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In *Three Guineas* (1938), Virginia Woolf reminds her interlocutor that it was only in 1919 that women gained access to the professions: 'The door of the private house was thrown open. In every purse there was, or might be, one bright new sixpence in whose light every thought, every sight, every action looked different'.[1] This is a reference to the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, passed at a moment when Woolf was launching into her own workplace adventure, with the founding in 1917, along with her husband Leonard, of their joint publishing house, the Hogarth Press. While the 1919 landmark legislation addressed the role of women entering civil and judicial office specifically, its impact on women's roles in public life was much broader; coming into force at a moment when women's relationship to the workplace had undergone radical changes as a result of World War One.[2]

Publishing was not a recognised profession as such, but was widely known as the 'gentleman's profession', and Woolf's co-founding of her own small press had few comparisons in the commercial publishing world.[3] When the Publishers' Association was founded in 1895 for instance, no women led any of the forty-nine publishing houses involved.[4] But in the landscape of small presses and little magazines, women's

1 Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, ed. Michele Barrett (London: Penguin, 1993), 130.
2 Mari Takayanagi, 'Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919', in *Women's Legal Landmarks: Celebrating the History of Women and Law in the UK and Ireland* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 133–8. See also Ray Strachey's 1928 *'The Cause': a Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1969), especially chapter XVIII, 'The War Years: 1914–1918', 337–49.
3 For more on women publishers in this period see Simone Murray, '"Deeds and Words": The Woman's Press and the Politics of Print', *Women: a Cultural Review* 11/3 (2000), 197–222.
4 For these founding members see Iain Stevenson, *Book Makers: British Publishing in the Twentieth Century* (London: British Library, 2010),13.

leadership in publishing was more visible. Woolf could look back to the example of Emily Faithfull's Victoria Press (founded in 1860) and the suffrage presses in England, and across the Atlantic to, among others, Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson's *Poetry* and Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap's *Little Review*, launched in 1912 and 1916 respectively.[5] As she would further point out in *Three Guineas*, the possibilities of the private press – 'not beyond the reach of a moderate income' – were endless for both readers and writers.[6]

This chapter considers the role of some of the first women who worked alongside Virginia and Leonard Woolf at the Hogarth Press. Current scholarship has unearthed important insights about Virginia Woolf's work as compositor and publisher at the Hogarth Press and how this shaped her own writing.[7] But much less is known about the women the press employed: those who worked in the Woolfs' orbit as typesetters, secretaries, managers, and book travellers. This chapter reflects on classed and gendered patterns of labour and explores how the Woolfs operated as employers in the 1920s, mapping these shifts onto the wider context that saw the press move from small, coterie press to medium-sized publishing house. Examining the roles of a number of relatively unknown women workers employed by the Woolfs – especially Marjorie Thomson (Joad) (c. 1898/9–1931) – we consider the complexities of working relationships at the press and what this has to tell us about modernist publishing in the period.[8] As Ursula McTaggart argues powerfully, the Hogarth Press was 'a site of labor

5 For seminal work see Jayne E. Marek, *Women Editing Modernism: 'Little' Magazines & Literary History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995) and Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

6 Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 223.

7 See Julia Briggs, *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); essays by Ted Bishop, Michael Black, Aimee Gasston, Karina Jakubowicz, Alexandra Peat and Megan Beech in Nicola Wilson and Claire Battershill, eds., *Virginia Woolf & the World of Books: The Centenary of the Hogarth Press* (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2018); and Alice Staveley, *Modernism in the Making: Virginia Woolf and the Hogarth Press* (forthcoming) and 'Virginia Woolf and the Hogarth Press', in Anne Fernauld, ed., *Oxford Handbook to Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

8 There is confusion over the spelling of Marjorie's maiden name. J. H. Willis, in his major study of the Hogarth Press, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as publishers: The Hogarth Press, 1917-41* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992) has her as Marjorie Thompson Joad. In Virginia Woolf's *Diaries*, she appears as Miss Tomson, which her editors correct to Thomson. We follow the latter here.

and power as well as one of dialogue'.[9] How does a closer look at the early women workers of the press help elucidate this triad?

