

Virginia Woolf, the War Without, the War Within

Her Final Diaries and the Diaries She Read

BARBARA LOUNSBERRY

“Lounsberry establishes how central to Woolf’s personal and creative being was diary-writing.”—**PANTHEA REID**, author of *Art and Affection: A Life of Virginia Woolf*

“A tour de force. Insightfully retraces Woolf’s movement from joyful confidence to restless struggles, persuasively illustrates the antiwar nature of all of Woolf’s work during the 1930s, and movingly interprets Woolf’s last diary entry.”—**BETH RIGEL DAUGHERTY**, coeditor of *Approaches to Teaching Woolf’s “To the Lighthouse”*

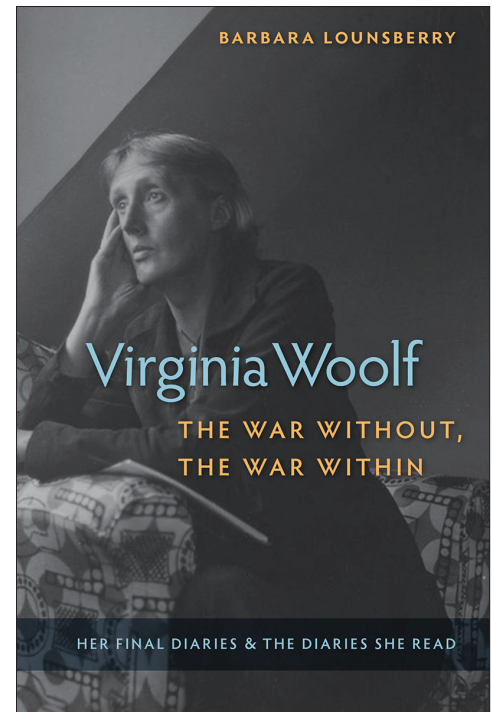
In her third and final volume on the modernist writer’s diaries, Barbara Lounsberry reveals new insights about Virginia Woolf’s courageous last years, from 1929 until her suicide in 1941. Increasingly, Woolf turned to her diary—and to the diaries of others—for support in these years as Europe saw the threat of fascism grow.

Lounsberry illuminates Woolf’s inner artistic wars as she battled the ever-nearing war without. The war bled into Woolf’s diary entries. In her final 12 diary volumes, Woolf seeks in commonplace moments and the natural human voice to counter the shrill hysterics of Hitler and Mussolini, their false melodrama of heroes and villains, their tyranny at home and abroad.

Lounsberry also explores the diaries of 19 other writers as Woolf read them, including Leo Tolstoy, Dorothy Wordsworth, Guy de Maupassant, Alice James, and André Gide. She shows how writing and reading diaries was both respite from Woolf’s public writing and also an inspiration for it. She details how these works and Woolf’s own daily records fortified the writer in her struggle with her most difficult work, *The Waves*. In these years Woolf also relied on diaries as she wrote *The Years*, *Three Guineas*, and *Between the Acts*. Lounsberry offers a new view of Woolf’s suicide based on her diaries, which she maintained until four days before her death.

The outer war and Woolf’s inner life collide in this dramatic conclusion to the trilogy that resoundingly demonstrates why Virginia Woolf has been called “the Shakespeare of the diary.” Lounsberry’s masterful study is essential reading for a complete understanding of this extraordinary writer and thinker and the development of modernist literature.

BARBARA LOUNSBERRY is professor emerita of English at the University of Northern Iowa. She is the author of *Becoming Virginia Woolf: Her Early Diaries and the Diaries She Read* and *Virginia Woolf’s Modernist Path: Her Middle Diaries and the Diaries She Read*.



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