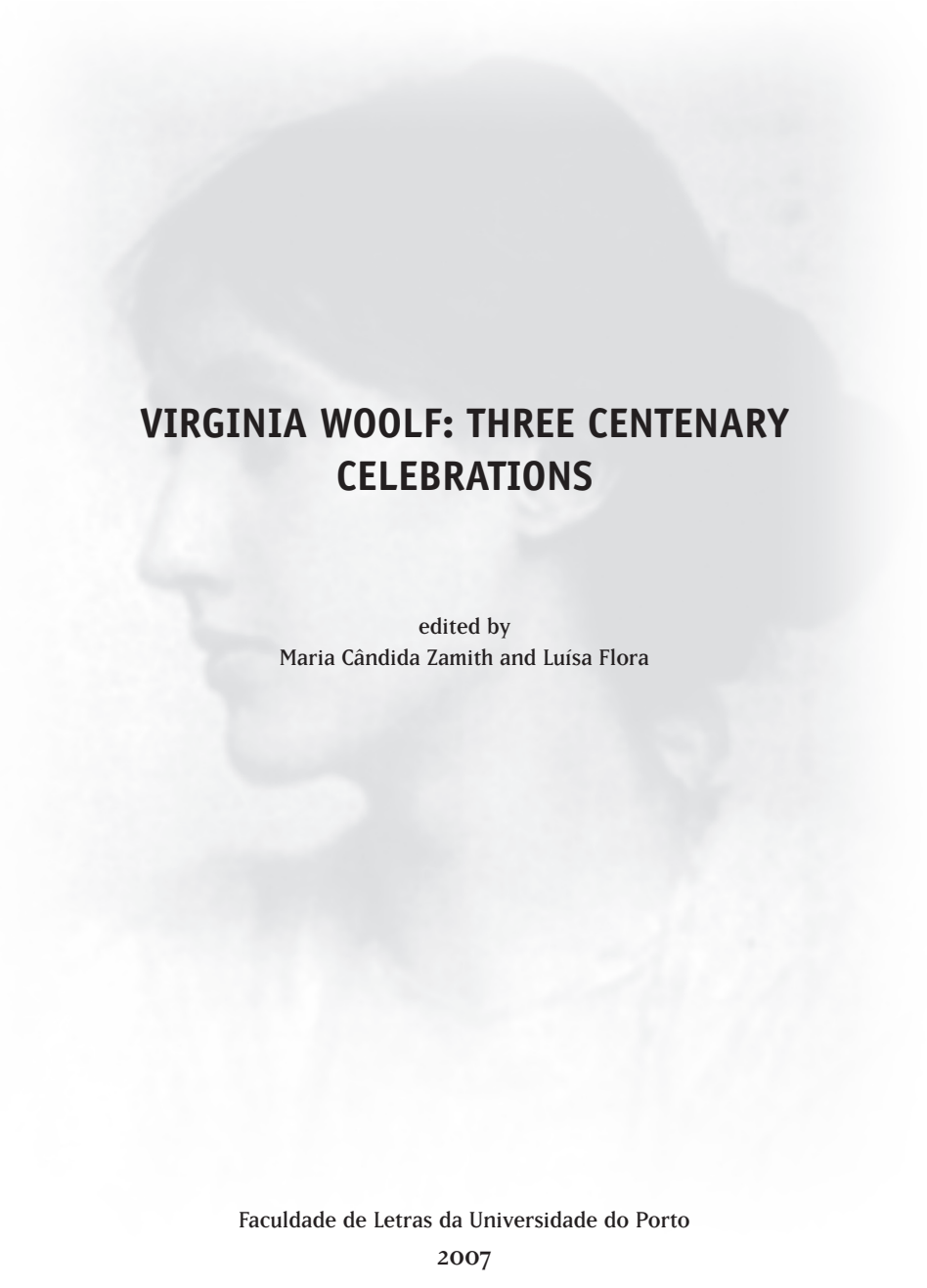




VIRGINIA WOOLF: THREE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

edited by
Maria Cândida Zamith and Luísa Flora

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto
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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations of titles of works by or about Virginia Woolf are used throughout the book.

