

**'All at Sea'**  
**Virginia Woolf, Walter Benjamin, and the Unknown German**

On July 10, 1940, amidst fear of Nazi invasion, a prison ship, of sorts, left Liverpool, England, crammed full of over two thousand male 'Enemy Aliens' – Germans, Austrians, and some Italians. They were herded together, below deck, with all hatches sealed. Some were prisoners of war, some were passionate Nazis, but most were Jewish refugees.<sup>1</sup> Among them was Walter Benjamin's estranged son, a young man of 22 years, Stefan Rafael Schoenflies Benjamin. Soon after boarding, however, the authorities mistakenly recorded his surname as Benjamini.<sup>2</sup>

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Stefan [...] won't undertake anything real.<sup>3</sup>  
 (Dora Benjamin)

**I/III**

No. No. This was not what S. had expected. Not of Merry England, not the dark. Not at all. Not the pandemonium, not the bayonets, not the barbed wire.<sup>4</sup> Not even the oil-painted face of the waters. The deep.

But, what on earth could be said of it all? What indeed. Words, S. felt, like the day, were failing him. If he had still possessed the gift of tongues, as granted his child-self, his dwarf-self, he surely would have had the words, words adequate to the situation, words equal to this new dark house of his. With such a gift, he might, for instance, have looked about and remarked, 'It is totally un-windowed.'<sup>5</sup>

S. stumbled.

Or inquired, 'How does the house see[?].'

S. tripped.

Or perhaps he might have said, 'The sun is ill today.'<sup>6</sup>

S. staggered.

Or even, 'My whole ear is laughed full of headache.'<sup>7</sup>

The blind house swayed.

Ah yes, how well the dear dwarf had spoken, back then, before, in those glorious Weimar days. 'Today, I am the Prince,' he then had declared.<sup>8</sup> S. slipped. In truth, alas, the Prince had stood in need, in need of an orange, as were all Weimar princes. 'Do you think,' he had asked, 'I can buy oranges for all the strange princes?' S. again fell arse-ward.

S. was, even now, still of the old opinion that "'Prince" is a word with a star tied around it.'<sup>9</sup> Like a noose, perhaps, or albatross. S. fell once more. No harm done. A charmed life, his. Yes, he was, no doubt, enjoying a charmed life. And soon, perhaps, a charmed death. Yes, charmed. But then, 'someone who has a magical Papa is a Sunday child,' as the Prince had said.

Ah yes, Papa, the King, though currently lost, was indeed of a magical sort. Or so the Prince had thought. 'Papa knows all of the stories in the whole world.' Yes, *all*, alas.

S. looked around. Behold, Lower Mess Deck No. 2, and everywhere pale men who, like himself, wrestled with fabulous names, their own, or so they said.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jonas, Moses, Solomon, Moses, Eli, Moses, Marx, Freud, Kafka, Wittgenstein, Moses, Adolf, Moses, Wilde, Wilde, and Wilde, not to mention Wilde, as well as Wolfgang Amadeus, Herr Zeppie, Semaphore, Frank-the-Mathematician, Simon-the-Child, and, indeed, one whom all others called 'Maestro S.'<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the latter was he himself, or maybe not. Whatever, his own especial and secret burden-of-a-name was Rafael. Yes, Rafael the god-dammed angel. For the King had always loved an angel.

S., though, had always remained stubbornly mortal. Much like the wrestlers about him. All sorts and conditions there were: lawyers, scholars, comedians, hairdressers, cooks, crooks, quacks, queers, errand boys, U-Boaters, madmen and spies (or so they said), not to mention (though he did) the Man from the National Circus of Argentina and, indeed, what is more, a Film Actor, albeit minor, who had been intending, but that very morning, to step jauntily aboard the ferry to the Isle of Man, not bloody Canada.<sup>11</sup> Or wherever it was they were bent, hell-bent. Godless no doubt, please God.

And so they cursed and cried, preached, plotted, and prayed, ceaselessly murmuring to someone or other. Someone like Jesus, no doubt – Jehovah, for instance, or Himmler, or Charlie Cairoli. To each man his very own clown. Some among them even attempted to read in the dark. Folly, thought the Prince. 'One doesn't read [a book] at night,' his Highness had told him, 'otherwise the darkness will read it,' and the book 'will remain dark for ever.'<sup>12</sup>

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In July 1940, Virginia Woolf and her Jewish husband Leonard, were, for the most part, at their house in coastal Sussex, though they also visited their apartments in central London.

Mrs Woolf went into the house. Yes, *a dark kind of summer*<sup>13</sup> it was proving. She removed her hat. *Ever since the war, she thought, we've been infested with refugees.*<sup>14</sup> No, let us say, we've been *entertaining* refugees.<sup>15</sup> Like angels unawares. She glanced at a pair of *strangled wool gloves.*<sup>16</sup> How, she thought, *they fill the place with odds and ends,*<sup>17</sup> these refugees. The gloves were women's gloves and had been abandoned, as if orphaned, by an Austrian woman. Jewish. *Mme Spira.*<sup>18</sup> The poor woman had *sobbed*, and would, no doubt, be back. Ah, *the refugees [...] People like ourselves, beginning life again.*<sup>19</sup> With and without their gloves.

Mrs Woolf again considered the abandoned gloves. Long accustomed they were to gentle Jewish hands. As, in a manner, was she.

Odd, though, seeing it was July. Why wear woollen gloves in July? Even this July. Not like that day, March, she thought, when that boatful of *refugees [were]* turned back from *Newhaven.*<sup>20</sup> Unfortunate name. Mind, her house *ha[d] been a [veritable] refugee haunt.*<sup>21</sup> And how they come and go, *fritter[ing] one's days to shreds.* No wonder *I'm [...] all at sea.*<sup>22</sup>

Mrs Woolf entered the sitting-room, then paused. *Dear me – what a bore,* she thought, *I've a wretch of a German (unknown) coming [...] on Thursday.*<sup>23</sup> She wondered if, on Thursday, the wretch would also leave behind strangled Jewish gloves, or

indeed anything strangled. The wretch would, no doubt, need saving like all the others. Saving from England. Yes, he would need to be rescued, this *our German von-something*, though not really 'von-anything.'<sup>24</sup> *I shall call you Renny, said L.*

The 'German (unknown),' aka 'our German von-something,' was one René Podbielski,<sup>25</sup> whom Virginia and Leonard were unable to prevent being rounded up, and put on the same ship as Stefan. Podbielski had been writing a novel at the time; however, the soldiers on board, some of whom were released convicts, threw the manuscript into the Mersey.

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A man, thought S., is weeping. Again. But it was only a book, and he, the man weeping, only its author. Indeed, his book was not quite a book, nor ever would be now, seeing it had just gone south. Ah, the English knew what to do with a book. And there had been no shilly-shallying, not from the Soldiers of the King's Pardon.<sup>26</sup> The Forgiven, as it were – such is grace.

Welcome to hell,<sup>27</sup> they had said, the Forgiven, upon greeting S. et al, as they had boarded. And S. had believed them for, as they examined one's baggage, it was evident that they knew exactly what things to put into their pockets, such as a ring or coins, and what to hurl over the edge of hell, such as the scribble of von-something or other. At least, thought S., the darkness would not be able to read the drowning book.

Even so, the author continued to blubber. Blubber like a child, he did. 'It's raining in the room,'<sup>28</sup> the Prince would have said. Just as it had always rained

whenever his mother had grown royally sad. Although he could, most times, stop this rain from falling. He would simply lisp in her ear, avowing 'I am going to marry the princess.' Yes, marry her, he would lisp. (*Oedipus has acquired speech*).<sup>29</sup>

The great blind house now murmured. Unmoored, loosened, she felt her way. His Majesty's Sightless Ship was off. England had left England, and S. was away. Away. (*Oedipus is the oldest runaway*).

