

Latham, Monica, Caroline Marie, Anne-Laure Rigeade, eds. 2022. *Recycling Virginia Woolf in Contemporary Art and Literature*. New York: Routledge, 278.

While *recycling* has served as a key cultural term since the rise of environmental movements in the 60s, today, cultural studies offer (ever-)new understandings of this notion as a tool for critical analyses of contemporary literature and arts. Monica Latham, Caroline Marie, and Anne-Laure Rigeade's new edited collection represents this effect by turning to *recycling* in order to examine references to Virginia Woolf's persona and works in recent cultural manifestations, from literature to ballet, as well as from theater to astrology.

By moving beyond studies on the influence of Woolf through practices such as intertextuality, borrowing and cultural appropriation (3) – which have dominated literary scholarship during the past few decades – this volume discloses new implications concerning Woolf's extended iconicity in culture. As renowned Woolfian scholar Mark Hussey explains in his "Foreword" to the volume, this concept displays a "nuanced articulation of a process that spans appropriation, ingestion, absorption, together with repurposing, transformation and reusing" (xii). This collection, therefore, proposes *recycling* as a multilayered concept, which embraces different processes of cultural dissemination of an author and her oeuvre in different media, investigating her ongoing cultural influence in a transdisciplinary way, in alignment with the "ethical and metacritical turn in twenty-first-century literary criticism" (4).

A rich "Introduction" illustrates the volume's approach to the notion of recycling, which owes to critical discussions by, among others, multimedia artist Kabe Wilson and critic Susan Stanford Friedman, both featuring in the collection as contributors. In *Contemporary Revolutions* (2018), Friedman explains that recycling can be observed "either as material turned into something completely different or as a new production in which the old material remains somehow enmeshed" (4); instead, during the presentation of his artwork *Of One Woman or So*, by Olivia N'Goufri – a creative re-writing of *A Room of One's Own* – Wilson revealed that the notion of recycling "not only add[s] the idea of 'renewals with a different to all the well-known notions of *heteroglossia*, *intertextuality* or *influence*, already emphasizing how literary work is embedded in pre-existing signifying systems; it also points out the inscription of the work in a social context" (189). These considerations appear as the primary thread running through the fourteen chapters featured in the book.

Wilson was also the keynote of the *Recycling Woolf International Conference* hosted by the Université de Lorraine, France, in 2019, from which the volume derives: yet it should not be considered as a mere collection of conference proceedings, but rather as a compendium of original essays built on instructive discussions on *recycling* as an original critical approach, as one can glean as one progresses through the pages of this book.

Pluralism is one of the main features of this collection, not only in relation to the diverse expertise of its contributors – artists, literary and cultural studies scholars – and research objects – dance, theater, literature, photography, and astrology – but also in reference to the style displayed by the several chapters: more traditional academic essays accompany an interview transcript and even a piece of creative writing. In this sense, while the notion of *recycle*, as adopted in the book, does not possess ecocritical implications – as one might mistakenly think considering the chromatic choice of its cover (green) – *Recycling Virginia Woolf in Contemporary Art and Literature* remains an *ecological* volume: at its very core there lies a keen sense of *relationality* among several diverse areas of study and cultural manifestations of the world we live in, which comprises a cohesive, self-sustaining (scholarly) *unicum*.

The book is organized in five parts, each centering on a specific cultural field in which Woolf's recycling is performed by contemporary authors or artists. Section one, titled "Recycling and Composting Virginia Woolf", provides readers with the idea that Woolf herself could be involved in practices of *recycling*. Christine Reynier discusses Woolf as a recycler by observing, for instance, that some of her characters are tied to collecting and reusing objects – as appears in the short story *Solid Object* – or that she was inclined to reuse themes, images, and quotes from several authors. While the British author often made use of others' literary materials, she differs from the de-authorising procedure performed by T.S. Eliot in the same years. Reynier, in fact, parallels Woolf's recycling to Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of language as being "made of second-hand words that have been used over the years by everybody" (27): along this line, Reynier retraces two ways in which Woolf perceived literature as a recycler: a) as a *common ground*, that is as a public good accessible to anyone; and b) a *common pool*, that is "as a radical vision of literature as collectively owned" (31).

"Recycling Virginia Woolf in Visual Arts" is the title of the second part of the book, which is dedicated to references to her works in contemporary new media, including multimedia art and photography. Two essays of this section focus on Kabe Wilson's *Of One Woman or So, by Olivia N'Gowfri* (2019), the popular visual artwork which rearranges each and every word of Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* while generating a new story about a young African woman studying in Cambridge. Chapter 4, titled "Of Words, Worlds and Woolf: Recycling *A Room of One's Own* into *Of One Woman or So*" is in large part the transcript of a conversation between Wilson and Stanford Friedman, which highlights some of the critical themes of this artwork, by stressing, for instance, how it makes up, and even expands upon, what Woolf left behind in her essay, including racial and class-based issues.

