

Title

The True Heart: Sylvia Townsend Warner's Impolitics of Love

Abstract

What can Sylvia Townsend Warner teach literary criticism about love? Despite critical neglect for this twentieth-century British writer, I argue that Warner's work can help us think about how we read love. Debates about Warner's significance persistently involve, and revolve around, her writing of love and its revolutionary potential. But if her love plots offer her readers the hope of a transformational politics, its expressions also invoke critical discomfort, even shame: to love Warner is to love a writer whose politics of love also engage attachments to imperialism, to eugenics, and to difficult discourses of race and class. If these ugly adjacencies disrupt recuperative readings that put love's potential at the heart of their critical projects, however, this tells us there is a politics of love at work not only in Warner's writing, but in the very critical narratives we bring to her work. Whether or not we are Warner scholars doesn't matter: critical attachments to love's potential are not limited to Warner's moment, but alive in our own.

Keywords

Sylvia Townsend Warner; *The True Heart*; love; affect; emotion; politics; impolitics

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So: your heart beats, gives the downbeat, the birth of rhythm, beyond oppositions, beyond outside and inside, conscious representation and the abandoned archive.ⁱ

You know it very well, but did you recognise the sub-structure? – It is Cupid and Psyche, from [Apuleius's] The Golden Ass. I wanted to do some serious technical study – to develop my wrist for narrative. So I thought I would write a canto fermo, as one does in learning counterpoint. The True Heart is on a canto fermo.ⁱⁱ

‘What does it mean to fall in love with a writer?’: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick asks this at the end of an essay on Sylvan Tomkins’ affect theory.ⁱⁱⁱ What she loved in Tomkins’ thinking about shame was its ‘unfamiliar and highly exciting set of moves and tonalities’ that allowed her to think in new ways about ‘the rich life of everyday theories and how expensively theories turn into Theory’.^{iv} Sedgwick’s work has inspired a new mood of literary criticism that asks how an attention to feeling unfolds different potentialities for our critical imaginations. One of the most explicit is Rita Felski’s pursuit of critical modes and attitudes to counter the suspiciousness that has dominated literary studies. Suspicion, Felski argues,

...highlights the sphere of agon (conflict and domination) at the expense of eros (love and connection)...Anyone who attends academic talks has learned to expect the inevitable question: “But what about power?” Perhaps it is time to start asking different questions: “But what about love?” Or: “Where is your theory of attachment?”^v

Although Felski’s project resonates with my own curiosity about the critical feelings underwriting our scholarship, I’m less certain about this distance between suspicion and love: asking about love *is* asking about power. An appeal to love doesn’t surmount the risk of critical violence, but carries its own by making the two questions appear to take different measures, and by naturalising this difference as if it weren’t already a critical distinction. I wonder: just how far away from suspicion is love? and how far away from love is suspicion?

Sedgwick asks about love in anticipation of suspicions about her love for Tomkins: founded on the idea of innate and universal affect programmes, engaging Tomkins' work also means engaging in one's own an indebtedness to concepts of essentialism and neurological hardwiring, and risks the erasure of cultural specificity.^{vi} While Sedgwick's appeal to love is a refusal to be shamed for loving Tomkins, it is, also, an appeal *to* shame. She answers her question by what she calls 'deferring': describing the generative impossibilities of resolving these difficulties. She situates Tomkins as a writer 'whose most extraordinary insights had to be interlined with self-ignorance, involved in contradiction, and inextricably interleaved with the speculative science of his time'.^{vii} Refusing to renounce the object' of her own critical desire she also refuses to pathologise it according to the discourses of her contemporary critical moment, or mood. She initiates a different orientation to those aspects of a writer's work that might, by her (or our) literary standards, be most disturbing – it's an orientation that asks: 'What was it possible to think or do at a certain moment of the past that it no longer is? And how are those possibilities to be found, unfolded...in the very different disciplinary ecology of even a few decades distance?'^{viii}

Love in the contemporary mood of criticism might seem too distant a starting point for thinking about Warner's 1926 novel *The True Heart*. But Warner's novel has the potential to address us across this distance on the question of love and literary practice in a way that is similarly valanced to Sedgwick's affection for Tomkins. What Warner's moment shares with our own is a claim for the transformational potential of love: but to love Warner's work is, also, to come into ecologies of thinking, reading and feeling whose most difficult contacts are indivisible from love's potential. Rather than undermine, or contradict, the political potential of her work, *The True Heart* goes straight to the heart of the narratives of love at work in critical claims for such a positive political force.

In this essay I look again at love in Warner's writing by situating *The True Heart* as a text whose neglect even within Warner studies is related to the way it disturbs our critical attachments to love. While I agree with existing scholarship on Warner that love is crucial to the work her novels do, I make a substantial departure by showing how her work is not unthinking in the adjacencies it materialises between love and ugly ideologies. These are not unconscious irruptions, I argue, but textual encounters that attend to the fantasies of love's potential that textured the politics of writing and reading in her moment and, I go on to suggest, are being regenerated in our critical present. My work here is, then, a call for a more critical orientation to love both in Warner studies and in literary criticism's contemporary concerns with and for love, an orientation that does not engage love, or loving reading, as an inherent corrective (or alternative) to those moods or modes of which we are becoming critical. Warner's *The True Heart* asks us to learn, by heart, that love is neither inherently positive nor positively transformational. Rather than teach us a politics of love, the novel teaches us its *impolitics*. Derived from the negative prefix 'im' and 'politic', impolitic points in at least two directions at once: to impolitic is to bring a body into the body politic, while to be impolitic is to use a method unsuitable for such ends. Neither skillfully contrived, nor in accordance with what we believe is good, impolitic also pulses with the affects that characterise the impolite. Even in Warner's time the word was out of date: but in its distance from her moment, and our own, we can come into contact with a way of reading and writing love in which its promise cannot be divided from the impolitics at its heart.