And now he fell to cursing, to cursing the ship, the day, the war, Herr Adolf, Herr Churchill, Herr George VI, not to mention Herr Knock the Policeman-in-Cunning-Disguise who had knockity-knocked at his door.<sup>30</sup> (*In [...] London [...] the police already have tanks*).<sup>31</sup>

Where, though, might they be going? 'We are traveling to the Baltic,' the Prince had once said.<sup>32</sup> But no, the Prince had blundered, for they seemed bound for the Atlantic and, thereafter, all the ends of the earth, thought S., at whatever hour it was, he could only imagine, seeing that the Forgiven now possessed his watch. (*The [...] seafarers [are] lost and do not now know where morning and evening are*).<sup>33</sup>

S. stared at his naked wrist. All around him, the Patriarchs of Israel were considering the watery wilderness. Their destination, what was it? Canada, said Abraham. America, said Isaac. The bottom of the sea, said Jonas.

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Mrs Woolf sat down. Removed her boots. The walk had been a long one, but the sea had done its best to gleam in the sun, as had the passing ships. And *the cliffs*, she

thought, had almost *looked as if they were conscious of the ships, and the ships [...] as if they were conscious of the cliffs, [just] as if they signalled to each other some secret message of their own.*<sup>34</sup>

Ah, the sea. She was, perhaps, not a stranger to its secrets, or at least the secrets of the Admiralty. Yes, she thought, *I want to see [again] the shore where I played my joke on the Dreadnought.*<sup>35</sup> What alarums had sounded that day. How the Naval Lords had wailed in protestation. And yet it had been nothing more than one of her youthful *tricks on the King's ships.*<sup>36</sup> Such a fuss over her merely sneaking aboard in male garb. And how fine she had looked with beard and turban as she had man-walked the *brig [or] frigate, or what[ever] they call it.*<sup>37</sup>

Ah, *no head* had she for *sea-terms* – or indeed, for the sea itself, or water of any kind, come to think of it. She *never crossed a ditch without saying the Lord's Prayer backwards.* No, not quite backwards, as that might upset the Almighty, and to whom else could she address her *Damn Hitler prayer?*<sup>38</sup> Damn Hitler, she thought, praying forwards, damn him for causing her once more to stoop before God. And the wireless.

The BBC in a measured trained voice [...was] interrupted by the ArchB's prayers: then [...] a [...] message from the Admiralty to ships. [...] Then [...] all foreign stations were jammed.<sup>39</sup>  
(Virginia Woolf)

Jammed, yes jammed, like weather-stiffened windows. And if the news were to worsen she really would jam the windows, jam them shut. Although, she thought, *I*

*[do] open my windows when I hear the Germans.*<sup>40</sup> As she did so often now. Only last night there were *raging voices [...] in German*, and she had raged back.<sup>41</sup> *The wireless, she thought, is [...] more pain [...] than pleasure. What with the Germans cutting in.*<sup>42</sup> Most often it was their Fuhrer. *Hitler speaks tomorrow [...] Hitler's speech [is] tonight.*<sup>43</sup> She preferred, though, to call him *what's-his-name*,<sup>44</sup> as if he were half-unknown, a kind of secret, the secret king of –

*- 'Secret Germany.'*<sup>45</sup>

*- 'Pardon?'*

*- 'Secret Germany.'*

Mrs Woolf reached for the newspaper. *I begin to hear voices*, she thought.<sup>46</sup> She looked down at the newspaper. *Nun [on...] bus [...] pays [...] fare with a man's hand.*<sup>47</sup> She looked up.

Perhaps, she thought, the Germans had a taste for secrets. Look at all the books the Germans had read – even books one has written oneself. Right now, in fact, a certain *Fraulein Gulde [...] is studying my works in the Brit. Mus.*<sup>48</sup> Though her name is not quite Gulde, it may even be Grüber, but why now bother to be precise? Besides, I am not the scholar – *she* is. Which is doubtless why she *cannot be sure what life is, so writes to ask me*. How inquisitive are the young.

Mrs Woolf closed the paper, and picked up a large envelope. It had come from Fraulein G. Ah, she *sends me a pamphlet on me, [...] a German glass [...] into which I [can't...] resist looking [...] and so much] so that I [...soon] begin twisting among long words.*<sup>49</sup>



One of the very first studies of Woolf's work was written by Ruth Grüber as a doctoral thesis at the University of Cologne; it was completed in 1932, and published in 1935.<sup>50</sup>

Mrs Woolf allowed the pamphlet to fall from her hands. One's *book[s]*, she thought, *might [as well] have sailed out into the blue & been lost. 'One of our books did not return,' as the BBC puts it.*<sup>51</sup> She eyed the radiogram. *We think England's talking of us – not a bit.*<sup>52</sup>

It is Germany talking, talking, talking. Such is scholarship. Such is radio.

-*'Berlin Radio.'*<sup>53</sup>

-*'For example, yes.'*

-*'But not any more.'*

-*'Pardon?'*

-*'Events at Berlin Radio have completely robbed me of my income.'*

-*'Ah.'*

-*'I have been asked to leave. To leave Voice Land.'*<sup>54</sup>

-*'Voice Land?'*

-*'Radio, it's what I call the radio.'*

-*'Ah.'*

Pause.

-*'In Voice Land one can't see. Can't see anyone.'*

-*'Not even me?'*

-*'No, dear invisible one.'*<sup>55</sup>

-*'Ah.'*

-*'Maybe someday I'll meet you.'*<sup>56</sup>

-‘Perhaps.’

-‘*But we won’t [alas] recognise each other.*’

Beginning in 1927, Walter Benjamin gave around eighty radio talks, many for children; from 1933, however, as a Jew, he was no longer able to broadcast.

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S. rose to his feet, and swayed, like a drunk. Am I, he wondered, about to vomit? Why not? I already stink. He thought of his father. ‘I am sad because I don’t see you anymore,’ the Prince had said.<sup>57</sup> But perhaps he might yet see his Highness again, even out here. On this dear ship of theirs. There was a chance, was there not? What if the King (unknown) had finally made it (unknown) to England, as many had begged him, and then (unknown) been packed off with the rest of them? S. removed his spectacles (uncleaned). And stared at them. ‘Papa [is] glad,’ the Prince had said.<sup>58</sup> And perhaps Papa is glad once more, this time glad to be at sea with his only begotten son. But was that really possible? ‘That I don’t know,’ the Prince had said, before adding, in his own defence, ‘Does one know everything?’<sup>59</sup> But did the Prince know *anything*? ‘That I don’t know,’ had said the Prince, ‘[but] one day I’ll know.’ Know what? ‘That I don’t know,’ had said the Prince.

S. now sat slumped, head-hard-against-wall, if ships have walls, and put on his spectacles (uncleaned). He peered about him. Moses, Moses, Moses, Moses, Moses, and Jonas. No King, alas, to be seen. And none had even heard of his

Highness. But perhaps, S. thought, the King had adopted a pseudonym, a borrowed, gentile name. He had done so before. Fellner, Mabinn, Holz, Stempflinger – there had been so many.<sup>60</sup>

Though never Benjamini. No, the King had never tried Benjamini – but perhaps S. should give it a go. It would, admittedly, be a somewhat unimaginative alias, but it might be sufficient to pass for Italian. And S., after dark, did perhaps look like one. Could certainly prattle like one – and enough, if ever cornered, gun-to-head-grave-at-his-feet, to try screaming, ‘No, I am not a Jew.’

