



Rumer Godden's *A Fugue in Time* and (Inter)Modernism

Andelys Wood
(Union College, Kentucky, USA)

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Abstract: Rumer Godden's 1945 novel *A Fugue in Time* has been reprinted several times since its original publication, but it has received relatively little critical attention, perhaps because it resists categorization. Focusing on a London house occupied by one family from the 1840s to the 1940s, it shares themes and techniques with some much more frequently studied texts and offers another perspective on the end of modernism in World War II London. Through comparison with the treatment of time and place, women's roles, aging, and new beginnings in Virginia Woolf's high modernist *Mrs Dalloway* and T. S. Eliot's late-modernist *East Coker*, I suggest that *A Fugue in Time* deserves to be better known.

Keywords: Rumer Godden, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, modernism, realism, time, London, women's roles

Rumer Godden's 1945 novel *A Fugue in Time*, telling the story of about one hundred years in a London house occupied by one family, has been reprinted several times since its original publication, but it has received relatively little critical attention. While none of the contributors to Kristin Bluemel's 2009 collection, *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain*, refers to Godden, she is included in a list of intermodernist writers in the appendix, and the sense that many of these writers have been neglected in academia because they are not clearly categorized as modernist, realist, or postmodern fits Godden as well. The difficulty of categorizing

her work is a persistent theme in the sole scholarly collection on Godden's work, *Rumer Godden: International and Intermodern Storyteller*, compiled in 2010 by Lucy Le-Guilcher and Phyllis Lassner. Victoria Stewart's chapter on *A Fugue in Time* argues that Godden 'resists [...] categorization' and challenges definitions of both modernism and realism (86). However, Godden's novel shares themes and techniques with some much more frequently studied texts and offers another perspective on the end of modernism in World War II London. Through comparison with Virginia Woolf's high modernist *Mrs Dalloway* and T. S. Eliot's late-modernist *East Coker*, I suggest that *A Fugue in Time* deserves attention.

As Woolf is in her 1925 *Mrs Dalloway*, Godden in *A Fugue* is concerned with the relationship between chronological time and psychological time. The opening sentences of *A Fugue in Time* establish the focus: 'The house, it seems, is more important than the characters. 'In me you exist,' says the house' (1). John Ironmonger Dane and his new wife Griselda move into 99 Wiltshire Place in 1841, but the novel begins in 1940, as his youngest son, now General Sir Roland Ironmonger Dane, learns the 99-year lease is about to expire and the owners do not want to renew. Confusingly at first, the fluid nature of time is emphasized by narrative technique: events that happen in the past are narrated in present tense, those in 1940 in the past tense. There are no numbered chapters, but the novel is divided into six sections beginning with 'Inventory' and proceeding through a day: 'Morning', 'Noon', 'Four O'clock', 'Evening', 'Night'. However, unlike the setting of one June day in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, the present-day events take place over several days, from the solicitor's conversation with Sir Roland (now called Rolls) setting 15 December as the day he must vacate, through the arrival of his great-niece Grizel in an American women's volunteer ambulance unit, to the last-minute news that the owners are willing to sell the house. Past times and other times of year are brought in not only by memories of the present-day characters, as in Woolf, but also by the house itself, and there are glimpses of the future, especially of a little boy whose parents have not yet met when he is first mentioned.

This description refers to some superficial similarities to *Mrs Dalloway*, but there are deeper ones as well. As we might expect with novels that explore the mind's experience of time, both call attention to the passing of chronological time by an awareness of clocks. The times of Clarissa Dalloway's day are established by external clocks: the striking of Big Ben, of the delayed bell of St. Margaret's church, and of the street clock that Hugh Whitbread notices on his way to lunch at the house of Lady Bruton. In *A Fugue*, the clocks are inside the house but also disagree in a similar way to St. Margaret's and Big Ben: the grandfather clock

leads in a chorus the clocks all over the house and connects them with the clocks outside, the church clock and other clocks in spires and towers as its chime is too big for an ordinary house clock. It is always a second later than St. Benedict's (11).