Critical Attachments

Maude Ellmann remarks that most work on Warner 'begins with a kind of ritual lament about the critical neglect that has condemned her writing to obscurity. Unfortunately the present

survey is obliged to echo this refrain'.^{ix} In this echo, however, we can — and should — attend to something else: how Warner's advocates feel. Listen to Sarah Waters:

The intelligence of [Warner's] writing has sometimes resulted in her fiction being misunderstood as difficult, and has perhaps lost her readers; she's certainly one of the most shamefully under-read great British authors of the past 100 years...She remains, however, relatively under-appreciated – a fact that baffles, frustrates and, I think, secretly pleases her admirers, for she's the kind of novelist who inspires an intense sense of ownership in her fans.^x

Waters' introduction mobilises shame, knowledge and pleasure with a complexity of feeling that suggests Warner's critical status is as much an effect of how we feel as it is what we think. Here we can hear an affective economy of criticism at work — the question of whether, and how, we read Warner is entangled with how she makes us feel. In Waters' appraisal, though, shame is not limited to Warner's neglect. It's at work in the very pleasures that texture the critical relations of those who love her writing.

While Warner's status allows us to think more generally about the kinds of feelings involved in literary criticism, my interest here is in how work on Warner is characterised by specific kinds of critical attachments to the potential of love. Love persistently underpins claims about how to read Warner, and how to situate the significance of her writing. Whether her love for communism, for feminism, or for another woman (Valentine Ackland), Warner is read as a writer whose novels express desires and longings that describe a very particular kind of political potential: a politics of love in which private intimacies can be made public, and in which love can be made political. While critics don't agree on the ends achieved by love in Warner's writing, most readings meet in the sense that her work expresses a desire for the transformative effects of love, its ability to transcend and even lead to revolution.^{xi}

Yet if love in Warner's work is a resource for these projects, it also disrupts them. Most scholarship on her novels notices, with discomfort, how frequently her visions of love engage imperialist and eugenicist discourses alongside those aspects of her work — her novel's communist yearnings, the emancipation her heroines desire, their lesbian articulations, and revolutionary romances — that might lend her writing a radicality with the capacity to secure her critical significance. The most sustained readings tend to position her use of racialised, sexed, classed, and degenerate bodies as engaging, like the contemporaries with whom she has been grouped, textual strategies of otherness to articulate a politics of emancipation and negotiate a lesbian relation to the body politic. This method turns around materialising contacts with otherness as a supplement for women's, and for lesbian, subjugation and subjectivity. But by failing to recognise the distinction between the subjugations of these others and her protagonists or, indeed, the women's body she wishes to make legible, Warner's novels surface the primitivism underpinning both naturalising discourses in 1920s lesbian writing, and the imperialism of women's political imagination. For Jane Garrity, then, the politics of desire imagined in Warner's novels are undercut by the ideologies embodied by these figures of otherness, making her an example of British women modernists who 'fabricate literary compensations for the political agency they lack in real life' but 'reinscribe rhetoric of empire even as they resist it'.^{xii} Robin Hackett considers the difficulty of how to read the tone of such representations, but finds that, regardless of whether Warner's novels engage these as irony or satire, the extent to which her writing relies on these discourses for 'narrative coherence and logic' ultimately 'undermines the irony with which these may be rendered, even the direct critiques'.^{xiii} And for Gay Wachman, Warner's reliance on encounters with eugenicist and imperialist discourses make her novels susceptible to these discourses' resistance to deconstruction. While Wachman determines Warner's crossing of class bounda-

ries, to a certain extent, successful, she argues that Warner's representations of racial difference are unable to overcome the problems inscribed by this textual strategy: her novels, 'like those of other modernists, were contaminated by primitivism'.^{xiv}

'Contaminated' is notable here as an example of the affects Warner's writing provokes. To imagine her novels as contaminated does a curious kind of critical work, constructing the literary text as tainted, diseased even, as if it had a state of health or goodness before (or would, without) exposure to such ideologies, a positive potential that has been rendered toxic, ruined beyond recuperation. We can hear in it too a threat of spread, as if the project of reading Warner requires its own sort of boundary work, a critical distance or containment. This is what makes me want to look at *The True Heart*. In it, Warner transports Eros and Psyche to 1873 and swaps them for Sukey Bond, an orphan in her first position as a domestic servant-girl, and Eric, the 'idiot' son of a Parson's wife. Sukey's narrative destination is to secure Eric in marriage by appealing to higher powers: first Eric's mother, and then the Queen of England. This makes the novel an explicit address to love, but also to love's political potential. Yet of all her novels, *The True Heart* is, also, the most critically un-loved. Lacking sustained attention (with one recent exception), work on *The True Heart* hasn't developed much since its initial publication, when, writes biographer Clare Harman, it 'excited either pious admiration or puzzlement. No one really knew what to make of it'.^{xv} While critical readings of the novel typify efforts to explain Warner's status, their brevity is less typical. Where these exist they rarely extend beyond a paragraph or two, and suggest a kind of critical awkwardness about how to talk about the novel. Unlike *Summer Will Show*, Warner's 1936 historical novel about love in the 1848 failed French revolution, or her radical feminist (and encoded lesbian) 1926 fantasy *Lolly Willowes*, *The True Heart* doesn't seem to take place during a failed revolution, and its subject hardly seems radical. There doesn't appear to be anything technically or aesthetically innovative — beyond the absurdities of the story — about

her 'disguise' for Cupid and Psyche. It also fails to deploy any sort of manifesto (as in the scene of reading *The Communist Manifesto* that ends *Summer Will Show*) or employ tone to sufficiently orient the reader to a political vision. And what could be revolutionary about Sukey's quest? Despite the transgressions Eric might represent, his social status makes it much harder to convert this love-story into counter-normativity; what Sukey seeks, politically, appears to be the kind of social mobility secured by marriage into the middle-class. No wonder Wachman's analysis, one of the most substantial to date, ultimately determines the novel a 'heterosexual primitivist fantasy'.^{xvi} Where the love plots of Warner's other novels secure a critical care willing to contend with the difficult subjects traversing her work, this novel does not. In its brief inclusions, and overt exclusions, the *The True Heart* appears a source of critical embarrassment, and even shame.

