflies. Although butterflies were common cultural foci and appear in almost every piece of Woolf’s writing, very little critical work distinguishes their function from moths in her oeuvre. Critics tend to skim over distinctions between butterflies and moths, but the two kinds of insects often represent different figurations of maleness. By contrasting the figure of the butterfly with the moth, we can better understand the difference a butterfly makes for Woolf’s reparative maleness. The butterfly signals particular male bodies and their rare and hidden queer delights. The moth, on the other hand, signifies heavier, more epic concepts like life’s futile struggle against death and the unrelenting, habituated throng of the masses—exemplified in *Jacob’s Room* by the disturbing processions of male students at Cambridge—that immobilizes and destroys men.

Woolf registers as explicitly queer the irregularity of butterfly bodies in *To the Lighthouse*. Butterflies appear when the weight of heteropatriarchal compulsion, exemplified in Mrs. Ramsay's manic compulsion for marriage and Mr. Ramsay's relentless demands, withdraws. The literary entomologist in the famous interlude "Time Passes" reports expressions of sexuality that emerge when heteropatriarchy disappears. Butterflies cavort with sexual deviants in the abandoned house: "Nothing now withstood them," Woolf reports, "nothing said no to them. Let the wind blow; let the poppy seed itself and the carnation mate with the cabbage. Let the swallow build in the drawing room, and the thistle thrust aside the tiles, and the butterfly sun itself on the faded chintz of the armchairs" (*To the Lighthouse*, 138). Like an entomologist making a list, noting and observing specimens' activity rather than disturbing or interfering, the narrator reports the butterfly basking on the armchair in the company of sexual deviants such as the masturbating poppy and the carnation's unproductive, cross-species fornication with the cabbage. Woolf engorges this scene with sexual vocabulary of action, not gender: "seed itself," "mate," and "thrust."<sup>27</sup> The picture Woolf paints is sexually active but unsexed. The butterfly feels right at home in the motley company of reckless queers.

The singular butterfly's behavior in *To the Lighthouse* recalls the character of a singular man, the sexually ambiguous poet Augustus Carmichael. In the same way that butterflies' gravity lies in their anomalousness, Carmichael is one of the major characters of the novel because he is not a major character. As in Woolf's description of Forster, the narrator leaves Carmichael's history, motivations, and interiority unexplored. None of the characters understands him. Even the narrator, who so breathtakingly examines the interiorities of the novel's other figures, leaves his identities and affiliations an open question. Carmichael remains aloof from the rest of the summer company. He would rather sun himself outdoors in the garden like the butterfly that "suns itself on the faded chintz of the armchairs." He feels deeply for a man (Andrew Ramsay), and is often in the vicinity of the queer figure of Lily Briscoe, who enjoys erotic intimacies with paint, color, and shape, not with men. Drawn to warmth like the butterfly, Carmichael makes "off to sit in the sun," "bask[s]" on the lawn, wears "yellow slippers," and keeps "his candle burning" to read Virgil alone in his room (*To the Lighthouse*, 147, 10, 40, 125). Carmichael "should have" followed the path of becoming "a great philosopher" but did not because he flits erratically from endeavor to endeavor. As Mrs. Ramsay tells us, he jumped around, starting at "Oxford," then attempted "an early . . . and unfortunate marriage," experienced "poverty, going to India; translating a little poetry," "teach[ing]," "and then lying, as they saw him, on the lawn." As a man whose body alights in places erratically like butterflies, Carmichael is characterized through zig-zag moves, which "give no inkling of any inner thoughts or emotion whatsoever" (10). His character is wayward, but not psychologized. As he stands outside of the lasso of marriage and shares intimacy with other queer figures, Carmichael's character parallels the butterfly's, resting from zigzag flights on the chair to look on at the orgy. The butterfly is a figure important for Woolf because of the ways it, unlike the moth, stands for singular men who evade the capture of identity. As with Woolf's description of Forster, a female narrator or character observes men

732 through the language of butterfly mobility: they recognize not men so much as figures of freestyling wonder whose identifications are open questions freed from masculinist forms Woolf is so tired of seeing.

In *To the Lighthouse*, butterfly-like Carmichael flits from place to place, escaping masculinist capture. In other works, like “The Death of the Moth” (1942, posthumously) and *Jacob’s Room*, moths represent—to a female observer—male bodies caught within inescapable repetitions and patterns that lead to death. We recall from Darwin that moths that adopt butterfly-like motion are likelier to escape harm. Woolf represents Forster and Carmichael as butterfly-like figures to facilitate their freedom from heteropatriarchal capture. But the male moth in “The Death of the Moth” cannot escape his habituated flight patterns and dies. Unlike the curiously irregular mobility of Forster and Carmichael, the moth is trapped, drawn to the light from the window and moving constrainedly from one window corner to the next in search of escape. Despite the vast range of potential space and motion to enjoy, the moth will not change his pattern: “He flew vigorously to one corner of his compartment” and then “flew across to the other. What remained for him but to fly to a third corner and then to a fourth? That was all he could do, in spite of the size of the downs, the width of the sky, the far-off smoke of houses, and the romantic voice, now and then, of a steamer out at sea.”<sup>28</sup> The moth’s incapacity to reorient his motion prevents him from enjoying not only erotically inflected “romance,” but a long life gamboling across the “downs” and “sky.” Ultimately the moth as a figure for constrained male mobility is overwhelmed by an even greater force, “so mean an antagonist”: death. “O yes,” the moth “seemed to say” as he falls to the ground and dies there, “death is stronger than I am” (“The Death of the Moth,” 6). The moth is a figure for male existence that, catastrophically, does not have the versatility with which to overcome his restrictive bodily patterns and is killed by them.

Woolf applies the figures of moths to narrate a herd of men caught in masculinist habituation in *Jacob’s Room*. Just as in her essays “Death” and “Reading” (1950, posthumously), in *Jacob’s Room* moths are masculine figures who are entrapped and immobilized. Woolf dons her metaphoric field glasses as a literary entomologist and observes men as moth specimen in one of the novel’s most famous scenes: a scathing critique of the violent masculinism nurtured en masse at Cambridge. The narrator sees King’s College Chapel as a “lantern” in a “forest,” “cast[ing] a brightness into the night” but also “into the day,” whose burning never ends and which lures both young and old men, vacant and moth-like, including Jacob and his friends, captivated and mesmerized by light—“the lamp of learning”—upon which they will bat their lives out (Woolf, *Jacob’s Room*, 32, 31, 40). The literary entomologist avoids sexed pronouns and infuses the scene with the language of specimen behavior entranced by the “lamp of learning.” Released from identity, these moth-men have only behavior: “Look, as they pass into service, how airily the gowns blow out, as though nothing dense and corporeal were within”; “In what orderly procession they advance”; “The white-robed figures crossed from side to side, now mounted steps, now descended, all very orderly” (31–32). Yet the men’s freedom from sex and their release into figures of moth specimen is a hindrance: their behavior is better described as compulsion. Observing men as specimens allows

the literary entomologist to notice their horrifying, habitual behavior, “sculptured” and “controlled” “marches,” and “orderly processions” that they exercise en masse (31). The vacant moth men’s habitual behavior makes it impossible for spontaneity to enter this King’s College Chapel “forest.” Moth-like, the men’s bodies move predictably, repetitively, and “orderly” rather than openly and waywardly like the butterfly motion of Forster and Carmichael. The moth men’s blankness repeats the erotically colorless (“white”) rather than the butterfly-like erotically colorful blues and yellows of Forster and Carmichael. There is a regal quality to the chapel-as-lantern in its “processions” and “robes,” but ultimately Woolf finds in the moth a figure through which to narrate the horrors that result when men move their bodies in masculinist patterns: the sexless, colorless, immobilizing teleologies lead toward senseless psychic and physical death. As in “Reading,” Woolf concludes this moth men procession with a “terrifying volley of pistol-shots” made by “a tree” that “has fallen, a sort of death in the forest” (32). These men’s habituated behavior leads to capture and immolation by the masculinist “light” of Cambridge. Their capture is violent, to be sure, but more violent still is the foreclosure of freewheeling movement of their bodies, the ultimate “death.”

