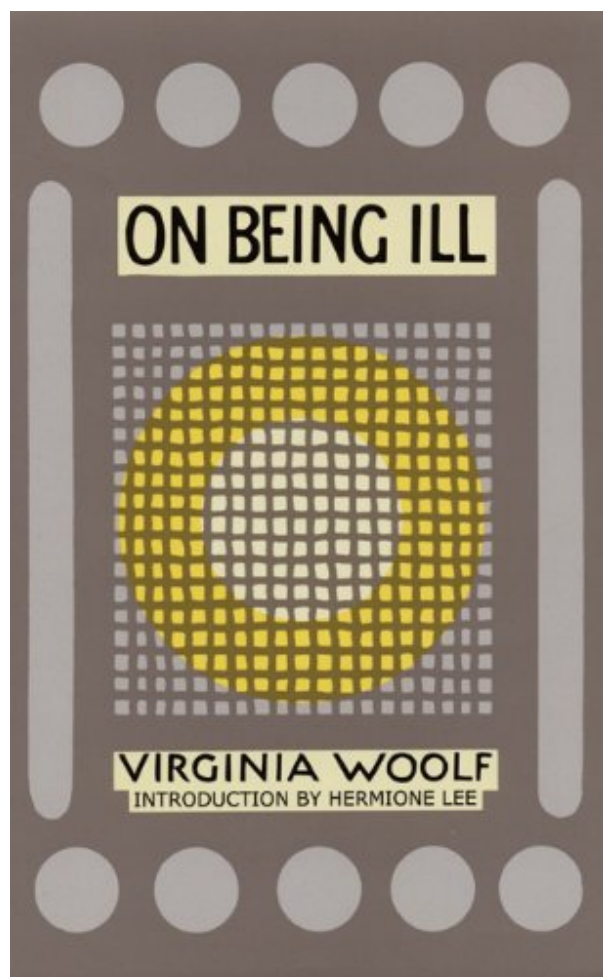
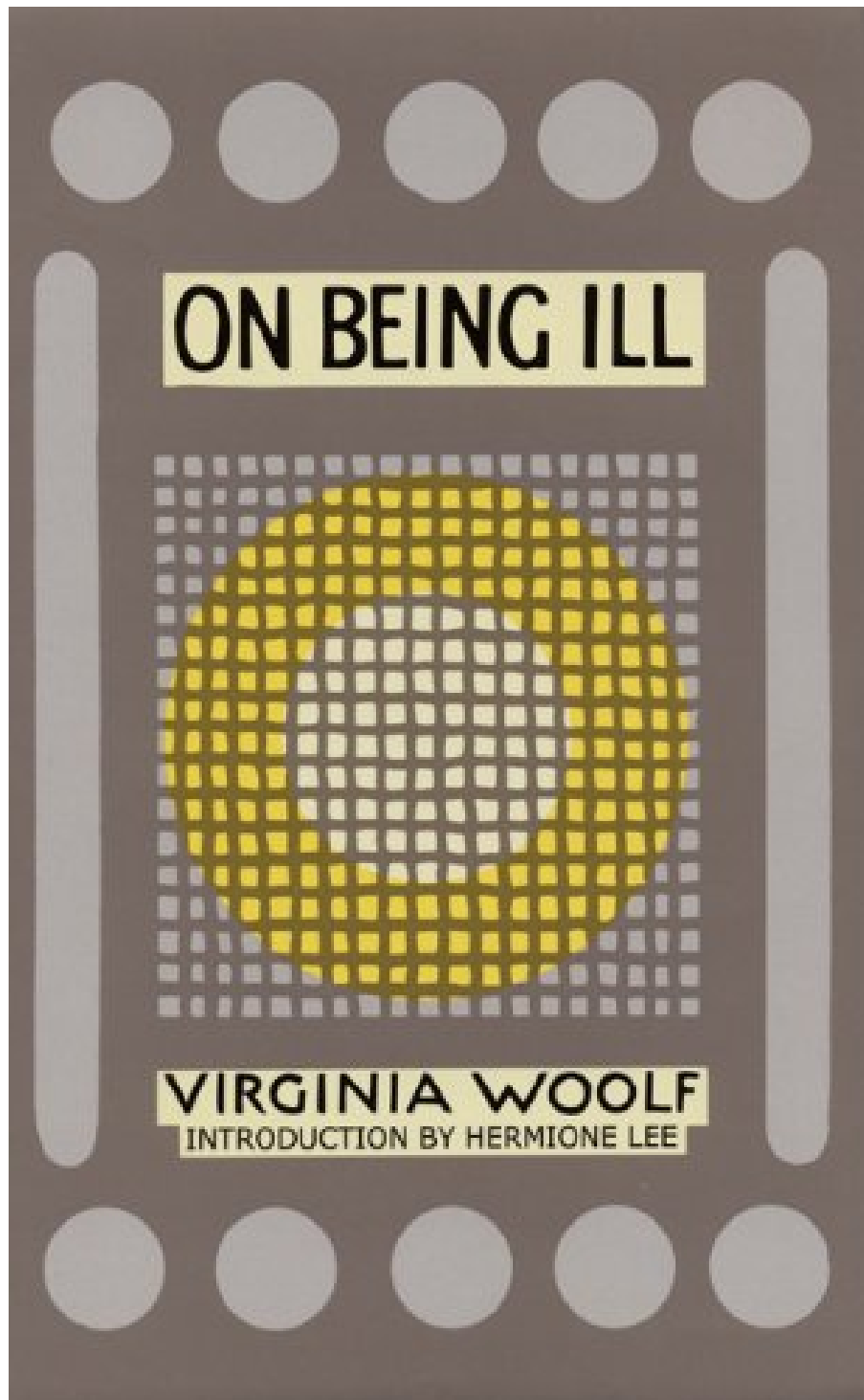


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In this poignant and humorous work, Virginia Woolf observes that though illness is part of every human being's experience, it has never been the subject of literature—like the more acceptable subjects of war and love. We cannot quote Shakespeare to describe a headache. We must, Woolf says, invent language to describe pain. And though illness enhances our perceptions, she observes that it reduces self-consciousness; it is "the great confessional." Woolf discusses the cultural taboos associated with illness and explores how illness changes the way we read. Poems clarify and astonish, Shakespeare exudes new brilliance, and so does melodramatic fiction!

On Being Ill was published as an individual volume by Hogarth Press in 1930. While other Woolf essays, such as *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, were first published by Hogarth as individual volumes and have since been widely available, *On Being Ill* has been overlooked. The Paris Press edition features original cover art by Woolf's sister, the painter Vanessa Bell. Hermione Lee's Introduction discusses this extraordinary work, and explores Woolf's revelations about poetry, language, and illness.

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