> "a token of some real thing behind appearances": Woolf's divinatory gestures

> "um símbolo de algo real por trás das aparências": os gestos divinatórios de Woolf

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Abstract
This paper seeks to understand the appearance of mystical imagery in Virginia Woolf's writing, even though she was well-known as an agnostic. With Woolf's religious cynicism in mind, this paper seeks to show a connection between the symbols and images Woolf uses to describe her personal philosophy and the mystical images in the Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot deck. In addition, this paper will demonstrate how writing was a divinatory practice for Woolf and, as a result, how she struggled with the ability to clearly understand all that was in her mind and how to effectively communicate it on paper. Of particular interest are these struggles as they appear in the dialogue of Sara Pargiter in *The Years* and how her peculiar wordplay has a mystical effect on those around her.
Keywords: Woolf. Mysticism. Modernism. Divination. Tarot.

Resumo
Este texto visa entender a aparição do imaginário místico na escrita de Virginia Woolf, mesmo ela sendo amplamente conhecida como agnóstica. Levando em conta o cinismo religioso de Woolf, pretende-se mostrar uma conexão entre símbolos e imagens utilizadas por ela para descrever sua filosofia pessoal e imagens místicas no baralho de tarô Rider-Waite-Smith. Ademais, o texto demonstrará como a escrita foi uma prática de divinação para Woolf e, como resultado, como ela lutou com a habilidade de entender claramente o que estava em sua mente e com a forma de transmitir efetivamente tudo para o papel. Este texto tem interesse nesses conflitos, especialmente no diálogo de Sara Pargiter em *The Years* e em como os seus jogos de linguagem peculiares exercem um efeito místico naqueles em torno dela.
Palavras-chave: Woolf. Misticismo. Modernismo. Divinação. Tarô.

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To locate a definitive meaning for the concept of mysticism is a tricky endeavor – and to do so for the mystical qualities within Virginia Woolf's fiction is even trickier. Though Woolf and her father were known agnostics, even atheists, Jane de Gay, in her article, "Challenging the Family Script: Woolf, the Stephen Family, and Victorian Evangelical Theology," draws attention to the selection of religious books that Woolf included in her personal library, all of which were written by family members[1]. This fact illustrates a few things: that Woolf understood the lineage of religious writers from which she was descended, that she was educated in her disbelief, and that an interest in the unknowable continued to persist for her. Given Woolf's own declaration in *Moments of Being* that unequivocally "and emphatically there is no God,"[2], scholars instead study what she herself "might call a philosophy," "that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this…"[3]. Woolf also refers to this philosophy as an intuition. In addition, she refers to "exceptional moments" in which she receives shocks: "I feel that I have had a blow…it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words"[4].

With Woolf's religious cynicism in mind, this paper seeks to show a connection between the symbols and images Woolf uses to describe her personal philosophy and the mystical images in the Tarot. In addition, this paper will demonstrate how writing was a divinatory practice for Woolf and, as a result, how she struggled with the ability to clearly understand all that was in her mind and how to effectively communicate it on paper. Of particular interest for this paper are these struggles as they appear in the dialogue of Sara Pargiter in *The Years* and how her peculiar wordplay has a powerful effect on those around her.

Within the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*'s definition of mysticism, very near to the beginning, there lies a caveat: "Because of its variable meanings, a definition of 'mystical experience' must be partly stipulative"[5]. Though frustrating for a scholar, the fact that mysticism would be difficult to define seems fitting, simply another facet inherent to its meaning. However, at the end of *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*'s introductory paragraph for its entry on mysticism, we are left with a somewhat useful working definition: "'Mysticism' is

[1] Jane de Gay, "Challenging the Family Script: Woolf, the Stephen Family, and Victorian Evangelical Theology," *Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Woolf*, 2013, p. 35.
[2] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 72.
[3] *Ibid*.
[4] *Ibid*.
[5] Jerome Gellman. "Mysticism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2018.

best thought of as a constellation of distinctive practices, discourses, texts, institutions, traditions, and experiences aimed at human transformation, variously defined"[6]. This rather broad umbrella actually works well for a discussion of the ways in which mysticism appears in Virginia Woolf's writing. For, as a result of Woolf's intimate knowledge of theology (despite her agnosticism and cynicism) and extensive knowledge of (and love for) literature, any argument which tries to solidify a belief system for Woolf would be contradictory, and even short-sighted.

