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"A little article on Queen Elizabeth's nose for *Eve*" Virginia Woolf's "The Waxworks at the Abbey" between Tradition and Modernity[1]

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Abstract

Although scholars have often illustrated the multiple connections between high and low, elite and popular, tradition and modernity in modernist print culture, the enactment of such dichotomies in a women's commercial magazine like *Eve: The Lady's Pictorial* (1921-29) has not been adequately investigated. This paper analyses Woolf's essay "The Waxworks at the Abbey", published in *Eve* on 23 May 1928, in relation to other types of verbal and visual material (editorials, articles, adverts, pictures) in that particular issue as well as in others. In failing to present history and royalty in a serious or dignified manner, "The Waxworks at the Abbey" at the same time resonates with and undermines the idolisation evident in *Eve*'s many high society and celebrity pages, thus providing a counterpoint to the magazine's usual deference to class and cultural hierarchies.

Keywords: Celebrity Culture, *Eve: The Lady's Pictorial*, "The Waxworks at the Abbey", Virginia Woolf, Women's Magazines

In the new modernist studies, substantial critical attention directed to the central role played by magazines and periodical culture in the production, dissemination and reception of modernism has often intersected with a rethinking of the long-established dichotomy between highbrow and lowbrow,

[1] The present essay derives from the research on Virginia Woolf and middlebrow publishing venues such as *Vogue*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Eve: The Lady's Pictorial* which I have been conducting since 2019, and which I have had the occasion to present at various conferences, like those of the Associazione Italiana di Anglistica (September 2019), International Virginia Woolf Society (June 2021 and 2022), European Society for the Study of English (August-September 2021 and 2022), European Society for Periodical Research (September 2022).

and between intellectual and commercial culture. As a wave of revisionist scholarship has revealed how modernist authors adopted the commercial practices of the literary marketplace for the purpose of self-promotion, another prominent strand of research has traced modernism's emergence in, engagement with, and mediation by diverse forms of popular or mass culture, including fashion, cinema and celebrity, as well as mass-market publishing and commercial journalism, ranging from high-circulation newspapers and pulp magazines to medium-circulation smart magazines or slicks.[2] If modernist periodicals were often sites of fruitful exchange between mainstream and experimental, or elite, culture, this applies even more emphatically to women's magazines, which have traditionally been perceived as hybrid objects enjoying an ambiguous reputation as both cultural products and easily discarded commodities selling other commodities.

Feminine periodicals – often historically underrated and disregarded owing to presumptions about their contents, as well as inveterate prejudices concerning the supposedly domestic or commercially-driven interests of their female readerships – may apparently be said to epitomise that "increasingly consuming and engulfing" feminised mass culture against which, as Andreas Huyssen once famously posited, modernism "constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion" (1986, vii). However, the presence of both "high" and "low" content in interwar women's magazines and their active engagement with modernist culture question not only the notion of a polarity between modernism and mass or popular culture, but also the gendering of these fields of cultural production. In her illuminating *Modernism and Modernity in British Women's Magazines*, Alice Wood has demonstrated that "commercial women's periodicals debated, disrupted, and sustained contemporary hierarchies of high and low culture" by tracing their "participation in the construction of modernism's public profile" (2020, 2). Her informed analysis of interwar women's magazines in Britain highlights how publications such as *Vogue*, *Eve*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Harper's Bazaar* "disrupt the very notion of a struggle between intellectually demanding and easily consumable pleasures by encouraging their readers' enjoyment of both difficult and easy pleasures and presenting cultural activities perceived as highbrow and lowbrow side by side" (8). Other studies have equally emphasised that, in the interwar years, "a variety of women's periodicals – from upmarket fashion magazines to lowbrow pulps – promoted highbrow, middlebrow, and popular literary and cultural materials, often side by side", thus demonstrating that "periodicals produced for women readers were not unaware of the rise of modernism in the cultural landscape, and in various ways actively participated in its key discourses" (Clay 2018a, 11).

Apart from the different ways in which such highly commercialised, feminised texts trespassed freely on high culture, what scholarship on women's magazines has most frequently underlined is the inherent complexity of a form characterised by heterogeneity, multiplicity and even ambiguity. The authors of *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine* recognise the presence of "multiple contradictions in the representations of femininity offered within the pages of a single number" (Ballaster *et al.* 1991, 4), which appears as a foundational characteristic of the genre:

[2] The phrase "the new modernist studies" obviously refers to the title of a seminal article by Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz (2008). The rich literature on the multiple intersections between high modernism and mass or popular culture, with its particular emphasis on the crucial role played by periodicals, comprises at least such foundational studies as Dettmar and Watt 1996; Willison *et al.* 1996; Rainey 1998; Morrisson 2001; Collier 2006; Ardis and Collier 2008; Scholes and Wulfman 2010. On modernism and celebrity culture see, among others, Jaffe 2005; Hammill 2010; Goldman 2011; Rosenquist 2013.