APA	<i>A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals 1897-1909</i>
AROO	<i>A Room of One's Own</i>
AWE	<i>A Woman's Essays: Selected Essays: Vol. 1</i> , ed. and int. Rachel Bowlby
BP	<i>Books and Portraits</i>
BTA	<i>Between the Acts</i>
CE	<i>Collected Essays</i>
CR ₁	<i>The Common Reader: 1st Series</i>
CR ₂	<i>The Common Reader: 2nd Series</i>
CS	<i>Congenial Spirits: The Selected Letters of Virginia Woolf</i> , ed. Joanne Trautmann Banks
CSF	<i>The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf</i> , ed. Susan Dick
D	<i>The Diary of Virginia Woolf (vols 1-5)</i> , ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie
E	<i>The Essays of Virginia Woolf (vols 1-6)</i> , ed. Andrew McNeillie
FB	<i>Flush: A Biography</i>
GR	<i>Granite and Rainbow</i>
JR	<i>Jacob's Room</i>
L	<i>The Letters of Virginia Woolf (vols 1-6)</i> , ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann
MB	<i>Moments of Being</i> , ed. Jeanne Schulkind
MD	<i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
MDP	<i>Mrs. Dalloway's Party</i>
MT	<i>Monday or Tuesday</i>
ND	<i>Night and Day</i>
O	<i>Orlando: A Biography</i>
RF	<i>Roger Fry</i>
TG	<i>Three Guineas</i>
TL	<i>To the Lighthouse</i>
TVO	<i>The Voyage Out</i>
TW	<i>The Waves</i>
TY	<i>The Years</i>

VWB

Virginia Woolf: A Biography, by **Quentin Bell**

WF

Women and Fiction. The Manuscript Versions of 'A Room of One's Own' by **S.P. Rosenbaum**

INTRODUCTION

This collection of essays focuses mainly on the early days of the Bloomsbury Group and on its long-lasting significance to the work of Virginia Woolf. It has grown out of a Conference held on 16th March 2005 at the Faculty of Letters, University of Porto, Portugal. The Conference was the first Woolfian event ever to be organised within the scope of the University's Institute of English Studies and it aimed to commemorate the centenary of that first Thursday Meeting at nr. 46, Gordon Square, which marks the beginning of the Bloomsbury Group. It also celebrated the centenary of Virginia Woolf's literary career and that of her only visit to Porto. The Conference was intended both for Woolf/Bloomsbury scholars and for the common reader interested in this literary, artistic and social phenomenon of the first decades of the twentieth century.

The presence of a considerable diversity of researchers and academics, from the United States of America, from Russia and from Portugal, had promised from the very beginning a fine compass of voices and the event turned out to do full justice to its initial inspiration. As a result, the editors considered that the publication of yet another collection of essays on Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group was thoroughly justified. Besides, each of the contributors took care to incorporate, to her or his paper written for the Conference, the product of recent research, thus opening up novel approaches to Woolf and Bloomsbury studies or consolidating established perspectives. The essays read at the Conference were then further enriched by new research material and details for publication purposes.

While a good number of the contributions to *Virginia Woolf: Three Centenary Celebrations* deal with the early years of Virginia Woolf's literary life, they nevertheless comprise a very wide and suggestive range of approaches to the issues in question. The essays are not limited to Bloomsbury's early years. They embrace the whole scope of Woolf's life, from her first reminiscences on her mother's lap to the closing words of her posthumously published novel, which, prophetically, opened up the way to the longevity of her work, giving the word to readers and critics. And... "they spoke".

The emotional, psychological, social and literary importance of the geographic shift, from Kensington to Bloomsbury, carried out by the Stephen siblings after their father's death, and the decisive repercussions this event had in Virginia Woolf's (then Stephen's) writing orientation constitute the basic theme

of the enlightening introductory essay by Maria Di Battista (Princeton University, U.S.A.). "The Sybil of the Drawing Room: Virginia Woolf in Old Bloomsbury", which launched the Conference, persuasively shows how "Woolf, whose literary personality and prospects are predominantly identified with a room of her own, began her professional life as a writer equally absorbed with the life of the drawing room. [...] [W]ithout the training she received and the human dramas and behaviours she observed there, her fiction, however exalted in its visionary musings and lyrical transports, would have been humanly barren".