More recently love has found its way into critical efforts to recuperate the novel's radicality and political vision. Courtney Andree carefully reads the approaches to disability in critical appraisals of the novel, and argues that the novel's representation of Eric must be contextualised by Warner's history of 'intervention on behalf of people with disabilities'.^{xvii} Andree's reading sets out, as does mine, from the premise that the novels' engagements with otherness are more complex, and less unconscious, than critics have granted. Yet where we depart is in the relationship between love and radical politics envisioned by the novel. For Andree, *The True Heart*'s utopic vision works by 'naturalising the otherwise improbable romance' between Sukey and Eric and, in so doing, imagining a version of loving and living 'wholly separate from the control of the state and the space of the institution'.^{xviii} What I want to apprehend here is how love's naturalness is posited as a source of political freedom, a freedom whose expression, or evidence, is, also, its ability to retreat to privacy and autonomy. Although I agree with Andree that Warner 'expands our understandings of what it means to

live a conventional life in an age of eugenics^{xxix}, that conventionality — as the novel imagines it — is utterly imbricated with state and institution. The texture of that imbrication is the novel's encounters with otherness, and these encounters' impolitics of love. What Andree regards as at odds with the novel's ethcial drive are those aspects of the novel I am positing as impolitical. Indooing so I aregue we can read a more complex engagement with the desire to hook love onto ethics. Rather than endorse either the naturalness of love, or love's naturally positive political potential, *The True Heart* disturbs our critical attachments to love and the justices we like to think its naturalness guarantees.

Love's Guile

How true is the 'heart' in *The True Heart*? Is it wrong to hear in it a whisper of 'art'? Although the novel's design invites, from the beginning, a sense of the novel's impolitics, a certain level of suspicion about its narrative of love, none of the work I've read questions the authenticity of the title's declaration. Warner herself noted that the novel's disguise worked so well reviewers didn't recognise it.^{xx} Perhaps her title's claim to truth took things a bit far, condemning the novel to be interpreted either as endorsement or satire. David Garnett seemed to find the latter to be distastefully true — Harman records that he accuses Warner of making her reader feel superior to Sukey; 'she's only an aunt sally and a half wit'.^{xxi} Although critics are aware of *The True Heart* as a reinvention, rhetorics of authenticity and truth continue to characterise descriptions of the novel. Harman herself sees it as a story of 'pure love between two simple souls'.^{xxii} Wachman acknowledges its technical ambition, but still deems it an 'allegory of class oppression that both celebrates and simplifies the sexual and practical innocence of its destitute maid of all work, Sukey and her beautiful 'feeble-minded' lover'.^{xxiii} I wonder whether too much emphasis has been placed on Sukey — and Warner's — *guise* without enough of a sense of her (or their) guile.

Throughout the novel, Sukey's lack of knowledge (we might call this her innocence or, also, her ignorance) is crucial to how she moves her plot along. If the reader feels 'superior' to Sukey, they must consider how Sukey's appearance of innocence and ignorance enables her to gain an audience with Queen Victoria, and to secure Mr Warburton's confidence. And if this is the story of two simple fools, then Sukey has a remarkable ability to pass through the different landscapes – urban and rural, lowly and royal – untouched. I'm not interested in the question of *success* here (as in, whether the ending signs or countersigns her story) but rather Sukey's sheer mobility, which depends on the ways others perceive her as innocent of not only her own ignorance but also of the *ignorant discourses* that accompany her encounters with others and, similarly, of whether one reads Warner as innocent or ignorant of how her text relies on the ideologies it mobilises. More than once in the novel one wonders whether Sukey is really as ignorant, or as innocent, as she seems.

Consider the 'art' of Sukey's heart when she solicits Mrs Seaborn for Eric. Sukey declares she's pregnant only *after* her appeal to love is refused. Love here invokes the entanglements that Garrity and Hackett observe of women writers of the period: her plea to Mrs Seaborn is an appeal on behalf of her own love for Eric, and on behalf of his love for her. But it is also by an appeal to that most supposedly natural love – a mother's for her child – that Suki hopes Mrs Seaborn will accept her offer. The basis of that appeal is the naturalness of her own love, her own fitness to care for Eric:

When they told me yesterday that he – that he was not quite like other people, it cut me to the heart...But then I thought of him, the poor dear, and how in spite of his misfortune he had loved me...How could I die, how could I be so heartless as to fail him – him who, being as he is, has a hundred times more need of loving than some ordinary person in his right mind? It would be like failing a child or some poor dumb creature (104).

Sukey displays her open heart to guarantee the naturalness of her claim to love. Love works here to secure the authenticity and moral goodness of her intent; her rhetorics of care tenders

a loving responsibility that she hopes will make his mother transfer his guardianship from mother to would-be wife. But what makes this irreducible to the kinds of affinities Hackett and Garrity find between Warner and her contemporaries is that the appeal to his mothers' love is only the first of Sukey's tactics. In this first declaration, Eric's exchange is, she first thinks, to be achieved through a transaction of care; for it to work it must be read as true, her bargain must not appear contrived. Everything about this speech is calculated to prove an authentic love at the core of her being that would equal the naturalness of a mother's love. But when she sees that she will not win him by claiming a natural law of *his* mother's love (Mrs Seaborn is, after all, a eugenicist), nor the value of hers (Mrs Seaborn is hardly an egalitarian), Sukey changes tack, and tact. This time she appeals to the shame Mrs Seaborn will suffer if she does not legitimate Sukey and Eric's union. Interceding Sukey's rejection and her second appeal is a two-paragraph pause:

...She had failed, she knew it, but the fullness of her misery was perplexed by a feeling that there was something important which she had left unsaid, left undone. Whatever it was, it could not redeem her failure now, yet it might have helped her, it might have made all the difference – and she had forgotten it...

Yet she continued to move towards the door, dragged on by that unseen gaze, and presently she had set foot on the blue and yellow diamond where she had stood waiting...[to be taken to service]...She remembered. She stayed herself, standing exactly where she had stood then. Now she could lose all, now her defeat could be consummated. She spoke meekly, as if knowing beforehand that there could be no virtue in her words...'I think I am with child' (105-106).