Woolf, who said "emphatically" that "there is no God"[7], struggled in *Moments of Being* to find one specific way of describing her particular mode of understanding herself and the world around her. For one, Woolf implies that she remembers too much, an "enormous number of things,"[8] and, two, even suggests a few pages later that she is able to tap into the knowledge of those who came before her. This notion of queer temporality and interconnectedness has parallels in mysticism and divinatory practices. A quick background and discussion of The Hanged Man card in the Tarot will be a good example of a mystical image whose imagery holds both ancient and religious meaning.

While all of the cards in a Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot deck depict fascinating scenes, one of the most distinctive for its strangeness is the Hanged Man card, number seven in the Major Arcana. The card presents a man hanging somehow imperceptibly by his left foot from a T-form made by tree trunks (these "trunks" are also suggestive of the Minor Arcana group, the wands). The right leg is crossed behind the extended left and his arms are folded behind his back, almost as if he is holding onto the trunk behind him. His face is calm, his white hair hangs down with gravity, and there is a golden halo that shines around his head. The man does not appear to be distressed at all, but somehow quite relaxed. Widely-respected Tarot historian and scholar, Rachel Pollack talks about this card extensively in her book *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom*. According to Pollack, the image of the Hanged Man has roots in Christian tradition ("...St. Peter being crucified upside down, ostensibly so he could not be said to be copying his Lord"), Norse mythology ("...the god Odin hanging from the World Tree for nine days and nights..."), and from "...the actual practice of shamans, medicine men and women, in such places as Siberia and North America"[9]. These are only a few of

[6] *Ibid*.
[7] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 71.
[8] *Ibid*., p. 64.
[9] Rachel Pollack, *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom: a Book of Tarot*, 2007, p. 4.

the mystical and historical streams that the Hanged Man could be dipped into or that could be drawn from his pool of meaning.

Returning back to Woolf's attempts in *Moments of Being* to articulate the dimensions of her personal philosophy, she also had a sense that "strong emotion must leave its trace"[10] and that one could tap into that emotion and be transported back to the particular moment in time which prompted it. To Woolf, "…the past [is] an avenue lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions," and that one need only to discover how to tap into it, "…so that we shall be able to live our lives through from the start"[11]. Woolf also described life as a bowl on a base that one "fills and fills and fills,"[12] as a painting that is "globular; semi-

[10] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 67.
[11] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 67.
[12] *Ibid*., p. 64.

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transparent…curved shapes, showing the light through, but not giving a clear outline,"[13] as intermittent states of "non-being,"[14] a term that could also be used to describe the act of divination (which I will discuss in further detail below), and finally, as "a pattern hid behind the cotton wool"[15]. This last one she calls her philosophy and that there are "exceptional moments" she experiences which allow her to see the pattern, the pattern that "all human beings [are connected with]; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art."[16] And, it is these moments of seeing through the wool that move Woolf to write her novels:

> …it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me…[17]

Such exceptional moments, as Woolf describes them, can find their corollary in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*'s narrow definition of mystical experiences which requires a "unitive experience … of a kind not accessible by way of sense-perception, somatosensory modalities, or standard introspection." In none of these instances Woolf describes in her memoir is she bodily engaging with the thing which sends her into a sudden violent shock. In each it is as if a sudden insight or truth is simply unveiled to her: a ring is revealed, or a question, or a "pit of absolute despair from which I could not escape."[18] There is no particular sensory perception (except for simply "looking at the flower bed by the front door"[19] that triggers any of them, no sensation other than horror, no preceding interval of introspection or meditation.

These unitive experiences also sound like the state of being that is tapped into for a tarot card reading, or any other mode of divination. In Selah Saterstrom's book on divination, *Ideal Suggestions: Essays in Divinatory Poetics*, she discusses her and her family's long and intimate history and experience with the art of divination and related spiritual and ritual practices. In the opening chapter of her book, Saterstrom describes the effects that divining, which she considers to be an embodied act, can have on a reader: "…master readers fall, become subsumed, disappear. This is also true of some writers."[20]

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[13] *Ibid*., p. 66.
[14] *Ibid*., p. 70.
[15] *Ibid*., p. 73.
[16] *Ibid*., p. 72.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 72.
[18] *Ibid*., p. 71.
[19] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 71.
[20] Selah Saterstrom, *Ideal Suggestions: Essays in Divinatory Poetics*, 2017, p. iv.

