
Lucas--as well as many others in this bibliography but predominantly important to his argument--writes about a paradigm shift that occurred in the British literary world after World War I. He notes some scholars and writers had a tendency to cling to “Edwardian” values, but the move to modernism came to Britain with a seeming loss of innocence that could never be regained after the Great War. He shows Warner has been forgotten or omitted on many lists of the great modernists of the era, and Lucas makes a case for her as one of “the movement” (as Orwell called the writers, though he also omits Warner from that list). Lucas points out how early Warner published *Lolly Willowes*, and how fundamentally important the text remains in that it predates Woolf’s feminist movement. Lucas shows Warner’s novel rejects Edwardian
values of the bourgeois in a careful, calculated manner in that Warner offers a radical response to the politics of her day; Lucas’ article looks at two other overlooked authors of that time period as well to round out his central point.

**Space, place, and body**


Nesbitt makes a compelling argument for the dual image of Britannia as a nation and as a mother and that all women of the World War I era to fit the role of mother, whether they had children or not--much like Laura as she works for the war effort early in the novel. Nesbitt’s claim that Britain is the mother that sends her sons to war and women symbolically remain behind as the homeland remains behind implicates the importance of how space defines women in times when women were unable to define themselves. The national domestic space serves as a mode of support for British imperialism, and women cannot escape this implication or how they are processed within the implication of space. Nesbitt’s assertions that space is created by white men for white men shows how anyone who does not fall into the *white male* category—for Warner’s novel, specifically women--will likely be affected in significant ideological ways;

O’Connor’s view of *Lolly Willowes* as a modernist utopian text seems to center on the central belief that *utopian* represents renewal, perhaps specifically renewal of the self for Laura. O’Connor’s argument centers much on a Marxist view of alienation from society and self, and interestingly, how the material world and capitalism function as a necessity in the novel as a framework for Laura’s escape to a utopian community--away from the alienation of the spinster. Perhaps most useful, O’Connor expands the concept of renewal/utopia beyond a sense of self to how the self must function with a productive, healthy community of acceptance that rejects the commodification of women that led Laura to her initial alienation. This article also provides information on how to teach *Lolly Willowes* and provides sample lessons with O’Connor’s arguments in mind, so as a teacher, it feels incredibly useful. While much of the argument is
centered on Marxist theory, I thought O’Connor’s focus on Laura’s place in the modern world as a means of creating alienation versus community lends itself to the sub-topic of space and how space plays a role for women in this period.


Renzi’s argument centers on the ideas of the grotesque and normalcy. She uses the metaphor of dough and baking in Lolly Willowes to analyze how the grotesque and the normal manifest through feminist and queer theory--but central to her point is to move beyond the notion that Laura’s baking of twisted, dough-like versions of the villagers of Great Mop as a subtle reference to the spinster’s body being similarly twisted and ruined. Renzi sees the dough and its grotesque manifestation as a reflection of societal roles, or “the sameness between the normal and the grotesque” (64). The same dough that is used to expose the monsters/witches hidden within the Great Mop for what they are, she argues, is that dough used by the women in the normative role--the domestic space she is supposed to inhabit. Her argument presents an interesting view of how the domestic space functions. Works I wanted to include in this bibliography, but ultimately chose not to, mostly center around Renzi’s theoretical approach to the text. Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick were all writers who contributed to Renzi’s theoretical argument.

Valls, Esther. ““Dressing up for War’ (Facts and Phantoms): Flappers, Vamps, and What about Spinsters?” The Image of the Twentieth Century in Literature, Media, and Society. Edited
Recreating the image of the spinster, Valls argues, is central to Warner’s work in *Lolly Willowes*. The idea that women of a marriageable age outnumbered men of the same age due to World War I came up in other articles, but Valls hones in on this as a specific problem British society held in its subconscious. For many women, becoming a spinster was impossible to avoid due to the fundamentals on which society had been built: a woman must marry a man; therefore, the values of a post-World War I British society became deeply threatened by the lack of men. And what if women began to realize, as more spinsters came to exist, that it was not so bad without men? Valls pays close to attention to the spaces women inhabited in the time period, and what those spaces often forced women to be (domestic vs natural space).