As a literary entomologist who observes men as strange specimens, then, Woolf applies insect figures to narrate both reparative releases from and disturbing expressions of maleness. It is crucial that in Woolf’s work, a woman—whether herself in *Moments of Being* or “The Death,” Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, or the female narrator in *Jacob’s Room*—introduces the shift from perceiving a man to perceiving a body in motion. Women are positioned to notice the butterfly-like freewheeling inherent to male bodies that would otherwise go unnoticed. Reimagining figurations for male bodies released from constricting gender norms is a form of feminist labor.

Woolf writes herself into a tradition of Victorian female life scientists whose central method of discovery about their test object was observation. For Woolf, however, the test object was often men. Though women observers “see the same world” as men, Woolf writes to her male reader in *Three Guineas*, “we see” that world “through different eyes” (22). Woolf determines “how different it looks to us from what it must look like to you!” Woolf’s “us” “who behold” these masculinist bodies includes female Victorian life scientists. Woolf imagines perceiving masculinism from the “angle” of the well-known and respected botanical writer Mary Kingsley, and from the angle of Sophia Jex-Blake, one of the first female physicians in Britain (*Three Guineas*, 30). Both women challenged Victorian feminine propriety by not only pursuing their interests in the sciences, but by succeeding in them. Misogyny and male intravolence create, in “Mary Kingsley’s sisterhood,” an outsider’s perspective from which to report on laughable and horrifying masculinist behavior: “Here you kneel; there you bow,” Woolf records, “here you advance in procession behind a man carrying a silver poker; here you mount a carved chair” (31, 24). Masculinism habituates men into restriction: kneeling, bowing, advancing, mounting. The list-like syntax—“here,” “there,” “here,” “here”—highlights the impossibility of spontaneity in such bodily discipline of hierarchy (kneeling and bowing) and authority (advancing and mounting), characteristic of moth men in *Jacob’s Room*.

734 Women report on masculinism not only to identify it, but to fix it. Woolf's preference to see freewheeling figures over processional men is foundational to her feminist aim to unsettle heteropatriarchy. Woolf's revision of maleness expands livability not only for a "sisterhood" of women but for everyone. Woolf's feminism starts with her unique perspective on masculinism, but aims for a "human sympathy" that includes men into her aspiration for "peace and freedom for the whole world," which would enhance "the rights of all—all men and women—to the respect in their persons of the great principles of Justice and Equality and Liberty" (128, 170). While sexed bodies—"men and women"—feature in this "Liberty," Woolf's feminism transcends sexual difference to land in an ethics of freedom or "Liberty" for "all" "persons." Woolf finds in studies of a tiny insect a way to shake heteropatriarchal foundations and liberate bodies into greater ranges of motion.

### Eleanor Ormerod's Queer Entomology

We recall the ways Woolf announces her prerogative to see Forster's mobility as more pronounced than his sex. In Ormerod, Woolf discovers an entomologist who questions so-called truths about maleness by relying, too, on her "own observation."<sup>29</sup> In fact, Ormerod opens her autobiography with a memory of observing male anatomy changing. "My first insect observation," Ormerod records, "I remember perfectly. It was typical of many others since" (*Autobiography*, 2). What is typical, we learn, is that Ormerod's observation of male bugs is not believed because the transformations of the male bodies she observes are almost unimaginable. She documents as a child watching "in a tumbler of water . . . about half-a-dozen great water grubs in it. One of them had been much injured and his companions proceeded quite to demolish him. I was exceedingly interested" (2).

Ormerod's "first insect observation" opens several key themes that preoccupy Woolf's observation of men: the observation of male bodies in a community ("about half-a-dozen great water grubs . . . in a tumbler of water"), the particularizing of a single male body ("one of them"), noting that particular body's vulnerability ("one of them had been much injured"), the destruction of the vulnerable male body by other males ("his companions proceeded quite to demolish him"), and the sense that this destruction is unusual and demands further attention ("I was exceedingly interested"). The shift from maleness to destroyed bodies interests Woolf greatly, too. Her art labors to narrate an alternative change in male bodies: Woolf prefers to narrate a move not from sexed to destroyed bodies but to bodies who move out of harm's way.

Ormerod's scene sets the stage for a woman witnessing changes in male physiology as "exceedingly" interesting—so surprising that when she shares "the results of my observations" with family members, her observations are "entirely disbelieved" (2). Similarly to Woolf's preference to perceive Forster as a butterfly, Ormerod perceives features of male bodies that may be easily missed—even dismissed—by others, especially male authority figures. Woolf dramatizes Ormerod's father invalidating his daughter's discovery: "'Nonsense, Eleanor,' said Mr Ormerod . . . 'You are not telling the truth.'

He looked severely at the tumbler in which the beetles were still gyrating as before" ("Miss Ormerod," 124). As Ormerod narrates and Woolf dramatizes, women are in a unique position to study the odd and often destructive behavior of males that males themselves cannot or will not see. Ormerod associates her "first step in Entomology" with unsettling givens about male anatomy that are not believed, so ingrained are the societal norms determining maleness (Eleanor Anne Ormerod, 2). Through her careful examination, Ormerod perceives so-called normal bodies as strange. Woolf as a literary artist documents strange bodies as a first step to destabilizing heteropatriarchy. She aestheticizes the susceptibility of male bodies—and the masculinist tendency to attack rather than receive this susceptibility—which would otherwise go unremarked.

Ormerod does not stop problematizing absolutes about male bodies. She voices her authority as an entomologist, in fact, not through statements but questions about maleness. For instance, in a letter to Dr. Ritzema Bos in 1894, Ormerod describes the sex of new specimens as uncertain: "This matter of the *Tylenchus devastatrix* in the cortex seems to me most perplexingly curious," for "looking at these *Tylenchi* being smaller than *T. devastatrix* is customarily known to be, and also their occurring in a locality where *devastatrix* is not known, the idea just floats in my mind whether they may be ♂ (males) or, alternatively, larval *Heterodera schachtii* ('Beet-root' eel-worm)" (236). Maleness for Ormerod is easily confused with—and perceived as—transformation: "larval" developmental immaturity. She considers that maleness may just as well be an unsexed embodiment of change.

Not only is it difficult to distinguish between males and larvae, but it is often impossible to determine male from female insects. In a letter in February 1897 to her fellow entomologist O. E. Janson, Ormerod outlines the physiology of insect bodies, but what evades her is their sex. Ormerod explains that, "on examining" the body of a forest deer fly, "I found on each side, at the hinder edge of the thorax, a little membranous kind of structure with a scalloped edge, and on very carefully raising it I found it was fixed to the thorax by a joint, and was, I think, quite certainly an abortive wing. I saw veins traversing the structure longitudinally, and though the scalloped and notched extremity was irregular in shape, it did not at all have the appearance . . . of being torn" (260). Ormerod parses out the body of the forest deer fly into an astonishing array of components: sides, membranes, scalloped edges, thoraxes, joints, veins, and hints of a wing. What is surprising is the extent to which Ormerod's intimacy with bug bodies—handling, observing, and reporting them—leads not to certainty about their sex, but to the questioning of it: "What I am very much wishing you would help me about," she continues to Janson, "is whether these are females. They have the distinguishing dark brown colour (not the faint yellow colour of the male), and I should say they had the shape of the female, but I am not anatomist enough to be certain" (260). Given the countless parts and nuances of bodies, the certainty of sexual difference, Ormerod discovers, is not certain at all.

