

2000

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Recommended Citation

Stine, Alison (2000) "The Sheeted Center: Nan Goldin and Virginia Woolf," *Articulāte*: Vol. 5 , Article 6.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/articulate/vol5/iss1/6>

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THE SHEETED CENTER: NAN GOLDIN AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

BY ALISON STINE '00

The sun rose. Bars of yellow and green fell on the shore, gilding the ribs of the eaten-out boat and making the sea-holly and its mailed leaves gleam blue as steel. Light almost pierced the thin swift waves as they raced fan-shaped over the beach. The girl who had shaken her head and made all the jewels, the topaz, the aquamarine, the water-coloured jewels with sparks of fire in them, dance, now bared her brows and with wide-opened eyes drove a straight pathway over the waves. (54) — Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

Introduction: "Couple in Bed, Chicago, 1977"

"The body seemed contained in a miraculous glass cabinet through which no sound could penetrate." — Virginia Woolf

The image is a color portrait of a young couple. The woman, nude, lies at the front of the picture, eyes cast down and arms crossed in a heart shape over her breasts, legs tucked under her body in a similar triangular shape. She reclines on a bright greenish-yellow sheeted bed, her head resting on an immaculate white pillow. The man is further back in the image, behind the woman's head, smaller in proportion and less defined in focus. Unlike the woman, he wears a pair of dark pants, perhaps jeans. His feet are bare, the right one dissolving in sunlight. The same slanted-bar light patterns repeat on his body, blind stripes. He sits in classic "Thinker" pose — elbows on knees, chin in hands, contemplative. Books or papers sit in a stack before him, on a table perhaps, though this detail is lost in shadow. A yellow cloth or towel is folded before him, suggesting impurity or the need for cleansing. The rest of the room is bare, walls painted a dark, iridescent green.

"Couple in Bed, Chicago 1977" implements Nan Goldin's focus on color as one of the early images in her career. More formalized than the work she is presently known for,

both figures' poses seem manipulated — also uncharacteristic, considering Goldin's statement in *Couples and Loneliness*, the 1998 book in which "Couple in Bed" is reprinted, on the page preceding, "[m]y work is about letting life be what it is and not trying to make it more or less, or altered. What I'm interested in is capturing life as it's being lived" (9), and only in Goldin's work does life resemble, in its crayon-box intensity and drama, a painting. Specifically, "Couple in Bed" harks of Edward Hopper's "Excursion into Philosophy." Some of Goldin's early art school work recalls Hopper in its suggestion of lazy afternoon light and static poses (such as "Anthony by the Sea, Brighton, England, 1979") yet this photograph is more reactionary — "Excursion" seen from the other side of the painting, beyond the frame. While Hopper focuses on the man, placing him at the front of the painting and denoting the woman to the back, faceless and partially nude, Goldin takes us to the women's side of the bed. The woman in Goldin's work is completely naked, stripped of the pretensions of male painting and the male gaze. Hopper's man is fully dressed, but Goldin's is not. Robert Hobbs writes of "Excursion", "the man in the painting seems to be questioning the idea of light versus the actual beam of it and the idea of beauty versus the presence of the voluptuous female on the bed beside him" (14). Yet in the Goldin photograph, the woman does the questioning. Ironically, though the man is posed in "Thinker" style, her face suggests contemplation; his is blank. Books accompany the male in both images, but the books in "Couple in Bed" are closed books; he is not the great thinker or creator of Hopper's idealization. Goldin's woman, in a traditional link with fertility, is more the cre-

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ator. The angles of her body — angles that recreate the female pubic triangle — form the apex of the image, repeated larger on the wall, like Plato's shadows being cast on the wall of the cave. Goldin's woman is stronger and more fully self-aware and active, not only of Hopper's woman, but Hopper's man as well.

