In the work of Virginia Woolf space and gender are concepts that are inextricably bound together. Space provides a vehicle for questions about gender, about the inclusion of one sex and the exclusion of the other, and about the access of each to power. Spatial configurations, represented spaces, such as houses and libraries, and textual spaces, such as parentheses and ellipses, suggest the capacity of space to divide along gender lines. They also constitute the means to overcome that same division.

Feminist scholars in the fields of geography, architecture, and anthropology have focused on the divisiveness of space in the realm of gender. In Gendered Spaces, Daphne Spain asserts that ‘architectural and geographical spatial arrangements have reinforced status differences between women and men’ and further that ‘“[g]endered spaces” separate women from knowledge used by men to produce and reproduce power and privilege’ (3). Claudine Herrmann, speaking from a literary and legal perspective, echoes Spain: ‘for man, the disposition of space is primarily an image of power, maximum power having being achieved when he can dispose of the space of others’ (114).1

The study of space and gender in Woolf’s work has ranged across her fictional and non-fictional texts, covering such topics as the split between public and private or domestic space, the work’s engagement with metropolitan and imperial spaces, and its relationship to painting.2 Building on the work of Peggy Kamuf, Rachel Bowlby, and Shari Benstock among others, and focusing specifically on the figure of interruption, I want to suggest here that Woolf manipulates space as a means to empower the women in her work and that that manipulation of space extends beyond representations of physical space to linguistic space. Thus, the following questions shape this study: How and to
what effect are questions of gender filtered through a network of spatial imagery and rhetorical figures? How does a retention, rather than a resolution of the problem of space, a movement towards rather than an arrival at a destination, enable Woolf to reopen questions of sexual difference?3

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf calls for the writing of 'a supplement' to history, a body of scholarship from which women have been for the most part excluded:

> It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should re-write history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lopsided; but why should they not add a supplement to history? calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety? For one often catches a glimpse of them in lives of the great, whisking away into the background, concealing, I sometimes think, a wink, a laugh, perhaps a tear. (ROO 58)

This call for a supplement, rather than a re-writing, demands something synchronous. It calls for a filling out of gaps that seeks not to erase but rather to mark those omissions as it bridges them. An interruption and interpolation of this sort, a simultaneous and continual opening and closing of the text, I will argue, forces a rethinking of the parameters of an established body of scholarship, here 'history'. It does not, however, necessitate a forfeiting of difference, a coming together and a closing down of the text. Instead it enables the retention of a certain differential. Thus just as Lily Briscoe celebrates the retention of the problem of space as she completes her painting at the close of *To the Lighthouse*, 'Heaven be praised for it, the problem of space remained, she thought, taking up her brush again' (my emphasis 231), so does Woolf. Like the hollow in Lily's painting ('And she began to lay on a red, a grey, and she began to model her way into the hollow there' [231]), the laugh, the wink, the tear, rifts in the smooth texture of the literary landscape, signal that this difference is there, and, furthermore, that it is there to be made.

Throughout Woolf's work characters, more often than not women, are found on thresholds and at the margins of the text. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf describes what happens as a woman enters a room, as she negotiates the threshold (of the English language/of a room), here figured at the level of the sentence by the semi-colon and the dash.