Although we do not have access to Janson's response, we know that he responded to Ormerod. She writes in a letter to him a few days later, "I am greatly obliged to you for helping me in this matter of the *L. cervi* [forest deer fly]" (260). Whatever his response



736 was (whether the specimen was male or female), it generates rather than resolves questions about sexed bodies. Ormerod had since made a new observation about the forest deer fly's sexual anatomy: there were two varieties of males. Some males in "pairing" or mating seemed to take the "shape of the female." "My belief," Ormerod asserts, "is that our only hope towards clearing up the matter is our own observation" to see if "these creatures are really females" (260). The simple dichotomy between male and female has become a complex series of differences: not only are there potentially two varieties of males, but some of these varieties seem indistinguishable from females. Rather than a secure concept, maleness multiplies into various forms and interests Ormerod not for its fixity but for its changes. The study of sexed bodies begins to generate questions of variation that undo fixed ideas of maleness.

Months later, in May 1897, the question of the bug's sex appears to have been answered. Yet as soon as the bug's sex is determined, its physiology inspires new questions. Ormerod learns from Professor Mik that "my *L. cervi*" are "well-developed females." Mik "says that he has himself ♀ of *L. cervi*, with abortive wings" (261). As soon as Ormerod discovers one kind of certainty with sexual physiology, she queries another kind of physiology: wings. "I should like ♂ or ♀ and forceps of both, and I have material for this, but I should very much like a wing. I tried to unfold one or two and wasted my materials. . . . [I]f I could have the wing set I should very much like to have a good figure of it" (261). As soon as sexual difference is confirmed, she moves to an anatomical similarity: wings. The winged similarity between male and female bodies set them apart from other winged specimen. What had preoccupied Ormerod—a question of sexual difference—flowers into a new preoccupation: the differences between species (deer forest fly and earwigs) become as interesting as the difference between sexes. For Ormerod, studying bodies so meticulously brings differences to light which are not reducible to sexual difference. Sexed bodies are only one of endless anatomical differences among bugs, differences that are never "sure" but open to question.

Discovering that the deer fly specimens were female does not render inconsequential her uncertainty about maleness. Ormerod's queries dramatize the ongoing question that maleness can be. While she learns that her specimen was female, she offers no conclusion for what a male specimen looks like. Male anatomy remains an open question. Ultimately, her interest in maleness becomes a focus on wings. The sequence of moving from maleness to wings suggests maleness in motion rather than stasis. At bottom, Ormerod finds in her intimacy with insects uncertain physiologies and perplexing sexual practices, all connected with the intricacies and mysteries of motility. She interrogates the stabilities of male physiology and sexual behavior and keeps anatomical difference an ongoing question: there are other species she encounters whose sex perplexes her. As an entomologist, she authorizes the rethinking of anatomies and sexualities based on the method of an ongoing, firsthand observation of winged creatures. Although the sex of bodies is uncertain, its wings—its anatomical capacity for motion—remain certain.



**Victorian Entomology's Queerness**

From reading works by entomologists such as Ormerod, Woolf learned about the erotic and “courtship” behaviors of insects (Alt, *Study of Nature*, 57). While Woolf’s knowledge about entomology was typical of Britons across the turn of the century, what was unusual were the ways she applied entomological discourse to aestheticize queer sexuality in men. Critics, including Alt and Michael O’Driscoll, tend to characterize Victorian entomology as moralistic, but Ormerod’s work exemplifies the ways this science rethinks absolutes about gender and sex.<sup>30</sup> In particular, strands of entomology begin to feature the butterfly as an exception to—or a queering of—the gender-dyad model of sexuality. Darwin, for instance, in *The Origin of Species*, turns to the figure of the butterfly to illustrate the excessive, bravura operations of sexual selection. Woolf’s art, Beer reminds us, ceaselessly “echoes” and “references” Darwin’s work, “responding with great subtlety to that major figure in [Woolf’s] own upbringing, her own ‘development’” (*Common Ground*, 16, 7). Woolf would have read in Darwin’s work that butterflies are one of the rare species in which color, rather than just sexual difference, acts as sexual agent to diversify beauty in both male and female bodies. Butterflies are different from most species because “the female,” Darwin writes, “is as beautifully coloured as the male” (*Origin of Species*, 212).<sup>31</sup> For most species in which color has been sexually selected over other erotic lures such as voice, height, and shape, only the male is so ornamented (for example, peacocks and ducks). Butterflies sexualize their world not only with two sexes, but with what Darwin calls “a host of magnificent colour[s]” (212). Because butterflies can be purple, blue, yellow, orange, black, white, red, green, and often a combination of these colors and more, they manifest a world of sexual differences based upon multiplicities of color rather than binary sexes. This explosion of magnificent colors “has been effected” by sexual selection, Darwin explains, not merely to facilitate procreation, but to foster erotics as a heightened, aesthetic experience, “for beauty’s sake” (212). Butterflies show that the differences between colors might be just as erotically enticing as the differences between sexes. Woolf thus inherits from biology a discourse about butterflies that explains the sexual through bodily variation not confined to a simple dichotomy of sexual difference.

Science’s eroticization of butterflies’ colors had an analogue in a Victorian male fashion statement. A new Victorian male subjectivity, the butterfly dandy, drew on the erotically colorful appeal of the butterfly and emerged as an alternative, more ostentatious expression of masculinity than the stoic, Spartan dandyism of the Romantic and Regency periods.<sup>32</sup> The butterfly dandy described those Victorian bourgeois men who adopted a French clothing style that pushed Regency dandyism to a flashier level characterized by a flamboyant style. A butterfly dandy exploited artificiality and ornamentation and conspicuously decorated himself with outlandish rings and jewelry, ruffled silks and ties, vivid stripes and patterns, and bright and contrasting colors. Such self-fashioning asserted one’s sexual experimentation as much as it expressed a new version of upper-class masculinity, for it marked a man as free from the weighty concerns of matrimony and fatherhood. Some commentators castigated the butterfly dandy as signifying ir-

738 responsibility, hedonism, and “puerile vanity”—expressions becoming associated with the emerging identity of the homosexual.<sup>33</sup> But these aspersions were often considered praise, for some communities celebrated the butterfly dandy as a vanguard of expression who loosened constraints of typical masculinity. Before he became prime minister in 1868, Benjamin Disraeli was one of the most famous Victorians to adopt this style. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the term “decadent” overtook “butterfly dandy” to describe this masculine expression, and Oscar Wilde’s public persona is the most famous dramatization of this shift. Woolf’s use of the butterfly to refashion male embodiment draws on what we might call the Wildean queerness that was associated with butterfly dandies across the turn of the century. What gets lost in the critically well-traversed fields of art, fashion, performance, and capitalist consumption that guide queer literary readings of the butterfly, however, is the entomological vocabulary from which Woolf drew to queer male bodies.

Woolf expressed her fascination for butterfly dandies’ experiments with masculinity in her essay “Beau Brummell” (1925). This essay dramatizes the life of the titular character, who was one of the nineteenth-century’s most notoriously fashion-forward men, but who opposed the butterfly dandy style. Brummell adorned himself in silks and ruffles, “brought the art of tying neck-ties to perfection,” Woolf writes, but abandoned bright colors for the “quiet harmony” of blacks, grays, and whites.<sup>34</sup> He even penned a poem called “The Butterfly’s Funeral,” suggesting his wish to see flamboyant and colorful expression disappear and more staid, neutral expression take its place (“Four Figures,” 153). Woolf associates his aversion to butterfly-dandy expression not with a release into new masculine expression, but into an imprisoning stasis: “Handsome, heartless, and cynical,” Brummell is “invulnerable.” His body doesn’t move. The horrors and promises of the “French Revolution,” for instance, “had passed over his head without disordering a single hair” (151). Woolf portrays Brummell as a tragic figure whose expressions of immobile maleness are “highly artificial” and “act as a preservative” instead of a re-inventor of maleness (152). Woolf’s portrayals of Forster and Carmichael through the language of change and motion are expressions of her writing against the Brummell model of maleness.