> the strength of the magazine format from its manifestation has been its rejection of the single, the unified and the monolithic – in other words, its embracing of contradiction. […] Indeed, the form of the magazine – open-ended, heterogeneous, fragmented – seems particularly appropriate to those whose object is the representation of femininity. (7)

Margaret Beetham has compellingly illustrated how the woman's magazine, which she defines as a "fractured and heterogeneous" kind of text, "has developed in the two centuries of its history as a miscellany, that is a form marked by variety of tone and constituent parts" (1996, 1). She also reminds us that

> the magazine as 'text' interacts with the culture which produced it and which it produces. It is a place where meanings are contested and made. […] Just as the meaning of femininity was always being re-made, so was the meaning and the form of the magazine and its conventions. (5)

In the wake of these foundational studies, scholars have spoken about the "tensions and paradoxes" (Ritchie *et al.* 2016, 2) underlying such multifaceted documents, while Wood herself has emphasised that "as multi-authored texts, magazines are predisposed to articulate and generate conflicting views even within a single issue" (2020, 10) and are often characterised by "tensions between conservatism and radicalism, and between traditionalism and innovation" (177). "Magazines are rich texts, but they are also hugely diverse and intricately complex", Laurel Forster states in *Magazine Movements. Women's Culture, Feminisms and Media Form*, adding that "their breadth across a vast array of subjects and their interconnectedness through publishing house and associated industries such as advertising, present rather daunting objects of study" (2015, 1). If, as inherently eclectic and multivocal documents, feminine journals both invite and embody debate, then they undoubtedly require what Penny Tinkler has defined a "holistic approach" to the study of periodicals as hybrid textual forms: considering that "women's magazines are complex cultural products" and that "their pages harbour diversity, inconsistency, contradiction and tension" (2016, 26), such an approach "involves engaging with the different types of content within a magazine and how they are presented, particularly the relationship between text, images and design features" (31).

Although scholars have often illustrated the multiple connections between high and low, elite and popular, tradition and modernity in modernist print culture, as well as the radical potential of commercial, feminised periodicals to challenge the critical categories of "highbrow" and "lowbrow", "middlebrow" and "modernist" which continue to inform most critical debates, the enactment of such dichotomies in a women's magazine like *Eve: The Lady's Pictorial* (1921-29) has not been adequately investigated.[3] Vike Martina Plock has recently spoken about the "rhet-

[3] *Eve: A Magazine for Women* was launched by Sphere and Tatler Ltd. in September 1919 and rebranded only two years later, when it merged with *The Lady's Pictorial* and the *Women's Supplement* of *The Times* to become *Eve: The Lady's Pictorial*, a "unique journal for the modern woman" that aimed to ensure "the highest possible standard of excellence in all departments – Fashion, Art, Literature, Society, and Domestic Affairs" (*Eve*, 24 February 1921, iii). Then, only three years after the *Gentlewoman and Modern Life* was incorporated in 1926, publication as a feminine weekly was suspended and *Eve* was subsumed by the current affairs journal *Britannia* to create *Britannia and Eve*, a new periodical that labelled itself a "monthly journal for men and women" on its cover page. In spite of its vitality and versatility, this magazine has been largely neglected by scholars. To the best of my knowledge, apart from Wood's well-researched monograph, the only studies so far devoted to *Eve* in the various phases of its expansion are Plock 2018, to which my essay is much indebted; Sheehan 2018, examining *Eve* between 1919 and 1921 as a publication that "exemplified the tensions between novelty, repetition, and continuity that characterise periodicals and fashion" (132) in the interwar period; and Parkins 2018, focusing

oric of measured progressiveness" (2018, 36) of this periodical, which addressed a middle-class female readership interested in fashion, household management and society news as well as in the latest trends in literature and the arts, and which occasionally included features written either by or about modernist women as a way of accommodating progressive and unorthodox voices among its conservative columns, generally characterised by a thinly veiled promotion of traditional values, patriarchal standards and nationalist viewpoints. Being, as Cynthia L. White puts it, "aimed at the daughters of the New Rich" and embodying "the spirit of the 'roaring twenties' " (1970, 94), *Eve* mainly attended to the concerns of the modern middle-class woman of the postwar period who had domestic and maternal duties. However, contents such as the "Children's Page" introduced as early as 1921, the "Growing Up" and "Home Furnishing, Decoration and Management" series added respectively in 1926 and 1928, or advertisements for beauty products, domestic appliances, cooking classes and maternity wear, could be easily accommodated beside articles regarding the new possibilities that, from a social as well as a cultural point of view, opened up for women in the interwar period.