Further, as in *Mrs Dalloway* the sound of Big Ben links characters who hear it from different perspectives, Godden signals a shift in time through the chiming of 'the cuckoo clock on the nursery landing' (11). Although the cuckoo clock has not worked since John and Griselda's children outgrew the nursery, it strikes when present-day Grizel is sewing and thinking how the lives of Griselda and her daughter Selina were so different from her own, and it marks a narrative transition back to events of Selina's time as mistress of the house by striking twelve (80). For Woolf, clock time offers a contrast to the less measurable time in the mind; for Godden, the clocks demonstrate the continuity of time in the house.

The passing of years in London brought changes in women's roles, and both Woolf and Godden highlight those changes. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf explores the topic through the juxtaposition of characters. For example, the aristocratic Lady Bruton 'should have been a general of dragoons herself' (115) but now relies on men in positions of authority like Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread to edit her letters to the Times. Clarissa Dalloway married predictable Richard rather than acting on her riskier romantic inclinations. Clarissa's young daughter, riding the omnibus in the Strand, at least feels that more choices may be available to her than were to her mother. In *A Fugue in Time*, Godden's layers of time make the contrasts even more prominent. As a young wife, Griselda dreams of travel and education but then has nine children. Each time she expresses any reservations about another painful childbirth, her husband says 'Nine is my lucky number' (37, 93), a statement that haunts him after she dies giving birth to the ninth child, Roland (170). Her daughter Selina has a governess rather than being sent to school like her brothers, even 'stupid' James. When Griselda suggests she should go to school, her husband says 'James may have to support a family when he grows up. Lena will not' (36), and the point is decided. Grown up, Selina does not marry and is perceived by an elderly woman who knew her mother as 'busy doing nothing at all' (54). But Grizel, not only a later generation but born in America, is so thankful that she is 'free' (63) that she resists connections with the family and with the house and at first refuses to marry the man she loves. Both Woolf and Godden suggest that more choices are available to the younger generation of women than were to their mothers and grandmothers.

Further, in both *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Fugue*, marriage is seen as problematic. Clarissa Dalloway values her marriage with Richard because he is not as emotionally demanding as her other more volatile suitor, Peter, would have been. When Richard

makes the gesture of bringing her roses she feels it is enough, yet readers know that he has intended and failed to say 'in so many words' that he loved her (129). In *A Fugue*, the only married couple is Griselda and John, and their very Victorian marriage seems to discourage their offspring from following their example. In the house,

There are christenings and confirmations; white cakes, white veils; silver mugs, and silver rattles; gold crosses on gold chains and new prayer-books. There is no wedding day; among all the occasions found in the house, there is no wedding day (166).

Griselda calls her husband the Eye, she tells him, 'because I thought you knew everything, saw everything', but she realizes that he sees her only as 'an angel in the house', not as herself (96). Their children who do marry travel elsewhere, Pelham to America and adopted Lark to Italy; the others we know about, Selina and Rolls, do not marry at all. Godden makes clear that when present-day Grizel marries, she will find both love and a mutual relationship, will become a wife while remaining herself. A generation later than Woolf, Godden can be more optimistic about relationships.

Grizel's story provides a more future-oriented ending for *A Fugue* than Woolf presents in *Mrs Dalloway*. Introducing herself as one who does not care about the past—'I don't like history or all this bother about the past', she tells her great-uncle (65)—Grizel learns to appreciate her family connections but still looks forward, unlike Clarissa Dalloway, who only looks back on her past choices with varying degrees of regret. For Godden, the tangled relationships of earlier generations can be resolved in the present and future: Grizel, Rolls's great-niece, can accept and return the love of Pax, Lark's nephew, where Rolls and Lark were divided by her birth, his career, and her need to escape. Though Rolls has not seen Lark since the night she left the house, the night before he was to take up an army posting in Afghanistan, he still communicates with her through the house, so that he now understands her decision and can encourage Grizel and Pax. As Grizel says and the house echoes, 'We thought it was going to end to-night, but it isn't. It is going to live' (211). She refers to the family's occupation of the house, but the repetition suggests that 'it' is their relationship as well as the house itself.