Such rejection of male and conventional ways of knowing (and imagining) is comparable with most of Goldin's work¹. Interestingly, this gendered notion of knowledge and power also corresponds with the ideals and work of an English fiction writer dead years before Goldin was even born. Virginia Woolf represents a woman finding power, not in the presence or existing knowledge of men, but in her own words — specifically, the autobiographical projection or *image* of herself in her words, comparable to Goldin's self portraits. The linking of Goldin and Woolf, of a photographer and writer, is not usual or unmediated as may first appear. Thomas A. Vogler writes, "the importance of visual arts for the whole movement, and for Virginia Woolf in particular, was tied to a growing sense of limitation in the traditional use of words as an artistic medium" (4). Yet the points of comparison between Woolf and Goldin are grounded, not in the limitations of their respective art forms, but in the capabilities, in the possibilities, for the expansive application of one genre to another.

Diaries and Mirrors

"The camera is a mirror, the pictures are the diary through which I change" — Nan Goldin

"Her works are performances of her autobiography." — Larry Qualls

The stylistic similarities between Goldin and Woolf must first be understood as emerging from the context of comparable biographies. Both the photographer and the writer were driven by the impulse to record. For Goldin, the obsession for documenting began as a young teenager, after her older sister's suicide. Perhaps reacting to the absence of vi-

sual memories of her sister — two cracked and faded images and a dedication open Goldin's *I'll be your Mirror* — Goldin turned to the camera as a sort of visual diary. Goldin had started keeping a literal diary years before, in childhood, propelled by a mature sense of the untruthfulness of the social/public reality enforced upon her by friends and family². "She's an artist obsessed with taking control of her own personal history, with preserving memory from the ravages of time and the inevitable erosion of retrospective revision" (Fineman 2) as well as present, societal amendment. Goldin's sister's death perhaps shattered the public illusion of perfectness, thus, the catalyst for constructing photographic true, or at least more true, records. Goldin writes, "when I started taking pictures, I realized that it was a way to make a real record... of what I had actually seen and done. It came from a very deep place, this need to record. It was about... keeping myself sane, and grounded. About being able to trust my own experience" (451). Woolf too, perhaps also driven by the unreality of events, began a diary in childhood, documenting her mother's death and her own abuse by a half-brother, nonfiction events that would later haunt her fiction. "Autobiography is itself an assertion of control over self-image, for in writing an account of one's life, one *authorizes* the life" (Linda Haverty Rugg 4). And as Goldin initiated her perspicacious eye with writing, so Woolf trained her perception with art, copying existing pictures — interestingly enough by those who attempted to straddle the writing/artistic worlds such as Blake and Rossetti (she would later be influenced by existing writing, namely James Joyce). Thus, for both women, art emerged initially more as an offspring of documentation than a deliberate attempt at creation. It is not accidental art, but could have been, at least, in its inception, found art.

Yet for both Goldin and Woolf, though the latter concentrated on fictional writing, biography occupied a place of essential inspiration and subject matter. Meyer Raphael Rubinstein writes, "like many a bohemian poet, Goldin draws her material from the life

immediately present to her" (74). Both Goldin and Woolf share histories of abuse. Goldin was physically abused by a boyfriend, and abused drugs and alcohol herself for many years. All of Goldin's abuse and its aftermath is documented by her own lense, her own eye. "Self Portrait battered in hotel, Berlin, 1984," for example, shows dual images of Goldin, the woman and the woman in the mirror, with blackened eyes, holding her camera out. The presence of the camera in the photograph illustrates both the camera as a machine to gather evidence, much like an emergency room examination or a police report, as well as a silent witness in the absence of other human comfort³. In her pictures of parties and bar scenes, Goldin also shows the abusive lifestyles of her friends in the constant yet unobtrusive presence of cigarettes and glasses in various stages of emptiness. Her own abuses are also documented, including blurred self-portraits — as Goldin herself was in transition — outside and in her room at a drug treatment center. "Nan at her bottom, Bowery, NYC, 1988" as the 12-step terminology title suggests, features an unfocused Goldin sitting on her bed with ashtray and the telephone. An empty wine bottle and prescription pills loom in the background as the eye is drawn to a searing yellow, bare-bulb light, emulating, conveniently and prophetically, from the feet of a golden crucified statue⁴.