It would be impossible to fully describe the density of diction, figuration and affect that valence this scene. But what interests me is how this passage enacts a pause in the narrative in which Sukey comes into contact with a moment in her own past; reflecting on how she felt (and was made to feel) then, she knows what feelings to act on now. This marks the passage out as a scene of reading that is indivisible from Sukey's attempt to move her marriage plot forward through claims to love. The obstacle that Mrs Seaborn presents is not only an obvious trope of romance (indeed it's crucial to the myth the novel retells), it is a cliché. There is

nothing natural about it. Sukey's failure makes her realise that she'd mis-read the very scene she'd spent so much time fantasising, and, indeed, she's misread its feeling. Indeed the length of the pause with its density of interpretation and reflection identifies Sukey's work here as that of a reader. Despite her recollections she cannot remember how to make Mrs Seaborn accede in the present. That is, until she stands on the same tile on which she had stood when awaiting her entry to domestic service. On remembering how she felt then, she is willing to 'lose all, now her defeat could be consummated'. Defeat here is an odd affect unless one remembers that the novel opens with Sukey winning the prize for good conduct. It is not her virtue or politeness that will advance her story, but an appeal to Mrs Seaborn's shame. After all, an appeal to Eric's mother's love will not work for a eugenicist. Instead Sukey makes a plea based on a bargain that the impolite – appealing to Mrs Seaborn's shame rather than love – might be the most politic move. Yet her diction retains the impossibility of discerning her ignorance or her innocence: 'I *think* I am with child' (italics mine). The text's attention to these rhetorical strategies re-position Sukey as not only a mobiliser of discourse in order to effect a narrative that will secure a place for her, but a *reader* of the discourses that she uses. What she is reading in these moments is the economies of affect through which she moves, and comes into contact.

Over the course of the novel its attention to Sukey's art intensifies. We can see this in the politicking Sukey deploys by means of policing the polite and impolite when she is on the verge of her audience with the Queen's Lady in Waiting:

At Halfacres and during the journey it might seem the most rational thing in the world for a loyal young woman in difficulties to apply to a monarch who was a woman too, but at the first question the conviction had darted upon her that this was a project demanding the nicest handling...So far, things had fallen out admirably; it was not every poor servant girl, she thought with a glow of elected pride, who would so promptly find a gentleman so willing and affable with a sister who was a lady-in-waiting.(248)

Not only does Sukey admire her own success, but she calls it a ‘project’, claiming for herself a talent for making her way. Yet she does not go so far as to elicit the charge of self-congratulation – she addresses even the reader with a tact for the politic by remaining on the right side of endearing. Sukey’s attunement to the discourse of manners is there too in her preparation for an interview with a Lady-in-Waiting. Here she strategises how to impolitic: ‘Yes, she must walk circumspectly, be on her guard, keep her own counsel still; even to the Queen, perhaps, it might be as well not to enter too lavishly into all her reasons...’ (249). As if to address any further question of whether her politic is contrived, a moment later she explicitly ruminates on the artfulness of her project:

...she had believed implicitly that Eric could be hers by barter. It would have been impiety to doubt it, to question the working of a strategem put into her heart, she verily believed, by some good angel,....or if the strategem was a little too artful to be fathered on an angel, then it was Love that had inspired it, Love whose strong wings will stoop to any cunning, any unscrupulous sorcery. Whether of Love or of an angel, the strategem was certainly inspired; she was not by herself able to conceive such a scheme, lofty as a cloud, exact as a mouse-trap. For what could be more ingeniously infallible? (249).

The question of whether Sukey’s heart is ‘true’ or merely a disguise is handled here with a deftness of tact that touches on the disingenuous – signaled, perhaps, in that gesture of the ‘ingenious’ at the end. All of this is not to say that the novel does not pose a question about the ends that a ‘true’ heart might secure, but I don’t think it’s Sukey the novel addresses.

These moments speak, through an acute consciousness of Sukey’s ‘art’, to the reader who sees in a novel the scene for a fantasy of love’s reach. That we should doubt the authenticity of love as the basis of a natural claim for justice is already tendered when Sukey, before she conceived of her plan, ruminated: ‘Perhaps her very love had been a delusion too. It had seemed like love, but so had it seemed to her that she would bear a child. One was untrue, so might the other be. For what did she know about love? Nothing.’ (175)

Sukey's 'strategem' surfaces a few ways of re-conceiving the novel's 'true heart'. First, that Sukey is not merely innocent nor ignorant, but artful in her manoeuvres. Second, her most artful manoeuvre is how she mobilises the economies of love (romantic, maternal, filial, and subjugal) to secure for herself something approximating a 'good life' and, in effect, produces for herself a marriage-plot that confirms her merit for a life beyond that of a domestic. Third, crucial to her mobilisation of these economies is the reader's desire to imbue her simplicity with the authenticity that supposedly underwrites love. But there is a further art at work in her guile: that of a reader. As I have pointed out, Sukey's reflections are not merely moments in which she recollects, or anticipates, but moments in which she actively interprets. We are asked to see her not only in moments of reading, but see her as an *artful* reader: a reader whose own thoughts are already addressing us with an awareness of the stories of love we bring to her love story. Sukey's journey to impolitic is indivisible from the impolitical encounters that structure it. Yet in these moments we should not reduce her to a fallibly innocent maid, nor an ignorant sukey. Her impolitics of love teaches us that the truth is her heart is not reducible to such a language of opposition. We might recall that the 'politic' of impolitic also refers to 'not skilfully contrived': lacking a definite opposite, Sukey's impolitics re-appraises her heart not as true, but artful.

Counterpoint

The kind of artful encounter *The True Heart* invites is, I think, already suggested by the problem readers have with how to read the novel's tone. If meant as satire or irony, the discourses being repeated sound too close to the truth to distance the text, Warner, or even the reader from their affects. This makes the novel problematic for recuperative strategies that have counted so much on reading her political imaginaries of love as counter-politics. But to try to

align the novel with what Terry Castle calls a ‘lesbian counter-plot’ in Warner’s novels would require prioritising the story of Sukey’s journey over how it happens. But Sukey’s artfulness doesn’t accede to the logic of a counter argument, position, or identity.^{xxiv}