Stefan’s handwriting was very eccentric, and often his signature appeared to have an ‘i’ at the end – hence often misread as ‘Benjamini.’ This, though, may have been an error with which Stefan was not altogether unhappy; since he does, in a letter written in July 1939, seem to imply that, in extremis, he might seek to hide his Jewishness by being mistaken as Italian-Aryan.<sup>61</sup>

But enough of pseudonyms, the urgent question was this: might his Highness be a royal stowaway? (*The gangplank had already been withdrawn and the ship begun to move*).<sup>62</sup> Was the King perhaps hidden somewhere, having, at the off, in the uncreated stink of it all, effected some improvised, or unofficial embarkation? (*I [...] scale[d] the hull and [...] succeeded in getting [aboard]*). Or perhaps his Highness could not be seen because his Highness was not so much here as there, up there, on deck, at the very helm, erect and hard by the Captain’s side. (*Picture me at the bow [...] cutting through the Mediterranean surf*).<sup>63</sup> Yes, perhaps that’s where he was, his runaway Highness, the ocean his royal road, road out, out of the shit. (*One has left*

*Berlin [...] aboard a 2000-ton steamer).*<sup>64</sup> Or was he, more precisely, a man in absurd disguise? (*A droll, moustachioed old lady sunbathing [...] on the ship's terrace*).

S. shifted his back, his arse. Ah, there we go. Now he was rear-to-wall, head-about-to-drop, hands-at-the-ready. Perhaps an opportune moment to vomit. Or simply to fall prey to despair, seeing that no one claiming to be the King had, as yet, approached S. or even waved to him from afar with, say, a soiled royal handkerchief, whilst crying aloud S.'s secret angel-name across the o'er-crowded bark. No, there had been no such enchanting scene. But, then, the Prince had never been easy to approach or hail, and little may have changed, even now that he was no longer the Prince.

It [is...] completely impossible to communicate with Stefan.<sup>65</sup>  
(Walter Benjamin)

## II/III

After a couple of weeks at sea the men began to organise talks and lectures. They called it the 'Ship's University.'<sup>66</sup>

'Fursity,' the child Prince had said at first.<sup>67</sup> 'Unifursity,' he had later said, so often had his Highness vanished.<sup>68</sup> 'Do you like it [...] in Heidelberg?' the Prince had, once upon a day, written to the King.<sup>69</sup> The Prince had added, 'Papa, [...] bring me something back from Heidelberg.'

S. looked around. All about him were unwashed prophets. Some perched upon tables, others hung from hammocks. (*Many lecterns stood all around*).<sup>70</sup> And was

his Highness one of the prophets? Was he too, even now, preaching to the dark? (*His night [...] is the hour [...] of the lecture hall*).<sup>71</sup> If so, which of the lectures might be his?

But there were so many lectures on so many and varied topics, and all of them, it seemed, were being given at once. S. narrowed his eyes and listened, listened to them all, and to the cursing.

*'The-History-of-Shipbuilding-shit-is-nevertheless-shit-Colour-Photography-whilst-shit-on-the-other-hand-is-Deutero-Isaiah-fuck-if-you-take-a-spanner-fuck-notwithstanding-A-Walk-Through-Paris-or-fuck-The-Philosophy-of-History-bloody-Nazis-or-How-to-Drive-a-Car-vis-à-vis-Hegel-bastards-and-Colour-Photography-vis-a-vis-Hegel-not-to-mention-Moses-or-Sex-in-Backstreet-Vienna-or-a-hammer-whilst-The-Viennese-Fire-Brigade-notwithstanding-Isaiah-not-to-mention-Sex-or-A-Walk-Through-a-Car-or-Sex-or-Moses-or-How-to-Drive-a-Ship-seeing-that-this-lecture-is-above-all, above all, above all, now concerned, at last, not with either Sex in Vienna or its Fire Brigade but, rather, with that greatest Game of All, namely the Game of Kings, hence, at last, the title of today's discourse, "The Caro-Kann Defence," or, if you will (grand clearing of throat): "How to Defend against the King's Pawn Opening."'*<sup>72</sup>

How indeed? How indeed does one defend against the King's Pawn Opening? Perhaps S. should ask the Viennese Fire Brigade. Why not? Might even make sense. Particularly if, by any chance, the King's Opening were to entail Fire and the Burning of Buildings – synagogues, for instance. There were, S. had heard, such Fire-Kings around, even in dear Vienna. His own.<sup>73</sup>

Ah Vienna, Vienna. Its days of Backstreet Sex were, doubtless, numbered now. No wonder, then, that so many on board had, some time ago, learnt How to Drive a Car and Set Sail from Vienna. His Highness, however, being a clumsy man, did not even know How to Make a Cup of Coffee, let alone Build a Ship.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps, after all, his Highness was, then, still roaming his beloved Paris. Perhaps, even now, taking One Last Walk Through Whatever Has Become of Her.

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One Jewish émigré who did make it from Paris to London was Walter Benjamin's close friend and fellow Berliner, Charlotte Wolff. Once in London, she took up palm-reading, and read the palms of many, including Virginia Woolf. Charlotte, aka 'Lotte,' was once arrested by the Nazis as a spy suspected to be a man in woman's clothing. This story, amongst others, she told Woolf.<sup>75</sup>

Mrs Woolf looked down at the palm of her hand. Like a man's? No. She rose to her feet. Enough, she had had enough. She would head for the garden. The writing lodge was, perhaps, awaiting her. She must go and see. She paused. Looked again at the palm of her hand. Like a man's? No, certainly not. Although, according to the palmist, it was a 'hand full of [...] contradictions.'<sup>76</sup>

Mrs Woolf had, at first, refused to have her hand read, but then, *having the idea that [...] some kind of communication is possible between beings that can't be accounted for*, she had surrendered.<sup>77</sup>

Yes, she had sat for the palmist. Or, was that *to* the palmist? Whatever, a peculiar woman, if woman she was – hard to tell, the way she dressed. *But why marks on the hand? Why should deaths [...] be indented on the palm of the hand?* Mind, if true, then might death, in the case of her own hand, be contradicted? It was a thought.

*'We who have died [...] are resurrected.'*<sup>78</sup>

'Quite.'

Mrs Woolf strode through the garden. The palmist's statement had *read*, she felt, *like the kind of lecture on the Novels of Virginia Woolf that earnest young men sometimes deliver at Huddersfield.*<sup>79</sup> Not that she had ever been to Huddersfield, nor felt it was quite the place for such a lecture. She feared, in fact, for literary criticism in Huddersfield. And elsewhere. Though there was always Germany, or at least the *monolithic* Baroness von Noritz, which amounts to much the same thing.<sup>80</sup>

She walked on, past the pond, remembering how *the Baroness [had said]* *Germany is the better for Hitler*, and that she was seeking some *young man to lecture on English poetry*. Not, alas, a woman; which was, felt Mrs Woolf, an oversight characteristic of the Nazis. *Why don't they make me Prof. of English[?] – I'd teach em.* But what would she teach them? What could she possibly teach the Germans?

Mrs Woolf entered the lodge, but did not sit down. Still standing, she asked herself what might be the point of literary criticism in Mr Hitler's Germany? Indeed, she wondered, what was the point of criticism, period? In truth, she was herself somewhat nervous of literary critics. They were, she felt, out to get her, to tear her to

pieces. With respect to critics, she thought, *I'm the hare*, a higher kind of vermin, as it were.<sup>81</sup> Thankfully, she thought, *I'm [...] a long way ahead of the hounds*.

She sat down.

What if, though, the hounds were closer than imagined? After all, they were now being bred within the universities. Take, for instance, Dr Grüber, or Gulde – what if this particular critical hound had *discovered the meaning of 'The Waves'*?<sup>82</sup> It would be a peculiar feeling to be decoded. Mrs Woolf had always thought *The Waves*, like the sea itself, might never be decrypted. She examined the window. The decoders were, undoubtedly, after her.