Rolls's encouragement, though, is intended more to benefit the house than the couple, and the focus on the house represents an important difference from *Mrs Dalloway*. Woolf's London is very precisely drawn, with the novel's characters walking through streets located on the map and observing buildings and statues that were there in 1923, though many have since been demolished or moved. Godden's 99 Wiltshire Place, however, is fictional, not on the map, although the narrator insists

on its existence: 'There is in London a Wiltshire Square, a Wiltshire Crescent, and a Wiltshire Road; Wiltshire Gardens and Wiltshire Place' (4). Plausible as that sounds, only the Road and Gardens existed in 1940, and the fictional Wiltshire Place and Square are nowhere in particular: near enough to 'the Park' that children can walk there to play (41) and the Eye worries that 'hooligans' will be attracted by the Great Exhibition (13) and also to walk to Oxford Street, Wiltshire Place is also where 'the sound of the traffic in the Park Road comes in; and every minute and again, the whole house vibrates slightly as the trains pass underground' (18). Besides, in 1940, 'Now' there are barrage balloons over the houses and church spire (7), and a bomb actually falls on the neighbourhood at the end. The London setting is established, but the house itself takes priority as a symbol of continuity in the midst of change.

In the 1976 Macmillan edition, Godden adds an Author's Note explaining that her narrative technique is based on J. W. Dunne's 1927 book *An Experiment with Time*, the main idea of which she summarizes as 'that time is not consecutive, divided into past, present, and future, but that all these are co-existent if only we could see it' (5). Perhaps finding that too challenging, US publishers changed the title to *Take Three Tenses*, derived from a moment in the 'Morning' section where big sister Selina coaches little brother Roland, called Roly then, in grammar before school. That moment introduces an abrupt tense-shift in the narrative: the narrator tells us 'the house is given over to the servants and the children', Selina and Roly have their lesson, and the servants who appear are the butler Proutie and the charwoman, Mrs Crabbe, talking about a quiet night and bomb shelters (23-24). As Proutie and Mrs Crabbe have tea, the narrator comments that 'The distance between butler and charwoman had narrowed: it had almost disappeared' (24). Later in the novel, Grizel is amazed to learn that Mrs Crabbe is the granddaughter of a previous charwoman and complains that in England 'Everything here, even the charwoman, seems to link up with something else' (77). For Proutie, the nephew of John and Griselda's cook, these links are positive, making him 'feel that I am doing not only what I am doing but what has been done before; as if a thousand hands were working there with mine' (77). The work has changed—Mrs Crabbe has a Hoover and Bissell carpet-sweeper that Mrs Sampson did not (25)—and so have the relationships among masters and servants, but the house continues, providing a reason for the characters to exist. For Woolf, the exploration of time happens through Clarissa Dalloway herself, but Godden insists that the house is central.

One inspiration for Godden's novel and this sense of continuity must have been T. S. Eliot's *East Coker*, the second of the *Four Quartets*, published by itself in September 1940. Readers of the novel first encounter lines from the poem's final section as one of three epigraphs, and the quoted lines appear again when Rolls reads to himself and then recites to Grizel and her young man from the book he has recently

bought. While the content of the lines about home, old men, and change is certainly appropriate to the novel's themes, the novel is also connected to the poem by the effort to combine words and musical form to explore and evoke the effects of time passing in the context of wartime London.

The connection of musical form, fugue and quartet, would not have been as obvious in November–December 1940, the time setting of the novel. Readers in 1940 familiar with Eliot's 1935 *Burnt Norton* might have noticed that *East Coker* is similar in form, but nothing would have identified either poem as a movement in a quartet. Helen Gardner quotes letters between Eliot and his friend and editor, John Hayward, that show Eliot thinking about a sequence of four poems, although he only begins to do so in terms of musical form in 1942. In that year he sent a draft of 'Little Gidding' and suggested the title Kensington Quartets for the four poems (Composition 17), defending the choice on the grounds that it called attention to 'the notion of making a poem by weaving in together three or four superficially unrelated themes' to make a 'new whole' (qtd. Gardner Composition 26). By the time *A Fugue in Time* was published in 1945, though, 'East Coker' had become part of Four Quartets. Godden emphasizes her own incorporation of musical form through the first epigraph, identified as 'A sentence describing Bach's fugues, written by Lawrence Abbot'. (The source is a book called *A Listener's Book on Harmony*, where the author's name is spelled Abbott. The ellipses in the quotation are Godden's). To attentive readers, the epigraph sounds like a warning of difficulty to come:

...Two, three or four simultaneous melodies which are constantly on the move, each going its own independent way. For this reason the underlying harmony is often hard to decipher, being veiled by a maze of passing notes and suspensions... Often chords are incomplete; only two tones are sounded so that one's imagination has to fill in the missing third tone.