Woolf tends to associate the men whom she admired in her Victorian youth both with butterflies and with erotic openness. Jack Hills, Woolf’s brother-in-law, introduced her, as a teenager, to a language of sexual openness that she links to his familiarity with butterflies. Jack was the first who spoke “cleanly, humourously, openly, about sex. . . . He opened my eyes on purpose, as I think, to the part played by sex in the life of the ordinary man. He shocked me a little, wholesomely.” Woolf links Jack’s appealing openness about sex to an aspect of “country life” that he brought to the Stephen family’s “distinguished literary, book-loving world,” particularly by means of a gift he gave the Stephen children: “he gave us a copy of Morris’s *Butterflies and Moths*, over which I spent many hours, hunting up our catches among all those pictures of hearts and darts and setaceous Hebrew characters” (104). The book to which Woolf refers is actually F. O. Morris’s two books, *A History of British Butterflies* (1853) and *A History of British Moths* (1859–70). Arguably the Victorian period’s most popular natural historian of

entomology, Morris wrote books on butterfly and moth taxonomy and collection that went through numerous editions from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, producing and responding to the obsession with butterfly capturing, collecting, studying, and enjoying during this time. While Morris offers advice on the tools necessary to capture and preserve specimens, he also narrates the delights of sitting back and watching the antics of these specimens with no compulsion to capture them.

Woolf, having “spent many hours” with Morris’s volumes, may have noticed how queerly Morris describes the practice—and his own body. Practicing entomology allows Morris to escape masculinism and to experience his body changing. Morris asserts his allegiance to manliness as a “minister” who “shall never forget” his oath of “duty” both to God and to his congregation, condoning butterfly-study as unmanly.<sup>35</sup> Yet its unmanliness is where Morris locates butterfly-study’s pleasure. For Morris, entomology’s value lies outside masculinist productivity in its status as “so singularly pleasing and delightful in itself” (*British Butterflies*, iv). His butterfly searches allow him to indulge in “a few brief moments,” alone, free from manliness “that I snatch for that which is naturally most pleasing to me” (iv). Butterfly study is an escape from manly duty, an asocial pleasure intended for personal enjoyment. Morris’s description of butterfly study as a solitary experience aligns him with the figures of Woolf’s singular, unmanly, butterfly-like men, Forster and Carmichael.

Morris experiences those solitary delights as changes to his body, opening him to a new eroticism. Once Morris is alone observing butterflies, he notices titillations in his body. He is “glad to lie down on some grassy bank,” for how “pleasant it is to watch” the “pretty and interesting” Silver-studded blue butterfly “as it wanders about.” The blue butterfly’s wandering launches a new experience of his body moving. (We recall Woolf’s observation that Forster moves like a blue butterfly as well.) The act of shifting positions—lying down near a stream—renders Morris’s body formally closer to nature’s sensual flows: “rippling of the tide” and the “murmur of the tinkling rill” (140). Morris feels this motion as “inexpressible enjoyment,” luxuriating in his body’s movement apace with nature’s erotic fluidity. Gazing at the butterfly’s wandering, Morris experiences his body as flow: his capacity to “watch” the butterfly changes to “listening” to the “rippling tide” and “tinkling rill,” then drifts to “gazing” at other “flowers” or “insects,” before moving on to “recalling . . . other times and other scenes” (141). Like a butterfly flitting from spot to spot, Morris flits from body part to body part; no single part is lingered on for long. Through the figure of the butterfly, Morris experiences an open-ended body released from masculinism and receptive to new sensations.

Morris’s body in motion helps us better understand Woolf’s description of her butterfly-loving brother, Thoby, who was a model for her fictional butterfly-enthusiast Jacob in *Jacob’s Room*. The first time Woolf mentions Thoby in her memoir, she describes a triangulated relationship between Morris’s book on butterflies, Thoby, and herself. Morris’s volume provided a way for brother and sister to spend time together, if sometimes stormily. Turning to Morris’s book as a reference, “I had the post of name finder in our Entomological Society,” Woolf writes, “and was scolded severely by Thoby, I remember, for slackness.”<sup>36</sup> She associates Thoby with the physical delights of the

740 outdoors, wandering the countryside like Morris and his butterflies: “always around him, like the dew that collects in beads on a rough coat, there hangs the country; butterflies; birds; muddy roads; muddy boots; horses” (“A Sketch,” 136).

Like Morris, Thoby may have wandered to escape gender identity.<sup>37</sup> Woolf wonders, “As for sex, [Thoby] passed from childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to manhood under our eyes, in our presence, without saying a single word that could have been taken for a sign of what he was feeling. . . . Yet beneath that silence—it may be kept cool and sweet, it may be given a depth and seriousness, an emotional power and quality that speech destroys—dwelt as I felt a great susceptibility; great sensibility” (“A Sketch,” 139). Thoby’s experience of maleness—“from boyhood to manhood”—is not a given, but a mystery. Woolf singularizes Thoby’s “manhood” and his relationship to “sex”: she removes him from “our” collective understanding. The ways in which he developed—or “passed” through—experiences of “sex” are an unknowable “silence” to his community. She understands this silence as his capacity to be receptive to experiences, what she calls a “susceptibility.” Thoby’s developing sexuality and manhood are compelling to Woolf to the extent that they are not shared and conclusive, but singular, conjectural, and susceptible to change. The seriousness with which Thoby undertook his butterfly studies makes it possible for Woolf to perceive maleness as openness to change into a mysterious form. In her readings of Morris’s study of butterflies and her observations of Thoby’s entomological pursuits, Woolf echoes Ormerod in her perception of males as singular, rare figures who evade understood form. Thoby’s maturation, like Morris’s body, is better characterized by graduated susceptibility than by the achievement of a conclusive manhood.

### Queer Entomology in *Jacob’s Room*

Woolf gives us glimpses of Forster, Carmichael, and Thoby as butterfly-bodies in motion. *Jacob’s Room* is Woolf’s only novel devoted entirely to observing a male body that moves in and out of masculinist capture. We’ve already seen Woolf narrate Jacob as a moth man captured at King’s College Chapel. But Woolf cannot allow a rare life to continue such destructive patterns. Like Darwin’s endangered moths that adopt butterfly expression and thus evade danger, Jacob finds refuge from danger in a literary sea of butterflies: red admirals, white admirals, tortoiseshells, commas, peacock butterflies, purple emperors, and painted ladies. But *Jacob’s Room* stands out from Woolf’s other narrations of men for another reason: this novel’s butterflies announce not only a reorganization of the singular male body, as with Forster, Carmichael, Thoby, and Morris, but also launch queer intimacies *between* bodies. A rare, freewheeling body sends another rare body aflutter.