In contrast to Goldin's candid representation of abuse, Woolf's fiction notably avoids direct mention of the topic. As a child and young woman, Woolf was sexually abused by her half-brother, George Duckworth. The abuse obviously affected both her perception of self as well as her relation with others, most dramatically, with her husband, Leonard, with whom she rarely had sexual intercourse. As Woolf's abuse must have made it difficult for her to function as a sexually active woman, so Woolf's female characters have difficulty with their social existence as wives and mothers. Most come off as unhappy and trapped, and their responses to the men in their lives — husbands, sons, and fathers — seem antagonist and resigned. Woolf writes in *To The Lighthouse*, the

novel that was her fictionalized portrait of her mother:

And what then? For she felt that he was still looking at her, but that his look had changed. He wanted something — wanted the thing she always found difficult to give him; wanted her to tell him that she loved him. (133)

And, it can more than likely be added, wanted the physical tangibility of her sexuality, the "proof" of her love. Woolf's male characters are presented as docile and sympathetic (and, arguably, effeminate), or harsh and masculine — the representations of two dominant men in Woolf's life, her undemanding husband and her abusive half-brother? Perhaps this is Woolf's long-buried abuse surfacing in fictional manifestations. Another scene in *To The Lighthouse* examples the kind of domestic uneasiness characterizing much of Woolf's work:

Suddenly Mr. Ramsey raised his head as he passed and looked straight at her, with his distraught wild gaze which was yet so penetrating... she pretended to drink out of her empty coffee cup so as to escape him — to escape his demand on her, to put aside a moment longer that imperious need. (160)

Perhaps out of subconscious reaction to the violent associations with men in their lives, both Woolf and Goldin had affairs with women. Goldin is openly bisexual. She first fell in love, she said, with drag queens, biological men who dressed and occasionally lived as women, encapsulating, in theory, both her attractions to the male and female. She writes in the introduction to *The Other Side*, a retrospective of her drag queen portraits (which takes as its title the name of an infamous drag queen bar in 1970's Boston), "as a bisexual person, for me the third gender seems to be ideal" (7), at the very least, in terms of subject matter. Goldin's photos in *The Other Side* may be separated into two periods — the black and white portraits from the time she

lived as a runaway teen with drag queens; and the color, more formalized but no less empathetic pictures taken after Goldin's return to the community, this time armed with an art school education⁵. Yet the major influence of non-heterosexuality may be evidenced not in these images, but in portraits of her female lover, Siobhan Liddell.

The images of Siobhan...have a greater range of expression. They move from the gloomy yet beautiful intensity...to an uncompromising eroticism. They are not set in social situations—rarely are other people caught in the same space: Siobhan in all her moods exists for the photographer's eye only. (Sussman 39)

Gone is the harsh, flash-induced artificiality, or the static locale of the same dirty bed in Goldin's portfolio of herself with boyfriend Brian. Gone are the aftermath shots of Goldin's beaten-eyes, wet face, shot in glaring, often almost falsified, bright colors. Instead, the portraits of Siobhan are infused with natural light, glowing with the subtleties of shadow and contrast. They are simple and often close up: Siobhan on a sheeted bed, for example, without the cluttered background of a disheveled bedroom that characterizes Goldin's earlier shots. The proximity of the photographs, zeroing in on Siobhan's face and especially eyes, reflects Goldin's closeness to the subject. She states in *Couples and Loneliness*, on the page facing a portrait of Siobhan, "taking a picture of someone is a way of touching them. It's a caress. My pictures often come from erotic desire" (Goldin 58).