This argues for the enactment of a continuous tension or negotiation between tradition and modernity, and between highbrow intellectualism and popular culture, within the miscellaneous columns of this hybrid and extremely versatile periodical. In Plock's view, *Eve* "fashioned itself as a dialogic space that aimed to address the various, at times, contradictory experiences and interests of women in the interwar period" (2018, 29). These could range from the latest sartorial fashions showcased in regular features such as "Fashions of To-Day and To-Morrow", "Eve in PARadISe" or "Eve Goes Shopping"; various leisure activities made trendy in "Eve and her Car" or "Eve at Golf"; gossip on high society and royalty fuelled by multiple photo-pages depicting notable personages while hunting, skiing or attending the races, alongside more sophisticated cultural matters represented by fiction, essays and reports on shows and exhibitions, appearing in recurrent features like "Eve and her Books" and "Eve at the Play". We may therefore assume that *Eve*'s editors were particularly keen on recognising and sustaining their readers' taste for both intellectual and commercial culture, and for both established and unconventional outlooks. This mainly took place by means of a conscious strategy of exploitation, on the one hand, of the high cultural capital associated with leading authors of the time such as Elizabeth Bowen, Bryher [Annie Winifred Ellerman], Radclyffe Hall, Winifred Holtby, Storm Jameson, Rosamond Lehmann, Anita Loos, Rose Macaulay, Jean Rhys, Edith Sitwell, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Rebecca West, Virginia Woolf, and, on the other, of the potential of the latest trends from Paris designers, or of high society's glamorous lifestyle, to shape public taste and attract an affluent, leisured readership of upper-middle-class women within an ascending celebrity culture.

Wood posits that, in the interwar period, "illustrated magazines fuelled and sustained a public appetite for gossip and sensation, which placed successful writers under scrutiny alongside actors, singers, dancers, and (later) film stars, as well as the more traditional idols of royalty and aristocracy" (2020, 145). Commercial women's magazines, in particular, "did not always make sense of work by the modernist writers and artists they evoked and debated, but they participated in the systems of celebrity that sustained and shaped these modernists' public personalities nonetheless" (*ibidem*). Plock shares this opinion, maintaining that *Eve* "participated in the forging of an emerging celebrity culture that insisted on the construction of (women) writers as cultural icons when it commissioned works by or about well-known authors", displaying their talents

on *Britannia and Eve*. For brevity's sake, throughout this essay *Eve: The Lady's Pictorial* will be simply referred to as *Eve*. Moreover, the magazine's peculiar, sometimes even inconsistent, use of capitalisation and italicisation in articles' and features' titles will be scrupulously retained.

and using their well-established names "to suggest the journal's sophistication and refinement" (2018, 35). In line with Laura Doan's view that *Eve* was "at the forefront of promoting women's artistic achievements and activities" (2001, 183), what seems particularly remarkable – alongside the appearance of modernist content next to adverts and articles on domestic issues – is that the editorial apparatuses introducing these female writers invariably highlighted their cultural significance, outstanding accomplishments and high reputations.

If this, on the one hand, attests to modernism's availability to readers not typically associated with avant-garde art forms, on the other it helps to resituate a highbrow and sophisticated author like Virginia Woolf, whose forays into middlebrow culture have recently attracted critical attention.[4] This paper focuses on Woolf's essay "The Waxworks at the Abbey", published in *Eve* on 23 May 1928, in relation to other types of verbal and visual material (editorials, articles, adverts, pictures) in that particular issue as well as in others, chiefly the editorial comment celebrating Woolf as winner of the prestigious Femina Vie Heureuse Prize and accompanying her essay, a review of *To the Lighthouse* published on 1 June 1927, and the caricature of her by Paul Bloomfield which appeared on 4 April 1928. These contents show that the magazine played a key role in the emergence of a contemporary celebrity culture and enacted an interesting tension between the avant-garde and the mainstream, the unorthodox and the conventional, in both the representation of interwar culture and the portrayal of one of its main exponents as a high cultural icon. This attitude seems to be reflected in the subversive and eccentric depiction of great historical figures like English monarchs as ordinary or even ridiculous, attempted by Woolf in her essay. In failing to present history and royalty in a serious or dignified manner, "The Waxworks at the Abbey" at the same time resonates with and undermines the idolisation evident in *Eve*'s many high society and celebrity pages, thus providing a counterpoint to the magazine's usual deference to class and cultural hierarchies or, better, reflecting the productive dialogue between conservatism and progressiveness constantly enacted in its pages.