Like that woman in Chicago, Miss Elizabeth Eddy, authoress of 'The Study of the Style of Mrs Virginia Woolf with Special Emphasis on Her Thought Patterns,' which meant, it seemed, Special Emphasis on the Length of Mrs Woolf's Sentences.<sup>83</sup> These, apparently, ranged from 1 to 274 syllables, with 75 to 85 per cent being no more than 50 syllables, and those over 85 amounting to 6.86 per cent of the later novels, as against 1.3 per cent of the earlier. Roughly.

This account of Mrs Woolf's Thought was, thought Mrs Woolf, a curious thing. A twisting among long sums. A twisting that, Miss Eddy said, was a trick learnt from her Chicago tutor, one Miss Edith Rickert, who had herself, or so she says, first learnt the trick as a military cryptographer.<sup>84</sup>

Mrs Woolf stared at the desk before her.



Miss Rickert had, apparently, gone on to work for The Black Chamber (hush hush).<sup>85</sup> Anyway, it was she, they say, who had decoded the Zimmerman Telegram, when all hell had broken loose.

Mrs Woolf at last began to type. She had had enough, she thought, of the hell from Chicago. *All yesterday [I endured] a positively dangerous woman lunatic from Chicago. Never again do I answer the telephone in person.*<sup>86</sup>

The woman on the telephone was not, in truth, Elizabeth Eddy or Edith Rickert but rather one Elinor Nef. She did, though, almost certainly know both Eddy and Rickert as she was herself a woman of letters and wife of Chicago professor, John Ulric Nef. Professor Nef once remarked of Virginia and Elinor that 'there was a strange communion between the sufferings of the two women.'<sup>87</sup>

Ah yes, they were on to her, the mad ladies of Chicago, clearly convinced that, when typing, she was in fact labouring at some kind of clanking encryption machine.

Mrs Woolf paused, her hands mid-air.

But perhaps she *was*, perhaps she *was* busy encrypting, just without quite knowing it. She stared at her typewriter with suspicion. She had often found that it would randomly change one letter for another. *The typewriter cannot spell*, she would say, with something of a smile, or one half of a laugh.<sup>88</sup> Perhaps, though, she should not laugh, or even half-laugh.

She stared down at the page just typed.

*The typewriter*, she thought, *has already converted [one ...] name into another.*<sup>89</sup>

She would type a little more. Ah, there we go again, just look at those *dots and dashes*.

It was Morse code, dear God, Morse code, albeit well disguised. *Observe how [the]*

*dots and dashes [...] run themselves into continuous lines.*<sup>90</sup> She looked around her. She could [work ...] like a spy without leaving this place, without [even] stirring from this chair.

Mrs Woolf tapped again at the typewriter, her *Portable Underwood*.<sup>91</sup> Yes, portable, albeit not reliable, not faithful. And what could one expect? Underwoods were made in America, a merely neutral nation, so not exactly Enemy but neither Friend or Ally. Clearly some *things [were best] not to be whispered on a typewriter,* certainly this one.<sup>92</sup> Yes, she must be careful. She looked at *the books* open upon her desk, her own books. *Were they allies? Or were they enemies?*<sup>93</sup>

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Friendly enemies, thought S., looking for the stairs, in need of a piss. Yes, that's what they had said.<sup>94</sup> 'You lot,' they had said, 'you lot, are what we call Friendly-Enemy-Aliens. In short, Friendly-Bloody-Enemies.' Paradoxical, yes, oxymoronic even. Or should that be ambiguous? No matter, he needed a piss. Besides, the ambiguity (if that it was) had been something of a blessing. Where, he wondered, had the stairs gone? Trouble was, someone Important had had a belly-full of ambiguity, and sought Clarity in Time of National Emergency. He had held on as long as he could. And now they were just Enemy Enemies. Simpler, could not be denied. He could hold out no longer. Or, was it not? Not simpler. Was he, in fact, in some sense confused?

Yes, thank God. And bliss it was. He did not, in truth, have a bloody clue, and neither did anyone, not even his Deck-Leader, or whatever he was called. 'Mess-Father,' was it?<sup>95</sup> Anyway, the poor bugger knows no more than one's Actual-Father, wherever he is – Baltimore, Buenos Aries, Bermondsey.

But not so fast. What if, in fact, his Highness *were* on board, but simply ensconced in his very own room? What if, in fact, this here hell of theirs were, in truth, some shocking hotel? The King had always liked shocking hotels. Not to mention a room of his own. Trouble was, as the Prince had said, 'Papa won't let me go in the room,' not the King's room, not again, however much he might beg to enter.<sup>96</sup> (*Stefan [...] I see [...] twice a week*).<sup>97</sup>

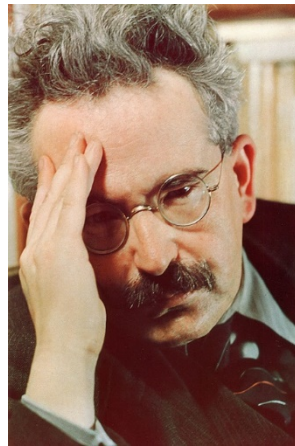
But then, perhaps the King was low, and at the end of his royal wits. Or perhaps, it was more that his Majesty's room was rather uncomfortable. 'Can he sleep badly[?],' the Prince had once asked him.<sup>98</sup> The King had not replied, so the Prince had answered the question for his Highness. 'Yes,' the Prince had said, even as he had marched straight into his father's room. (*Stefan is here*).<sup>99</sup> The King had responded with aplomb, inquiring, 'What are you doing coming in[to] my room with your unwashed "yes"?'<sup>100</sup> To which the oncoming Prince had replied, 'I [have] washed my neck, and so also washed my "yes."'

S. now felt for his neck. It was no longer washed, or at least not washed well, but neither was any part of his darkened body, not to mention his somewhat ragged attire. Whatever, he would rise and go now, and yet again search for the King. (*At once a lad in rags came towards [me]*).<sup>101</sup> Ah, was that him? The King? That one, over

there? (*I searched feverishly in my pockets*). No, no, just looked like him. (*He crossed my path [but...] did not stop on his way*).

### III/III

On June 24, 1939, at 3 p.m. Virginia Woolf encountered another German-Jewish exile and friend of Walter Benjamin's, one Gisèle Freund. Freund had already photographed many famous authors, such as Sartre, Joyce and Malraux, and was now to photograph Woolf. Before doing so, Freund projected for Woolf, upon a sheet hung up in her London drawing room, some of the colour portraits recently shown at a private exhibition in Paris, at 'La Maison des Amis des Livres,' a bookshop owned by Adrienne Monnier. This exhibition included a photograph of Freund's friend, the little-known Benjamin.<sup>102</sup>



Walter Benjamin, 1938

(photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Gisèle Freund, reproduction de Georges Meguerditchian)

Mrs Woolf drew up a chair and sat down. The sitting, or *séance*, as the French might say, had begun. The *devil woman*, was ready to show *those d---d photographs*, and then it would be herself, the next to succumb to this *treacherous vermin*.<sup>103</sup> The room, she thought, needs cleaning. Ah, and here they were, *all the lit. gents & ladies shown on a*

*sheet*.<sup>104</sup> Bed-sheet. Single or double? Whatever, so leisured they seemed, the gents and ladies, all of them, or rather all save one, the unknown one, or at least unknown to Mrs Woolf. She stared at his face.

-*'Now began the game.'*<sup>105</sup>

-*'What game?'*

-*'The game [...] of recognising someone I knew in every face.'*

Mrs Woolf peered again.