Taking as a starting point Woolf's early diaries and essays, Natalya Reinhold (Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow) contends that such writings are more self-revealing than anything found in the author's later texts and that they signal the underlying significance of "the Other", one of Woolf's links to Modernity. In "'A Wonderful Compass of Voices': From a Passionate Apprenticeship towards Full-scale Writing", the essayist reveals her conviction that "Woolf is distinguished from a typical modernist writer by her focusing as much on the socio-cultural implications of depersonalising a writer's identity as on the formal technique of de-explicating the author in the narrative". Reinhold argues that Woolf's writing apprenticeship "developed along two main lines. One was connected with literary artefacts of the past, the other was a challenging issue of giving voice to those ambitions which had not been given any definite literary form by [...] present or previous generations".

In "Virginia Woolf: Moments of Being" Ana Clara Birrento (University of Évora, Portugal) chooses to read autobiography as a map of possibilities of the self and as a narrative created by the writer and recreated by each reader. Privileging in her exploration Woolf's "A Sketch of the Past" as a means to uncover "the narrative strategies used by the author to tell herself, to construct her identity and power, giving voice and authority to herself as a discursive formation", Birrento views "the process of rewriting the self" as "a selective and imaginative construction of who we have been and who we are", a process that leaves to the critics the task of exploring what is obscured and of bringing to light Woolf's self, a self "who has no existence prior to the text and who does not coalesce with the creator".

In "'Happily I'm Bloomsbury': Virginia's Bloomsbury, Bloomsbury's Virginia", Maria Cândida Zamith (University of Porto, Portugal) surveys Woolf's life and doings in 1905, "the year of her coming of age". Remembering the distance between the late Victorian Hyde Park Gate atmosphere and a blossoming Gordon Square avant-garde, the essay emphasizes how both worlds could be

perceived to co-exist in the writer's inner self and, at the same time, how the parallels between Woolf's life and her writings are detectable right from her early fiction, actually forecasting all the literary strategies later followed by the author. The creation of the undefinable Bloomsbury Group, its genesis and composition are reminded in Zamith's informative essay. Woolf's visit to Porto on 5th April 1905 aboard the *Anselm* (whose picture provides the cover to this book) fostered the third motive to organise the Conference.

The influence of French art and culture on Bloomsbury at its origins is explored by Christine Froula (Northwestern University, U.S.A.), in "On French and British Freedoms: Early Bloomsbury and the Brothels of Modernity". Froula denounces Clive Bell's male discourse in his 1923 pamphlet "On British Freedom" and compares it to the Stephen sisters' understanding of their new freedoms through a creative dialogue with "France" and the French ways, the sisters' Bloomsbury emerging "dialectically not just from the differences between French and British freedoms but from the gender differences *within* them". In a vigorously argued essay, Froula insists on the importance of both sisters' agency as artists and women and shows that "what makes Woolf an author [...] no adequate understanding of modernism can ignore – is not that she wrote from within modernism's brothels but that she emerged from her minotauromachy, wounded but victorious, to write with such vision and power from outside them".

José Luís Araújo Lima (University of Porto, Portugal) singles out *Mrs. Dalloway* and brings forward some very cogent arguments about the book's particular textual strategies that lead the reader to gradually acquire an insight he or she does not share with the narrator's or the characters' because he or she was allowed to question the illusion of reality. "For there they were': *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa and Mrs. Dalloway" takes the reader along a journey of questioning discoveries that help understand the diversity of interpretations of the main character's self and, consequently, the diversity of selves who may be contained in one only person. In this novel, where "Clarissa is lost in Mrs. Dalloway", Woolf's textual strategies encourage the reader to build a point of view of his/her own while pondering on the "inner dialogue between two persons who are one".

Marilyn Schwinn-Smith (Five Colleges, U.S.A.) takes the reader through a fascinating and neglected field: the close relationship between Bloomsbury and the Russian authors and émigrés, choosing as example the translations

undertaken by Jane Harrison and others. "Bears in Bloomsbury: Jane Ellen Harrison and the Russians" recreates the political and social circumstances that brought Russian literature to the attention of the British elite, including the Hogarth Press and its founders. After the 1917 October revolution many émigrés – "Russia abroad" – chose London as their new home, and the intellectuals among them were soon made welcome by their English peers. The essay "brings together a number of diverse threads: the close-knit nature of the British literary community, the comparable intimacy among Russians abroad, and Bloomsbury's fascination with an exotic notion of Russia".