It is well known that the Hogarth Press began as a domestic enterprise - part hobby, part creative and artistic pursuit – in the context of wartime. The Woolfs had first discussed buying a printing press in 1915. Virginia had experience in book-binding and for inspiration they had the model of Roger Fry's Omega Workshops, which began publishing 'works of a special character' in limited editions in early 1916, as well as the tradition of fine printing and craftsmanship, pioneered by William Morris and C. R. Ashbee among others, from which Omega took its cue.[10] The Woolfs built their reputation, as Leonard put it, upon publishing 'short works which commercial publishers could not or would not publish' and initially conceived of the press as being a vehicle 'for all our friends [sic] stories'.[11] The collaborations and friendships that animated the Press's earliest publications in its first years of operation – as the Woolfs started self-publishing by reaching out to acquaintances for unpublished work they might use – was mirrored in the social familiarity of its earliest staff. As the press became more of a professional outfit, the class background of its employees and their corresponding distance from the Woolfs shifted accordingly.

Apprentice compositors

Publication no. 1 of the Hogarth Press was a thirty-two page pamphlet, *Two Stories*, comprising 'Three Jews' by Leonard and 'The Mark on the Wall' by Virginia, with four

9 Ursula McTaggart, '"Opening the Door": The Hogarth Press as Virginia Woolf's Outsiders Society', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 29/1 (2010), 66.
10 Roger Fry, *Burlington Magazine* (November 1915), 80; cited in David H. Porter, *The Omega Workshops and the Hogarth Press: an Artful Fugue* (London: Cecil Woolf, 2008), 12.
11 Leonard Woolf, *Downhill All The Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919 to 1939* (London: Hogarth Press, 1968), 66. Virginia Woolf to Lady Robert Cecil, October 1916, in Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann, eds, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1976), 120. For a summary of the different origin stories see Ted Bishop, 'Getting a Hold on Haddock', in Wilson and Battershill, eds, *Virginia Woolf & the World of Books*, 5–6.

woodcut illustrations by the Slade-trained artist Dora Carrington.[12] It was written and printed at home by the Woolfs on a small platen hand-press that they set up in their dining room in Richmond. They worked collaboratively on the project between May and July 1917, with Virginia setting the type and later stitching and binding the paper covers, and Leonard doing the printing. The Woolfs taught themselves how to set type and print from a sixteen-page pamphlet which they received when they purchased their press. They had enquired about printing lessons from St. Bride's in Fleet Street but found that printing as a skilled trade could only be taught to trade union apprentices or, as Leonard put it, 'that the social engine and machinery made it impossible to teach the art of printing to two middle-aged, middle-class persons'.[13] Both were inspired by the process of printing *Two Stories*. As Virginia wrote to her sister Vanessa Bell as they embarked on the process of typesetting:

> One has great blocks of type, which have to be divided into their separate letters, and founts, and then put into the right partitions. The work of ages, when you mix the h's with the ns, as I did yesterday. We get so absorbed, we can't stop; I see that real printing will devour one's entire life.[14]

Virginia reported to her friends that even setting up and printing their first circular was 'exciting, soothing, ennobling and satisfying'.[15] But to take on longer and more ambitious works, they needed assistance. This came initially, as would the next few works they published, from within their familiar Bloomsbury networks.

Alix Sargant-Florence (better known as Alix Strachey after her marriage in 1920) and Barbara Hiles (Bagenal, after she married Nick Bagenal in 1918), were the two earliest

12 See 'Two Stories, written and printed by Leonard and Virginia Woolf' <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/two-stories-written-and-printed-by-virginia-and-leonard-woolf> accessed 1 April 2020.
13 Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911 to 1918* (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), 233.
14 Virginia Woolf, 26 April 1917, *Letters*, ii, 150.
15 Virginia Woolf to Margaret Llewelyn Davies, 2 May 1917, *Letters*, ii, 151.

Hogarth Press assistants. As the biographer Hermoine Lee points out, Alix and Barbara were part of a younger, adventurous generation who cut their hair short and wore trousers, and whom Virginia found intimidatingly modern.[16] Along with Mary Hutchinson, Katherine Mansfield, Dora Carrington and Fredegond Shove, Woolf dubbed these women 'Bloomsbury Bunnies' and 'cropheads'. She had met the American-born Alix via the latter's future husband James Strachey in June 1916 and by July the following year, as the Woolfs grappled with the problem of including Dora Carrington's woodcuts in their first publication, they had already discussed with Alix that she might work at the press to help speed up the work.[17] They had agreed to print a long short story by New Zealand émigré Katherine Mansfield. *Prelude* would become twice as long as *Two Stories*, and at sixty-eight pages was too long to print one page at a time on their own machine. Leonard reached out to a local jobbing printer, F. T. McDermott – an ex-compositor at a London printing firm – who offered them access to his larger treadle platen machine and allowed the Woolfs to borrow the chases so they could set and lock up four pages of *Prelude* at a time at home, then carry them over to his nearby premises to print.