Like Eliot, Godden suggests that her work will incorporate the apparently independent themes into a new whole.

The importance of place is a major theme in both poem and novel, perhaps influenced by the non-resident status of both Eliot and Godden. For Eliot, the village of East Coker represents a link with his family's English past, but he was born in the United States and was living in friends' houses in London when he wrote the poem, as his inclusion of Kensington in the early title of the four reflects. For Godden, the fictional 99 Wiltshire Place represents a less personal continuity and change in a real London where she, like Eliot, stayed with friends. Though she was born in England, she spent much of her childhood and married life in India, where she lived while writing the novel (Chisholm 7, 155).

Both are aware that houses are not necessarily safe, especially in time of war. Eliot's time frame in 'East Coker' is much longer than Godden's in the novel, widening from the human to the cosmic. The poem begins,

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass,
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf. (Four Quartets, 196)

The imagery fits the village setting, though it could also remind readers that the destruction by fire of houses had become a commonplace in London during the Blitz. In *A Fugue in Time*, the threat comes at first in legal, rather than physical, terms when Rolls learns that his family's 99-year lease on 99 Wiltshire Place expires within a month, and the owners do not want to renew it or sell. The house itself seems destined to stand forever, even though reminders of the war keep intruding. When a bomb falls on the neighbouring garden wall in the novel's closing pages, the house survives while its human inhabitant probably does not. Here, it is the family rather than the individual that continues.

Both poem and novel are characterized by paradoxical phrases that establish their nonlinear approach to time. In 'East Coker', the opening 'In my beginning is my end' leads from references to the village and its houses both 'now' and in a past much earlier than Eliot's seventeenth-century ancestors to the last section's concluding 'In my end is my beginning' (204). And of course the previous poem, 'Burnt Norton', sets up the nonlinear approach with its 'Time present and time past | Are both perhaps present in time future | And time future contained in time past' (189). Godden seems to pick up on that as well as the lines from 'East Coker', introducing her opening section's 'Inventory' with 'In the house the past is present' (4) and repeating 'Again the past is present' (23) early in the second section, called 'Morning'. Despite the chronological section titles, her narrative is certainly not linear, and the presence of the past is demonstrated in many ways: for example, furniture and possessions brought to the house by Rolls's parents in 1841 are still there in 1940, recalling earlier incidents. The physical possessions can be misleading, though: a family photograph from 1861 has been altered so that Rolls, whose mother, Griselda, died giving birth to him in 1863, is pictured with Griselda and all of his older siblings. The perspective of Rolls's great-niece Grizel, born in America, further emphasizes the

presence of the past. She believes she is not interested in the past, that her current comfort and the world's future are more important (116), but the house keeps making her aware of what has happened before. For example, the room she is given had been that of Selina, Rolls's sister who managed the household after her mother's death, and being in it makes Grizel confront the past as something alive:

Most houses change, she thought. Most houses don't keep the same inhabitants for generations, especially not in towns. The life in them changes and ebbs and flows; the rooms change; they are not usually, for as long as this, one person's room. Life does not stay in them as life has stayed in this (72).

She attributes some of this feeling of continuing life to the restricted lives led by women of the past, thinking that 'girls in those days were so much more in the house, closed into it' (71), but the novel makes clear that the past selves of male characters, even Rolls, who spent more of his life out of the house than in it, are also still present.

In both poem and novel, the dominant perspective is that of an old man contemplating his own past and present with less than complete satisfaction. Helen Gardner calls 'East Coker' 'the most personal' of the four (Art, 60), and Eliot invites a biographical reading with lines referring to the difficulty of writing poetry, especially in the beginning of the final section:

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre deux guerres—
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure [...] (202)

This section concludes with an assertion that 'For us, there is only the trying' (203), so that the 'we' in the next lines, the ones Godden quotes and has Rolls recite, can be read as referring specifically to poets. Godden suggests that identification as a poet depends on something deeper than the act of writing poetry, though. Both Rolls and his brother Pelham are described as 'not a poet but he knows what a poet feels like' (about Pelham 91; in similar words about Rolls's younger self 108 and about his older self 205). Besides, the poem is meaningful to Rolls because of his own feelings of waste: having sacrificed love and the possibility of family for a career that has ended in embarrassment, he had looked forward to living again in the house. The words he first notices in the 'long poem, that some johnny in the bookshop said that Rolls, if he were interested in new poetry, ought to read,' are 'Love is most nearly

itself | When here and now cease to matter' (15). He comes to realize that the connections with the past that he feels in the house are a way of regaining lost love.