As a relationship with a woman extended Goldin's artistic palette, so Woolf's (mostly emotional) love affair with Vita Sackville-West brought a new passion to Woolf's writing. Unlike Goldin's quiet, tonal revolution in pictures of Siobhan, Woolf's work gained a boldness and audacity equal to the brazen character of lover Vita. As Jane Dunn notes, "[Vita's] extravagant passions were barely contained by reasonableness, convention, or control" (208)⁶. Dunn goes on to write, "the relationship with her was particularly enriching to [Woolf] personally and artistically (211-212). It produced

Orlando, the most surreal, fantastic work Woolf was to write, a fictional biographical which expands, not only the boundaries of narrative structure which Woolf was wont already to do, but the boundaries of time and gender. It was written for Vita. As the character of Orlando, sitting next to his/her beloved, says, "ransack the language as he might, words failed him. He wanted another landscape, another tongue" (Woolf 32), as bisexuality caused Woolf to reject traditional (male? heterosexual?) notions of time and sexuality as too restricting, and opened her up to a new richness of fantasy previously unknown in her work.

Erasing the Ladder: Structure

"It is a glimpse beneath the waves on the surface, into the unknown depths which she knew she must some day penetrate to complete her life-long search for form."—Thomas A. Vogler

The fluidity of narrative found in *Orlando* was characteristic of the majority of Woolf's works. Her distinctive aesthetic involved building the story, then erasing the narrative ladder, the chronological skeleton on which it was built—omitting exposition and unnecessary background. Her novels plunge right in the middle; Woolf worked from the middle out, stretching voluminous pages around simple moments. The world of her characters is often internalized, and, as in *The Waves*, seen through the eyes of multiple, often contrasting, characters. Hawley describes Woolf's selective narration as, "narrow[ing] down her field to one important factor: the discovery of what it is that gives to the design its sense of reality" (107). This also may lead to an uncertainty; one wonders whether the events in a Woolf story take place in the physical world, or in the emotional one of the character's head.

Goldin relates in her version of the unreal narrative, namely, through the gender presentation of her subjects and their relationships to each other and to her. Though she titles her photographs in conventional fashion—relational to the people, places, and times

photographed—the images themselves often eschew linearity, as if the specified titles are only to remind Goldin (again, in an act of preservation) of their significance. These are private titles. Take, for example, "Santi with his portrait as a Young Queen, Bangkok 1992." The image features a middle-aged, Asian man smiling contently before a painting of what appears to be a young woman in a red dress, but the modifier in the photograph's title ("his") as well as the male sex of the subject contracts this assumption. The painting looks cheaply done, but is mounted and displayed in a gilt frame, and the figure wears a hefty, beauty pageant tiara, suggesting a double entendre on the word "queen." The title locates the picture in the present, yet the palmprint curtains, wallpaper, and flowered shirt seem to position the image in the seventies. The man's and painted woman's matching smile cement the portrait, locating the image as a series of images, repeated through time. Relying often on mirrors, background images (such as a postcard of *Woman with Meat Packer Gloves* stuck into her mirror frame), or self-invoking objects like Barbie dolls, Goldin layers metaphors through extended versions of the self. According to Carole Naggar, "[Goldin's] pictures resonate with these multiple truths" (41).

They further reject linearity by the order in which she chooses to publish and exhibit them. Goldin often groups portraits of a particular subject together in portfolios, such as the ones of Cookie Mueller and Siobhan. Her arrangement otherwise is not chronological. Even in the portfolios, images seem often to be structured more aesthetic than archival. Max Kozloff writes, "*The Ballad*[of *Sexual Dependency*] has the character of a tawdry story, carried by thematic momentum, as distinct from linear plot or expositional plan" (39). Goldin's penchant for nonlinear order emerged from her early slide shows—which, in turn, emerged out of necessity (she had no access to a dark room). The first one, *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, still runs today, and is different—in length, style of music, but especially images; new ones are added and old

replaced all the time—but still displays a liberal view of order.