Alix Sargent-Florence came to the Woolfs in her mid-twenties in October 1917 as an apprentice compositor for the Hogarth Press. In Virginia Woolf's description (confirmed by Sargent-Florence herself) on Alix's first day, after a quick demonstration the Woolfs took the dog for a walk and left her to it. On their return, the twenty-five-year-old Bedales, Slade Art School and Newnham Cambridge graduate 'solemnly & slowly explained that she was bored, & also worried by her 2 hours composing' and announced to the Woolfs that she 'wished to give it up'.[18] Realising quickly that it was not the 'introduction to literary work' she'd hoped for, she quit that same day.[19] Despite

16 Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage, 1997), 384.
17 Virginia Woolf to Dora Carrington, 13 July 1917, *Letters*, ii, 162. Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, i, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 41, n.9.
18 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*,i, 61.
19 Alix Strachey in *Recollections of Virginia Woolf by her Friends* (London: HarperCollins, 1972), 115, quoted in Wayne K. Chapman, '"L.'s Dame Secretaire": Alix Strachey, the Hogarth Press and Bloomsbury

Sargent-Florence's unsuccessful foray into type-setting, Leonard Woolf kept her on as a research assistant for his study of *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1920), in which capacity she appears to have excelled.[20] Her relationship with the Woolfs continued; she is best known as the translator (with husband James) of twenty-four volumes of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychoanalytical Works of Freud*, published by the Hogarth Press beginning in 1924.

Another early 'apprentice' was Barbara Hiles (Bagenal), who came to 'take up printing' with the Woolfs in November 1917, after Sargant-Florence's departure.[21] Like Sargant-Florence, Hiles trained at the Slade and was another close connection, involved romantically with their friends Saxon Sidney Turner and Nick Bagenal. It was agreed that Hiles was to work three days a week, be given lunch and tea, her fares (when she didn't cycle over from Wimbledon) and a share in any profits.[22] Experienced in artistic and manual work, she had previously worked at Omega as a seamstress under Vanessa Bell who was in charge of dressmaking. This is a reminder that the Hogarth Press took its cue from the Omega workshops in many respects; other personnel shared with Omega included Dora Carrington and Roger Fry, both of whom provided woodcuts for early Hogarth Press publications.[23]

With the possibility of printing on the larger machines at McDermott's Prompt Press, Hiles helped the Woolfs pick up the pace with setting *Prelude*. To give a sense of how long hand printing took in the early days of the press, the Woolfs 'took a proof of the first page of K.M.'s story [...]' on 9 October, 1917; on 25 January, 1918, Barbara and Virginia 'diss' four pages together and 'L printed off the second 4, at the printers' at which point Virginia estimates it will take five weeks to complete the full text; on 17 June, 1918,

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Pacificism, 1917–1960', in Wayne K. Chapman and Janet M. Manson, eds., *Women in the Milieu of Leonard and Virginia Woolf: Peace, Politics and Education* (New York: Pace University Press, 1998),42.
20 For more on Sargent-Florence's research for Leonard Woolf see Chapman, '"L's Dame Secretaire"'.
21 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, i, 67.
22 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, i, 79, n. 29.
23 For more on these connections see Porter, *The Omega Workshops and the Hogarth Press*.

Woolf 'finished setting up the last words of Katherine's stories--68 pages'.[24] Barbara and Virginia composed in different rooms, but Barbara's first few days were a struggle. Her lines were full of errors - her first few pages had to be totally re-done - and she refused payment for her first week.[25] The Woolfs were not certain they could keep her on, and although Hiles gained some proficiency, Virginia found her presence a strain. Mid-December, Hiles left to work as a temporary governess for Vanessa Bell, and Woolf had few regrets.[26] While the 'marriage bar' might not have strictly pertained here given there was a lifting of restrictions due to the war, Barbara's subsequent marriage to Nick Bagenal and the birth of their child likely also played a role in her decision to leave the Woolfs' employ.

These first experiments in employing women assistants at the Hogarth Press are typical of the informalities of small press publishing. They are also indicative of the Woolfs' habits as employers and a reflection of their lack of experience in working collaboratively on the press, outside of their marital relationship. Unused to what Leonard and Virginia relished as the 'materially attractive' 'implements of printing', neither Sargant-Florence nor Hiles appears to have taken the pleasure in hand printing that the Woolfs did.[27] Both were young, educated upper middle-class women with various options (Sargant-Florence for instance was being courted to work for the Women's Co-operative Movement by Margaret Llewelyn Davies when she agreed to work at the Hogarth Press). For their part, Sargant-Florence and Hiles were clearly attracted by the Woolfs and their literary sensibilities but seemingly disheartened – unlike their employers – by the actual labour of printing. Throwing them in at the deep-end with little training also seems not to have been successful. In *Mrs Woolf & the Servants*, Alison Light describes the Woolfs' dependency on the working-class women who lived and worked in their home: 'without all the domestic care and hard work which