Warner offered her own term for the novel’s technique, quoted at the beginning of this essay: ‘I thought I would write a canto fermo, as one does in learning counterpoint. *The True Heart* is on a canto fermo’. A canto fermo is a simple and unadorned melody of the ancient hymns and chants of the church; the term is applied to any simple subject of the same character to which counterpoint is added. Counterpoint itself, as a musical term, derives from ‘contrapunctum’ – ‘song or music pointed-against.’ It is the part of a composition that is ‘added as accompaniment to a plain-song being indicated by notes, ‘pricks’, or ‘points’, set against (over or under) the notes or points of the original melody’.^{xxv} To read *The True Heart* as undermined by what it appears to be against is to read only one part of the composition. It would also assume to discover opposition as something the novel has not already anticipated, nor already mobilised through its form. The effect of the counterpoint, importantly, is not simply opposition: the counterpoint is not the work of the canto fermo, nor of the opposing melody. It works in the points where these meet, where each ‘pricks’ the other. The same work is materialised in the other sense of ‘counterpoint’ — a kind of quilting. This counterpoint forms a kind of texture whose effects cannot be reduced to opposition. Gerald Manley Hopkins described counterpoint as ‘the carrying on of two figures at once, especially if they are alike in kind but very unlike or opposite in species.’^{xxvi} For the counterpoint to work, its composition must make ‘pricks’ that punctuate a relation between figures. The ‘prick’ of counterpoint is that the relations of its components are neither identical nor oppositional, not based in either identification nor difference; its figures meet in their relations to one another, and to opposition. They do not point forward, but to the effects of their contact — orientation, rather than identity.^{xxvii}

Rather than punctuate Warner's love story with the ideologies of her contemporaries, these pricks texture *The True Heart* with counterpoint. Throughout the text we have interludes of political imagining — visions, reveries, recollections, and fantasies — in which Sukey explicitly considers how she might use love to impolitic herself. The ideologies that texture these moments prick us with contact between Sukey's 'true' heart and the affects of empire, eugenics, class and race. It seems a violation, to make love do this work, to make the ugliness of these discourses, also, the object of loving feelings. But affection for empire, for eugenics, for whiteness, are not love's opposite, but another of its orientations. Such loves also deploy rhetorics of truth, authenticity, and naturalness to underwrite distinctions between who and what is, and is not, loved. If we wish to impolitic through love, then we must be prepared to face the impolitical affects to which it is also attached. This is, I think, the sharpest prick of the novel's counterpoint: that it cannot imagine the transformation and revolution desired for a politics of love because love is, already, political. And that means love's political potential cannot be divided from the violences it affects. Counterpoint offers a different way of understanding Warner's textual strategies, at least for this novel, and allows us to think about the impasses the novel has presented to her readers. Rather than align Warner with her contemporaries, the scenes of reading I've discussed suggest a rather more pointed orientation to both the discourses being engaged and the contemporaries who engage them.

The ugliness undercutting *The True Heart* has, for her critics, been exemplified by the scene where Sukey first envisions her plan to seek the Queen's endorsement. Here Sukey gazes upon her employer's engraving, *The True Secret of England's Greatness*, and in so doing imagines her plan:

There was Queen Victoria, and there behind her were two statesmen and the courtiers, the field-m Marshalls, bishops, pages, and ladies-in-waiting. The Bible was still in the royal hand. Only the negro was not there: in his place, kneeling at the foot of the

throne, was Sukey Bond. She had always wanted to go to court. Now she was going.
(200)

For Garrity, the naturalness with which Sukey can imagine the ‘negro’ disappearing, to be replaced by her own loyal subjugation, exemplifies the fantasies of equivalence characterising those modernist women writers with whom she aligns Warner.^{xxviii} And for Wachman, the indoctrinations of Victorian orphanages would have made Sukey ‘feel a “natural” wish to participate’ in the court.^{xxix} Typical of the period’s material cultures, the engraving materialises both the ‘naturalness’ engaged by an imperialist ideology that ties together eugenics, race, class and degeneracy in the novel, and the naturalness of its appeal to Sukey. In these readings it is as if the historical detail — the engraving’s presence as a sign of reality in a novel that otherwise pretends to be fantasy — transfers the naturalising aesthetics of imperialism from what Sukey sees to how the novel (and Warner) sees her. I am in no doubt about the ugly ideologies in this scene: but what we should also notice is that the engraving is *not* the only scene we are looking at here. The text explicitly shows us Sukey’s vision as an act of looking, materialising this as a scene in which a loving gaze itself comes under scrutiny: ‘Sukey had raised her head. She was staring fixedly at *The True Secret of England’s Greatness*. Her mouth was a little open, her cheeks were pink, her body leaning forward towards the picture, was inspired and motionless. She looked like some one who beholds an extremely exciting, extremely flattering vision. Such a vision she indeed beheld.’ (200) This vision has the look of love. But as well as these erotics of excitement we are also directed to this as *resemblance*, Sukey ‘looking like’ someone who beholds her own political potential in such a scene. There is nothing natural here about Sukey’s fantasy of ‘natural’ subjugation. Represented this way, it’s a moment that asks us to take seriously the question of what we see when we look at love, and particularly when love – however its scene is textured, whether subjugal, maternal, filial, romantic – betrays our critical attachments to its potential.

Consider how ‘naturalness’ works in what could be the most natural scene of love in the novel:

Out here on the saltings she was in a secret place between two worlds, and putting her hand to her face to wipe off the sweat, she discovered that she smelled of this ambiguous territory – a smell of salt, of rich mud, of the bitter aromatic breath of the wild southernwood. She plunged her hands into a bush and snuffed into the palms. It was so exciting to discover herself thus perfumed – she, who till this day had never smelled of anything but yellow soap – that she suddenly found her teeth biting into her flesh, and that was a pleasure too, the bites were so small and even. (26)

Sukey’s sensuous contacts are figured with the tropes of an eros that cannot be otherwise said: the ‘secret place’, the ‘ambiguous territory’, the ‘aromatic breath’ of ‘wild southernwood’. It would be impossible not to feel traces of what Garrity and Hackett call out as a primitivist erotics standing in for lesbian desire. Certainly, the tactics of these salty traces sound like the naturalising work of English imperialism’s cartographic desires, discourses that Garrity argues are absorbed by Warner as a result of her exposure, through her work with land conservation in the 1920s, to conservative nationalist discourse.^{xxx} But how natural is this scene? While Warner’s interest in land conservation is evident, the question of how to critically orient Warner’s representation of these landscapes must also recognise the literary tradition she engages. Mary Jacobs draws attention to Warner’s use of pastoral in her representations of landscape, a tradition whose ‘oppositional ironies’ have, she argues, lent it to *both* radical and conservative traditions.^{xxxi} If the sensuous geographies of Sukey’s erotics affect a strain of sapphic primitivism that use intimate relations with the land to naturalise lesbianism, then it also sets the scene for these politics using the contrivance of a literary tradition whose cartographic aesthetics are already traversed by both ideology and critique. This is the very pointed counterpoint to her contemporaries: that love, even in its most private form, does not have an original territory, a natural state not yet subject to ideology. And in the prick of these bites that are ‘so small and even’, Sukey’s embodies both the landscape and cartographer. If her skin displays signs of subjugation, she is also the writer of these affections.