The only chronology Goldin does not play around with is death. Goldin fears it, believes it, respects it. Her photographs of Mueller, dead in 1989 from AIDS, trace a menology of parties, a wedding, a child, sickness, and a coffin. By presenting these images in traditional, linear order, Goldin shows not only the beauty of Mueller maturing, but also, the suddenness of death. On one page, she looks serious in a wedding dress, on the next, her eyes are closed in her coffin⁷. Goldin follows her subjects through multiple, years of photographing, like *Orlando's* narrative of a life. James Crump writes, "Goldin's imagery is unrelenting in that the photographs seem to build on themselves" (26). Such photographs also serve as visual history. In the introduction to Goldin's book *I'll be your Mirror*, Elisabeth Sussman writes:

As she continued to take pictures of her friends, she began to accumulate their histories, and history itself emerged as an imperative that would thenceforth govern her operation. By capturing the present, Goldin instinctively knew that the record would ultimately deliver the past. (25)

Other Goldin photographs are juxtaposed onto singular large print, creating gridlocks of visuals, like a montage family tree. Thus, one is confronted by a grid of faces, does not know where to look, is overwhelmed by sheer abundance of images, not to mention Goldin's zinging trademark colors. Such collage-type construction, echoing Woolf's abundant layering of images, serves to multiply the central emotion of images: the tragedy of AIDS related death in the Gilles and Gotscho series from *Couples and Loneliness*, or the base sexualizing of young men in pictures of Jon-Jon from *I'll be your Mirror*. These images take their originality and their impact from (multiple) nonlinear representation.

Despite her deviation from chronology, at their heart, Goldin's images still tell stories. Her structure remains largely narrative, derivative of Woolf's work as writer. "Stepping

out of physical and psychic wholeness and into the fray of its surround, such works treat the subject paradigmatically, through literary or metaphorical forms of representation" (Feldman 43). The compelling subjects of her work make them narrative. The complexity of each subject's face holds a story. Goldin's documentative tracing of the lives, and deaths, of her friends ensures their place as protagonists in a continually unfolding drama. Goldin also shares with Woolf a penchant for metaphor and allegory. For Woolf, metaphors tend to be construed from physical objects, representing emotional states; for example, the lighthouse in *To The Lighthouse* and Mrs. Ramsey's inability to reach it.⁸ Goldin uses similar metaphors, often, as Woolf does, recalling other artistic works or referencing history: "such works employ fictional or allegorical modes of representation that open themselves to multiple meanings and new art forms" (Feldman 10). "Gina and Bruce's dinner party, NYC, 1991" contrasts a Classical/Romantic image of the God of wine Dionysius with a sad-faced, plump drag queen in a neon sweater as well as the bowel of glistening, sexual (and fake, like Gina's "artificial" sexuality) fruit and a vase of lilacs—creating at least four representations of the standards of beauty, if not more. James Crump writes, "Goldin's many female model-friends[look] cautiously into mirrors, crying, or bathing, these intimate portraits dispel myths of classic beauty and grace" (26).

Goldin establishes less direct, more historic metaphors in the unfolding of her portraits. Some subjects, like David and Susan, she has been documenting almost continually since their young adulthood, thus, giving their pictures a kind of mythology all their own—much the way Woolf's Orlando, though more compacted, traces a singular life made manifest in multiple genders and times. Through Goldin's allegorical eye, David transforms from a lithely-androgynous teenager to a roughened, muscular man. The sequence of Susan's circled eyes grow darker and more ominous as she ages, creating a biographic foreboding in Goldin's pictures, culminating

in a close-up image of her lowered head, darkened eyes, and a single, silver tear.