Woolf's essay – accompanied by an illustration by John Austen featuring members of the upper classes in typical Victorian dress with the architecture of Westminster Abbey dominating in the background – describes the experience of visiting two London attractions: the Royal United Services Museum in Whitehall and the waxwork funeral effigies of English royals and nobility housed in a small chapel at Westminster Abbey.[5] Imagining herself as a visitor to such

[4] In Plock's view, "the appearance of modernist features in *Eve* presents scholars of interwar literature with the opportunity to revisit debates about modernism's engagement with contemporary mass and periodical culture, and it encourages us to consider alternative audiences as recipients of modernist work" (2018, 30). However, Wood warns us that, although *Eve* and other "upmarket British fashion magazines facilitated the spread of modernism to new readers and equipped them with strategies to negotiate its complexities, […] they did not always present modernism as easy to access and understand. On the contrary, […] it was in the editorial interests of these magazines to position modernism as difficult and the preserve of a minority audience even as they extended this audience to include their readers" (2020, 99-100). On the complex relationship between Woolf and middlebrow print culture, see for instance Garrity 1999 and 2000; Luckhurst 1998; Pollentier 2010; Reynier 2019; Wood 2010.

[5] "The Waxworks at the Abbey" has unfortunately received scant critical attention. While Harvey 2010 refers to it in his account of Woolf's vivid interest in art galleries and cultural institutions, Schröder 2014 investigates Woolf's fascination with the Westminster Abbey waxworks, which are mentioned in her correspondence, essays and fiction. In *Orlando*, for instance, Queen Elizabeth I is described as "a lady whose eyes were always, if the waxworks at the Abbey are to be trusted, wide open" (Woolf 1992, 22), whereas in "The Art of Biography" Woolf compares "the majority of Victorian biographies" to "the wax figures now preserved in Westminster Abbey, that were carried in funeral processions through the street – effigies that have only a smooth superficial likeness to the body in the coffin" (1966, 222). A letter of 6 March 1928, furthermore, briefly records the emergence of her plan to contribute this short piece to *Eve*: "I've refused to write for the Evening Standard on the 9th year of marriage: and I've refused

important historical buildings and their exhibits, Woolf provides an implicitly satirical view of authority, sovereignty and canonical reverence for English monarchy and aristocracy. She peruses and gently pokes fun at the historical personages she describes and, by envisaging details about their lives and characters, or by focusing attention on apparently negligible particulars (the Duke of Wellington, for example, is "a very great man", but the only feature actually mentioned about him is his top hat), she also depreciates them, or considers them as ordinary people rather than public personalities elevated by power or social position. Thus, Queen Elizabeth I is at first presented as "dominat[ing] the room as she once dominated England" (Woolf 1928, 429) and as a figure eliciting reverential respect, as the regalia she holds also seem to impose: "leaning a little forward so that she seems to beckon you to come to her, she stands holding her sceptre in one hand, her orb in the other". However, she is immediately after imagined as being "immensely intellectual, suffering, tyrannical", and portrayed as incredibly human, "a drawn, anguished figure, with the pursed look of someone who goes perpetually in dread of poison or of trap". The observer, moreover, stands almost captivated by details mostly overlooked in typical representations of public figures from the past, which are foregrounded here thanks to the opportunity, granted by the visit to the waxworks, of being face to face with celebrated subjects: "her eyes are wide and vigilant; her nose thin as the beak of a hawk; her lips shut tight; her eyebrows arched; only the jowl gives the fine-drawn face its massiveness. […] She will not allow you to look at anybody else" (*ibidem*). One could also go as far as saying that the experience of catching glimpses of the famous or closely approaching otherwise unapproachable individuals, described by Woolf in her essay, mirrors that of *Eve*'s aspirational readers, who were allowed to encounter outstanding personalities – whether authors, actors, artists or members of high society – among the magazine's columns.

Furthermore, Woolf's description daringly breaks down oppositions between the ordinary and the celebrated, the low and the high, the common and the exceptional, simultaneously taking part in and challenging the periodical's promotion of celebrity. As Woolf reveals their less-than-polished side, the great and famous are often downsized in this odd historical gallery. For example, "William and Mary are an admirable pair of monarchs [...] though the King, unfortunately, is a little short in the legs" (*ibidem*). Queen Anne's aura is equally deflated as she looks as if

> it is only by accident that they have clapped a great crown on her hair and told her to rule a kingdom when she would so much rather have flirted discreetly – she was a pretty woman; or run to greet her husband smiling – she was a kindly one. Her type of beauty, in its homeliness, its domesticity, comes down to us less impaired by time than the grander style. (*Ibidem*)

In the same vein,

> that great beauty, the Duchess of Richmond, who gave her face to Britannia on the coins, is out of fashion now. Only the carriage of the little head on the long neck, and the simper and the passive look of one who has always stood still to be looked at assures us that she was beautiful once, and had lovers beyond belief. (*Ibidem*)

to write for the Encyclopaedia and on the other hand, I think I shall write a little article on Queen Elizabeth's nose for Eve" (Nicolson and Trautmann 1977, 468-69). "The Waxworks at the Abbey", however, actually appeared for the first time in the American review *New Republic* on 11 April 1928 (reflecting Woolf's habitual practice of publishing essays in more than one venue in order to increase income) and was posthumously included in the collection *Granite and Rainbow* (1958).