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She adds on the next page: "I have come to think of divination as a form of reading-as-being: an embodied hermeneutics, an ontological situation" and "Teaching divination workshops feels the same to me as teaching writing workshops."[21] This link between the body, divination, a loss of self, and writing presents itself acutely in the mind and writing of Virginia Woolf.

In *Moments of Being*, Woolf also particularly describes these moments as having happened *to* her, outside of her prompting or control. According to her, she does not intentionally invoke her powers of divination. In fact, she refers to them simply as intuition: "This intuition of mine – it is so instinctive that it seems given to me, not made by me…"[22]. She then goes on to consider what a painting of herself within these moments of intuition should look like if she were to draw a representation. However, the way she talks about this painting automatically makes me think of the High Priestess card in the Rider-Waite Deck:

> If I were painting myself I should have to find some – rod, shall I say – something that would stand for the conception. It proves that one's life is not confined to one's body and what one says and does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions. Mine is that there is a pattern, hid behind the cotton wool[23].

Returning to Pollack's important text on divination and the ancient meanings presented within each card of the Tarot, *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom*, she describes the High Priestess as representing "darkness, mystery, psychic forces, the power of the moon to stir the unconscious, passivity, and the wisdom gained from it"[24]. In *Moments of Being*, Woolf herself described her "exceptional moments"[25] as dominating her, rendering her "passive,"[26] and, at the connection of the apple tree with suicide, Woolf describes looking at the bark of the tree "—it was a moonlit night—"[27] and feeling as if she were being "dragged down, hopelessly, into some pit of absolute despair"[28]. In the instance of the flower, which made her realize, "That is the whole,"[29] Woolf was brought to a new and clear understanding about the world, an understanding that she "put away,"[30] knowing it would be "very useful to [her] later."[31] Along with these connections

[21] *Ibid*., p. v.
[22] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 72.
[23] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 73.
[24] Rachel Pollack, *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom: a Book of Tarot*, 2007, p. 38.
[25] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 72.
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] *Ibid*., p. 71.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] *Ibid*.
[30] *Ibid*.
[31] *Ibid*.

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with the High Priestess, it is important also to include how the High Priestess's image is presented on the card in the Rider-Waite deck and what lies around her:

> She sits before two pillars… A veil hangs between the two pillars, indicating that we are barred from entering the place of wisdom. The image of the veiled temple or sanctuary appears in many religions… You can see what lies behind the veil by looking between the veil and the pillars. And what lies behind is water. No great temple or complex symbols, simply a pool of water, a line of hills, and the sky. The pool signifies the unconscious and the truth hidden there[32].

One need only think of Woolf's meditation on water in the interstitial chapters of *The Waves* to get a sense of the importance she places on water as a meditative source. In addition, when Woolf thinks of her early childhood and the morning, it's the dreamy, peaceful combination of the sound of waves crashing

[32] Rachel Pollack, *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom: a Book of Tarot*, 2007, p. 39.

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and the "elastic, gummy air"[33] as if it were "a blue gummy veil"[34] that brings her back, as if she were there again. And, even though she does not say specifically that what gets filled and refilled into the bowl that sits on the stand that she calls life, I would argue that water, in fact, should be inferred.

While I have not been able to find textual proof thus far that Woolf might have been familiar with the Tarot, let alone whether she would have put any credence in it, there is an article titled *Virginia Woolf, Hapticity, and the Human Hand*, written by Abbie Garrington, that, in order to frame a discussion of Woolf's use of gesture in *The Years*, begins with a narration of the singular time Woolf had her palm read by Dr. Charlotte Wolff in 1935 at Aldous Huxley's house. The article includes an excerpt from Dr. Wolff's book, *Studies in Hand-Reading*, in which she provides some of the details of the reading: "Virginia Woolf's rectangular palm is divided into two by the Head-line which runs right across the hand and ends in a fork. It is the Head-line of a philosopher."[35] The article also includes an excerpt from one of Woolf's diaries which suggests that she "was characteristically pleased to be flattered regarding her genius," and that she, at the very least, enjoyed the conversation that developed from the reading.[36] Garrington also proposes that this focus on the hands may have influenced Woolf's writing of *The Years*, which she had been in the process of writing at the time.

