

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

35th International Conference Virginia Woolf

Open Forum “Virginia Woolf: Sound and Rhythm in Translation”

Toward the end of her life, while working on Roger Fry biography, Virginia Woolf began writing her own memoir, “A Sketch of the Past” (1939–41). In it, as in much of Woolf’s writing, conventional genre boundaries are deliberately blurred. Interweaving recollections of her past with diary-like reflections on her present, Woolf develops one of the few explicit reflections on her own creative process, revealing that, in the scenes of her memories, images are never dissociated from sound; rather, they are inherently audiovisual, “colour-and-sound memories”: “If I were a painter I should paint these first impressions in pale yellow, silver, and green. [...] I should make curved shapes, showing the light through, but not giving a clear outline. [...] what was seen would at the same time be heard; sounds would come through this petal or leaf-sounds indistinguishable from sights. Sound and sight seem to make equal parts of these first impressions.” (*MB*, 66)

Based on the transposition she establishes there between her creative gesture and the gestation of her own self, it becomes clear that such inseparability functions as a foundational parameter — one that she drew upon throughout all her works. Indeed, in an answer to a letter by Elizabeth Trevelyan, in 1940, she states: “It was delightful of you to write to me about my life of Roger. You have found out exactly what I was trying to do when you compare it to a piece of music. It’s odd, for I’m not regularly musical, but I always think of my books as music before I write them” (*L6*, 425). A decade before, while composing what many consider her most experimental novel, the quartets and late Beethoven sonatas were aired by her Algraphone while she wrote *The Waves* (1931). The highly demanding technical expertise of the player somehow oozes through her writing, which in its turn equally demands that her readers be willing to move away from traditional forms of fiction. “I think then that my difficulty is that I am writing to a rhythm and not to a plot”, she wrote to her friend, the British composer Ethel Smyth (*L4*, 204).

However, aurality in Woolf is not an aspect confined to her texts in English. In fact, sound is one of the most critical aspects translators take into consideration in their work. How to deal with the rhythm of Woolf’s *écriture* in a different language, or in a different medium?

We invite participants from all over the world to submit a proposal to the open forum **Virginia Woolf: Sound and Rhythm in Translation**, in preparation for the *35th International Conference Virginia Woolf*, which is taking place in Istanbul, Turkey, 24-28 June 2026. The forum aims to discuss the participants’ texts on sound and rhythm concerning the translation of Virginia Woolf’s *oeuvre*, with the prospect of having them published after the conference. Papers about all forms of translation, including intersemiotic translations and adaptations, are welcome.

Important notice: There will be a pre-conference meeting to discuss proposals on 22 May 2026, from 9-10 am (GMT-3), pre-conference readings, and a post-conference follow-up to discuss publication ideas on a date to be determined. Both pre- and post-conference meetings will be held online. The number of participants is limited to 15. As the forum follows a collaborative model, in which researchers share their works in progress and explore possible connections with other researchers’ work, participants are encouraged to take part in both the pre- and post-conference meetings even if they do not plan to attend the conference in person.

Submit your proposals (200–300 words) by 30 March 2026. Should you have any questions or comments, please write to woolftranssound26@gmail.com

We look forward to having you with us!

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