The profligate number of seemingly inconsequential butterflies in *Jacob’s Room* amplifies Woolf’s fascination with bodies that flit in and out of surveillance. A vast range of butterflies—clouded yellows, fritillaries, blues, painted ladies—and their superabundant range of movements (pelting, zigzagging, flaunting, settling, circling) are linked to Jacob’s roaming mobility away from the domestic sphere that binds him

to sexed identity. Through butterfly-seeking, Jacob sheds his role of dutiful young man and becomes a body in motion, as “off again” and “helter-skelter” as the butterflies he observes while wandering the forest for hours:

The pale clouded yellows had pelted over the moor; they had zigzagged across the purple clover. The fritillaries flaunted along the hedgerows. The blues settled on little bones lying on the turf with the sun beating on them, and the painted ladies and the peacocks feasted upon bloody entrails dropped by a hawk. Miles away from home, in a hollow among teasles beneath a ruin, he [Jacob] had found the commas. He had seen a white admiral circling higher and higher round an oak tree, but he had never caught it. An old cottage woman living alone, high up, had told him of a purple butterfly which came every summer to her garden. The fox cubs played in the gorse in the early morning, she told him. And if you looked out at dawn you could always see two badgers. Sometimes they knocked each other over like two boys fighting, she said. (20–22)

Butterflies do more than herald limitless activity; they also signal visual diversity. They are yellow, blue, painted, white, and purple. They know no single location, but spread wildly over the moor, across the clover, and along the hedgerows; they spread out for miles, but also condense closely beneath a ruin. They signify substance that can take on diverse forms, names, movements, and characters.

Although butterfly collecting linked one to a cultural craze, its enthusiasts often enjoyed it, like Morris and Jacob, as a richly solitary endeavor. The anomalous cottage woman, “living alone,” and Jacob appear just as unique as the varieties of butterflies. In fact, the cottage woman’s singularity, while tethered to sex, appears free from a prescribed sexuality (she is neither a wife nor mother), spending her time cohabiting with those whom we might call queer kin of butterflies and badgers.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, we learn that butterfly-seeking offers Jacob a chance for singularity, released from sexed narratives thrust upon him by his community. Jacob seeks “pale clouded yellows in the clover field, eight miles from home,” alone, away from Mrs. Flanders and Captain Barfoot, who consider Jacob’s interest in butterflies immature (*Jacob’s Room*, 20). Butterfly study, in fact, thwarts Jacob’s development into manhood. While talking to her suitor, Captain Barfoot, Mrs. Flanders chastises Jacob for his immature pastime: “‘Jacob is after his butterflies as usual,’ said Mrs Flanders irritably” (27). What he should be doing, both Mrs. Flanders and Captain Barfoot agree, is to develop into a man like his brother Archer, who, they learn in “a very nice report from Captain Maxwell,” “is doing very well” at university (27). While the heterosexualized pair praises Archer for pursuing manly accolades of the kind Woolf critiques in the moth man scene at King’s College Chapel, they dismiss Jacob as immature in his solitary wanderings attentive to butterflies and queer kin. When Jacob arrives back home from his entomological pursuits, he loses his mobility and becomes a captured moth man similar to those at the chapel. He cannot move: “There he stood, pale, come out of the depths of darkness, in the hot room, blinking at the light” (21). The domestic sphere becomes a “lamp” like the chapel, immobilizing young men once they enter. The figure of the butterfly allows Jacob’s body—like Forster’s, Carmichael’s, Thoby’s, and

742 Morris's—to disappear from the surveillance of heteropatriarchal expectations. Jacob reappears on the hill far away from home as an individual released from sexed expectations; he cavorts with others whose identities are not lassoed to established narratives.

Woolf may have applied Ormerod's observation that male anatomy can be synonymous with developmental incompleteness to her description of Jacob. Jacob never grows out of his relationship with butterflies, nor does his body ever achieve a stable manhood. The queer promise of unstable bodies figured by the butterfly accompanies Jacob to Cambridge. In what we might call the habitat of Cambridge, the literary entomologist, like Ormerod, employs a detail-oriented, firsthand observational strategy to learn about her specimens and make discoveries. These methods lead to the discovery that her subjects, in their shifty behaviors and changing forms, are not completely knowable. Observation only incompletely accesses Jacob's singularity. The innumerable range of his features available to observe are too vast to document completely, much like in Ormerod's texts, where observations about specimens' bodies generate new questions: "The observer is choked with observations," the narrator of *Jacob's Room* explains; "Only to prevent us from being submerged by chaos, nature and society between them have arranged a system of classification which is simplicity itself. . . . But the difficulty remains—one has to choose" (75). Given the avalanche of observable actions, the narrator knows that observation is limited by human optics and critical frames. Even so, if one wants to make discoveries about a specimen, one must begin somewhere, even if that study will never—can never—be complete, as the researcher reports some details and overlooks others. Woolf's narrative methodology for describing males aestheticizes Ormerod's: both writers' acceptance of bodily incompleteness offers new ways to approach male bodies as shifting movements rather than as static forms. This methodology also recognizes its own arbitrariness, for its knowledge hinges on the observer's choice either to report details or to let details go unreported ("one has to choose"). Following Ormerod—who determines the only way to clear up the matter about what constitutes maleness is "our own observation"—the literary entomologist enjoys the prerogative—what might be called the observational prerogative—to choose the ways in which to see in Jacob not a stable subject, but a singular body in motion.

The narrator, like Ormerod, announces her expertise on maleness by posing questions about male bodies she observes instead of by asserting conclusions about them. Looking into the window of Jacob's room at Cambridge, the narrator studies him as a series of changing actions rather than as a constant identity: "So Jacob thought and spoke—so he crossed his legs—filled his pipe—sipped his whisky, and once looked at his pocket-book, rumpling his hair as he did so" (79). Through the observational prerogative, the narrator asserts her interest in Jacob's ever-changing movements in his habitat—his crossing of legs, filling of a pipe, sipping of whiskey. She is less interested in capturing Jacob than in watching his capacity for behavioral change, and how his movements emerge unexpectedly in his susceptibility to other forces in his environment. "Part of this" movement "is not Jacob but Richard Bonamy [Jacob's friend and secret admirer]—the room; the market carts; the hour; the very moment of history" (79). The observational prerogative to report Jacob as enveloped in multiplicity—Bonamy, the



carts, the hour, each of which are objects that themselves move—aestheticizes Jacob as a specimen characterized by mobility. It is not only that Jacob, as a specimen whose meanings can only ever be “guess work,” evades the narrator’s capacity to know; it is that Jacob’s unknowability is itself a discovery (80). While the narrator records the details she observes about “his face,” she immediately acknowledges that “whether we know what was in his mind is another question,” recalling the mobile but unpsychologized butterfly-men Forster, Carmichael, and Thoby (104). Remaining on the surface of action enables the literary entomologist to understand Jacob as a specimen whose character is a question rather than known.

Combining Ormerod’s questioning of male anatomy, Darwin’s demotion of sex in butterfly erotics, and Morris’s singular titillations, Woolf narrates open-ended male bodies free to delight in a moment of erotic intimacy with each another. Adopting the observational prerogative, the literary entomologist observes Jacob and his classmate Timothy Durrant, whose bodies are more fluid than sexed, at a garden party. This fluidity loosens their bodies from male identities that would enlist them into the violence characterizing every heterosexual relationship in the novel.<sup>39</sup> In a moment of intimacy, Jacob and Durrant escape the courting rituals at “Lady Miller’s picnic party” and lounge together in a boat so that the “meadow was on a level with Jacob’s eyes as he lay back,” much as Morris lies on the grassy hill near the “tinkling rill,” away from the other party attendees, enjoying each other’s company silently (*Jacob’s Room*, 38, 37). Similar to the rare white butterfly that announces Jacob’s release from dutiful manhood in the company of the queer “woman living alone,” “two white butterflies,” this time, “circl[ing] higher and higher round the elm tree” appear when Jacob lies with Durrant: two butterflies for two male figures (37). The two young men adopt the fluidity of the butterfly bodies, which momentarily frees them from the encroaching dangers of heteronormativity. Sexed identity becomes less important than their bodies’ fluidity, and the two classmates enter into an open-ended intimacy.