Marilyn Slutzky Zucker (University of Stony Brook, U.S.A.) focuses her attention on Woolf's heterogeneous experience of reality and her skill to treat words as living things that convey the multiplicity and ambiguity of lived experience, in the context of contemporary Physics theories, particularly Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. In "Woolf's Revisionist Poetics and the Materiality of Language", Zucker stresses "the readily detectable relation of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle to Woolf's work" and also the writer's "comfort with the Einsteinian notion that energy and matter are versions of one another". To the purpose she takes examples from *To The Lighthouse*, concluding that Woolf "constructed in literary language ambiguous, contingent yet meaningful analogues of the way the new physicists understood our world to work".

Drawing on the Levinasian concept of alterity, Lígia Silva (Instituto de Literatura Comparada Margarida Losa, University of Porto, Portugal) compares Woolf's novel *The Waves* and *O Jogo da Liberdade da Alma* (*The Game of the Freedom of the Soul*), by the Portuguese author Gabriela Llansol. In "Virginia Woolf and Gabriela Llansol – 'Sweeping the thick leaves of habit'" she demonstrates that in both texts the experience of writing cannot be separated from the dissolution of identity, but "while in V. Woolf the dissolution of identity involves a negative feeling of the loss of Self and is a consequence of an obsession with the fugacity of things and its consequent instability, with G.Llansol the dissolution is synonymous with liberation and affirmation of difference".

This collection of essays comes full circle with Luísa Flora's (University of Lisbon, Portugal) analysis, in "'The Desolate Ruins of My Old Squares': Woolf out of Bloomsbury and into the Future", of the writer's "gradual estrangement

from a consideration of politics as outside the realm of aesthetic experiment" as "part of her fight against any totalitarian narrative". In *Between the Acts*, Woolf brings together out of the debris of a collapsing culture a composite text that moves into the future. When patriarchy seems exhausted, both gender and genre boundaries have to be overflowed and literary tradition is both very much alive and very much cliché. When no stable narratives any longer seem possible, out of the threat of chaos a new, fragmented open-ended fiction emerges.

While the central theme of the conference - celebrating Virginia Woolf and the hundredth anniversary of Bloomsbury-related events – emerges more or less explicitly from the bulk of the essays now collected, each one has its own specificity, each helps build a whole that may be seen as covering the hours of a full day, going from dawn to twilight. Following a pattern that evokes *Mrs Dalloway's* one-day sequence interspersed with enlightening flashbacks, it also makes the bridge to the eclectic eternal one-day-long *Between the Acts* with its medley of literary, social and human conflicts and situations, brought to a close at the threshold of the future.

Throughout the journey of the conference, the diversity of approaches this book presents stimulated lively discussions with fruitful involvement both from the floor, where common readers, students and colleagues all showed their interest and played an active part in the debates, and from the researchers and academics who contributed with their papers. Each contributor to *Virginia Woolf: Three Centenary Celebrations* is solely responsible for her or his essay. The editors did their best to conform to each author's options and opinions while trying to ensure that the volume's consistency and unity as a book remained faithful to the occasion. Even though we could not expect to recapture the spirited atmosphere of that 16th March 2005 in Porto, we trust the book will enable all the participants to look back with enjoyment. Those who were not present will hopefully consider this volume a worthwhile opportunity for an always thought-provoking (re)reading of Virginia Woolf.

Porto, January 2007

Maria Cândida Zamith and Luísa Flora

A faint, grayscale background image of a woman's head and shoulders in profile, facing left. Her hair is dark and pulled back. The image is very light and serves as a backdrop for the text.