24 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, i, 56, 113, 160.
25 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, i, 83, 85.
26 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, i, 91.
27 Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again*, 234.

servants provided there would have been no art, no writing, no "Bloomsbury"'.[28] The early days of the Hogarth Press make an interesting adjunct to this, as an initially domestic enterprise that required the paid labour of others in the home to succeed. In a later account of her brief time at the press while they were printing *Prelude*, Barbara Bagenal recalled how Leonard had 'turned his back when he'd slipped her half a crown, her wages'.[29] If domestic servants were an indispensable but at least traditionally accepted part of life for an upper-class household, paying friends from your own social circles to assist you in hand printing was an uncomfortable and ambiguous experiment.

Managers and Secretaries

By August 1920, the Hogarth Press had published ten works, including T. S. Eliot's *Poems* (1919), Virginia Woolf's *Kew Gardens* (1919), and their first foray into Russian translations with Maxim Gorky's *Reminiscences of Leo Nicolayevitch Tolstoi* (1920). Several of these publications had involved more collaboration with McDermott and The Prompt Press, and when the small print run of *Kew Gardens* sold out they asked another printer, Richard Madley, to print a second edition of 500 copies. With better sales and more demand than they'd anticipated, they were already on the way to 'abandoning the original idea of the Press', as Leonard later put it, and were on 'the path which was to end in our becoming regular and professional publishers'.[30] At this juncture, the Woolfs first started to articulate the need for help with the business side in the form of a manager or partner. 'As a hobby', Virginia wrote in her diary on August Bank Holiday Monday 1920, 'The Hogarth Press is clearly too lively & lusty to be carried

28 Alison Light, *Mrs Woolf & the Servants* (London: Penguin, 2007), xvii. Light points out how the press made the servants' lives more difficult in Hogarth House by creating more mess and, once it was moved downstairs to the larder, by getting in the way of the servants' work in the kitchen (135). When it first arrived in April 1917, Nellie Boxall, their live-in servant from 1916-1934, helped to unpack it. See Virginia Woolf, *Letters*, ii, 150.

29 Cited in Oswell Blakeston, 'Richard Kennedy *A Boy at the Hogarth Press*', *Arts Review*, 29 January 1972.

30 Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again*, 240. There is a wealth of recent scholarship on how the Hogarth Press outgrew its origins. See for instance Helen Southworth, ed., *Leonard & Virginia Woolf: the Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) and Claire Battershill, *Modernist Lives: Biography and Autobiography at Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

on in this private way any longer'.[31] Again drawing on their networks, at the end of August 1920, they took Ralph Partridge on as a partner in the business, 'baiting this perhaps minute titbit with the plumper morsel of secretaryship to L' at a salary of £100 a year part time and fifty percent of the net profits.[32] Ralph Partridge, a friend of Lytton Strachey and Dora Carrington, was twenty six and an Oxford graduate with a distinction in English Literature. Leonard's initial idea was to lodge Partridge at Suffield, the house adjoining Hogarth, and to expand with 'a complete printing outfit' and 'a shop'.[33] Despite a blunder over Virginia Woolf's *Monday or Tuesday* (1921), which went to the *Times* for review without a publication date, Partridge made a significant contribution: 'the effect of [his] joining the Hogarth Press,' according to Leonard, 'seen in the rapid expansion of our list to six books in 1922 and thirteen in 1923.'[34] However, when the Woolfs wanted Partridge to go full time as a professional publisher after he'd been with them for two years, he turned them down.[35] According to Ann Chisolm, there was confusion over Partridge's role, and he and the Woolfs decided to part ways in December 1922.[36] Partridge summed up his experience in a letter to Gerald Brennan: 'the temperament of Leonard, the sensibility of Virginia and my own pigheadedness now admit the impossibility of coalition. I didn't comprehend them and they didn't comprehend me, two years ago, or we should never have embarked on partnership'.[37]

'That regiment of the wage earning women's republic'

31 Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ii, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), 55.
32 Woolf, *Diary*, i, 62, 56; Leonard Woolf, *Downhill*, 72. Partnership was indeed a titbit. According to internal accounts, net profits for the financial year April 1922–April 1923 were just over £20, of which Partridge received £10.6.3 on his half share. Profit & loss a/c 1922-1923, University of Reading Special Collections, *Records of the Hogarth Press*, reference, MS 2750 A/32/1 (hereafter MS 2750 A/32/1).
33 Virginia Woolf, *Diary,* ii, 57.
34 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 106. Leonard Woolf, *Downhill*, 73.
35 Leonard Woolf, *Downhill*, 77.
36 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 216.
37 See Anne Chisolm, *Frances Partridge: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), * [pg no. forthcoming]