"Jewels with sparks of fire in them"

"Reality is in Color"—Nobuyoshi Araki

Of Goldin, Jed Perl writes, "she is avid for appearances, she brings a restlessness to everything she sees. This alertness probably has more in common with a novelist's intuitions as with the instincts that are a painter's essential tools" (30). Then there is Goldin's use of color. After beginning work in black and white—perhaps out of a sense of "artistic" conformity—Goldin switched to color film in 1973, infusing her work with a vibrancy that is both artificial and alive in its intensity. "Goldin's fusion of color and artificial light became as critical a defining mark of her vision as her original decision to photograph her personal life...Goldin embraced it" (Sussman 31). Colors showed better the sickly green of the bruises, the garish red of the lipstick. She often uses blurred images of colors, hues bleeding into each other, blending as her friends lives blend into each other, changing the pigment (and relating metaphorically to AIDS).

As Goldin pays attention to detail like a novelist and layers like a painter, Woolf too takes technique from a genre akin to her own, painting. Sister of the painter Vanessa Bell and frequenter of the Bloomsbury Group, the affect of the visual arts may also be traced through Woolf's writing. Woolf uses color in nearly every sentence to encapsulate character's moods, periods in time, locations, and yes, even descriptions. In *The Waves*—in which each sibling character is represented by a color or series of colors—Woolf writes, "Now, too the rising sun came in at the window, touching the red-edged curtain, and began to bring out circles and lines. Now in the growing light its whiteness settled in the plate; the blade condenses its gleam" (55). Color, stark shades of red and white, and the domestic scenery they describe evoke unhappiness in domestic life. Such would be a theme in both

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"Artists, especially gay ones, often make a connection between the sexual force and the creative one."—Andrea R. Vaucher

"For we think back through our mothers if we are women."

—Virginia Woolf

For Woolf, the domestic sphere was the primary location of most of her work, centering on the lives of women, yet it is also a scene of unhappiness. Her characters, especially protagonists, mostly wives and mothers, feel trapped in their marriages and relationships with males. Her work has been criticized for its concentration on the routine of domesticity, yet by narrowing in on the everyday details of women's lives, Woolf constructed a drama out of the rote insignificance of women's day to day existences. Comparably, "Goldin's photographs... are shot almost exclusively on-site, in the environment of the people documented. They tend to indicate moments caught amid daily life and activities" (Feldman 96). Goldin construes this notion in an upgraded gender setting; she pictures drag queens at home, prostitutes getting dressed, lesbians bathing—thus making those that society deems "abnormal," ordinary by virtue of the normality of their lives as pictured.

Goldin sets her dramas in bedrooms, sheeted center of the domestic sphere, and scene of the primary tropes of her work: sex, death, birth. Jennifer Blessing writes that Goldin, "provides an intimate glimpse of disaffected men and women sleeping, having sex, lounging around and otherwise living their lives—suggesting volatile narratives of desire and frustration, placed out most frequently in bed" (208). Her concentration on the bedroom, specifically the bed, also signifies the proximity of Goldin to her subjects—a relationship metaphorically comparable to Woolf since the latter's subjects were projections of *herself* or her family. "As a sign that her subjects have allowed her to show the intimacy of their disheveled living quarters, and it appears, their messy lives, the bed acts as the ideal prop in Goldin's narrative... bathrooms vie with the

candor of bedroom[s]" (Blessing 208). Goldin includes the bathroom in her narrative of domesticity because it also represents privacy of the body. The bathroom in Goldin's work is often sexualized to be a carnal extension of the bedroom, with eroticized photographs of friends and lovers showering or bathing. Mirrors, in bathrooms and otherwise, are the ultimate camera—the witness that reflects truth and multiples it into parallel images for contraction; in addition, mirrors bring up notions of beauty and the representation of female beauty and expectation through history and literature, ala "Mirror, Mirror, on the wall." Bathrooms also represent enhanced femininity (Blessing) as well as sterility in the cold porcelain and tile landscape that correlates to illness and AIDS, other important tropes in Goldin's work.