However, Garrington's focus on Woolf's encounter with the palm-reader creates another access point for locating Woolf's mysticism in her writing: the gesture. The scene in 1910 when Rose has joined Sara and Maggie for lunch is a good example. After they have eaten, Sara takes a fork and uses it to emphasize a story she is making up about The Pargiters. Maggie watches "as if [Sara] had been drawing her picture on the table-cloth."[37] The story-telling and drawing with the fork has such an effect on Rose that it seems to cast a spell over her. Indeed, throughout this scene, the physical and vocal gestures of both Sara and Maggie influence Rose in ways she is not expecting. In the minutes before Rose arrives, we are introduced to Sara and Maggie's intimate play of dialogue. Sara spins tales and Maggie encouragingly prompts her to continue with the phrase, "And then?"[38] However, when Sara uses this device on unsuspecting Rose, rather than

[33] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 66.
[34] *Ibid*.
[35] Abbie Garrington, "Virginia Woolf, Hapticity, and the Human Hand," 2013, p. 115.
[36] *Ibid*., p. 118.
[37] Virginia Woolf. *The Years*, 1937, p. 169.
[38] *Ibid*.

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acting as a friendly encouragement of conversation, this phrase acts as an incantation that makes Rose want to "talk about her past; to tell them something about herself that she had never told anybody – something hidden."[39] Then, when Sara goes into the other room to make coffee and Maggie and Rose are left alone to talk, Maggie starts to sew. With only the slightest of provocations from Maggie, Rose talks about when she used to live in the same neighborhood. Maggie does not respond, except to say "Yes" and "[whir] the machine round and round."[40] It is as if Sara has cast a spell over Rose, and Maggie can effortlessly extend it: "Rose went on talking. It was easy to talk, she found; quite easy."[41] It isn't until Sara re-enters the room and makes a joke about mishearing through the door that Rose asks herself what she had been talking about: "Perhaps she had been talking nonsense. She had been saying the first thing that came into her head."[42] Unlike the fork of Woolf's hand that analyst Wolff interpreted as having "form[ed] a barrier between the sensitive and imaginative worlds,"[43] Sara's use of the fork took down any such barrier that may have existed between herself and Rose and Maggie, encouraging intimate talk.

Sara not only wields her power on Rose and *with* Maggie, she also has visions she herself does not want to see. After Sara is back home with Maggie at Hyams Place, after being out with Rose, she sits down at the piano but this time she is not playing, instead she only sits: "hunched on the music stool."[44] She wears her heart on her sleeve; it is clear she is unhappy. But her fingers are on the keys; she wants to create but she wonders aloud: "What's the good of singing if one hasn't any voice?"[45] It isn't until Maggie asks Sara about how she has spent her day with Rose that Sara starts to create and play again. But the song she sings, and the divinatory images within its words, casts a spell on herself: "'Running water; flowing water. May my bones turn to coral; and fish light their lanthorns; fish light their green lanthorns in my eyes.'"[46] Now when Sara looks at the notes of the piano, she sees "a garden; flowers; and her sister; and a young man with a big nose who stooped to pick a flower that was gleaming in the dark. And he held the flower out in his hand in the moonlight…"[47]

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[39] *Ibid*., p. 166-167.
[40] *Ibid*., p. 170.
[41] *Ibid*.
[42] *Ibid*., p. 171.
[43] Abbie Garrington, "Virginia Woolf, Hapticity, and the Human Hand," 2013, p. 115.
[44] Virginia Woolf. *The Years*, 1937, p. 186.
[45] *Ibid*.
[46] *Ibid*.
[47] *Ibid*.

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In the teachings of Tarot, seeing objects in the light of the moon is particularly psychic. When the Moon card appears in a Tarot reading, its divinatory meanings point to "strange emotions, dreams, fears, even hallucinations. We find ourselves more intuitive, more psychic."[48] And, this moment is not the first time we see Sara and Maggie communicating and seeing things through the medium of moonlight. It is via the light of the moon that the sisters watch couples interact in the courtyard below them. It is the moon that casts a strange glow upon everything, "making the leaves white."[49] It is because Sara gestures toward the window that Maggie notices this; and it is Sara's questioning Maggie about "the little brown book"[50] that gets Maggie to ask the question, "Then what about trees and colours?"[51] and "'What's I? ...'I'...'"[52] With the gesture of her hand, Sara has gotten Maggie to perceive the strangeness of the light and question the nature of existence.

