



**Bonnie Kime Scott. *In the Hollow of the Wave: Virginia Woolf and Modernist Uses of Nature*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2012.**

In her treatment of Virginia Woolf's various uses of nature, Bonnie Kime Scott reassesses the existence and the prevalence of ecological concerns within modernist literature. Certainly, her goal of offering an ecocritical reading of modernism is in itself a rarity given the assumption that modernism is a literature of the urban environment alone. Yet Scott here advances an ecofeminist reading that establishes that, at least in Woolf's case, linkages between modernism and the natural environment are not as distant as we have come to believe.

Scott's first chapter, "Toward a Greening of Modernism," presents a general argument that modernist writers did indeed have important connections to the natural environment and so were not limited to the cityscape. This "inventory," as Scott terms it, surveys numerous modernist writers for their positive or negative experiences and characterizations of nature. Scott's thumbnail descriptions of various writers (including figures such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, H.D., and Djuna Barnes) will be interesting to general readers, but those with a deeper knowledge of modernism may find many of these broad claims—and especially the more negative characterizations—to be debatable and oversimplified. Moreover, Scott's definition of "nature" and her criteria of what are seen to be important "uses" of nature are left unclear, although these issues are currently troubled within ecocritical circles more generally. However, Scott's invocation does serve to urge a reconsideration of what "nature" means and what it includes, and she here responds to a clear need to consider how and why nature remains indelible in even the most urbane creative minds of the modernist period.

The second chapter traces the links between Woolf and naturalism with a focus on her family's engagement with Darwin and Darwinism. Museums and zoos figure highly as sites of early learning, and Scott describes Woolf's debates with and against Victorian science's ideas of ordering and classifying nature. Scott draws on her considerable archival research to offer an especially fascinating portrait of Woolf's intellectual interactions with female naturalists, namely Eleanor Anne Ormerod, Mary Kingsley, and Marianne North. The following three chapters catalogue Woolf's uses of gardens, of landscapes and seascapes and their artistic representation, and of animals and how inter-species barriers are crossed and disturbed. The final chapter addresses holism and order with respect to issues as diverse as physics, epistemology, and mythology.

The core chapters share a similar form. They treat a single subset of nature, namely naturalism, gardens, landscapes, or animals. The historical context is first broadly identified, then Woolf's personal experience is given, and, finally, the use of this subset of nature within Woolf's writing is described. Although many readers will expect a sustained critical analysis of Woolf's ideas and representations of nature, Scott's form throughout these chapters frequently approaches a catalogue summary of nature's appearances, which is again an indication of the strength of her archival work. The garden chapter, for

example, first speaks of the Victorian garden and its associated symbolism. It then recounts Woolf's experiences of the gardens of St. Ives, London (Kensington Gardens and Kew Gardens), Hampton Court, Tavistock Square, and the home gardens of Caroline Emelia Stephen, Violet Dickinson, Ottoline Morrell, Vita Sackville-West, Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell, and of Woolf herself with Leonard Woolf at Monk's House in Rodmell. The chapter next lists the many assorted appearances of gardens in Woolf's essays and novels, focusing on *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, and *Between the Acts*.

A lingering issue is that, on the whole, Woolf actually seems to have treated gardens and nature with some measure of ambivalence. While Scott insists on reading Woolf through an ecocritical, ecofeminist lens, she also admits that the "Woolf of modernity walks city streets" and "prefers city to country walks" (4) and that it was Leonard who actually enjoyed gardening at Monk's House whereas Virginia mainly used the space for entertaining. Indeed, although Leonard Woolf is often deemed a mere supporting character in Woolf studies, Scott shows that his ecological writings and actions clearly evidence an abiding fascination with natural spaces. Scott records Vita Sackville-West's opinion that "Leonard was attempting to construct Versailles on a quarter acre" in his gardens (98), and she also includes a lengthy quotation from Leonard, who seeks the sublime in early morning birdsong and bemoans the deadly effects of widespread insecticide use, a sentiment that Scott links to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (96).

Scott's main achievement, however, is to show that there is a crucial argument to be developed from sustained considerations of nature and modernism. This argument remains contentious because modernism has long been considered a literature that primarily celebrates the urban, the machine, the military, and the new while ignoring nature or seeking only to control it. Scott clearly demonstrates to the contrary that nature, in one form or another, consistently impacts Woolf throughout her life and that this is reflected in her literary themes, settings, and forms. Certainly, modernist studies is late to the ecocritical picnic, and Scott's welcome contribution points to valuable and thoughtful opportunities for future work.

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