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By the end of 1922, the Hogarth Press had published twenty six titles (half of them hand-set) and had increasing international clout and reputation.[38] However, the running of the press was still an afternoon addition for the Woolfs 'when we were not writing books and articles or editing papers', and with the partnership with Ralph Partridge faltering, they recognised they needed full time, regular assistance.[39] They were also negotiating a possible takeover. They turned down 'tempting' bids from larger commercial publishing houses like Constable and Heinemann, as well as an offer from James Whittall, a 'cultured American' who worked for Heinemann's, because they feared he 'might want to turn the Hogarth Press into a kind of Kelmscott or Nonesuch Press'.[40] They also had a more local offer to partner with the nascent, but ultimately abortive, Tidmarsh Press, which Partridge was trying to set up with Lytton Strachey and Noel Carrington, which they also turned down.[41] Even though the Woolfs were finding the day-to-day management of the press a trial, they were still invested in 'an independent Hogarth' and not yet ready to relinquish editorial or financial control.[42]

Instead, it is at this crisis point that the Woolfs opened up their networks outside of their existing acquaintances and started to put the Hogarth Press on a more regular, professional footing. In November 1922, 'in the midst of our negotiations and conversations and hesitations', Leonard and Virginia overheard Marjorie Thomson (Joad) in the 1917 Club declare that she wanted to give up her teaching career and be a woman printer instead. The location of this encounter is important because the Soho-based 1917 club, founded by Leonard Woolf, among others, was a club open to women, unlike most other clubs of the period such as the Athenaeum. As Woolf reports in her diary:

38 Claire Battershill and Helen Southworth, 'The Hogarth Press and Transatlantic Print Culture' in Jessica Berman, ed., *A Companion to Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 377-98.
39 Leonard Woolf, *Downhill*, 78.
40 Virginia Woolf to Vanessa Bell, 23 November 1922, *Letters*, ii, 587. Leonard Woolf, *Downhill*, 80.
41 See Helen Southworth, 'Introduction', *Leonard & Virginia Woolf: The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 9.
42 Virginia Woolf to Ralph Partridge, *Letters*, ii, 583.

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> We overheard one of those usual shabby, loose, cropheaded, small faced bright eyed young women, who was leaning negligently over the sofa side, & chatting with Scott as he drank tea**,** tell him that she was tired of teaching & meant to become a printer. “They say there’s never been a woman printer; but I mean to be one. No I know nothing whatever about it…&” When she went to the writing room, I followed, plucked her out, & revealed us to her as proprietors of the Hogarth Press.[43]

Marjorie Thomson (Joad) was of a different generation and a different social world to the Woolfs. When they first met her, she was in her early twenties and working at a private school in Gordon Square.[44] She had studied at the London School of Economics, intended to continue working after her marriage, and Virginia was attracted to Thomson as a professional working woman who has **‘**been thoroughly educated [and] must earn her living’.[45] In her diaries, where she often fictionalised friends and associates, Virginia speaks admiringly of ‘a steel thread in [Marjorie] from earning & learning’, and she was captivated by Thomson’s desire for the job.[46] Like Minna Green, whom the Woolfs had briefly contemplated hiring at the Press as a secretary, Thomson was part of what Woolf terms ‘that regiment of the wage earning women’s republic’.[47] Charmed by Thomson’s audacity and perhaps reminded of their own celebrated ‘DIY’ plunge into printing and publishing, they offered her a full time partnership and salary of £100 a year as well as fifty percent of the net profits, paying her at the same rate as her male predecessor (though Partridge worked part time and Thomson was the first full timer). During her first financial year at the press (April 1923-April 1924), Thomson’s half

43 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 213.
44 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 213, n 6.
45 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 213. When Thomson joined the press she was living with the philosopher C. E. M. Joad (as his mistress) and using his name. According to Woolf’s *Diaries*, Marjorie left Joad in February 1924.
46 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 214.
47 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 140.

share of net profits equalled five pounds.[48] The decision to take on first Partridge, then Thomson, as 'partners' reflects the fact that the Woolfs conceived of the press from that point on as a collaborative venture. Most importantly, taking Thomson on full time enabled the Woolfs to retain control of the press – avoiding a merger or buyout – and alleviate their own workload. Woolf celebrates in her diary their '[decision] for freedom & a fight with great private glee', as they 'incline to Miss Tomson [sic] & freedom'.[49]