Parody is openly acknowledged as Woolf adds that even "the parrot sitting on its perch in a corner of the case seems to make its ironical comment upon all that". Eventually, she defines the exhibits as a "strange muddle and miscellany of objects, both hallowed and ridiculous", characterised by "incoherence" (*ibidem*). It seems evident that, in sharing minor, unflattering details of those more famous for their lofty reputations, or revealing ordinary aspects of extraordinary individuals, Woolf's article both resonates with and subverts the exaltation typical of *Eve*'s society and celebrity pages, which were chiefly aimed at a middle-class readership hungry for gossip and anecdote.

Bearing in mind that meaning in periodicals depends on context and essentially derives from the reciprocal influence of visual and textual elements of content, Sean Latham encourages us to see magazines as "complex systems capable of producing meaning through the unplanned and even unexpected interaction of their components" (2013, 3). The present essay posits that "The Waxworks at the Abbey" acquires particular significance precisely from the interplay between editorial, feature and commercial matter of the 23 May 1928 issue of *Eve* for which it was originally conceived, and from resonating with further references to Woolf in previous issues of the journal. It seems particularly noteworthy that Woolf's irreverent portrait of British royalty and nobility is placed immediately after one of *Eve's* typical frontispieces and the photo-feature "In Focus" (*Eve*, 23 May 1928, 428), respectively containing a glamorous portrait of beautiful society women posing gracefully and snapshots of the upper classes at the Kempton races or other happenings. Equally interestingly, "The Waxworks" is followed by the photo-page "Sweet are the Uses of Diversity" (430), featuring five pictures of famous people on both private and public occasions accompanied by captions in which their social role is defined by aristocratic title, parentage or marriage, and by the witty gossip column "In Society: *A chronicle of the World and his wife*" (431), flatteringly detailing the pursuits of the rich and famous including "Stars of this year's Covent Garden season photographed outside their hotel" (*ibidem*).

Balancing the light-hearted, frivolous tone of these as well as other contents, the magazine's sophistication and attendance to more "serious" intellectual matters is ensured in this issue by the special series "*Literary 'Discoveries'* " by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes (433, 482), two features on stage and screen titled "Second Thoughts on First Nights" (434-35) and "The Picture Play: A Weekly Review of Current Films" (435-36, 478), as well as the regular column "Talking *about* Books…" (436-37, 478), subtitled "*A Critical Causerie of Good Reading*" and directed by Richard King, popular essayist, journalist and brother of *Eve*'s first editor. Most remarkably, such pages are enriched with multiple captioned images of famous writers and actors, as well as inset text boxes offering "Wit and Wisdom from the New Books" (436) and a short blurb on King's selection of "The Book of the Week" (437). Both verbal and visual content contribute to the underpinning of an ever-expanding celebrity culture: one of the editorial captions, for example, presents Greta Garbo as "the famous Swedish star with her fellow countryman, Lars Hanson, in 'The Divine Woman', their latest success" (435). It seems evident, therefore, that *Eve*'s interest in cultivating good taste and refinement equally applied to fashion, design, lifestyle, etiquette, as well as literature and the arts, which accounts for the choice to commission a renowned and highbrow author like Virginia Woolf to contribute a witty and brilliant piece. Moreover, this also confirms Wood's view that "within *Eve*, […] it was modernism's perceived uniqueness and exclusivity that were prized" (2020, 89). By regularly showcasing modernist celebrities and their accomplishments, "the magazine gives its readers the illusion of access to […] the sophisticated high cultural sphere these figures represent" (90).

As was often the case, moreover, this issue combines content that presents women as modern subjects with content that reinforces traditional models of femininity. The cover image of

"Lady Annaly and the Hon. Elizabeth White", both with fashionable bobbed hair and stylish dress, is just one of the many portraits of glamorous high society women posing together with their children and underpinning the ideal of respectable femininity and motherhood generally conveyed through *Eve*'s heterogeneous content.[6] The editorial caption on this frontispiece informs the magazine's aspirational readership that:

> Lord and Lady Annaly's daughter made her bow to the world in 1923. She has a small brother, christened Luke according to family custom. To-morrow, May 24, Lady Annaly takes part in the Pre-Raphaelite Ball which does homage to the centenary of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's birth by reproducing as tableaux some of the poet painter's most famous pictures. (*Eve*, 23 May 1928, n.p.)