-*'I've had dreams [of...] women.'*<sup>106</sup>

-*'Pardon?'*

-*'Dreams [of...] women taking an interest in me.'*

-*'Where?'*

-*'In Adrienne Monnier's rooms.'*

Mrs Woolf paused. So, who was he? The odd-man-out, looking down and away, his hand to his face, as if half-in-hiding. She readied herself for the camera. Most likely he was, like *devil woman*, some Berlin prodigal. A Jew, no doubt - again like *devil woman*, albeit with a moustache (him not her). Would make sense, sense of this particular unknown German. But to whom could he be compared? She hesitated. Perhaps, she thought, he *looked like a king in exile*.<sup>107</sup>

Yes, like that Viennese king, clown-king, What's-His-Name. He's a runaway, of a kind. Isn't German, not really. From Austria, the clown. And again a moustache. Anyway, she had seen him too, or nearly. Yes, *almost met Hitler face to face*.<sup>108</sup> Fancy that. Just a few years back. She and Leonard and the marmoset, all three of them on

holiday in Bonn, *received [...] like film stars* they were, and there he was, what's-his-name, just driving through all the people, by the bridge.<sup>109</sup> Chaos it was. *We [...] had to pass through ranks of children with [...] flags [who...] cheered and waved.*<sup>110</sup> 'Heil Hitler,' etc. *And I raised my hand.* Don't know why. Must have looked like a salute.<sup>111</sup> *And on we went, chased across the river by Hitler (or Goering).*

Yes, may have been Goering. Anyway, one of the two. They all look the same, Nazis. Seen one seen them all. She peered at her contradictory hand, and then at the man on the screen. His face, his half of a face, what, exactly, did it mean?

-*"The Task of the Critic" will include [...] physiognomic criticism.*<sup>112</sup>

-Quite.

But how to go about physiognomic criticism? She had no idea. Least not with respect to this face, this technicolor face. As large as life, though she would not go that far. Nevertheless, unveiled it certainly was. Naked, as it were. Like a sorry film-star. And to think that Fraulein Freund desired that she too, Mrs Woolf, be thus enlarged, how terrible. She stared again at the half-face, this *German glass* (dark glass) *into which [she...] couldn't resist looking.*<sup>113</sup>

-*"The more closely you look at a word – "*

-'Yes?'

-*"The more distantly they look back."*<sup>114</sup>

And might the same, she thought, be said of a photograph? She stared at the man for one last time, and he stared back. *At this very moment, half-past three on a June day in 1939 they greeted each other.*<sup>115</sup> How odd it was.

-‘I recently saw [...] Katharine Hepburn.’<sup>116</sup>

-‘Really?’

-‘She reminds me of you.’

No, she thought, *I’m not [even] Greta Garbo, thank God.*<sup>117</sup> She, Mrs Woolf, was largely unknown and intended to be *truly* unknown, *absolutely* unknown, unknown to all – to critics, photographers, and all exiled kings, whether in Bonn or her drawing room. She intended, in fact, to be unknown to herself, and, what-is-more, unknown to the unknown. *I [...] place one chair there, another here [...] and [...] somebody new, somebody unknown, somebody I passed on a staircase [...] will come.*<sup>118</sup>

She stood up. That Jew on the screen, had she passed *him* on a staircase? Unlikely, she thought. But there was something about him. Something known.

-‘Photography –’

-‘Pardon?’

-‘Photography [is...] the most decisive conquest of a person’s incognito.’<sup>119</sup>

Yes, she thought. Even in *L.’s* snapshot [...] *my privacy is invaded.*<sup>120</sup> Moreover, *my legs show, [...] oh my legs.* At least Fraulein Freund was not after her legs. It was merely her head she wanted. Ah, how *I loathe being hoisted about on top of a stick for anyone to stare at.*<sup>121</sup> She turned to go.

-‘Photography [...] studios –’

-‘Enough!’

-‘Photography [...] studios occup[y... an] ambiguous place –’

-‘Silence!’

-'Between execution [...] and throne room.'<sup>122</sup>

Mrs Woolf straightened her collar, high collar, the highest in her wardrobe. She moved toward the door. It was over, thank God. *I was photographed [...] about forty times.*<sup>123</sup> Why forty?



Virginia Woolf, 1939  
(Gisèle Freund)

Once she had reached the door she paused and recalled the Jew with the half-a-face, the one like a king who had lost his kingdom, a king no longer. Ah, how like herself, for she was now (thanks to devil woman) a *queen* no longer, and instead just another face, just another face in the crowd, since that is now where faces belong, in herds, queues, and lines, all waiting to embark. She thought once more of the moustachioed Jew. *Strange that, the face of a person whom I scarcely know save that I think we met on a gangway of a ship bound for Africa.*<sup>124</sup>



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After a few days, the ship that carried Stefan et al. turned south; it then made toward Africa, its first stop being at Freetown on July 24, 1940.<sup>125</sup>

Above them, just above, don't look, the sky had gone. All the clouds, the clouds of Europe, ah so beloved, had gone, quite gone, and now there was fuck-all above as well as fuck-all to the east, the west, the north, the south. Though there was, above, high above, don't look, a huge great flaming eye. Not that it can see, but no matter, seeing there is nothing to see, not out here, in the inferno, on deck, at noon, every noon, where, as if on A Walk Through Paris (think of the King), they would gaily, albeit briefly, promenade at bayonet point. Ah yes, let us now step out, and once more laugh, greet the gulls, and pass elegant comment upon the strong possibility of yet being drowned.

On July 11, 1940, the ship was very nearly hit by two U-boat torpedoes. There was great alarm on board, not least among those who had survived the sinking of the Arandora Star just two weeks before. The alarm was heightened by the fact that no life-belts had been given out, and no emergency drill had taken place.<sup>126</sup>

S. paused, mid-promenade. Mid-Paris. Ah, how delicate the light, today, and how delightful the barbed-wire, all glinting upon the sun-washed deck. 'The sun has painted the ground,' as the dear Prince might have said.<sup>127</sup> S. turned east and stared toward the Sahara. 'Affika,' to echo the Prince.<sup>128</sup> Desert, thought S. – and that way lies hunger. To echo again the Prince, 'Someone's meant to starve here.'<sup>129</sup> (*The Nazis*

*are threatening, [...] we make [for...] the desert*).<sup>130</sup> S. continued to stare. (*Africa mesmerises*).

S. considered the empty ocean. Wilderness enough, even for Moses, Moses, Moses, Moses, and Moses. And it was hot, too hot for walking, let alone running.<sup>131</sup> Not that he was much of a runner, and always felt ill-at-ease in shorts. Not that he now had any shorts. Not that he would wear them if he did. But they, their captors, did like them to run – the Men of The King’s Pardon. So run he would, for the Forgiven. Until he stopped. Again. Now out of all sight (on their part) and breath (on his). S. cursed, and then, no doubt Unforgiven, looked up.

It was Herr Weiss. Herr *Jacob* Weiss, he said. Jacob. Like the one that wrestled the angel, or perhaps it was Yahweh, too dark to tell, it having been around midnight, an usual hour for a grapple, though depends what you mean by a grapple.<sup>132</sup> Herr Weiss reminded S. of someone. But of whom? S. considered. Yes, it was, above all, the air of the man; therein lay the likeness. And what was this air? To be precise? This air. It was, S. concluded, the air of one who has a breezy way with suicide. And who was that like? Who? He paused. Ah yes, his Highness. (*Suicide is not worth the effort*).<sup>133</sup>

On board there were, naturally, many others who entertained self-slaughter, or at least had the winsome air, or demeanour, or stink, of such as do. And they too, it is true, reminded S. of the King. Everywhere, they were. (*Doppelgangers [...] he [...] saw [...] all around him*).<sup>134</sup> Herr Weiss, however, had a most particular passion for drowning - for literally jumping ship, to be exact. Man overboard, etc. ‘Ah yes,’ Herr

Weiss would say, 'just like my father and, indeed, his father before him.' A family tradition, as it were.<sup>135</sup>

S. said nothing. He had, in fact, nothing to say, least not with respect to the man's long-since-drownèd forebears. The Prince, in contrast, always had words for the departed. He had once been shown (though why he was not sure) an engraving of a heap of skeletons, and had, alas, laughed, belly-laughed, thinking, or so his belly had thought, what could be funnier? However, no sooner had the Prince-prodigy finally fathomed the engraving than up he piped with the charming yet riddling defence, 'I didn't know that they were already dead.'<sup>136</sup>

S. scanned the horizon for something, anything, then failed and thought of the King. Was *he* dead already? If so, and if anyone should ask how S. might have known, S. would, echoing the Prince, declare, 'Sometimes the dear Lord gives you something in your head.'<sup>137</sup>

No wonder the King had considered his dear dauphin to be rather telepathic, there being these voices all of a rattle in his head.<sup>138</sup> Not that they were always pleasant voices, oh no, far from. 'We want to leave the ol' voices,' the Prince had said.<sup>139</sup> But still they would persist. 'Someone made hello all the time,' as the Prince had also said, as if speaking of the telephone and of someone desperately, frantically, hopelessly attempting a long-distance call.<sup>140</sup> Hello, hello, hello.