Besides the autobiographical suggestion, Eliot also raises a more general question about the wisdom of old men. Words in the final section, 'Old men ought to be explorers', are anticipated by much more negative thoughts. In the second section, the speaker sounds angry:

[...] Do not let me hear
Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,
Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,
Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God. (199)

Though Godden does not describe Rolls reading these words, they reflect his repeated desire not 'to be disturbed', first mentioned at the beginning of the novel and again on the same page that refers to his reading *East Coker* (18). Possession is on his mind too, as he reflects that his sister's attempt to possess him failed but that his later life is obscured by 'a piece of good red tape called a career; pasted down over him, it hid him entirely' (56). His career as a general and provincial governor also associates him with Eliot's list of prominent men in the poem's third section who 'all go into the dark', a list including 'The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers, | Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees, | Industrial lords and petty contractors' (199–200). Rolls's 'bitterness' about his forced retirement from that career comes out in a sentence about Proutie the butler, who has been in the house since boyhood. In 1940 Proutie is the only servant still living in, and he is working some nights as a special constable: 'Now it was Proutie who had the uniform, Proutie whose comings and goings must be obeyed, Proutie who was of use' (19). For Rolls as for Eliot's speaker, having attained prominence in a career is no compensation in old age.

Despite the predominantly negative view of aging in 'East Coker', the poem's ending is hopeful, with emphasis on new beginning. Godden's Rolls shares the negative view and chooses to read the final lines of the poem as a positive statement, to encourage the union of his great-niece Grizel and Lark's nephew Pax. Though Rolls accepted a posting to Afghanistan to advance his military career instead of marrying Lark, he has never stopped thinking of her; and Pax's arrival shows that she has continued to think of Rolls. Her descriptions for her nephew of the London house that she left to marry a wealthy Italian nobleman have led him there: 'She taught me the house from top to bottom', he says (119). The mystical 'moving | Into another intensity | For a further union, a deeper communion' of the poem (203–04) has a

more concrete resolution in the novel in the marriage of Grizel and Pax. As Lark says to Rolls in his thoughts, 'They continue us and so they are us' (134), and even Grizel, who has resisted what she sees as a threat to her independence, finally affirms that their children will 'Link Lark and Rolls again through you and me' (188). Just after that, news arrives of Lark's death in Italy, but all have accepted the poem's lines that 'Love is most nearly itself | When here and now cease to matter' (15).

For both Eliot and Godden, children can be shadowy presences representing the future. Eliot introduces the image in 'Burnt Norton', where the speaker is aware of voices from the past in the garden: first, 'the leaves were full of children, | Hidden excitedly, containing laughter' (190), and then in the final section, 'the hidden laughter | Of children in the foliage | Quick now, here, now, always' (195). In 'East Coker', more concerned with aging, the ghostly dancers are adult, but children are still an implied presence in the beginning-end-beginning sequence of the poem. Again, the novel allows Godden a more concrete expression of the idea. Partly, children represent the past: besides the presence of earlier versions of Rolls including the schoolboy Roly, being tutored by his big sister to 'take three tenses', there are reminders of his twin brother and sister, who died of diphtheria before he was born. The image of the boy Pax flying through the house as his Aunt Lark describes it for him provides another layer of awareness. He is first mentioned before his name or that of Grizel or Lark has been introduced, as 'a little boy who seems to belong to nobody; a little interloper. He is small and thin and dark-skinned and he is dressed in a foreign-looking sailor suit. [...] He never walks. He always flies' (38). Though Rolls later says he has applied the word 'interloper' to Pax (193), it is not clear whether any of the characters can see this ghostly figure who seems to be another feature of the house, making another appearance after he has physically arrived as an adult (174).