Although the tree imagery suggests that the erotic between Jacob and Durrant might be phallicized, the imagery of the white butterflies alongside the tree poses an alternative explanatory principle for sexuality adhering in motion. Durrant looks over at Jacob and thinks, “Jacob’s off,” indicating his interest in Jacob not for his sex but for his particularity (“Jacob’s”) and his release (“off”) from categorical constraint (37). The narrator reports seeing phallic erotics withdraw and fluid erotics occupy the foreground. Jacob and Durrant become ensconced by the

spires soft in the blue, voices blowing and seeming suspended in the air, the springy air of May, the elastic air with its particles—chestnut bloom, pollen, whatever it is that gives the May air its potency, blurring the trees, gumming the buds, daubing the green. And the river too runs past, not at flood, nor swiftly, but cloying the oar that dips in it and drops white drops from the blade, swimming green and deep over the bowed rushes, as if lavishly caressing them. (36–37)

The narrator perceives a queer intimacy developing between the classmates, among butterflies moving apace with the motion evoked by the aquatic, erotic vocabulary of



744 “river,” “dips,” “white drops,” and “swimming,” suggestive of semen. Semen fascinates the narrator not for its virility, but for its fluidity. Seminal “pollen” launches processes of movement, “blurring” the phallicized “trees” into disappearance, rendering the male body intriguing for its capacities to move. Indeed, Jacob’s and Durrant’s bodies are literally in motion, drifting in a boat on the water’s current. Seminal “pollen” and ejaculate-like “white drops” that drip from the phallic-like “oar” and stir the air with “potency” draw attention to the male body not for its sex but for its bodily flows. The “white drops” drip from the phallic “blade” of the oar that does not violently slice, penetrate, or invade, but moves softly and irregularly, “swimming” over and “caressing” surfaces. “Pollen” is detached from maleness and attached to forms changing, flowers “blooming” or the body opening. Even the phallic grass moves: it changes forms, “stood, juicy and thick,” as if aroused not by sexed but by moving and opening bodies (37). The release from sex into motion enables a shift in Jacob’s and Durrant’s perceptions of the world around them. What should be pointy, phallic spires in the distance move as “softly” as the “voices blowing” and the “springy air” (36). Through the observational prerogative, the literary entomologist prefers to organize the erotics she sees into encounters between bodies moving, blurring, perceiving, drifting, gumming, and daubing. The literary entomologist, building on Ormerod and Morris, reports male bodies as fluid and receptive to new erotics together. This erotic moment lasts only as long as the short-lived presence of butterflies and might therefore seem incidental, fleeting as it is. But this moment’s unique nature is the point. For Woolf, butterflies don’t linger anywhere for long. Their seeming inconsequentiality is where Woolf locates their promise as figures for fitting embodiments and unlikely desires that escape the weighty constraints of identity.<sup>40</sup>

As soon as the butterflies disappear, so too does this open sexuality. The literary entomologist observes the butterflies depart and the heteronormative world encroach, accompanied by violence. Sexed bodies, marked as heterosexual pairings in “white dresses and the white flannel trousers,” appear as “a flaw in the column of air between two trees,” replacing the butterflies (*Jacob’s Room*, 38, 37–38). The two phallic trees without the butterflies announce the return of a deeply rooted sexed ideology thrust upon Jacob and Durrant by the heteronormative world and experienced as a “flaw” in the fluidity they enjoyed. “‘Oh-h-h-h,’ groaned Jacob,” painfully, “as the boat rocked, and the trees rocked, and the white dresses and the white flannel trousers drew out long and wavering up the bank. ‘Oh-h-h-h!’ He sat up, and felt as if a piece of elastic had snapped in his face” (38). Open-ended intimacy between Jacob and Durrant is “snapped” shut as the butterflies depart, and sexed categories harden like “rock[s]” around them.

### **Conclusion: Bodies that Unsettle**

For most Woolf scholars, when men practice entomology, masculinity is not far behind. Critics including Phillips connect Jacob’s entry into and catastrophic death in World War I to his entomological pursuits, concluding that the “vocabulary of the

butterfly hunt . . . announces World War I.”<sup>41</sup> Woolf seems to depict Jacob as complicit with his destruction to the extent that since childhood he has participated in the annihilation of bodies (in the form of butterfly and moth hunting), slowly preparing him for war and his own destruction. Certainly, we might read Jacob as a complicit victim of masculinism. But a reading that emphasizes Jacob’s surrender to masculinism obscures the ways Woolf employs butterflies to narrate Jacob’s releases from it.

The disappearance of male bodies, Woolf’s narrator shows us at novel’s end, can be unsettling in at least two ways: distressing, but also freeing. It’s tempting to read the novel’s devastating ending as a condemnation of Jacob for his complicity in conquest. But we might read Jacob’s death, instead, like Woolf’s narration of Thoby, as an escape from heteronormative manhood, an escape he seeks throughout his life and sometimes finds. Sarah Cole observes that the “novel is relentless in insisting on the determinism of this whole twisted narrative of the young life headed for slaughter” (*At the Violet Hour*, 237). But I read Woolf as narrating Jacob’s life as less deterministic through her decision to grant Jacob moments of sweet escape. At novel’s end, the unanswered letters from former lovers and their affiliates, such as Sandra, Mrs. Durrant, and Lady Rocksber, emphasize Jacob’s hesitancy to write himself into a whole narrative of any kind, and in particular of heteronormativity, thus aligning him with the open-ended eroticism with which Woolf characterizes Thoby. We recall that Woolf’s butterfly-loving brother’s “silence” surrounding his sexual development enables her to imagine a receptive embodiment and unknown sexuality for him. As a specimen like Forster who flits away from the domestic sphere and its heteropatriarchy, Jacob’s frequent releases from heteropatriarchal surveillance signify his escape from the horrifying achievement of manhood and from the walking dead (like the adults who accept places in heteropatriarchy, such as Mrs. Flanders and her husband, Captain Barfoot and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Plumer). Jacob experiences the pull toward the heterosexual as inevitable pain, indicated by the “elastic snap” and his lament of “O-h-h-h” on his boat a couple of years before. On the other hand, a moment of joy appears with his open-ended intimacy with Durrant, watching the butterfly ascend “higher and higher” until it disappears from view. Jacob’s death is not merely a horrific effect of masculinism, but his deliverance from it.

But this deliverance comes at unbearable costs. At novel’s end, Jacob’s mother and Bonamy, Jacob’s secret admirer, grieve in Jacob’s abandoned room while sorting his belongings. The arbiters of the post-Jacob world—Mrs. Flanders and Bonamy—are those who love him the most, and for whom the stakes are greatest to reassemble what they can of him—letters, shoes, books, clothes—pieces that figure Jacob as a puzzle rather than a conclusive whole. Through this final scene of rearrangement, Woolf urges us to consider, along with those who love Jacob the most: how might we reimagine the materiality of beloveds who happen to be male to free them from pressures of masculinism that impel them to go to extreme lengths to escape its devastating holds?

The question of how to save from destruction beloveds who happen to be men is one of the most pressing that Woolf’s feminism asks—and answers. To continue seeing male bodies as conclusively sexed is to participate in heteropatriarchal perception

746 that destroys men's lives and those who love them. In rearranging male bodies from knowable figures into mobile mysteries, Woolf's art shakes the sexed foundation of heteropatriarchy that needs to secure maleness for its survival. Her art unsettles maleness to save the lives of whom some might see as men, but whom she insists on perceiving as rare, delicate, and moving figures who are beloved by someone and therefore must be protected from harm.