On the night of September 26, 1940, Walter Benjamin died in a hotel in Port Bou, in the Pyrenees. It is believed he took a huge dose of morphine tablets and, in the morning, was

found half-undressed in his room. The night before, he had made four telephone calls; but whom he rang, or tried to ring, is not known.<sup>141</sup>

S. now bowed his head, what with that bastard sun. Yes, what if he were already dead, his father, that is. Fathers had a way of dying. (*He was awoken [...] and led to his father's corpse*). Besides, people are always dying. (*This has all happened so often*).<sup>142</sup> Not least out here, within sight of Africa.

On August 21, 1940, Jacob Weiss threw himself overboard. He had previously told others on board that both his father and grandfather had jumped to their deaths from ships.<sup>143</sup>

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Mrs Woolf turned off the wireless. Still more black words. But *holocaust on such a scale was not probable*, she thought.<sup>144</sup> *They could not all be drowned*. No, not all of them. There would not be room enough in the sea. No, they could not all be drowned. She looked about the sitting-room. Some might be simply shot or hung. Or, perhaps, effect their own end. Exhaust fumes could do the trick, she thought. *L. says he has [enough] petrol in the garage should Hitler win*.<sup>145</sup> Or, should he merely invade. Came to much the same thing with respect to petrol supplies, though quite how much might be enough was difficult to say. Perhaps a gallon would suffice. Best not be wasteful. Think of others, she would.

Though there were so many ways of going about it. Pills, for example. Yes, *I*

have, she thought, *my morphia in [my] pocket.*<sup>146</sup> To be taken, perhaps, in some faraway hotel. She now turned to the wall and began to speak aloud, as if addressing someone.

*'The last letter I had from you,' she began, 'said that you were sitting half naked in an Inn, and soon to leap from a very great height.*<sup>147</sup> *You were, I gather, about to plunge into the Pyrenees. Yes, now, you thought, I [shall] climb this Spanish hill, and will [there] lie dying, [ ...] but from the top I shall see Africa.'*<sup>148</sup>

Ah, she thought, how splendid, at the last, to climb a Spanish hill, to see Africa, and, sitting half-naked in some inn, with the Pyrenees all around, to gracefully reach for the morphia in one's pocket.

Mrs Woolf now headed for the dining room. *I begin to hear voices,* she thought.<sup>149</sup> My own. Yes, the voices are mine, but not always the stories they tell. They were so often, it seemed, stories from another's life, even one whom she did not know, and had never met, or at least not in person. *Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to.*<sup>150</sup> Though she may, perhaps, have seen their photograph, or sat with someone who knew them, or maybe even had their hand held by them, or – enough! Enough! *There are moments,* she thought, *when the walls of the mind grow thin.*<sup>151</sup> Very thin.

She stared at the silent telephone. Damn the unforgiving thing. *Buzz buzz buzz goes the telephone, damn it.*<sup>152</sup> *What else,* she sometimes thought, *is there to do - except [to] answer the incessant telephones.*<sup>153</sup> Die of them, she might. She then paused to make confession, *the truth is I can't resist the telephone.*<sup>154</sup>

Mrs Woolf sat down at the table, and prepared to write. It would be a letter of a sort. A missive. She took up a piece of paper and wrote. *Could you angelically ring the telephone?* she scribbled.<sup>155</sup> She stared at the telephone, and waited. (Silence). Yes, ring like an angel, please. (Silence). Indeed, *speak* like an angel - for mere *human voices wake us & we drown*, and she had had enough of voices that woke her and caused her to drown.<sup>156</sup> (Silence). Or at least to wish to drown. *She felt again her [...] headlong desire to throw herself off the cliff and be drowned.*<sup>157</sup>

Mrs Woolf stood up. She must think. Think. Ah, she thought, *it's all I can do not to throw myself in.*<sup>158</sup>

- 'Naturally.'

- 'Pardon?'

- 'What is meant by "thinking" is -'

- 'Yes?'

- 'Falling.'<sup>159</sup>

- 'Falling where?'

- 'The sea.'

- 'The sea? How close is the sea?'

- 'One step - one step ahead of me lies the sea.'<sup>160</sup>

- 'And are you alone?'

- 'No. I saw [an...] unknown woman -'

- 'Unknown?'

- 'Unknown.'<sup>161</sup>

-‘And what happened to her? This unknown woman.’

-‘She [...] disappeared’

-‘How?’

-‘She had fallen overboard.’

Mrs Woolf straightened. It seemed that others too were inclined to drown. She was not the only one. Perhaps, then, she would never say ‘I am drowning’ but only ever ‘We are drowning.’ Or at least, ‘I am drowning, my dear.’<sup>162</sup> My beloved.

Yes, perhaps one could not drown alone, but always in the company of others. Though not all of the others. *They could not all be drowned, holocaust on such a scale was not probable.*

She recalled Fraulein Freund’s damned photographs. Ah, she thought, *all the lit. gents & ladies*. Yes, *all*, all of them, even herself now. Perhaps it was *them*, the photographed, who were, in truth, the *all* that were drowned.

Gisèle Freund made much of the fact that her first-ever professional photograph was of someone who had drowned.<sup>163</sup>

But what, thought Mrs Woolf, what if there were a still-greater ‘all’ yet to be drowned? An ‘All,’ as it were. She moved to the window.

-‘Look!’ she said, ‘*there are figures coming toward us.*’<sup>164</sup>

-‘What figures?’

-‘*Figures [who...] wear [...] draperies.*’

-‘What kind?’

-‘*Ambiguous. [They] wear [...] the ambiguous draperies of the flowing tide.*’

-'What tide?'

-'The [...] tide in which they have been immersed.'

She looked again. For one last time. Could she still see them? *The figures*, she thought, *coming toward us*. *The immersed*.

On March 28, 1941, just days after beginning to hear voices, Virginia Woolf walked into a river and drowned.



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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Paul R. Bartrop and Gabrielle Eisen (eds.), *The Dunera Affair. A Documentary Resource Book* (Melbourne: Schwartz & Wilkinson, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> See NAA. MP1103/2, E39130, cited here and below by courtesy of the National Archives of Australia.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 544.

<sup>4</sup> The men were kept below by barbed-wire around the top deck, and were often beaten by soldiers brandishing bayoneted rifles, see Cyril Pearl, *The Dunera Scandal* (London: Harper Collins, 1983), pp. 24-27.

