

# **Studium Generale \_ KABK**

**'Notes on Method: close narration, critical fabulation, speculative fiction, word-tools and the fugitive text; creative speculations on the works of Saidiya Hartman, Octavia Butler, Audre Lorde, Sara Ahmed (and Virginia Woolf)'**

**A lecture by Luanda Casella**

**PLAYLIST**

# **OCTAVIA E. BUTLER**

**science fiction, speculative fiction (What If, If Only, If This Goes On)**



***OCTAVIA BUTLER  
ON SCIENCE FICTION***

# **REFERENCE: *SPEECH SOUNDS (1983)***

*Octavia E. Butler*

A mysterious pandemic leaves civilization in ruins and severely limits humankind's ability to communicate. Some are deprived of their ability to read or write, while others lose the ability to speak. They identify themselves by carrying items or symbols that function as names. People communicate among themselves through universally understood sign language and gestures that can often exacerbate misunderstandings and conflicts. Additionally, it seems that as a result of the illness and their handicap, many ordinary people are easily prone to uncontrollable feelings of jealousy, resentment, and rage over their own impairments and the ability of others.

concealed. She watched his hands.

He pointed with his left hand toward the bus. The dark-tinted windows prevented him from seeing what was happening inside.

His use of the left hand interested Rye more than his obvious question. Left-handed people tended to be less impaired, more reasonable and comprehending, less driven by frustration, confusion, and anger.

She imitated his gesture, pointing toward the bus with her own left hand, then punching the air with both fists.

The man took off his coat revealing a Los Angeles Police Department uniform complete with baton and service revolver.

Rye took another step back from him. There was no more LAPD, no more any large organization, governmental or private. There were neighborhood patrols and armed individuals. That was all.

*Speech Sounds—2*

She closed her eyes wearily, drew a deep breath. She had experienced longing for the past, hatred of the present, growing hopelessness, purposelessness, but she had never experienced such a powerful urge to kill another person. She had left her home, finally, because she had come near to killing herself. She had found no reason to stay alive. Perhaps that was why she had gotten into Obsidian's car. She had never before done such a thing.

He touched her mouth and made chatter motions with thumb and fingers. Could she speak?

She nodded and watched his milder envy come and go. Now both had admitted what it was not safe to admit, and there had been no violence. He tapped his mouth and forehead and shook his head. He did not speak or comprehend spoken language. The illness had played with them, taking away, she suspected, what each valued most.

She plucked at his sleeve, wondering why he had decided on his own to keep the LAPD alive with what he had left. He was sane enough otherwise. Why wasn't he

She had been about to drive away and leave them. She had almost done it, almost left two toddlers to die. Surely there had been enough dying. She would have to take the children home with her. She would not be able to live with any other decision. She looked around for a place to bury three bodies. Or two. She wondered if the murderer were the children's father. Before the silence, the police had always said some of the most dangerous calls they went out on were domestic disturbance calls. Obsidian should have known that—not that the knowledge would have kept him in the car. It would not have held her back either. She could not have watched the woman murdered and done nothing.

She dragged Obsidian toward the car. She had nothing to dig with her, and no one to guard for her while she dug. Better to take the bodies with her and bury them next to her husband and her children. Obsidian would come home with her after all.

When she had gotten him onto the floor in the back, she returned for the woman. The little girl, thin, dirty, solemn, stood up and unknowingly gave Rye a gift. As Rye began to drag the woman by her arms, the little girl screamed, "No!"

Rye dropped the woman and stared at the girl.



OCTAVIA BUTLER ON CHARLIE ROSE- PART 1/2



OCTAVIA BUTLER ON CHARLIE ROSE- PART 2/2

# **AUDRE LORDE**

**biomythography**

# **REFERENCE: *ZAMI: A NEW SPELLING OF MY NAME (1982)***

*Audre Lorde*

This is an autobiography. It started a new genre that the author calls biomythography, which combines history, biography, and myth. In the text, Lorde writes that "Zami" is "a Carriacou name for women who work together as friends and lovers", noting that Carriacou is the Caribbean island from which her mother immigrated. The name proves fitting: Lorde begins Zami writing that she owes her power and strength to the women in her life, and much of the book is devoted to detailed portraits of other women.