Elisa Bolchi's chapter "Dancing Virginia Woolf Back to Life: *Woolf Works* as a Critical and Artistic Recycling" opens the third section of the volume, titled "Recycling Virginia Woolf on Stage", in which three papers investigate many recent readaptations of her persona and works in the context of the performing arts, namely ballet and theater, and in innovative educational activities in English literature classes. *Woolf Works*, the acclaimed ballet first staged in 2015, involving acclaimed Wayne McGregor (choreography), Max Richter (music) and étoile Alessandra Ferri (dancer), is Bolchi's object of study as a contemporary recycling of Woolf, which intertwines intertextuality, intermediality, transmediality and remediation. As Bolchi observes, dance provides the unique opportunity to "convert into something new [...] not only Woolf's novels and her poetics but also the mental process behind her novels" (122), particularly paying tribute to "Woolf's genius to the rhythm of music" (132), thus proving how, in spite of the medium adopted to (re-)develop her literary voice, Woolf works.

Part four is dedicated to the topic "Recycling Virginia Woolf as a Textual Icon". While the first two chapters of this section address references to *To the Lighthouse* in contemporary literature – including Katharine Smyth's *Lived: Seeking Solace in Virginia Woolf* (2019), in which the recycle, according to Monica Latham "does not merely copy and paste fragments from Woolf's work [*To the Lighthouse*, nrd], but displays a deep understanding of it, engages with it, knits ties to it and creates literary kinship" (182) – Bethany Layne's chapter explores how Woolf's suicide by drowning is featured, directly and indirectly, in recent cultural manifestations. By reviewing a film (*The Hours* 2002), a limited TV Series (*Life in Squares* 2015), and novels (*Vanessa and Her Sister* 2014, *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* 2014, and *Adeline* 2015) in which Woolf's self-drowning is narrated, in her chapter "Something Rich and Strange?: Drowning, Resurfacing and Recycling in Biofiction About Woolf", Layne determines Woolf as a popular character in contemporary biofiction: this observation allows for highlighting how the network of references – parallels, differences, etc. – among the

multi-faceted portrayal of Virginia Woolf's life and death contributes to reinforcing her presence in contemporary culture.

Part five, "Recycling Virginia Woolf in Popular Culture", closes the book with a selection of essays investigating unusual cultural contexts where Woolf's dissemination has occurred, which include tattoos and online astrological discourses. About the latter context is Cristina Carluccio's chapter "Popularising Woolf in Virtual Astrology", which examines references to Virginia Woolf in several astrological online forums. Carluccio's innovative analysis demonstrates the popularity of Woolf among online users who, without being necessarily knowledgeable of her oeuvre, are attracted by her stardom and iconicity. In addition, she demonstrates how "Astrological recycling thus reinforces Woolf's image as a tragic icon, which momentarily loses its transcendental significance as it is astrologically applied to ordinary individual's own personal lives" (248).

The book closes with a piece of creative writing by Christine Froula, titled "The Worlds", which takes inspiration from Iranian writer Houshang Golshiri's story *The House of the Illuminated*, dedicated to the metaphysical perspective of a writer's words while observing his death. By describing Woolf's last hours from a similar point of view, Froula's story is further proof of the pluralistic stance of the volume, as well as of its originality: without losing the zeal of academic writing, the book explores uncharted territories in Woolf studies, both in regard to ever-new productions dedicated or connected to her, and first-hand areas of the study of culture, where Woolf unpredictably re-surfaces.

While this diversity risks undermining a solid positioning of the volume within more traditionally systematized areas of study – the Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory series of Routledge, in which the volume appears, for instance, does not fully give credit to some of the contributions in this volume with a more artistic perspective – this book, nevertheless, reinforces the idea that Woolf Studies have today (far) exceeded the domains of Literary Studies, in a strict sense. Therefore, *Recycling Virginia Woolf in Contemporary Art and Literature* appears particularly valuable for inspiring senior Woolf scholars to expand their primarily literary-oriented scopes and embrace more extended, transcultural approaches while simultaneously encouraging younger researchers, who trained in transdisciplinary approaches, to consider Woolf as a particularly fertile site for investigation.

Despite the volume's diversified nature, a high degree of cohesion emerges from the chapters of this collection along the idea that Woolf is destined to endure as a widespread cultural phenomenon. It is therefore the critics' job – as the book seems to suggest – to engage with different approaches in order to unveil innovative understandings of Virginia Woolf and her works as well as of contemporary society in multiple and surprising manifestations.

*Stefano Rozzoni*