The butterfly is a figure so versatile, Woolf finds, that it offers myriad ways for both men and women—"all—all"—to destabilize heteropatriarchy. For women entomologists like Ormerod, questioning the certainties of sexual difference in winged creatures allows her to shift the terms of scientific expertise from mastery to conjecture, from which questions spring about anatomical absolutes. For women artists like Woolf, careful observation of butterflies spurs awareness of the mobility manifest in embodiment and inspires a solution to deliver men from harm. For men, whether fictional like Jacob or living-and-breathing like Morris, the butterfly allows an escape from a masculinism that would estrange them from the queer singularity of their bodies and delights. It makes sense that Woolf, an artist moved by the queer potential of bodies in motion, would populate her work with butterflies, whose character it is to refuse to settle. Therein lie for Woolf their power and beauty.

## Notes

1. Virginia Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury," in *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1985), 179–202, 198. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Judith Brown, Rae Greiner, and Christopher Irmscher, mentors who tirelessly read multiple drafts of this article and offered invaluable feedback. My thanks as well to *Modernism/modernity's* community of editors and anonymous reviewers.

2. My use of the terms "gender" and "sex" follow Woolf scholar Laura Marcus's suggestion that, for Woolf, gender and sex seem not to specify different bodily planes, whereby gender names bodily expressions shaped by history and culture, and sex identifies a biologically determined anatomy. On the contrary, Marcus points out, Woolf often narrates the ways sex seems to be "a matter of fantasy and projection . . . of an illusory whole"; thus, sex can be understood within the same constructivist ideologies that are said to produce gender ("Woolf's Feminism and Feminism's Woolf," in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Sellers [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 142–79, 147). In *Three Guineas* (1938), for example, Woolf suggests that sex—the category of maleness and femaleness—is too infused with social constitution to be considered only a biological category free from ideologies, what she calls "memory and tradition." Woolf writes that women "possess in [our] own right and not through marriage practically none of the capital, none of the land, none of the valuables, and none of the patronage in England" that men do. "That such" sociopolitical "differences make for very considerable differences in mind and body, no psychologist or biologist would deny" (Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, ed. Mark Hussey [Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 2006], 22). For Woolf, physical differences between male and female bodies are not simply hormonal or anatomical givens, but are produced by sociopolitical structures. Woolf infuses this idea into her literary art as well. In *Jacob's Room* (1922), Woolf considers that categories of "men" and "women" are "shadows" which obscure "the most real, the most solid" of human experiences. Categories of sex do not exist outside gendered ideologies, but instead are constituted by them. These categories block us, Woolf considers, from perceiving a more "profound, impartial, and absolutely just opinion of our fellow-creatures," that is, of human beings as they may be outside of interlocked frames of gender and sex (Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* [New York: Signet Classics, 1998], 78). About two-thirds of a

century later, feminist philosopher Judith Butler collapsed distinctions between sex and gender for the discipline of gender studies by arguing that “this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all” (*Gender Trouble* [New York: Routledge Classics, 2006], 9–10). Consequently, Woolf’s project of undoing maleness (what some people might understand as “sex”) as a full identity for bodies coded “male” releases, at the same time, those bodies from debilitating storylines of masculinity (or what some people might understand as “gender”).

3. I use the verb “aestheticize” and its various noun forms including “aestheticization” not in the pejorative sense, which is one of its common connotations at present, but to describe the ways Woolf renders as beautiful life-scientific vocabularies and methods by incorporating them into her literary art.

4. Virginia Woolf, *Kew Gardens* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), 3.

5. Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 19.

6. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1909), 465.

7. Darwin’s use of the butterfly to explain survival was prime evidence for his theory of evolution. A couple years later in 1863, entomologist Henry Walter Bates pronounced that Darwinian analogical resemblances were so crucial in explaining natural selection that “the study of butterflies . . . will some day be valued as one of the most important branches of Biological science” (quoted in J. F. M. Clark, *Bugs and the Victorians* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009], 117). While the study of butterflies did indeed evolve in biological importance through the nineteenth-century’s growing specialization of lepidopterology, the butterfly also took on importance in Woolf’s modernist literary labor to destabilize maleness.

8. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, ed. Mark Hussey and Susan Gubar (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005), 38.

9. For excellent overviews of feminist studies of Woolf’s work that span the early twentieth century to today, see Laura Marcus’s “Woolf’s Feminism and Feminism’s Woolf,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, 142–79 and Lisa L. Coleman’s “Woolf and Feminist Theory: Woolf’s Feminism Comes in Waves,” in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 79–91. Woolf’s project of revising maleness for feminist goals of protecting bodies vulnerable to the harm of heteropatriarchy—including bodies coded as male—is still to be considered in these and other studies.

10. Jessica Feldman, *Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 16.

11. See the “Military Service Act of 1916”: “Every man” between the ages of eighteen and forty-one who is not married “will be deemed to have enlisted for the period of the War” (April 15, 1914, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC).

12. Woolf’s adoption of entomological vocabularies and figures to narrate male bodies in motion is one strand of her general fascination with motion as a way to destabilize gender and sexuality. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf watches a man and woman enter a taxi, which then “glided off as if it were swept on by the current elsewhere,” prompting her to reconsider sexual difference: “to think . . . of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort” (95). In “Street Haunting” (1930), an evening walk spurs an experience of the body as physiologically strange and open-ended: “We are no longer quite ourselves. As we step out of the house . . . The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves . . . is broken, and there is left . . . a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye” (“Street Haunting: A London Adventure,” in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays by Virginia Woolf* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942], 20–36, 20, 21–22). And in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), sailing to the lighthouse with her father allows Cam Ramsay to shift her perception of Mr. Ramsay from a patriarchal tyrant to an open question: “What could he see? Cam wondered. . . . What was he thinking now? she wondered. What was it he sought, so fixedly, so intently, so silently?” (Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* [Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1985], 207).

13. Harvena Richter, for instance, coins the term “butterfly or day people” in her study of Woolf’s moths, reading butterflies as figures for human form (“Hunting the Moth: Virginia Woolf and the Creative Imagination,” in *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity, A Collection of Essays*, ed.

748 Ralph Freedman [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980], 13–28, 18). But she skims over the idea to explore moths as a figure for women’s artistic creativity. Christine Froula also observes the importance of the moth figure through chrysalis imagery in Woolf’s narrations of the maturity of “her own creative imagination” as a woman artist (“Out of the Chrysalis: Female Initiation and Female Authority in Virginia Woolf’s *The Voyage Out*,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 5, no. 1 [1986]: 63–90, 87). And Christina Alt finds that Woolf condemns moth and butterfly hunting as part of a masculinist “taxonomic tradition of natural history” that sought to capture specimens, favoring instead “emergent scientific disciplines” such as the new biology and ecology “that focused on the observation of living organisms in action in their environment” (*Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 7–8). But I discover that observing insects in their natural environments was not a new scientific method but one that Victorian life scientists—including entomologists—regularly adopted to learn about the natural world. In her documentation of male bodies in motion, Woolf aestheticizes entomology’s wonder and careful observation of life in action.

14. See “Diversions of Darwin and Natural History,” in Bonnie Kime Scott’s *In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 42–70.

15. Spanning the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, entomology signaled myriad pursuits and encompassed diverse human relationships with insects—and human relationships with each other. Indeed, butterfly study was a diverse practice enjoyed by people spanning classes, genders, and ages for different reasons: for personal pleasure, to make friends or to spend time alone outdoors, to gain expertise and attain professional posts, to join societies and connect with other insect enthusiasts, to make money by selling specimens, to earn social prestige and status for claiming rare finds, to cultivate a relationship with nature in an increasingly urban and industrialized nation, or to delight in the aesthetic beauty of “the sublime diversity of form and colour of diminutive beetles and butterflies”—to name just a few (Clark, *Bugs and the Victorians*, 9).