Moon marked and touched by sun  
my magic is unwritten  
but when the sea turns back  
it will leave my shape behind.



AUDRE LORDE: THE THEORY OF DIFFERENCE



THERE IS NO HIERARCHY OF OPPRESSIONS - BY AUDRE LORDE (READ BY LAUREN LYONS)

# **SAIDIYA HARTMAN**

**close narration, critical fabulation**



SAIDIYA HARTMAN, LITERARY SCHOLAR AND CULTURAL HISTORIAN | 2019 MACARTHUR FELLOW

# **REFERENCE: *WAYWARD LIVES: BEAUTIFUL EXPERIMENTS (2019)***

*Saidiya Hartman*

At the dawn of the twentieth century, black women in the US were carving out new ways of living. The first generations born after emancipation, their struggle was to live as if they really were free. Their defeats were bitter, but their triumphs became the blueprint for a world that was waiting to be born. These women refused to labour like slaves or to accept degrading conditions of work. Wrestling with the question of freedom, they invented forms of love and solidarity outside convention and law. These were the pioneers of free love, common-law and transient marriages, queer identities, and single motherhood - all deemed scandalous, even pathological, at the dawn of the twentieth century, though they set the pattern for the world to come. In *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, Saidiya Hartman deploys both radical scholarship and profound literary intelligence to examine the transformation of intimate life that they instigated. With visionary intensity, she conjures their worlds, their dilemmas, their defiant brilliance. *Wayward Lives* recovers their radical aspirations and insurgent desires, their unfinished revolution in a minor key.



Saidiya Hartman  
*Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*

SAIDIYA HARTMAN, "WAYWARD LIVES, BEAUTIFUL EXPERIMENTS"

**SARA AHMED**

**word-tools**

# REFERENCE: *LIVING A FEMINIST LIFE(2017)*

*Sara Ahmed*

The subjects that Ahmed covers in *Living a Feminist Life* are broad; feminist “movements” as micro-events, the ways that bodies and minds are “directed” by cultural and social norms into so-called normalcy, feminist willfulness as related to a Grimm’s fairy tale, the drawbacks of institutional diversity work for marginalized populations, breaking points and “snapping,” and the continuing importance of lesbian feminism.