With the nonlinear time sequence of the novel, Godden emphasizes the future by including several references to another little boy, named Verity, the son of Grizel and Pax. The novel ends in December 1940, but Verity, identified in the 'Inventory' section as 'Rolls's great-great-nephew in the bad winter of nineteen forty-seven' (9), is old enough to make a comment on the conditions outside. Even though he is still not born when the novel ends, he exists in the house and assures us that it has a future. In the 'Evening' section, all three tenses of the novel occur simultaneously, with Rolls's mother reading a story to the twins and his father reading one to Roly in parallel columns while Verity listens eagerly to the radio to hear whether he will be recognized on his seventh birthday (171-73). Again, Godden manipulates the conventions of fiction to blur time distinctions so that 'here and now cease to matter', much as they might in music.

However, while ghostly voices are welcome in serious poetry, they are less so in literary fiction, and their importance in *A Fugue in Time* may be one reason for the relative neglect of Godden's novel. Another could be that Godden confuses critics because she wrote for both adults and children, as Mary Grover points out. The description of the 2013 Virago Modern Classics edition at the Little, Brown website reflects this confusion by foregrounding the love story of the young adult characters Grizel and Pax. On first publication, the novel was well received as written for adults: a note by John R. Frey in JEGP 1947 declares that reviewers liked it, that it represents 'a sufficiently significant experiment in the technique of narration to be examined in some detail' (205), and that modern readers are up to the challenge it might present (208). After that, though, silence until recently. Several books explore ways of classifying English fiction, identifying characteristics that are present in Godden's *A Fugue*, but none includes the novel. For example, Alan Munton's 1989 *English Fiction and the Second World War* focuses on the 'collective experience' of the People's War (1) so might have found *A Fugue* with its privileged family too narrow to discuss even though it has references to blackout, shelters, and bombing and a positive sense of the future. In 1997, Jenny Hartley wrote *Millions Like Us: British Women's Fiction of the Second World War* specifically to rescue from neglect women's fiction that she believes expresses a sense of 'commitment and citizenship' not appreciated by many feminist critics (15). Though Hartley does discuss Woolf's *Between the Acts*, Godden's *Fugue* is not mentioned, even in a chapter about 'Open Houses and Closed Doors'. Most puzzlingly, she is omitted from Nicola Humble's 2001 book, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s; Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism*, which reclaims the feminine middlebrow novel and defines its key concerns as 'class, the home, gender, and the family' (3), all key elements of Godden's writing. Stewart's chapter in the 2010 collection does, however, discuss Godden's use of Dunne's *Experiment with Time*. Stewart points to the quoted section from T. S. Eliot's *East Coker* as a link with modernism, and argues that 'the kinds of details that would normally be associated with realist narration are defamiliarized', so that 'the family's belongings refuse to stay pinned down to a single temporal location' (81). Maybe 'experimental realism', a term applied by Phyllis Lassner to Godden's later novel *China Court* (117), is more accurate for *A Fugue* than either modernism or realism.

Hartley's discussion of *Between the Acts* (1941) demonstrates that Woolf herself had moved on from the modernism of *Mrs Dalloway*, and Godden's novel similarly reminds us that the Eliot of *Four Quartets* moved beyond the modernism of 'Prufrock' and *The Waste Land*. Marina MacKay, while still identifying the works as modernist, might be describing *A Fugue in Time* as well when she asserts that 'The dominant aesthetic of Second World War writing is recursive: even the titles of Woolf's *Between the Acts* and Eliot's *Four Quartets* signal the texts' emphasis on the

circular and reiterative rather than on linear forward movement [...]’ (112). Jed Esty’s discussion of these late works of Woolf and Eliot as illustrating a shift from Britishness to Englishness, from the dominance of art to reliance on a more inclusive idea of culture, could also apply to Godden’s *A Fugue*, though her London setting counters the ‘demetropolitanizing’ trend he identifies in the period. In the section Rolls reads from ‘East Coker’ to Grizel and Pax, the speaker comments, ‘As we grow older, | The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated | Of dead and living’ (qtd. 184). Godden’s *A Fugue in Time*, with its blending of living and dead voices, beginnings and endings, builds upon and illustrates that pattern, and the novel, with all its challenges to categorization, deserves to be better known.

Notes

1. Page numbers correspond to 2013 edition.

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