[48] Rachel Pollack, *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom: a Book of Tarot*, 2007, p. 129.
[49] Virginia Woolf. *The Years*, 1937, p. 139.
[50] *Ibid*., p. 140.
[51] *Ibid*.
[52] *Ibid*.

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In fact, in *The Years*, the light of the moon is often used by Woolf to meditate on the form and transmutability of objects. For instance, before Sara takes a small nap and Maggie appears in her room, she spends some time considering the moon, its "white disc,"[53] imagining nightingales "calling to each other, calling and answering each other across the valleys."[54] Then she notices a couple sitting in the garden and "something gleaming in the grass"[55] in the moonlight. She watches the gentleman retrieve it. Sara imagines it is a piece of broken glass and that the man says to his companion that it is a bit of his broken heart. Later, when Maggie is with Sara, they both look at the moon and the moon is described as being "very sharp and hard,"[56] like a piece of glass. This mutation of the moon could also be a reflection on the changeability of love and the loneliness of a broken heart, and, if so, perhaps this is why the eventual vision Sara has of Maggie's future husband makes her cry. This evening scene between the two sisters is one of the most powerful in the entire book.

Let's return to Sara sitting at the piano, unable to sing. At Maggie's prompting, asking Sara questions as she sews, Sara articulates a series of images, as if she were turning over cards in a Tarot spread: a room with a "multitude of people"[57] in a "pale greenish light,"[58] a woman hanging out laundry in her garden, and "somebody very beautiful; clothed in starlight; with green in her hair."[59] For Maggie, all of these pictures simply generate a scene from Sara's day in her mind, as if Sara were her only source to the outside world. Whatever power Sara is trying to wield over Maggie is instead being deflected by her, trying to keep Sara in linear time and focus. For instance, when Sara says her rhyme about their cousin Rose, Maggie says, "'No, no,' … There was something wrong with the story; something impossible."[60] Then they are interrupted by a fight on the street, in response to which Sara goes to the window to look out, when she turns, Woolf adds to the mythical and magical feeling of the scene by describing Sara as a crone.

> The she turned; her face in the mixed light looked cadaverous and worn, as if she were no longer a girl, but an old woman worn out by a life of childbirth, debauchery and crime. She stood there hunched up, with her hands clenched together[61].

[53] Virginia Woolf. *The Years*, 1937, p. 134.
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] *Ibid.*, 139.
[57] *Ibid.*, 187.
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] *Ibid.*, 188.
[61] Virginia Woolf. *The Years*, 1937, p. 188-189.

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Following this, Sara foretells the future. She tells her sister that people will look into the room they are in and pinch their noses and exclaim disdain at the smell. She then falls into a chair as if all the energy has gone out of her. Maggie, looking at her, repeats in agreement what Sara has said, inside her own head. However, when Maggie turns to take care of their cat who appears to want dinner, Sara mimics her and says "As you rock the cradle, Maggie"[62] and Maggie, as if afraid of Sara's words, as if knowing their power, "[raises] her arms as if to ward off some implacable destiny; then let them fall."[63] This is when Sara starts to cry, understanding that she will not be able to keep her sister with her, that they will not be crone and old maid together. (Given the fact that *The Years* and *Three Guineas*, Woolf's treatise on the importance of women in society, were originally supposed to be two parts of a whole "novel-essay," these two archetypes often used against women were probably on Woolf's mind.)

However, it must be noted that nowhere in Woolf's diary during the time of her writing *The Years* does she mention the word "crone" or "Tarot" or even "magical." Instead, however, there are a couple of moments in which she hints at Sara's uniqueness and importance to the novel. On February 20, 1935, Woolf writes in her diary, "Sara is the real difficulty: I can't get her into the main stream, yet she is essential"[64]; and, before that, in April of 1933, she writes, "The figure of Elvira is the difficulty. She may become too dominant. She is to be seen only in relations to other things."[65] Even in her own diary, it seems Woolf had trouble clearly articulating Sara's character and what sort of role she was to have in the book. In a couple other instances, Woolf confesses to a personal connection with Sara's (first named, Elvira) character, as if the line between their consciousnesses was blurred: "I hardly know which I am, or where: Virginia or Elvira; in the Pargiters or outside."[66] This could simply be a result of the intensity of her feelings and frustrations during the time of writing *The Years*, but this confusion of identity is never expressed with another character other than Sara, except for maybe Eleanor Pargiter.