WHAT IS FEMINIST RESEARCH SERIES WITH SARA AHMED



SARA AHMED: DRESHER CONVERSATIONS

# **VIRGINIA WOOLF**

**the fugitive text**

# REFERENCE: MRS. DALLOWAY (1925)

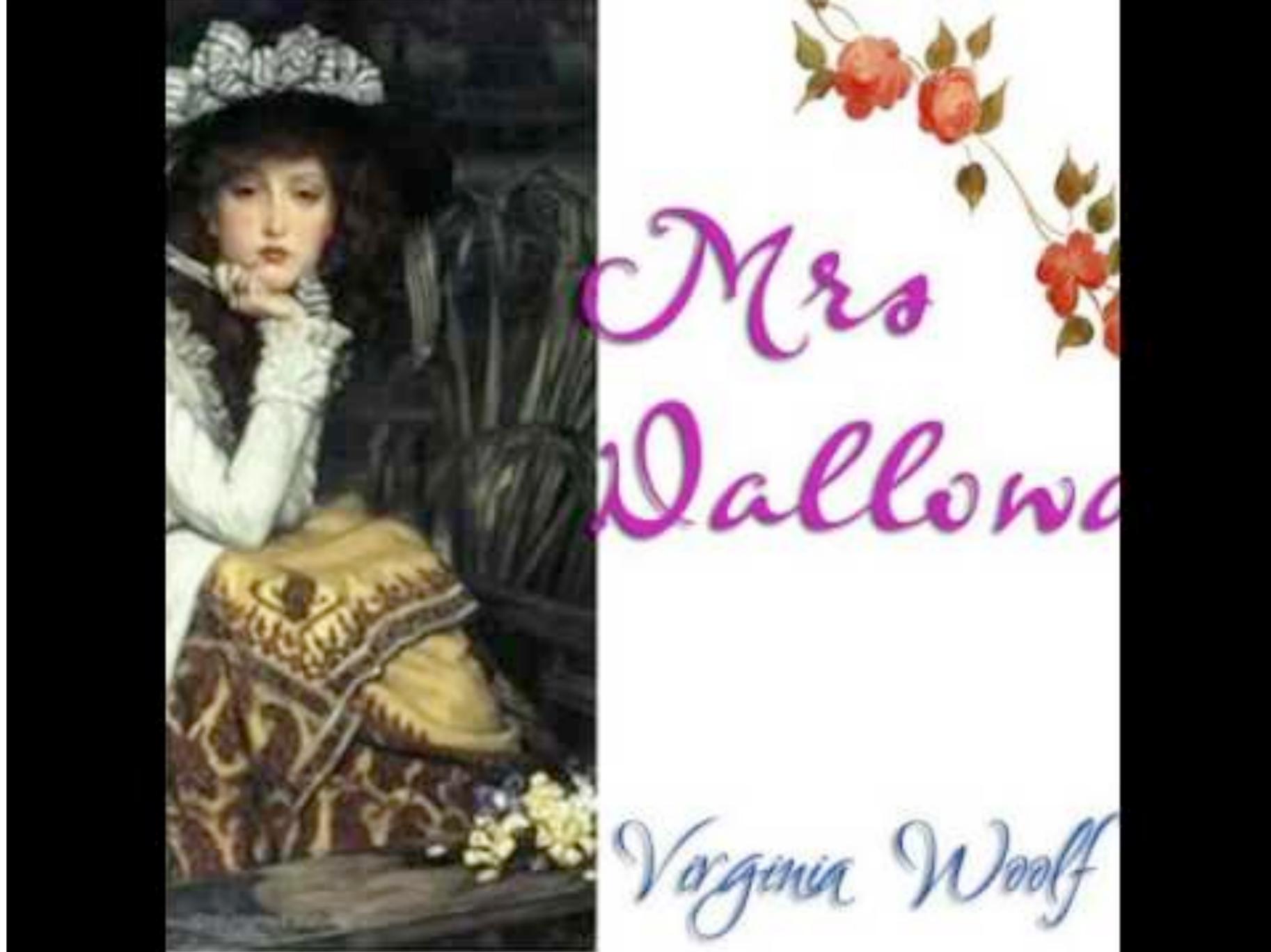
Virginia Woolf

## TRAFFIC SYSTEMS

I want to begin with another of my companion texts, Virginia Woolf's ([1925] 1996) extraordinary novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. She will keep coming up in this chapter because I think we need to be curious about this novel and why it holds such a place in feminist imagination. It is a novel set in one day. It is about an immersion in a day, one day, in the ordinary; one day as another day; every day as another day. Mrs. Dalloway is busy. She is throwing a party. She walks out into London, down the street, to get some flowers for her party; what an ordinary thing. There she is: out and about. She looks up to the sky and sees a plane making letters. Like those nearby, she strains to try to make out the letters. What are they going to be; what is it going to say? Woolf captures something here, how sociality can be achieved temporarily—you happen upon those who happen to be walking down the same street at the same time; you are passing by others who are passing you by, but just for a moment, just a moment, you look up at the same thing. She captures something: the oddness of a connection, the queerness of a gathering.

Mrs. Dalloway, she is busy; she is occupied. But she too can be distracted by what she encounters, looking up, not forward; distraction is how she is thrown into a common world, thrown off her track, her purpose. Suddenly in the middle of her day, when she is immersed in what she is doing, she has another sense of herself. She becomes aware of her own body as what she is wearing: "But often now this body she wore (she stopped to look at a Dutch picture), this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing—nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" ([1925] 1996, 14). This being Mrs. Richard Dalloway: in becoming wife, she loses herself. When it is no more, she is no more: no more marrying, no more having children now; becoming woman, being no more. Becoming Mrs. Dalloway is a form of disappearance: to follow the paths of life is to feel that what is before you is a kind of "astonishing and rather solemn progress." You are just going the same way others are going.





MRS DALLOWAY - VIRGINIA WOOLF (AUDIOBOOK)