16. Virginia Woolf, “Miss Ormerod,” in *The Common Reader*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (San Diego: Harcourt, 1953), 122–33, 123, 125.

17. Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1977), 2:178.

18. Suzanne Le-May Sheffield, *Revealing New Worlds: Three Victorian Women Naturalists* (London: Routledge, 2001), 153.

19. My project participates in green modernist literary studies, a critical approach to literary modernism that explores its relationships with concurrent innovations in the earth and life sciences. Woolf scholars have stood at the vanguard of green modernisms. See, for example, Beer’s *The Common Ground* (1996), Alt’s *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* (2010), and Scott’s *In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature* (2012). See also *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World: Selected Papers from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf* (Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2011), edited by Kristin Czarnecki and Carrie Rohman. Animal studies has been a vibrant subfield of green modernist literary studies since the poststructuralist resurgence in destabilizing lines among species. Woolf scholars have played a crucial role in thinking through modernist animals to open up new knowledge about feminist and queer modernisms. Jane Goldman, for instance, in *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, explores the ways Woolf takes up Darwin’s studies of industrious worms and fish as overlooked but primary evolutionary agents as metaphors for “the constituency of women . . . undermining the foundations of . . . patriarchy” (*The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 96). Derek Ryan’s *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory: Sex, Animal, Life* considers Woolf in league with Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, who all consider the animal “to re-evaluate how we think” about the shifting “relationship between culture and nature, human and nonhuman” (*Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory: Sex, Animal, Life* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013], 9). My argument, however, shows the ways Woolf recalls forgotten Victorian entomologists to destabilize male anatomy for her modernist contemporaries.

20. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 8.



21. Cynthia Daniels, *Exposing Men: The Science and Politics of Male Reproduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 159.

22. Elizabeth Grosz, "Interview with Elizabeth Grosz," by Robert Ausch, Randal Doane and Laura Perez, August 6, 2012, scribd.com/document/46893601/Interview-With-Elizabeth-Grosz.

23. Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

24. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 198.

25. Sarah Cole, *At the Violet Hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 240.

26. In entering scientific conversations about bodies and sexuality, Ormerod might be understood to participate in what Michel Foucault calls the nineteenth-century's "production of sexuality" (*The History of Sexuality* [New York: Vintage, 1990], 104). Ormerod's work, however, shows a strand in the production of sexuality that Foucault overlooks. In Foucault's study, women were subjects, not agents, of sexual discourse developed by men. Ormerod turns the tables of Foucault's claim by showing that women scientists of the nineteenth century were sometimes agents of discourse about male bodies and sexualities.

27. This instance of unsexed but sexual behavior is part of a pattern that critics tend to note about Woolf's narrations of women's sexualities, but not of men's. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1927), for instance, one of the most famous scenes is Clarissa's experience of orgasmic pleasure during intimate conversations with women, a pleasure not limited to genitals but that spans the body and thus destabilizes women's sexualities organized around sexual difference. Woolf writes that Clarissa "did undoubtedly then feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over—the moment" (Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* [Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1985], 32).

28. Virginia Woolf, "The Death of the Moth," in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*, 3–6, 4.

29. Eleanor Anne Ormerod, *Eleanor Anne Ormerod, LL.D. Economic Entomologist, Autobiography and Correspondence*, ed. Robert Wallace (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1904), 260.

30. See, for instance, Michael J. O'Driscoll's "Entoporn, Remy de Gourmont, and the Limits of Posthuman Sexuality," *Modernism/modernity* 20, no. 4, (2013): 627–43. O'Driscoll argues that Gourmont turns to insects to reimagine human sexuality free from "the moralizing and anthropomorphic tendencies of Victorian biological science" that "ideologically constrained" and "systematically essentialized" human erotic practices (628). Woolf, quite differently, draws inspiration from Victorian entomologists for understanding queerness. She finds in their writings a resource for rather than a block to imagining queer bodies and behaviors.

31. For a rethinking of Darwin as a Victorian theorist of queer sexuality through his account of color—especially human skin color—as an expression of erotic beauty, see Elizabeth Grosz's "Sexual Selection, Race, and Beauty" in her book *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 136–40.

32. For more on the history and variations of dandyism across the long eighteenth century to the twentieth, please see Ellen Moers's *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); Jessica Feldman's *Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); and James Eli Adams's *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

33. "The World of London," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, January 1843, 67–83, 67.

34. Virginia Woolf, "Four Figures. Part II: Beau Brummell," in *The Second Common Reader*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (Orlando: Harcourt, 1986), 148–56, 149, 150.

35. F. O. Morris, *A History of British Butterflies* (London: Groombridge, 1853), iv.

36. Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," in *Moments of Being*, 64–159, 104.

37. Kathryn Bond Stockton traces a pattern in Woolf of animals figuring escape from categories of gender and sexuality for adolescents. Stockton reads the dog in *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, as a vehicle for a teenager, Elizabeth Dalloway, to disrupt her maturation into normative femininity and lesbian desire. Elizabeth will not develop into her mother's—Clarissa's—"kind of lesbian," but into a future of open desires (*The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2009], 95). Stockton specifies the organizing principle for female queer bodies and sexualities through concepts of time in order to keep their sexual futures open-ended. Woolf's application of animals to narrate men's queer bodies and sexualities is different. Animals help Woolf aestheticize men's queer bodies and sexualities not through time but through physiological motion and change. Woolf does this for two reasons: to open men's futures to queer potentials (as in Stockton's argument about women), but more importantly to imagine a way to save their lives.

38. This description of the cottage woman recalls Woolf's narration of Ormerod, who removes herself from heterosexual imperatives by preferring the company of beetles over suitors: "When Eleanor Ormerod appeared at archery meetings and croquet tournaments," Woolf imaginatively observes, "young men pulled their whiskers. . . . It was so difficult to make friends with a girl who could talk of nothing but black beetles and earwigs—'Yes, that's what she likes, isn't it queer?'" ("Miss Ormerod," 125).

39. Immobilizing violence pervades heterosexual couplings. Jacob as a boy stumbles upon a corpse-like, "entirely rigid" heterosexual couple "stretched motionless" on the beach and runs away in terror (Woolf, *Jacob's Room*, 4). Also, Mrs. Flanders's relationships with her husband and Captain Barfoot are depicted through imprisonment. Seabrook, Mrs. Flanders's deceased husband, lies "six foot beneath" the earth, "dead these many years; enclosed in three shells; the crevices sealed with lead" (12). Her letters to Captain Barfoot are "tear stained," invoking permanent pain; her tears "make all the dahlias in her garden undulate in red waves and flashed the glass house in her eyes, and spangled the kitchen with bright knives" (2). Mrs. Flanders's suitor, Captain Barfoot, experiences reduced mobility, for he is "lame and wanted two fingers on the left hand, having served his country"; Captain Barfoot's wife is described as an "invalid" (22, 11). And violence saturates Jacob's first courting experience with Clara Durrant, who stands on a ladder over Jacob, "cutting through the stalk" and "snipping another vine leaf" of grapes, recalling the "knives" that Mrs. Flanders sees when she thinks about Seabrook and Captain Barfoot (66, 67).

40. For more on erotic intimacies between Jacob and his classmates, see Susan C. Harris, "The Ethics of Indecency: Censorship, Sexuality, and the Voice of the Academy in the Narration of *Jacob's Room*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 43, no. 4, (1997): 420–38; and Rachel Hollander, "Novel Ethics: Alterity and Form in *Jacob's Room*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 53, no. 1 (2007): 40–66.

41. Kathy J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf Against Empire* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 129.