

THE HORSE WITH A GREEN TAIL

In *Between the Acts*, Isa Oliver picks up her father-in-law's copy of the *Times*, and reads:

"A horse with a green tail..." which was fantastic. Next, "The guard at Whitehall..." which was romantic and then, building word upon word she read: "The troopers told her the horse had a green tail; but she found it was just an ordinary horse. And they dragged her up to the barrack room where she was thrown upon a bed. Then one of the troopers removed part of her clothing, and she screamed and hit him about the face..."

That was real; so real that on the mahogany door panels she saw the Arch in Whitehall...¹

This rape actually occurred on the night of 27 April 1938.² The girl was aged fourteen and nine months at the time. As she and two companions were passing under an archway leading to the stables a soldier asked her if she wished to see a horse with a green tail. Leaving her companions, she accompanied him to the stables. There he tried to kiss her and got her into a loose box, but she resisted his advances. Trooper Pullin arrived and the first soldier left. The *Times* reports:

The girl said that she was crying and shouting, and he said if she shouted it would be the worse for her. She screamed and tried to push him away and punched him, and he said he would hit her back and hurt her, as he had been a champion boxer.

She testifies that then Pullin raped her. Afterwards he allowed her to leave, but she:

was intercepted by other soldiers and dragged upstairs to the barrack room and thrown on a bed and was again assaulted.

The trials of Troopers Pullin, Thomas, and Reeves took place at the Old Bailey on 27, 28, and 29 June 1938. Since Pullin was tried separately from Thomas and Reeves, the girl had to give her evidence twice. Pullin was found guilty of attempted rape. In sentencing him to 22 months, Mr. Justice Du Parcq expressed his regret that the maximum sentence for the offence was only two years, for, he said:

Sometimes an attempt to commit rape is as dreadful in its serious consequences as rape itself. The girl went through a terrible experience.

Thomas was found guilty of rape and Reeves was found guilty of aiding and abetting him. In addressing them, Mr. Justice Du Parcq said that he:

found it impossible to make any distinction between their cases. He had seldom heard of a more horrible case than this horrible offence.

Since Pullin was found not guilty of rape:

She went out of the place not yet ravished, although she had gone through an experience which must have reduced her to a condition of misery and despair. One would think that every Englishman, especially English soldiers, would be anxious to help her and protect her.

He then sentenced each to four years' penal servitude.

As a result of the rape, the girl became pregnant. Mr. Aleck Bourne, a respected surgeon at one of the London hospitals, openly performed an abortion. He in turn ended up at the Old Bailey, where he was tried on 18 and 19 July 1938. At that time abortion was completely illegal, except for the purpose of "preserving the life of the mother." Mr. Justice Macnaughten extended the meaning of that phrase when he directed the jury that if:

the probable consequence of the continuance of the pregnancy will be to make the woman a physical or mental wreck, the jury are quite entitled to take the view that the doctor, who, in those circumstances, and in that honest belief, operates, is operating for the purpose of preserving the life of the woman.³

The jury found the accused not guilty. On the 25th July the Minister of Health was asked in Parliament:

whether, as this was a test case, he intended introducing legislation to clarify or amend the law dealing with such offences.⁴

But nothing was done for almost another thirty years. Until the

passing of the Abortion Act 1967, *R. v. Bourne* remained the leading case on abortion in the United Kingdom. Since the act did not extend to Northern Ireland, it is still the leading case there.

The counsel for the defence in *R. v. Bourne* was a Mr. Oliver. Is this a coincidence?

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1. Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (Hogarth Press, 1941), p. 27.
2. See the *Times*, 28 June 1938, 11; 29 June 1938, 11; 30 June 1938, 11; 30 July 1938, 3.
3. [1938] 3 All E. R. 615 at 619.
4. The *Times*, 26 July 1938, 7.

Review: VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE FICTIONS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS, by Elizabeth Abel, University of Chicago Press, 1989

Virginia Woolf and Sigmund Freud—each a "formidable architect and carpenter of modernity" according to Catharine Stimpson in her Foreword to this book—have taught us to read and interpret the gaps and silences of discourse. Learning from both, Elizabeth Abel notes Woolf's insistence on the significance of what people "don't say," and uses the Freudian vocabulary of resistance, deferral, and displacement to interrogate Woolf's dismissive remarks about Freud in her diary and letters. Although she may well not have purposively read Freud's writings (that the Hogarth Press began to publish in 1922) until late in her life, Woolf herself acknowledged that psychoanalysis was frequently a topic of conversation among her friends and relatives. Abel's knowledgeable and powerful account of the parallel and contemporaneous trajectories of the fictions of psychoanalysis and Woolf's narratives argues that this concurrence may also have evoked considerable anxiety in Woolf.

Concerned not with influence but with intertextuality, Abel argues that Woolf's fiction "de-authorizes psychoanalysis, clarifying the narrative choices it makes, disclosing its fictionality." Following an account of Freud's narrativization of development (in the Oedipal story), the impact of his theory in England, and the challenges posed to it by Melanie Klein, Abel reads *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* as narratives that question the paternal genealogies of Freud (and, incidentally, anticipate object relations theory). The submerged story of Clarissa's evolution from Bourton to London is played against Freud's contemporaneous Oedipal narrative. In a strikingly fresh approach to the novel, Abel reveals how the development plot reverberates throughout. The pattern of Clarissa's move from a female-centered natural world to the heterosexual and androcentric world of London and marriage is paralleled, for example, by Rezia's life and ultimately modulates to a conflict between life and death that Clarissa resolves in her experience of Septimus's suicide. In a text haunted by the mother's absence, Abel sees Woolf as challenging Freud's normative categories of female sexuality and indicating "the price of equating female development with acculturation through the rites of passage established by the Oedipus complex."

In discussing *To the Lighthouse*, Abel seeks to correct the usual reading of James's relations with his mother and father as a Freudian Oedipal narrative and notes how Woolf "suggests the narrative repressions that inhere in the narrative of repression." Woolf's narratives of the 1920s seem much closer to the Kleinian developmental story than the Freudian. This is apparent in Lily Briscoe's aesthetic and psychological struggles, her story being played against those of James and Cam. Abel analyses Lily's paintings to demonstrate their connections with the controversies within psychoanalysis over the matrilineal and patrilineal status of cultural origins. Lily's position as the non-biological "daughter" of Mrs. Ramsay enables her to effect a union with the "mother" through the medium of paint, constituted for the artist by an interdependence of presence and absence.

In *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, Abel traces a shift in Woolf's narrative from maternal to paternal genealogies; this, I believe, is the most challenging aspect of her book and one that deserves a discussion that goes well beyond the presentation of the case herein. These discursive texts, Abel writes, "resituate her