<sup>5</sup> These, and all other, words that S. recalls as being once spoken by the infant Stefan, aka the Prince, are as recorded by Walter Benjamin, 'Opinions and Pensées' in Ursula Marx et al (eds), *Walter Benjamin's Archive* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 138.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>10</sup> All the names from 'Abraham' to 'Wolfgang Amadeus' appear in official records (five men had the surname 'Moses' and four 'Wilde'), see Bartrop and Eisen, pp. 397-416; the other names here were soubriquets, see *ibid.*, pp. 193, 197, 161, and Benzion Patkin, *The Dunera Internees* (Stanmore, N.S.W. : Cassell Australia, 1979), p. 60.

<sup>11</sup> See Bartrop, 194, 385-88,197; the term 'queers' was used by the men themselves, and the film actor was Sigurd Lohde, see Pearl, pp. 206, 22.

<sup>12</sup> *Archive*, p. 144.

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<sup>13</sup> All italicised words ascribed to Virginia Woolf are quotations from her writings; in this case, *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf*, 5 vols, ed. Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1977–84) 4.30 – June 23 1931. When citing Woolf’s diaries or letters I regularise unconventional spelling.

<sup>14</sup> To Philippa Woolf, September 29 1939, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975-79), 6.360. By ‘refugees’ Woolf here means clerks from Hogarth Press, which had been moved from London for fear of bombing; however, in London, they received several continental refugees, as will be seen.

<sup>15</sup> To Ethel Smyth, September 12 or 13 1939, *ibid.*, 6.358.

<sup>16</sup> July 25 1940, *The Diaries*, 5.305.

<sup>17</sup> To Philippa Woolf, 29 September 1939, *Letters*, 6.360.

<sup>18</sup> *Diaries*, 5.305.

<sup>19</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* [1941], ed. Frank Kermode (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> March 22 1938, *Diaries*, 5.131.

<sup>21</sup> To Ethel, 26 September 1939, *Letters* 3.359.

<sup>22</sup> To Edward Sackville-West, December 1 [1940], *ibid.*, 6.449.

<sup>23</sup> To Elizabeth Bowen Thursday [March 2 1939], *ibid.*, 6.320

<sup>24</sup> March 11 1939, *Diaries*, 5.208.

<sup>25</sup> The German (unknown) is identified as Podbielksi by Bell and McNeillie, *ibid.*, 5.208n, and his name appears on the Dunera list of internees, see Bartrop, p. 415.

<sup>26</sup> These were men who had been allowed out of prison on the basis that they would enlist, and by whom ‘every valuable was taken,’ see Bartrop, pp. 21, 162.

<sup>27</sup> The Dunera was often called ‘a hell-ship,’ see Patkin, p. 32.

<sup>28</sup> *Archive*, pp. 127-8.

<sup>29</sup> These are Walter Benjamin’s written words, as are all the italicised interjections that follow, ‘Oedipus or Rational Myth’ (1932), Michael W. Jennings et al, eds., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, 4 vols. (London: Harvard UP, 1996-2003), 2.2.579-80 (translation modified) / Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7 vols, ed. Rolf

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Tiedmann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972-1992) 2.393, 395.

<sup>30</sup> Stefan's date of 'capture' was June 28 1940. See NAA.MP1103/2, E39130.

<sup>31</sup> 'Brecht's *Threepenny Novel*' (1935), *Selected Writings*, 3.3 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 3.440.

<sup>32</sup> *Archive*, p. 134.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>34</sup> Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* [1927], ed. Margaret Drabble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 246.

<sup>35</sup> To Ethel, March 2 1936, *Letters*, 6.17. Woolf refers to a hoax effected by herself and five male friends in February 1910 when, disguised as the Emperor of Abyssinia and attendants, they were officially welcomed aboard HMS Dreadnought in Weymouth harbour. See Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1996), pp. 282-6.

<sup>36</sup> To Ethel [October 6 1932], *Letters*, 5.109.

<sup>37</sup> *Between the Acts*, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> September 15 1940, *Diaries*, 5.321.

<sup>39</sup> October 2 1938, *ibid.*, 5.178.

<sup>40</sup> July 12 1940, *ibid.*, 5.302.

<sup>41</sup> August 30 1939, *ibid.*, 5.232.

<sup>42</sup> To Ethel, January 6 1933, *Letters*, 5.146.

<sup>43</sup> January 29 and January 30 1939, *Diaries*, 5.202-3.

<sup>44</sup> To Julian Bell, March 11 1936, *Letters*, 6.19.

<sup>45</sup> 'German Letters' (written 1931-33, unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.466 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4.945.

<sup>46</sup> To Leonard Woolf, [18? March 1941], *Letters*, 6.481.

<sup>47</sup> May 25, 1940, *Diaries*, 5.288.

<sup>48</sup> July 7 1931, *ibid.*, 4.34. The woman's name is, in fact, Ruth Grüber who was American, though born to Russian emigrants.

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<sup>49</sup> May 31 1935, *ibid.*, 4.317.

<sup>50</sup> See Ruth Grüber, *Virginia Woolf, The Will to Create as a Woman* [1935] (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> August 2 1940, *Diaries*, 4.308.

<sup>52</sup> May 2 1934, *ibid.*, 4.212.

<sup>53</sup> 'To Gershom Scholem [August 24 1932], *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere (London: Harvard UP, 1992), p.17 / *Walter Benjamin–Gershom Scholem Briefwechsel, 1933-1940* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980), p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> 'Much Ado about Kasper' (1932), *Radio Benjamin*, ed. Lecia Rosenthal, tr. Jonathan Lutes et al (London: Verso, 2014) p. 247 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7.1.345.

<sup>55</sup> 'Children's Literature' (1929), *Selected Writings*, 2.1.250 (translation modified) / *ibid.*, 7.250.

<sup>56</sup> 'Street Trade and Markets in Old and New Berlin' (1929 or 1930), *Radio Benjamin*, p. 14 / *ibid.*, 7.77.

<sup>57</sup> *Archive*, p. 134.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>60</sup> Eiland and Jennings, pp. 622, 386, 407.

<sup>61</sup> See letter to his father, written from London. Geret Lurh (ed), *Was noch begraben lag* (Berlin: Bostelmann & Siebenhaar, 2000), p. 53.

<sup>62</sup> To Scholem, July 26 1932, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, tr. Manfred and Evelyn Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) p. 395 (translation modified / *Gesammelte Schriften Briefe*, p. 555.

<sup>63</sup> To Scholem, April 4 1937, *ibid.* p. 538 (translation modified) / *ibid.*, p. 729.

<sup>64</sup> To Gretel Adorno, July 27 1930, *Gretel Adorno and Walter Benjamin Correspondence 1930-1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz, trans. Wieland Hoban (London: Polity, 2008), p. 1 / *Gretel Adorno-Walter Benjamin Briefwechsel 1930-1940*, ed. Christophe Gødde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005), p. 200.

<sup>65</sup> To Adorno, c. December 2 1936, *ibid.*, p. 188 / *ibid.*, p. 275.

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<sup>66</sup> Bartrop, p. 191.

<sup>67</sup> *Archive*, p. 119.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>70</sup> 'Schiller and Goethe' (written c. 1906-12, unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime), Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller*, tr. Sam Dolbear et al (London: Verso, 2016), p. 8 (translation modified) / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7. 638.

<sup>71</sup> 'Karl Kraus' (1931), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.447 / *ibid.*, 2.354.

<sup>72</sup> All based on lectures given or topics discussed, see Bartrop, pp. 191, 195, 264, and Patkin, pp. 59-60.

<sup>73</sup> Stefan spent some time in Vienna as a young man, see Eiland and Jennings, pp. 543-4.

<sup>74</sup> Even as an adult, Benjamin was unable to make a cup of coffee, see 'Berlin Chronicle' (written 1932), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.596 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 6.466.

<sup>75</sup> Charlotte Wolff, *On the Way to Myself* (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 88-9, and *Hindsight* (London: Quartet Books, 1980), pp. 66-7, 146.