Counterpoint textures *The True Heart* with an imagining of love in which its potential is indivisible from the ugly ideologies it surfaces. This should be seen as an engagement of, not alignment with, the politics of love at work in her contemporary imaginaries. Warner's counterpoint is a pointed reading of their (and our) attachments to love's 'natural' force. This allows us to think further about the other part of the cantofermo — Warner's retelling of Cupid and Psyche. Only Wachman asks what to make of this, and she makes two speculations: that it attracted Warner because of its tale of forbidden love, and that the version of the myth she used is the source of *The True Heart*'s primitivist contagion. She argues that Warner likely read Edward Carpenter's 1923 translation of Apuleius, and contends that Carpenter's 'sociosexological and utopian primitivist ideas' influenced Warner's textual strategies as it did her contemporaries'.^{xxxii} But this positions Warner as a naive reader of sexology.

Warner's early draft of what became her preface to *The True Heart* demonstrates familiarity with a variety of sexological work when she recalls the summer of 1922, when she first conceived of the novel and 'spent a month in the marshes, walking, reading Freud, writing...'.^{xxxiii} Indeed Warner's archive holds reading records that demonstrate a breadth of classical and contemporary reading that make it unlikely Carpenter's was her only source for either myth or sexology. Instead, Warner's reading habits require us to acknowledge that Warner was likely very aware of the tradition of writing that intersects sexology and mythology. If Warner was, like her contemporaries, reading Carpenter, she had likely read Walter Pater, who not only wrote one of the most important texts for the problem of how to write homosexual desire, but also retold Psyche and Cupid. Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* became absolutely crucial to the sexologists and the male writers Wachman argues influenced the textual strategies of Warner's contemporaries. What these share is a *method*: the use of the naturalness of love in civilisations of the past, or in the 'primitives' of the present, to impolitic homosexuality. It is a method Pater engaged again in *Marius the Epicurean*

(1885). Here Marius' Flavianus is awakened by an older boy to a love of literature through the textual intimacies of reading (and retelling) the story of Cupid and Psyche — the power of love's naturalness is extended here to the naturally transformative potential of reading love itself. But its use of the myth irreducibly inscribes an aesthetics of love, love's story, rather than love itself, at the heart of Marius' journey. While *Studies* might have provided a literary and historical terrain on which to *impolitic* 'forbidden love', it imagined this through Eros, not Psyche. As feminist scholarship has shown, the gendered ideology of Pater's utopic versions of love do not easily give body to lesbian desire.^{xxxiv}

Warner's deliberate use of the myth of Cupid and Psyche should be seen as an explicit engagement of the founding myth for her contemporaries' theories of love and for the literary traditions and aesthetics on which these were based. If she was influenced by sexology's narrative methods, she was also aware of its theories as, themselves, narratives. *The True Heart* is a direct engagement of the method of this work, and its political appeal to the naturalness of love. The most impolitical thing about Warner's novel is, I think, that it ultimately desires a kind of love that would be anything *but* political, but cannot find it. Indeed Clare Harman speculates that one reason Warner has been overlooked is the lack of seriousness ascribed to her 'peculiar feminism': the 'struggle for privacy not power', a struggle 'not common nor ideal...and not very serious either'.^{xxxv} But by going to the myth at the heart of both her contemporaries mythologies of love, and of the normative discourses they were countering, her novel shows that love is, at heart, already impolitical. Sukey does not love without exchange and, indeed, Psyche herself initiates her story by being seen by others as a commodity they can afford – Venus' cheap copy. The romance of obstacle that the narrative mimics is the structure of not just heteronormativity but ideology – the promise of a belonging, a place, a home in the body politic effected by the merit bestowed by those who love and claim love as

their natural right. As a *cantofermo* – a ‘simple and unadorned melody’ – the retelling of Cupid and Psyche pricks the myth of love’s force with the artfulness of Sukey’s impolitics.

Love’s Labour

In her arguments about Warner’s *Summer Will Show*, Heather Love argues that by setting the question of queer love and loss in the failed 1848 revolution, Warner offers a ‘rethinking of history as itself bound up with fantasy...history – like the future – is a medium for dreaming about the transformation of social life.’^{xxxvi} What is dreamt, for Love, is a vision not about how to love, but how to live politically *like one loves*. Yet I don’t think this works for *The True Heart*. The two novels can be distinguished, I think, by their attitude to love, and to reading.

One of the most obvious points of contact between the two novels is their endings: both finish with attention to how their protagonists are postured, how they feel, and, importantly how they read. *Summer Will Show* ends with Sophia reading *The Communist Manifesto*, which Love treats as an ‘intensely personal’ encounter whose sensuous physicality seems to suggest that one’s relation to a collectivity might be based on the model of erotic love’.^{xxxvii} In her last footnote, Love points specifically to the text of the *Manifesto*: ‘it was in the drafting of the *Manifesto* that the word “party” (*Partei*) was introduced into political discourse: it replaced the more personal term *Bund* (union or marriage). At the end of *Summer Will Show*, the depersonalizing of politics is set in reverse.’^{xxxviii} Yet the scene of reading that ends *The True Heart* can’t be read like this. Sukey ends in labour, and in a final reverie: ‘These were the scenes, the thoughts and the adventures that Sukey recalled, lying quiet in the early morning of the day when her child would be born’ (292). But the dead woman she addresses is not a lover, but herself: ‘Shall I ever see you again, Sukey, Sukey Bond?’