Contrasted to Goldin, Woolf was near silent about the body. Long misdiagnosed and mistreated by the medical establishment, perhaps reacting out of her past, she hated her body, hated talk (and writing) of the body and avoided mirrors. As Dunn writes, "even private bedrooms aren't sanctuary as visited [sexually] by half-brothers" (45), so the bed loses its sexual sanctity. Instead, Woolf infused her drawing and living rooms, her parlors and other non-sexual domestic locations with loaded sexual longings, fear, and frustration.

Woolf's and Goldin's frustration with conventional domesticity is reflective in their negative portrayal of the nuclear family. Woolf's wives, mothers, and daughters are always unhappy, looking onward or backward but never existing bodily, contently, in the present. The traditional family failed both Goldin, in her sister's suicide, and Woolf, in the sexual abuse by her family. Though Goldin's photographs of her aging parents are rendered lovingly and patiently, she perhaps sums up her discontent best by arranging the portrait of her parents next to a shot of a wax dummy Coney Island couple in *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. As she says, "I came from a culture where so many things were dictated. In my family there was a high premium on being a male" (Goldin 153). In her work,

Goldin dismisses the male head. Women, by themselves and with other women, occupy the positions of strength and power in her pictures, dominating the lens, filling the frame. Her work can be seen as a critique on the middle class. "When Goldin's camera visits Bourgeois interiors... she notes a decrease in such warmth, and with that, a failure of even ordinary human connection" (Kozloff 41).

Both artists' dissatisfaction with traditional family is evidenced in their attempt to create new ones for themselves, Woolf with the Bloomsbury Group and Goldin with her adopted circle of artists and bohemians. The latter notion of invented family is crucial to Goldin's work. After running away from her biological home, following her sister's death, the traditional family again failed Goldin in a series of unsuccessful foster homes. She only succeeded in finding a place for herself when she made her own family from societal outcasts—drag queens, prostitutes, artists. Only the dregs of society could redeem society for

her; thus, her interest in picturing outsiders as a way to redeem photography. She writes, "I was interested in people who were re-creating themselves, as I was trying to do by leaving home. They had achieved some kind of liberation" (153).

Yet liberation of the self comes at what cost to community? AIDS has left a ravaging effect on Goldin's community, as did the war on Woolf's. Though societal ideals of the self and self-perceptions may be altered through Goldin's lens and Woolf's pen, society itself remains unchanged by the art and mostly unsympathetic—many of Goldin's friends are dead and Woolf committed suicide in 1941. Perhaps the illusionary world imagined by Goldin and Woolf is the only world, at present, that could hold their inventive views of self-creation. As Woolf writes in *The Waves*, "How can I proceed now, I said, without a self, weightless and visionless, through a world weightless, without illusion?" (244).

Notes

1. And perhaps, metaphorically, to the lukewarm, somewhat confused response of the public at large to her images (very personalized portraits of friends), which have been accused of being exclusive and inartistic due to their snapshot aesthetic.
2. One wonders if Goldin's self-exposing later images of herself physically battered are latent attempt to recognize the denial inherent in everyday, constructed appearances.
3. Goldin rarely features *other* people in photographs where she bears marks of abuse—perhaps out of social shame?
4. Some might criticize Goldin's photographs of her abuse as self-benefiting, eliciting sympathy, yet as her work for AIDS activism suggests, the photographs perhaps emerge more out of an activist intention, as well as her continued commitment to honest documentation.
5. Initially feeling somewhat like an outsider after being gone for so long, Goldin's photographs of this transitional time reflect the strained, but fortunately fleeting, artificiality.
6. Or Woolf's husband, who, believing Vita to be no real "threat" to their relationship, tolerated her, and even grew to like her (Dunn).
7. Meuller also appeared in films, providing alternate representations for discussion.
8. Symbolizing frustrated heterosexuality (the phallic connotations inherent in the symbol are obvious)? Or, more indirectly, inability to reach domestic happiness, symbolizing by the lighthouse's beam?

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