**Nature, environment, ecology**


While Greenslade’s arguments have all the hallmarks of a Marxist theoretical framework, he pushes his analysis of *Lolly Willowes*--as our primary text of interest here--into an analysis of “ecological imagination” that seems to permeate many texts of the period. He argues a shift in how humanity sees itself in accordance with nature--specifically in the radical and socialist political thought movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century--becomes a role of guardianship over nature instead of mastery. The novels he analyzes, *Lolly Willowes* in particular, offer a specific path for re-determining modern cultural politics shortsightedness in the realm of the ecological. Much of Marxist thought seems centered on the worker, the person, and his or her relation to his working environment, but Greenslade goes back to the foundational writings of Marx and looks at how Marx discussed the worker in relation to his natural environment. While ultimately the analysis of *Lolly Willowes* makes up only a small part of this chapter, the rest of the text serves as an excellent foundational piece for a number of issues related to the novel’s setting.


For Knoll, passive resistance and aggressiveness can be seen as the duality between how the patriarchal society presented in Warner’s novel functions as the duality between masculinity
and femininity. Both are created under the banner of the patriarchy, so femininity was not a value necessarily worth accepting for a woman seeking reprieve from the patriarchal order. Knoll argues it is Laura’s ultimate acceptance of nature and her role within it that allows her to be transformed from child to assertive adult, and this transformation allows her to accept a life of acceptance as opposed to one of death as a spinster in the patriarchal order. This argument works well under the context that many of the arguments in this bibliography have presupposed: the patriarchal order is created through commodification and a corruption of nature and that moving closer to nature allows an escape from this type of societal pressure.


In an effort to show *Lolly Willowes* is not merely a feminist manifesto, Shin writes that Warner is able to create fiction and narrative that disturbed the imperial order through a reanimation of three works of art in the text (Leonardo portrait, Fuseli portrait, and a wood carved witch hunter). Shin uses the words “conjuring, animating, and re-animating” (710) to describe the process Warner uses to bring life to two-dimensional images allowing for a subtle challenge to unequal power and a vastly creative spark in narrative imagination. What’s interesting to me (and addressed in the article), is how Warner does little beyond mentioning without much-added description the works of art Shin focuses on—such as Fuseli. Of course, Shin’s analysis of the text in relation to Fuseli’s *The Nightmare* offers particularly compelling evidence to her argument. The difficulty of this argument is parsing out the theoretical argument of the images as a challenge to the power structure. I think Shin offers a lot here, but I had difficulty working through this argument in terms of how these seemingly small details (aside
from Fuseli perhaps) channel so much. Perhaps it is a credit to Shin that she is able to create an argument from such seemingly disparate elements.

Science, cognition


Harker’s argument that Laura’s thinking in *Lolly Willowes* is an example of cognitive minimalism as opposed to complex, in-depth, and self-analytic levels of thinking that are often associated with modernism works to help analyze Laura’s character despite her often blank-slated nature. He takes a counter-intuitive approach to analyzing Laura and shows time and again that she is presented as having minimal thoughts in the novel; Harker’s uses cognitive based behavioral science as to why Warner’s novel should be considered a top tier example of “literary form” and “political critique” (60). Harker argues Warner uses cognitive minimalism as a means of bridging the formal principles necessary to bring together the elements of such a disjointed novel and create a social critique of a society that allowed for minimal thought (in the form of something like social critique) from its female population. The use of behavioral sciences to evaluate Laura proves helpful, and this reading is extremely accessible despite its background in the sciences.

Witchcraft

Macdonald’s argument that Warner’s novel does not receive academic notice to the same degree as other literary feminist texts of the same period (or even other novels written by Warner) because *Lolly Willowes* is ultimately about witchcraft resonates with me. Macdonald’s argument seems to subversively strike at academic snobbery when literature even potentially whiffs at the dreaded words *genre fiction*. Warner’s text certainly is not genre fiction, but *Lolly Willowes* seems to be largely ignored, as Macdonald notes, when it comes to academic scholarship. Macdonald focuses on the trend in literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century texts that delve into the supernatural, but she is specifically interested in witchcraft. Another interesting possibility Macdonald asserts about the stigma against supernatural/witchcraft in literary writing is the Christian religious backing literature received in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from such writers—such as T.S. Eliot. Of all the articles I read, this was my favorite. It was accessible, it was on point, and it closely with one of the most interesting aspects of the novel without trying to wash it away.

This source is neither scholarly nor truly connected to *Lolly Willowes*, but I am adding the eleventh entry, for fun?, to point to this recently released horror film that is vastly different in tone from *Lolly Willowes*, but thematically holds much of the same worldview of Warner’s novel. I do not recommend this if you are not a fan of horror films, but I think the parallels are worth discussing, and I will pick that up in a blog post.