<sup>76</sup> Charlotte Wolff, *Studies in Hand-Reading* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1936), p. 90.

<sup>77</sup> To Julian Bell, December 17 1935, *Letters*, 5.452.

<sup>78</sup> To Ethel, January 16 1936, *Letters*, 6.5

<sup>79</sup> November 5 1935, *Diaries*, 4. 351; Baroness Nostitz was the niece of Paul von Hindenberg, the late President of Germany.

<sup>80</sup> To Ethel, August 10 1935, *Letters*, 5.423.

<sup>81</sup> September 22 1931, *Diaries*, 4.45.

<sup>82</sup> November 1 1935, *Letters*, 5.242.

<sup>83</sup> See Elizabeth Eddy, 'A Study of the Style of Mrs Virginia Woolf with Special Emphasis on the Her Thought Patterns,' MA Dissertation (University of Chicago, 1930), p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> Rickert writes that 'the root' of her approach, 'lies [...] in the methods of code analysis used in the Code and Cipher Section of the Military Intelligence in

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Washington during the war,' *New Methods for the Study of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), p. 5.

<sup>85</sup> This was the United States' first peacetime decryption organization, which ran from 1919 to 1929.

<sup>86</sup> To Vita, August 9 1933, *Letters*, 5.212.

<sup>87</sup> John Ulric Nef, *Search for Meaning* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1973), p. 147.

<sup>88</sup> To Elaine Robson, 26 September 1937, *Letters*, 6.174.

<sup>89</sup> To Dorothy Brett, July 8 1933, *ibid.*, 5.201.

<sup>90</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* [1931] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 161.

<sup>91</sup> Woolf remarks on the capacity of a Portable Underwood to misspell in letter to Julian Bell, *Letters*, 3.550.

<sup>92</sup> To Julian Bell, September 9 1934, *ibid.*, 5.329.

<sup>93</sup> *To the Lighthouse*, p. 172.

<sup>94</sup> See J. Beatson, 'Aliens, Enemy Aliens, and Friendly Enemy Aliens,' in J. Beatson and Reinhard Zimmermann (eds), *Jurists Uprooted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>95</sup> See Bartrop, p. 162.

<sup>96</sup> *Archive*, p. 124.

<sup>97</sup> To Scholem, December 5 1923. *Correspondence*, p. 222 / *Briefe*, p. 319.

<sup>98</sup> *Archive*, p. 134.

<sup>99</sup> To Scholem, December 31 1937, *Benjamin-Scholem*, p. 210 / *Briefwechsel, 1933-40*, p. 255.

<sup>100</sup> *Archive*, p. 149.

<sup>101</sup> 'Dream I' (written 1933, unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime), *The Storyteller*, p. 48 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4.431.

<sup>102</sup> See June 24 1939, *Diaries*, 5.220, and Adrienne Monnier, *The Very Rich Hours of Adrienne Monnier* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1976), pp. 490-1.

<sup>103</sup> To Vita, August 19 1939, *Letters*, 6.351.

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- <sup>104</sup> June 24 1939, *Diaries*, 5.220.
- <sup>105</sup> 'Hashish in Marseilles' (1932), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.675 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4.412.
- <sup>106</sup> 'Diary Entries, 1938,' *ibid.* 3.335 / *ibid.*, 6.532.
- <sup>107</sup> *To the Lighthouse*, p. 201.
- <sup>108</sup> To Stephen Spender, May 12 1935, *Letters*, 5.392.
- <sup>109</sup> To Vanessa Bell, May 7 1935, *Diaries*, 5.389.
- <sup>110</sup> May 9 1935, *Diaries*, 4.311.
- <sup>111</sup> Jacqueline Rose claims that Woolf 'raised her arm in salute.' See 'Smashing the Teapots,' *London Review of Books* (January 23 1997), 3.
- <sup>112</sup> 'The Task of the Critic' (written c.1931), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.549 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 6.172.
- <sup>113</sup> May 31 1935, *Diaries*, 4.317.
- <sup>114</sup> 'Karl Kraus' (1931), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.453 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2.362.
- <sup>115</sup> *Between the Acts*, p. 69.
- <sup>116</sup> To Adorno, July 20 1938, *Correspondence*, p. 572 / *Briefe*, p. 772.
- <sup>117</sup> October 30 1936, *Diaries*, 5.27.
- <sup>118</sup> *The Waves*, p. 167.
- <sup>119</sup> *Selected Writings*, 4.27 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1.550.
- <sup>120</sup> September 16 1932, *Diaries*, 4.124.
- <sup>121</sup> To Vita, August 19 1938, *Letters*, 6.351.
- <sup>122</sup> 'A Little History of Photograph' (1931), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.515 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2.375.
- <sup>123</sup> To Victoria Ocampo, June 26 1939, *Letters*, 6.342.
- <sup>124</sup> *The Waves*, p. 252.
- <sup>125</sup> See Bartrop, p. 174.

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>127</sup> *Archive*, p. 124.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 129

<sup>130</sup> *The Storyteller*, pp. 40-1 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4.423.

<sup>131</sup> Twice a day, the men were given twenty minutes on the upper deck, during which time they were forced, at bayonet point, to run, see Bartrop, p. 166.

<sup>132</sup> See Genesis 32.22-32.

<sup>133</sup> 'The Destructive Character' (1931), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.542 (translation modified) / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4.398.

<sup>134</sup> 'Demonic Berlin' (1930). *Radio Benjamin*, p. 25 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 7.87.

<sup>135</sup> See Bartrop, p. 199.

<sup>136</sup> *Archive*, p. 135.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>138</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 133

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>141</sup> See Eiland and Jennings, pp. 674-5, and Ingrid and Konrad Scheurmann, *For Walter Benjamin*, tr. Timothy Nevill (Bonn: AsKI, 1993), pp. 290-1.

<sup>142</sup> 'The Death of the Father' (written 1913 unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime), *The Storyteller*, p. 83 / *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4.724.

<sup>143</sup> See Bartrop, p. 199, and Pearl, p. 41.

<sup>144</sup> *To the Lighthouse*, p. 107.

<sup>145</sup> May 13, 1940, *Diaries*, 5.284.

<sup>146</sup> June 20, 1940, *ibid.*, 5.297.

<sup>147</sup> To Judith Stephen, August 22 1939, *Letters*, 6.352-3.



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- <sup>148</sup> *The Waves*, pp. 176-7.
- <sup>149</sup> To Leonard, March 18 1941, *Letters*, 6.481.
- <sup>150</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* [1925], ed. Stella McNichol (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 167.
- <sup>151</sup> *The Waves*, p. 192.
- <sup>152</sup> To Ethel, July 1 1936, *Letters*, 6.51.
- <sup>153</sup> March 13 1936, *Diaries*, 5.17.
- <sup>154</sup> To Ethel, March 27 1936, *Letters*, 6.23.
- <sup>155</sup> To Vita, June 8 1933, *Letters*, 5.194.
- <sup>156</sup> July 31 1939, *Diaries*, 5.228. Woolf is here quoting T. S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.'
- <sup>157</sup> *To the Lighthouse*, p. 237.
- <sup>158</sup> To Ethel, October 26 1937, *Letters*, 6.185.
- <sup>159</sup> 'Theological Criticism' (1931), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.430 (translation modified) / *ibid.*, 3.278.
- <sup>160</sup> 'Dreams' (1928), *Storyteller*, p. 32 / *ibid.*, 4.356.
- <sup>161</sup> 'The Handkerchief' (1932), *Selected Writings*, 2.2.660 / *ibid.*, 4.744.
- <sup>162</sup> *To the Lighthouse*, p. 124.
- <sup>163</sup> See Gisèle Freund, *The World in my Camera* (London: Dial Press, 1974), pp. 23-4.
- <sup>164</sup> *The Waves*, p. 198.