Marjorie Thomson (Joad) was at the press from early 1923 until February 1925, when she resigned. She helped the Woolfs through one of their busiest hand-printing years: five hand-set books in 1923 made it their most active year for printing so far. Like their earliest assistant compositers, Thomson typeset alongside Woolf. She was spending 'hours standing at the box of type with Margery', Woolf records in her diary in June 1923.[50] During her first year, Marjorie helped the Woolfs typeset, print and publish E. M. Forster's *Pharos and Pharillon* (an ambitious undertaking of nine hundred copies with eighty pages); Herbert Read's *Mutations of the Phoenix*; Robert Graves poem *The Feather Bed*; T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*; and Clive Bell's *The Legend of Monte della Sibilla*.[51] Neither Thomson nor Partridge are of course credited on the title page of any of these works, but we know from Woolf's diaries that Thomson was intimately involved in the printing and publication process. At the end of July 1923, for instance, Woolf wrote in her diary that *The Waste Land* was almost done, giving due credit to their partner in the process: 'As for the press, we have finished Tom, much to our relief. He will be published this August by Marjorie; & altogether we have worked at full speed since May'.[52]

48 Profit & loss a/c 1923-1924, MS 2750 A/32/1.
49 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 215.
50 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 250.
51 See J. Howard Woolmer, *A Checklist of The Hogarth Press 1917-1938* (London: Hogarth Press, 1976), 39–43.
52 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 259.

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The relationship between Thomson and the Woolfs took a tumultuous turn at the end of the year when they decided to take on another male partner, George ('Dadie') Rylands, to take over their share of the work. Rylands was again of the Bloomsbury set – a graduate of Eton and Cambridge – who wrote to Leonard that he 'wishes to devote his life to the Hogarth Press'.[53] Anxious of Thomson's response, Woolf records what happened in her diary when they 'broke Dadie to her', using the form of a playscript to distance them all from the scene:

> M. But I don't think I shall like that.
> V. Did you dislike him?
> M. I shant like being under him. He'd make me typewrite all day. And I suppose I should have to do what he told me?
> L. He would be in the same position to you that we are.[54]

In this fascinating re-enactment, it is clear that Marjorie fears Dadie's appointment might lead to a de-skilling; a shift in her place at the publishers from compositor and publishing partner to more routine secretarial work. This echoes in miniature much wider changes in attitudes to office work over the first half of the twentieth century, as clerical and secretarial labour moved from being seen as a relatively elevated and sought-after (male) profession to 'low-status "women's work" with no viable career ladder'.[55] Thomson's fear, as reported by Woolf, that she would be made to 'typewrite all day' suggests an anxiety about typing being her sole responsibility – as well perhaps as the routine office business of day-to-day publishing – that is different to the informality and flexibility she had enjoyed thus far in her role combining typesetting,

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53 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 271.
54 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 273.
55 Anne Bridger, *A Century of Women's Employment in Clerical Occupations: 1850-1950, with Particular Reference to the Role of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women'* (PhD thesis, University of Gloucestershire, 2003),158. On the gendered contours of this shift see also Leah Price and Pamela Thurschwell, eds., *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005), 3–7. On the male clerk, see Jonathan Wild, *The Rise of the Office Clerk in Literary Culture, 1880–1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

publishing, and office work.[56] As it was, Rylands' appointment in July 1924 was another failure for the Woolfs. When Rylands left the press just six months later in December 1924 to focus on his Cambridge Fellowship dissertation, Woolf wrote in her diary, 'I could never see Dadie as a permanent partner'.[57] As Emily Kopley suggests, Rylands' '*bon vivant* sensibility and self-professed "appetite for praise"' ill suited the obscurity and discipline of press work'.[58]

The Woolfs' subsequent hire was a friend of Dadie's, Cambridge graduate Angus Davidson, who had most recently been an art critic at the *Nation & Athenaeum*. With the arrival at the press of the more 'permanent and dependable' Davidson, Woolf vowed to rethink her role as employer, aiming for 'an impersonal, amicable business relation [with] less sympathy & more work'.[59] Thomson outlasted Rylands and worked briefly alongside Davidson until her own lack of dependability – the result of a spiralling love life in which Woolf had become entirely too embroiled – and poor health, meant that she too parted ways with the Woolfs in early 1925. By September 1924, Marjorie Thomson had left Joad, begun another affair, and was according to Woolf therefore homeless and reliant upon her income from the Hogarth Press: 'The upshot of the affair is that we have to engage her as sec. at £3 a week. She depends absolutely on that. Then where is she to live? in Bloomsbury, with a girl - Its all chaotic & precipitous, & like a modern novel'.[60] Thomson's state of mind, it seemed to Woolf, distracted her from work '& lessen[ed] my chances of selling my books'.[61] According to company accounts,