In Sayaka Okumura's essay "'A Dot with Strokes Raying Out Round It': Doodles, Eyes, and the World in *The Years*," Okumura discusses the doodlings of Eleanor and the multiple ways they operate in the novel. Before the main focus of

[62] *Ibid*., p. 189.
[63] *Ibid*., p. 190.
[64] Virginia Woolf and Anne Olivier Bell. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, 1983, p. 281.
[65] *Ibid*., p. 152.
[66] Virginia Woolf and Anne Olivier Bell, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, 1983, p. 148.

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the essay is given over completely to Eleanor's doodles, however, Okumura makes the claim that Eleanor is a proxy for Woolf herself, "as with Lily in *To the Lighthouse* and Bernard in *The Waves*."[67] This claim is also made because Woolf made a similar drawing on the manuscript of *The Years*. Interestingly, the drawing resembles a sun with rays cascading out. Okumura argues that this depiction of a sun, drawn by Eleanor in moments of idleness or distraction, operated in three ways, as "...a point in the present and memories of the past brought back to the present; a point in the past and several experiences she has undergone ever since; and a present moment with possible experiences to come."[68] Basically, Okumura argues that these drawings articulate radical intersections of time and space, like one interconnected moment, one step on the avenue Woolf described in *Moments of Being*, "lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions"[69] that she could tap into or that would tap into her. "...is it not possible – I often wonder – that things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds; are in fact still in existence?"[70] she asks. Okumura argues as well that these drawings are a symbolic microcosm of Woolf's novels and how they operate.

According to Pollack, the Sun card is described as follows: "Under the Sun everything becomes simple, joyous and physical. The light of the unconscious brought into daily life."[71] This is how these drawings work for Eleanor and therefore Woolf, a subconscious release of the connections she can sense happening below the surface. "...the joy and simplicity of the Sun does not mediate between the inner and outer poles of life but joins them together."[72] Indeed, in these doodles all lines intersect and all emanate from the space place. More specifically, the Sun card connects us with our inner child, reminds us that it still exists, and that it is beneficial to maintain a connection with her. And to think of Woolf's childhood is to be reminded of those three jolts she describes as having stayed with her all her life. In particular, the image of the flower sticks out to me the most, how Woolf saw a circle around it.

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[67] Sayaka Okumura, "'A Dot With Strokes Raying Out Round It': Doodles, Eyes and the World in *The Years*." *Virginia Woolf Bulletin*, 2015, p. 25.
[68] *Ibid*., p. 29-30.
[69] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 1985, p. 67.
[70] *Ibid*.
[71] Rachel Pollack, *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom: a Book of Tarot*, 2007, p. 130.
[72] *Ibid*.

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Pollack talks about these moments of realization as experiences of enlightenment in terms that sound similar to Woolf's descriptions of her exceptional moments: "The person feels struck by a burst of light, sometimes coloured… Suddenly the world is seen or felt, as spiritual and eternal, rather than the day to day existence of drudgery and confusion."[73] The sun, from its great height and daily travel, sees and knows all. Though Eleanor never marries and never has children, she maintains a youthful energy. She travels around the world, is always wanting to hear others' ideas, and her eyes are always shining, as if from an inner light: "The person feels totally alive with a childlike joy…for the sunstruck person has gone beyond the child's fear of darkness by travelling through it."[74] Even at the end of the book, Eleanor is the one who wants to know what happens next, her hands reaching out to her brother. And what is the very

[73] *Ibid*., p. 131.
[74] *Ibid*.

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next line? The sun rising above the houses and casting "an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace."[75]

Though Woolf may not have been familiar with or even seen a pack of tarot cards, it is evident that she was still tapping into the mystical meanings and archetypes that lie behind them. Similarly, Woolf understood that she was part of a long lineage that could not be fully apprehended:

> Who was I then? Adeline Virginia Stephen ... descended from a great many people, some famous, others obscure; born into a large connection ... born into a very communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting, articulate, late nineteenth-century world...[76]

These divinatory gestures were her way of trying to communicate not only the personal but the wider webs of knowledge that exist between us all.

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