It seems clear, therefore, that both words and image work together to create a composite portrait in which female representatives of the aristocracy are inevitably tied on the one hand to the rituals and social conventions of their class, and on the other to the male members of their family legitimating their position within that class. It is equally noteworthy, however, that *Eve*'s usual appraisal of women's accomplishments in roles that also fell outside the domestic sphere, such as the arts, literature and sport, becomes manifest here through special mention of Lady Annaly's taking part in a public event which elevates frivolous entertainment to a performance characterised by high cultural aspirations. By mentioning the Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Eve* assumed and at the same time enhanced its aspirational readers' intellectual sophistication and refined knowledge of art and literature, precisely as it did by making reference to recent books, plays and art exhibitions, or printing the work of a high modernist author like Woolf.

Although, on this cover page, woman's fame essentially derives from class status, it is equally instructive that, in recognising that women could successfully play roles other than those of wife and mother, the 23 May 1928 frontispiece resonates with other types of content within the same issue, such as the regular feature "Eve *at* Golf" (464, 466, 482), or "*The* Brave *and the* Fairway" (438), a page showing pictures of female golfers in sportswear either playing or holding trophies as signals of their success, accompanied by editorial captions praising their achievements as competitors in the Glamorganshire Ladies' Open Championship and other sport events. Indicating the availability of new roles and new models and standards of femininity for women of the interwar period, many of the female figures portrayed here and mentioned in the captions are not only skilled in sport but also unmarried. One of them in particular, a certain Miss Cumberledge, is most notably photographed while defiantly smoking in a casual pose, insouciant about the camera.[7] These images of women in motion signal feminine modernity and contrast, on the one hand, with the more traditional, static photographs of society women posed gracefully, for instance, in the features "Au Choix: *Personal and pictorial occasions*" (447) or "Received by Their Majesties: *People who went to Court*" (448), and, on the other, with the stylised fashion sketches of slender models with elongated necks and tiny feet appearing on pages such as "New Notes in Fashion's Spring Song" (442), "*The* Philosophy *of* Fashion: *The life we lead, the clothes we wear*" (443, 478), "Millinery *of the* Moment" (460), "Aristocrats *of* Anglicism" (461), as well as in the regular feature "Eve *goes* Shopping" (472).

[6] Wood attests that, in *Eve* and other feminine periodicals of the interwar period, society photographs often emphasised women's roles as wives and mothers, and particularly that "*Eve*'s society pages routinely defined aristocratic or celebrity women through their husband's identity, property, or achievements" (2020, 129).

[7] Tinkler 2016 offers an interesting analysis of representations of young women smoking in interwar female periodicals as an application of the holistic approach to the study of magazines she proposes in her seminal essay.

Again, this variegated verbal and visual content makes the choice of a celebrity author like Virginia Woolf as the most prestigious contributor to this issue (the other is the popular novelist, political activist and socialist Ethel Mannin) not in the least surprising, considering her reputation as an established, though non-conventional, modern writer particularly concerned with the question of women's subjugation in a patriarchal society. Other features, however, contrast with such progressive outlooks and insist on marriage and housewifery as the most viable careers for contemporary women. The regular photo-page "Getting Married: *Interesting weddings and engagements*" (444) announces several recent events concerning high society couples with snapshots of ceremonies or brides-to-be, combining *Eve*'s appetite for gossip and society news with its generally explicit promotion of traditional gender and class roles. Furthermore, the inclusion of articles on "*Home Furnishing and Equipment*" (" 'The End of a Perfect Day' ", 455), "*Constructive Furnishing and Decoration*" ("*Fireplaces* without a *Fire*", 456-57), gardening ("Considering the Cinerarias: *How they grow and flourish*", 439) and even the presence of a seasonal recipe (458-59) seem again to confine women to traditional spaces inside the domestic sphere.

Thus, while some of the features in this issue enthusiastically acknowledge female accomplishments in different domains, taken together the fashion and domestic contents of *Eve* pose problems about the connection between femininity and appearance or beauty, and between femininity and domesticity, which is presented at the same time as taken for granted according to standardised gender roles, and difficult to attain or perpetually in the making. Beetham contends that "femininity is always represented in the magazines as fractured, not least because it is simultaneously assumed as given and as still to be achieved" (1996, 1). It seems remarkable that in this as well as in other *Eve* issues, for instance, being a fashionable lady or the perfect housewife is characterised as something requiring special training, which the magazine is supposed to provide. The regular feature "Eve *goes* Shopping", containing various tips for choosing the best beauty treatments or the most appropriate outfit for every occasion, dogmatically states, for instance, that "an absolutely indispensable garment to all women who desire to achieve or maintain a reputation for being well dressed may well be styled the 'Three in One' " (*Eve*, 23 May 1928, 472). Similarly, an article of the "Home Decoration, Furnishing and Management" series, titled "The Absent-minded Guest" and signed by *Eve*'s expert in household matters Catherine Ives, is summarised by an editorial subheading in the form of a pearl of wisdom: "the hostess who provides an emergency shelf containing all the things that absent-minded guests of both sexes are apt to forget usually finds that her guests remain charming and her household charmed" (453).