56 Price and Thurschwell quote a reflection from French critic Roland Barthes on the difference between writing as creative liberation and when 'a person, the typist, is confined by the master in an activity I would almost call enslavement'. See *Literary Secretaries*, 3. For the wider aesthetic debate about typewriting and compositing see Victoria Callanan, *"Inspired Minds and Automatic Hands": Type-Writing, Type-Setting and Literary Access from Mary Elizabeth Braddon to Virginia Woolf* (PhD thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University, 2018).

57 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 323.

58 Emily Kopley, 'Virginia Woolf's Conversations with George Rylands: Context for *A Room of One's Own* and 'Craftsmanship', *The Review of English Studies* 67/282 (2016), 946–69.

59 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 324.

60 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 316. The accounts for 1924-25 locate her living in the Vale of Health, North Hampstead, London NW3. Profit & Loss A/c 1924-1925, MS 2750 A/32/1.

61 Virginia Woolf, *Diary*, ii, 316.

Thomson's salary between April 1924 and February 1925 was £116, making her salary (because of the split between Rylands and Davidson as managers during that year) their biggest outgoing staff cost. When Thomson left, they hired Irish writer Bernadette Murphy as secretary to replace her (Murphy, who had acted as secretary to the London Group in 1920, is listed in the Hogarth Press accounts as 'secretary'). Explaining Rylands's cheque for only £1 18*s.* 0*d.* as his share of the profits between April and December 1924, Leonard noted that while 'the Press did much better than I had anticipated' and 'the net profits on the books amounted to £194-2-1':

> owing to the continual revolutions we actually paid in salaries to Mrs Joad, Angus Davidson, and Miss Murphy £186-16-8 together with a sum of £1-11-6 on miscellaneous office expenditure. This therefore leaves divisible profit of £5-13-11, of which I reckon your share proportionately to be £1-18-0.[62]

The disentanglement of the personal and the professional to which Woolf aspired when Angus Davidson joined the press at the end of 1924 would prove more difficult than she had hoped. The Woolfs would go on to hire other friends and acquaintances, among them the fabled 'boy at the Hogarth Press', eighteen-year-old Richard Kennedy, whose architect father was a member with Leonard Woolf at the Cranium Club, and John Lehmann, who came to the press as an apprentice manager and would-be partner in 1931 via Virginia Woolf's nephew Julian Bell, who had first brought Lehmann to the press as an author.[63] This old-boy networking ran parallel to the continuing domestic quality of their business. Even once they had moved from the dining room then larder at Hogarth House in Richmond to Bloomsbury's Tavistock Square in 1924, there was a continued intimacy to their work space, in the basement of the building in which the Woolfs lived, that saw the press staff functioning as a (dysfunctional) family of sorts.

62 Leonard Woolf to George Rylands, 1 May 1925. Profit & Loss A/c 1924-1925, MS 2750 A/32/1.
63 Both men wrote well-known accounts of working at the Hogarth Press. See Richard Kennedy, *A Boy at the Hogarth Press* (London: Hesperus, 2011); John Lehmann, *Thrown to the Woolfs* (1978; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979).

At the same time, however, especially among the female employees, the Woolfs turned to wider and increasingly more professional sources. As the work of the press began to scale up and fewer works were set by hand, staff roles evolved and became more compartmentalised.[64] This coincided with a growth of training colleges that opened secretarial work up to a wider cross-section of women, in turn enabling the Woolfs to hire more widely.[65] As Lawrence Rainey points out, 'For millions of women, ... clerical work offered the first occupational alternative to teaching or nursing and marked a massive change in their range of experience'.[66] Mrs (Ma) Cartwright, a widow in her fifties with two daughters, joined as 'manager' (Hogarth Press historian J. H. Willis says 'office manager') in July 1925, staying until 1930.[67] Suggesting that Cartwright's work at the press was largely clerical, Richard Kennedy, who had a more eclectic brief that included reading manuscripts and even designing book covers, notes how fast Cartwright typed; Willis credits Cartwright for Leonard Woolf's increased efficiency at the press in terms of record keeping.[68] Peggy Belsher was hired to work alongside Cartwright in 1928. Among letters recently sold at Bonhams, there is one in which Leonard Woolf offers Belsher the post of general secretary, dated 1 February 1928, with the following terms: 'We would pay a salary of £125 a year to start off with and £150 after three months... The hours are 9.15 to 5, Saturdays 9.15 to 1, with every alternate Saturday off; one month's holiday in the year'.[69] Belsher stayed until 1936.