Sukey's entrance into political life – a mother, a wife – is figured as her death. 'Bond' ('Bund', in Love's discussion of *Summer Will Show*) denotes all those aspects of Sukey's subject-hood that she might willingly exchange for a promise of political transformation: a peasant, a slave, a serf, a churl. And, given Love's observations about the term, it denotes how, in Sukey's political moment, 'bond' was being used to designate bodies that were asserting political autonomy – the movement of the personal to the political. Perhaps most usefully pointed, 'bond' is a covenant between two people in marriage. In this sense 'bond' designates the uniting force by which a union is maintained. But in all these senses the way in which a bond *binds* also denotes its violence: a bond is a 'restraining' force as well.^{xxxix} By naming Sukey 'Bond', *The True Heart* asks us to think about the violences in the desire to form a body politic through love's uniting force. We cannot model a political life on love without also bringing to life love's impolitics. Love in *The True Heart* is neither something to be moved into the public, nor a collective politic to be personalized by reading the intimate. Love's heart beats beyond either destination. Sukey Bond knows love has never been intimate enough to be private. This is the prick of *The True Heart's* counterpoint: that love cannot be made political. Because it was never not political to begin with.

What is love good for, if not as a guarantor for goodness itself — good actions, good ethics, good politics, good futures? But what if, as Merve Emree asks, love is 'useless' — that is, what if it has no specific destination, no inherent outcome?^{xl} Although love is, as Sara Ahmed remarks in her thinking about love and facism, both 'central to politics and the securing of social hierarchy' and 'necessary to the maintenance of authority', our cultural imaginary persistently reifies love as a feeling whose apparent naturalness and authenticity constitutes a counter-politics to those ideologies that would diminish and dehumanise, and positions love as having a special relationship with justice and, crucially, an oppositionary relationship to ideologies of hate.^{xli} What Warner's critics claim of love in her work, then, is part

of a broader cultural story we tell about what love can do, and how it can be used; the attachments to love that I've traced in Warner criticism repeat a wider cultural narrative that performs surprise when love is accompanied by hate. We need to ask ourselves: when we make claims of, or to, love, what work is love doing for us? What are we asking love to do? In her essay on love and desire, Lauren Berlant observes that what we often desire of love is to simplify living: the love plot, she writes, 'provides a seemingly non-ideological resolution to the fractures and contradictions of history'.^{xliii} By reading Warner's novel in relation to the critical affects it provokes, and the attachments to love that it disturbs, we can re-position responses to *The True Heart* as moments in which literary criticism is confronted by a text's refusal to confirm criticism's own love plot — its attachments to love. By de-naturalising love, the novel erodes a critical fantasy of love's natural claim to justice. As Berlant observes, the question of 'real' love is actually 'a political question about the way norms produce attachments to living through certain fantasies'.^{xliiii} Warner's impolitical love asks us to attend to the normative work of our attachments, and to recognise the full range and implications of what love brings up when we make recourse to it. And, crucially, it asks us to recognise how love cannot, in and of itself, form a corrective to the 'bad' affects from which contemporary literary criticism might like to turn away. Berlant writes that love 'exert[s] a utopian promise to discover a form that is elastic enough to manage what living throws at lovers'^{xliv}. A critical mood, or mode, for love is no less enthralled by this promise than we are, when we love. Eventually, in *The Limits of Critique*, Felski acknowledges that 'suspicion turns out to be not so very far removed from love'.^{xlv} It is, perhaps, its own kind of reparative gesture, one that admits both the utopic promise, and ideological work, of its earlier distinctions between love and suspicion, agon and eros. But only after love has been put to critical use.

Consonance

It's a general principle of counterpoint that it should begin and end on a note of perfect consonance. The novel ends with Sukey's expulsion from her own political life: is that how it begins? The novel's first words: 'It was the 27th of July 1873, and prize-giving day at the Warburton Memorial Female Orphanage' (1). From the beginning Sukey's story suggests the vivid start of a dream. Yet it can't help sounding like history. Indeed the year 1873 marks a time of revolution in at least two senses that might count. It's the year Pater's *Studies* was published, and it's also the year of the 'Panic of 1873' – the original 'Great Depression' that was supposed to – but didn't – inaugurate a communist revolution.^{xlvi} It would be a pointed reference, from the beginning, to the call for revolutionary love that has been argued of Warner's later novels. But it would also be a pointed refusal to supply a manifesto for that politics of love. Not irresponsible: impolitical.

Warner's impolitics respond to a critical mood. By reading her contemporaries' attachments to love, she also reads ours. Like Warner, we find ourselves in a historical moment concerned with the potentialities of affect for our political imaginaries and our textual practice. But Warner's impolitics help us to sense how we are intimate with the ugliest strains of our discourse at the moments we feel furthest from them. We will not develop more ethical, or politically tenable, attitudes and modes through a mood of criticism that claims of love (or any feeling) an originary state, one not already affected by ideology. To refuse a politic of love is not to oppose it, but to listen to its rhythms, beyond opposition. Hear love's impolitics.

Notes

¹ Jacques Derrida, 'Che cos'è la poesia?', trans. Peggy Kamuf in *A Derrida Reader*, ed. and trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) pp. 221–237, p. 231.

² Letter to William Maxwell, July 5, 1954, in Michael Steinman (ed), *The Element of Lavishness: Letters of Sylvia Townsend Warner and William Maxwell 1938–1978* (Washington DC: Counterpoint, 2001), p. 51.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 117.

^{iv} *Ibid.*

^v Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 17.

^{vi} See Ruth Leys recent intervention in this aspect of affect studies' critical genealogy (in *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017)). For responses to the significance of Ley's arguments see Clive Barnett, Felicity Callard, Phil Hutchinson, James Russell, and Ruth Leys, 'The Ascent of Affect', nonsite.org, Issue 3, #30 (December 29, 2019). <http://nonsite.org/the-tank/the-ascent-of-affect?fbclid=IwAR2f5mqoVTe5sc8IVZwWSrjmed1wANWiOghGrpdnWoGP-AdVROpckNtjUGs> [Date accessed: December 30, 2019].

^{vii} *Ibid.*, p. 118.

^{viii} *Ibid.*

^{ix} Maud Ellmann 'Sylvia Townsend Warner', in *Oxford Handbooks Online*, May 2016. <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com> [Date accessed: August 29, 2018].