Variety also applies to the advertising and commercial content of *Eve*. As Beetham reminds us, throughout their history "not only were periodicals themselves commodities, they helped to create a commodity culture" (1996, 9). Feminine periodicals, in particular, positioned women as both readers and purchasers of the magazine's text as one particular commodity allowing entrance into a world of commodities, all represented as essential to the task of being perfectly feminine. *Eve*'s regular ads for clothes, accessories, jewellery, beauty products, hairpieces and department stores selling all of these, along with infant feeding and children's wear, show how the notion of femininity was closely linked to consumption, appearance (with visibility produced precisely through the purchase of commodities) and traditional roles for women as mothers or objects of male gaze and desire. Nevertheless, several advertisements in the 23 May 1928 issue also tie womanhood to modernity, novelty, originality and sophistication. Coty's newest fragrance, "L'Aimant", is presented as "the fragrance of the Moderns! A perfume that vividly expresses the woman of to-day – vital – glowing – magnetic" (467). Similarly, *Eve*'s readers can

rest assured that beauty treatments at Nan Stuart's "Institut de Beauté de l'Elegance Salons" might relieve the "frayed nerves" that are "the inevitable lot of all who lead the busy life which engulfs modern women" (472), or that, in buying an Ermeto watch, they can secure "the stylish watch for the modern age" (479).

In addition to the way in which magazines represent composites of visual and verbal form exposing readers to a plurality of often contradictory voices and viewpoints, scholars have variously highlighted that fashion periodicals prizing modernity and exclusivity in relation to cultural matters as well as style often cultivated the public personae of contemporary writers and artists as highbrow celebrities. The showcasing of modernist authors in interwar women's magazines frequently encouraged their reception as difficult, elite, avant-garde intellectuals and emphasised the high cultural cachet associated with their writing while simultaneously making them more accessible to the magazine's non-specialist audience. As Faye Hammill has noted about *Vanity Fair*, "the modernists' growing cultural capital consolidated the smart magazines' reputations as taste-makers, and allowed them to participate extensively in the making of modernist reputations" (2010, 135). However, the visibility granted to modernist artists and authors in sophisticated, medium-circulation publications was part of a mutual exchange: while these periodicals moulded and marketed modernist personalities for their readers' consumption, they established themselves as platforms that in turn provided literary celebrities with a means to acquire prominence and promote themselves to a wider readership.

Whether notable aristocrats, writers or stars of stage and screen, *Eve* cultivated the status of contemporary celebrities in "the distinctive modern sense" defined by Daniel Boorstin as "a person who is known for his well-knownness" (1961, 57). In this regard, it seems interesting to note that Woolf's "The Waxworks at the Abbey" was introduced by a caption presenting the author as the distinguished "winner of the much-coveted 'Femina' Prize with her brilliant novel, 'The Lighthouse' [*sic*]" (*Eve*, 23 May 1928, 429).[8] Besides recognising her talent, sanctioned by a prestigious literary prize awarded each year by an exclusively female jury, this editorial comment employs the notion of brilliance frequently associated with Woolf's flair and role as leading light of the literary elite in other women's magazines – chiefly *Vogue* and *Good Housekeeping* – which fuelled her celebrity and constructed her public profile in the interwar period. Moreover, the editor's subtitling of Woolf's essay as "a pen picture of the Past – inspired by the effigies of the Lordly Ones – shifting from the sublime to the ridiculous, from a beckoning Queen to an old top hat!" (*ibidem*) acknowledges her skilfulness in drawing verbal portraits, her irreverent satire as well as her merging of high and low, tradition and modernity.