64 Leonard and Virginia hand printed books themselves until 1932, but at the rate of only one or two a year from 1926 onwards. To put this in perspective, in 1932 when they handset their last book (a limited edition of Dorothy Wellesley's poetry, *Jupiter and the Nun* - publication no. 313) they published another thirty-six books with commercial printers that year. See Woolmer, 95-102.
65 See Bridger, *A Century of Women's Employment*, 131.
66 Lawrence Rainey, *Revisiting the Waste Land* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 53.
67 Willis, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers*, 163. For biographical work on Mrs Cartwright, see Karina Jakubowicz, 'Mrs Cartwright', Modernist Archives Publishing Project (2018) <http://modernistarchives.com/person/mrs-cartwright> accessed 1 April 2020.
68 Kennedy, *A Boy at the Hogarth Press*, 23. Willis, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf*, 388.
69 Stephen Barkway, 'Letters to Margaret (Peggy) Belsher', *Virginia Woolf Bulletin* 59 (2018), 7.

Chapter 10: Nicola Wilson and Helen Southworh

While the Hogarth Press, like other publishers, took advantage of women's increased access to clerical training in the early years of the twentieth century, this is not to say that their female employees were confined solely to secretarial roles. The more creative purview enjoyed by Marjorie Thomson (Joad) when she first landed at the press would be extended to later women workers employed by the Woolfs in the late 1920s and 1930s. Marketing agent Norah Nicholls for instance, who joined the press from Methuen in 1938 and stayed until 1940, was crucial in broadening Woolfs' readership. As Alice Staveley's work on Nicholls' marketing of *Three Guineas* has shown, the sale and distribution of Woolf's books clearly benefited from the creativity and expertise of the women they hired:

> In [her letters] we hear Nicholl's vibrant managerial voice working her professional women's contacts, drawing on her past marketing experiences, and constructing a community of women readers and buyers who actively promoted the book among other women.[70]

While critics have been quick to focus on Woolf's oftentimes difficult, sometimes competitive relationships with other women, this is only half the story. It's clear from looking at the Woolfs varied experiences with their early Hogarth Press employees, that the Woolfs were committed to collaboration at all levels in their publishing enterprise, and that the nuances of social and professional relationships shaped the success and longevity of those partnerships.

The profile of Hogarth Press staff over its first ten years mirrored to a large extent that of the press' authors. As intimates were solicited for publishable work to start with, so close friends like Alix Sergant-Florence and Barbara Hiles (Bagenal) were brought in to help the Woolfs handset their earliest publications. As a broader, open-submission process gradually evolved as the press grew, so a wider group of employees was hired,

70 Alice Staveley, 'Marketing Virginia Woolf: Women, War and Public Relations in *Three Guineas*', *Book History* 12 (2009), 296-339, 296.

though still, perhaps inevitably, mixed in with known quantities from the Woolfs' Bloomsbury connections. Margery Thomson (Joad)'s time at the press between 1923 and 1925 marks an interesting juncture. Coinciding with rapid expansion, a move away from the predominantly handset publications of its earliest years and the end of the press's early financial subscription model, Thomson's work at the press full time enabled the Woolfs' to retain editorial and financial independence at an early critical moment. She also opened the way to a new group of employees of both sexes who were invested – financially and professionally – in the business of printing, publishing and selling Hogarth Press books. While upper class women like Sargant-Florence and Hiles, along with the Woolfs' earliest male partners, were happy to dabble in the manual labour of printing and the professional labours of publishing, these friends were not ultimately dependent upon the press and had other vocational, academic, and entrepreneurial opportunities they wanted to explore. Thomson came to the press with some of this sense of freedom and ambition, but she was of a different social class to the Woolfs and their friends, and more vulnerable, when her relationship collapsed, to the pressures of economic insecurity. Though the partnership with Thomson was mutually beneficial only for a time, her appointment opened the Woolfs' eyes to the new ranks of trained, professional women workers who, like her, needed to earn a living and who took seriously the opportunities that publishing opened up to women in this period.[71] We know a lot about the men who worked at the Hogarth Press from the autobiographies they penned. This chapter opens up some of our new much-needed conversations about the women.

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71 In Ray Strachey's *Careers and Openings for Women: a survey of women's employment and a guide for those seeking work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935), Strachey suggests publishing as among some of the new career paths available to women. [*pp to be provided when access to library books after Covid-19]

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