^x Sarah Waters, 'Sylvia Townsend Warner', *The Guardian*, Mar 2 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/mar/02/sylvia-townsend-warner> [Date accessed: August 29, 2018].

^{xii} See essays by Ronald Paul Ronald ('"Loved with an L...": The Lesbian Continuum in Three Works by Sylvia Townsend Warner', *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, Vol 13 No 4 (2014), pp. 81–110) and Melanie Micir ('"Living in two tenses": The Intimate Archives of Sylvia Townsend Warner', *Journal of Modern Literature*, Volume 36, NO 1 (Fall 2012), pp. 119–131). Paul argues Warner's novels evidence a 'lesbian continuum of love and revolution' in which 'lesbianism and radical activism [are] so intimately interwoven...that they define the whole direction of her left-wing literary project' (p. 87), while Micir's cites Warner's 'intimate archives' as evidence not only of love's ability to transcend boundaries between the private and public, but of time itself (p. 129).

^{xiii} Gay Wachman, *Step-daughters of the Nation: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 59. I'm less convinced that Warner can be designated a modernist — at best the remarkable variations across her oeuvre mean we would need to evaluate Warner's modernisms text-by-text.

^{xiv} Robin Hackett, *Sapphic Primitivism: Productions of Race, Class and Sexuality in Key Works of Modern Fiction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 92.

^{xv} Gay Wachman, *Lesbian Empire: Radical Crosswriting in the Twenties* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), p. 43.

xv Clare Harman, *Sylvia Townsend Warner: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989), p. 85.

xvi Wachman, p. 83.

xvii Courtney Andree, 'Crippling the Pastoral: Rural Modernisms and Sylvia Townsend Warner's *The True Heart*' in *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 65, Number 1, Spring 2019, pp. 12-34, p. 14. Andree refers to the Stevenson training school case, in which Warner and a number of other high-profile local residents lost a libel suit against them for having signed a petition to evict the Stevensons for their mistreatment of the 'mentally backward girls' they trained for domestic service (Warner Archives, item H(R)/11).

xviii *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

xix *Ibid.*, p. 22.

xx Warner wrote: 'I spent a great deal of ingenuity on the Victorian versions of the divine characters, disguising their names and abilities....These disguises were so efficient that no reviewer saw what I was up to. Only my mother recognised the basis of the story' (TtH, P).

xxi Harman, p. 85.

xxii *Ibid.*

xxiii Wachman, p. 47. Wachman reads Sukey as, herself, as a mid-Victorian 'primitive', signalled both by her sexual innocence (she thinks a kiss has made her pregnant) and her 'immodesty' (p. 48).

xxiv Maud Ellmann cautions against such alignments: '...Warner is too suspicious of identity per se – witness her self-divided heroines – to be coopted into identity politics' (in 'The Art of Bi-location: Sylvia Townsend Warner' in Maroula Joannou (ed.), *The History of British Women's Writing, 1920-1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 78-93, p. 80).

xxv Oxford English Dictionary Online.

xxvi Hopkin's definition appears in a set of lecture notes from the year he spent teaching rhetoric at Roehampton: 1873– 1874 (Graham Storey, *A Preface to Hopkins Second Edition* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 63.

xxvii It's impossible to read Warner's counterpoint without thinking about Said's contrapuntal reading in *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994) or *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), especially as Said positions his method as a way of reading discrepancy and disjunction. However it is worth distinguishing between Warner's novel and those Said reads: Warner's is not canonical, and 'counterpoint' is a figure and method both engaged *and* invoked by Warner herself, rather than a strategy of reading to apply and, as I go on to discuss, she explicitly engages counterpoint in relation to a literary genealogy in which culture and ideology are imbricated. Finally, my reading insists that the 'pricks' of counterpoint resist identity and instead works through forms of orientation (or refusal to orient).

xxviii Garrity, p. 59.

xxix Wachman, p. 52.

xxx Garrity, p. 185, fn 103.

xxxi Mary Jacobs, 'Sylvia Townsend Warner and the Politics of the English Pastoral, 1925– 1934', in Gill Davies et al (eds.), *Critical Essays on Sylvia Townsend Warner, English Novelist, 1893– 1978* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), pp. 61– 82, p. 66.

xxvii Wachman argues that Warner's Eric (Eros) echoes Carpenter's use of the Greek and that her plot absorbs his 'absurdities' (p. 54.)

xxviii Warner Archives, item F(MGHT)/66/4.

xxiv For feminist responses to Pater's *Studies* see Hilary Fraser, 'Writing a Female Renaissance: Victorian Women and the Past', in John Law and Lena Johnston (eds.), *Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance* (Ashgate: Routledge, 2005), pp. 165-184.

xxv Harman, p. 85.

xxvi Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 133.

xxvii Ibid, p. 145.

xxviii Ibid, p. 186, fn 22.

xxix Oxford English Dictionary Online.

xl Merve Emree, 'Critical Love Studies' in *Los Angeles Review of Books* (May 3, 2020). <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/critical-love-studies/> [Date Accessed: August 20, 2020].

xli Sara Ahmed, 'In the Name of Love' in *Borderlands*, Vol 2, No 3 (2003), p. 6. Martha Nussbaum's work on political emotions is particularly striking in its distinctions between love and hate, especially in regards to Nazi ideology (*Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 46.

xlii Lauren Berlant, *Love/Desire* (New York: Punctum Books, 2012), p. 96.

xliii Ibid., p. 7.

xliv Ibid., p. 109.

lv Felski, p. 1.

lvi Glasner and Cooley cite it as the 'first truly international economic crisis', but note its effects, in Britain, did not initiate the social transformation on a scale that communism required. See David Glasner, Thomas F. Cooley, 'Crisis of 1873' in *Business Cycles and Depressions: An Encyclopedia* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997). In a piece for the *guardian* Professor Donald Sassoon cites the crisis as the historical moment in which most socialist parties were founded (<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/apr/29/long-depression-crashes-capitalism-history> [Date accessed Jan 3 2020]). To develop the intersection of literary, aesthetic, sexological, and ideological traditions already identified in the novel, and in her archive, I am researching links between Warner's novel and Alexandra Kollantai's communist writing about love, particularly her essay 'Make way for the winged Eros' (1923) and her 1923 novel *Love of Worker Bees*.