The publication of Woolf's "The Waxworks at the Abbey" in May 1928 had somewhat been prepared by her appearance – through text as well as image – in at least two previous issues of *Eve*. A caricature of Woolf by the artist Paul Bloomfield was inset within King's well-established column "Talking about Books…" on 4 April 1928, accompanied by an editorial caption identifying *To the Lighthouse* as "one of the three books by women writers selected for the final award of the French Femina prize" (17). This special mention, along with the recognition that "she and her husband, Leonard Woolf, run the Hogarth Press" (*ibidem*), situate Woolf at the

[8] Plock notes that, in *Eve*, references to contemporary and modernist authors "are unfortunately marred by errors and misspellings that might indicate unfamiliarity with the contents sporadically advocated" (2018, 30). She explicitly mentions the examples of Rosamond Lehmann's first name misspelled as "Rosamund" in a feature dated 4 May 1927, of Radclyffe Hall's "Femina Prize" novel retitled "Adam's Bread" on 29 August 1928, of Sylvia Townsend Warner as the author of a book called "Solly Willowes", mentioned in the 18 August 1926 issue, along with Woolf as writer of "The Lighthouse".

forefront of the contemporary intellectual scene by acknowledging her talent as both author and publisher, while the line-drawn cartoon depicts her in profile with elongated neck, oversized nose and eye, and hair drawn back to reveal an abnormally high brow. Wood comments that "the image presents a discerning, awkward face that mimics photographs of Woolf in circulation in the press while exaggerating her features to suggest intellectualism and her upper-middle-class status" (2020, 155). As part of a series of caricatures of writers by Bloomfield which appeared in *Eve* between 1927 and 1928, this image suggests the magazine's often light-hearted and effervescent treatment of celebrity, while also reflecting and boosting Woolf's reputation as a notable but difficult, out of reach modern author, associated with high intellectual culture.[9]

A review of *To the Lighthouse* published in *Eve* on 1 June 1927 similarly called attention to the complexity of Woolf's writing and its deviation from conventional fictional norms. Selected by Richard King as "The Book of the Week", the novel was discussed in a mixed review that eulogises it as "interesting from beginning to end", despite having "practically no story at all". "Scarcely any plot – and yet most thrilling", King comments, "it takes the characters more than ten years to get to the Lighthouse however, although they plan to go there on the morrow in the first chapter!". Along with her experimental treatment of time and narrative, the critic praises Woolf's mastery in portraying the inner life of her characters – "the characters themselves! One does not actually see them; but nevertheless, one gets to know them so intimately it is rather as if we had been given the latchkey into their minds" – and the novel itself as a "story of mental workings, rather than one in which a certain set of people do certain things". Evoking the language of psychoanalysis so often associated with the author, King concludes that "Mrs. Woolf has an uncanny genius for creating mental 'atmosphere', so that ideas, emotions, 'dreams', possess as much 'drama' as when even murder is afoot" (505). While the emphasis on Woolf's psychologism situates her within the literary avant-garde, the mention of her genius imparts her perceived skilfulness and significance as a highbrow intellectual.

King's review of *To the Lighthouse* was followed by another brief mention of Woolf's refinement and high intellectual lineage. In the "Talking *about* Books…" column from 19 October 1927, which included a photographic profile of Leonard Woolf, she was referred to as "Sir Leslie Stephen's daughter" and the "distinguished wife" of "an intellectual and a man of taste" – "the literary editor of 'The Nation' " and author of "many excellent essays, some of which have now appeared in book form" (154) – with whom she co-founded the Hogarth Press. It is particularly instructive that such kind of showcasing echoes *Vogue*'s promotion of Woolf's public persona between 1924 and 1926, when the magazine published five of her essays, along with two portraits and one mention in the photographic feature "We Nominate for the Hall of Fame" (May 1924), where she was praised as the daughter of the eminent Sir Leslie Stephen and a sister of Vanessa Bell, for her achievement in running the Hogarth Press, for being a distinguished author of admirable fiction and criticism, and chiefly for representing "the most brilliant novelist of the younger generation" (qtd. in Garrity 2000, 200).

It seems clear, therefore, that Woolf's reception in *Eve* shows her establishment as a high cultural icon owing to her literary accomplishments and her belonging to the intellectual elite, a process in which the periodical actively participated by means of a textual and visual

[9] Catherine Clay interestingly mentions the appearance of a series of "Lampoons of Literary Celebrities" in the feminist magazine *Time and Tide* between October 1927 and January 1928, with cartoons by Bloomfield and text by Sylvia Townsend Warner. Among these was another caricature of Woolf, published on 25 November 1927 and captioned "Mrs. Woolf is Visited by some Uncommon Readers". According to Clay, in this picture "the supposed inaccessibility of her works" is "accentuated by the awkwardness of her pose" (2018b, 124).

representation of her profile and her work. The way Woolf was promoted as a literary celebrity among the magazine's columns through the verbal as well as the visual medium certainly worked to consolidate and publicise her image as a modernist of serious imprint. However, it also cemented *Eve*'s role in shaping public taste in matters concerning both intellectual and commercial culture. Together with a constant negotiation between tradition and modernity, such appetite for celebrity accompanied by a peculiar merging of "high" and "low" contents definitely contributed to the distinctive look of this successful and versatile feminine periodical in the interwar years.

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