Dawn

THE SYBIL OF THE DRAWING ROOM: VIRGINIA WOOLF IN OLD BLOOMSBURY

Maria DiBattista – Princeton University

"To begin with, admire our new address".¹ So wrote Virginia Woolf on the eve of her move into a new house where she was soon to discover - and enjoy - a different and decidedly new way of life. This conference attests to the fact that there is still much to admire and indeed to celebrate in Virginia Woolf's new address, 46 Gordon Square, and in the new era it inaugurated in her personal and her professional life as a writer. Her arrival retrospectively came to mark the cultural ascendancy of Bloomsbury not just as a London neighborhood, but as a mode of living - irregular, informal, experimental - and a mode of thinking and writing about the world - candid, irreverent, artful and sometimes pointedly arch, in a word modern. Historically Bloomsbury as a social grouping of artistic talents and attitudes begins to form in that decisive year, 1904-1905, when Virginia and Vanessa Stephen moved into 46 Gordon Square and Thoby began his famous Thursday evenings, during which, amid now legendary conversation, the Bloomsbury group began to congregate, coalesce and consolidate itself.² Modernist Bloomsbury emerged with such astonishing rapidity that when Woolf came to write about these first exciting years a little less than two decades later, she already felt obliged to refer to that earlier time as "Old Bloomsbury".

But however admiringly, even reverentially we might regard Woolf's relocation from the sedate Victorian confines of 22 Hyde Park Gate to the bustling modern precincts of 46 Gordon Square, we should not overlook her own initial misgivings about that momentous move. At first, the prospect of leaving 22 Hyde Park Gate for Bloomsbury did not appear cheering or even dimly inviting. "We have been tramping Bloomsbury this afternoon with Beatrice," she writes to Violet Dickinson in December of 1903, "and staring up at dingy houses. There are lots to be had - but Lord how dreary! It seems so far away, and so cold and gloomy - but that was due to the dark and the cold I expect. Really we shall

never like a house so well as this, but it is better to go".³ These initial qualms were understandable, given the recent death of her father, Leslie Stephen, in the spring of 1904. Yet working as a counter-irritant to the emotional inertia brought on by mourning was her growing impatience with the "queer mole like life" she was living at 22 Hyde Park Gate, within whose walls "the outside world seems to have ceased".⁴ By the fall of 1904 she is eager for the move; her distress swells to bitter complaint against the implacable Dr. Savage, the physician who treated her for the madness that overcame her that previous summer, for condemning her to convalescence in Cambridge before allowing her to settle into her new home. She writes to Violet Dickinson, who had nursed her that summer through her madness, protesting against the delay that will keep her from the free and full life awaiting her in 46 Gordon Square, which to her represents the desired world of "my own home, and books and pictures, and music".⁵

In her account of these days to the Memoir Club, Woolf would more calmly reflect how Bloomsbury had retrospectively been endowed with the prestige of social and cultural myth. In her own recollections, Woolf attempted to take a more reliable and human measure of Old Bloomsbury, one that would capture the relation and proportion between inner circle to outer world. Old Bloomsbury, she proposed, was best understood and defined as a world within the world, as "[a] small concentrated world dwelling inside the much larger and looser world of dances and dinners".⁶ The granite fact, to adopt Woolf's own idiom, that infuses and variegates the rainbow myth of Bloomsbury's "luster and illusion," is that the "larger and looser" but also *earlier* world of dances and dinners that defined much of the life in Hyde Park Gate interpenetrated the life of Gordon Square, where it was brilliantly concentrated. For Woolf, it was out of those "concentrations" - in art, thought and feeling - that modernist culture was made, or at least made possible. In such concentrations, Woolf found the dense social and psychological matter that she would eventually shape and reshape in the fiction to come: the nature and role of silence in human interchange; the traditional relations as well as the irregular couplings of the sexes in modern times; the radical solitariness of the self; the comedy of social life.

So let us approach 46 Gordon Square as Woolf approached it both in life and in her recollections, through 22 Hyde Park Gate, honoring her insistence that "46 Gordon Square could never have meant what it did had not 22 Hyde Park Gate preceded it" (MB 160). Her memoir of that name is primarily a recollection of her remorselessly conventional half-brother George Duckworth. He dominates her memoir as a dreaded creature, half god, half faun, who looked at the world through the eyes of a pig (MB 144).⁷ His divinity was of the decidedly

physical kind ("When Miss Willett of Brighton saw him 'throwing off his ulster' in the middle of her drawing room she was moved to write an Ode Comparing George Duckworth to the Hermes of Praxiteles", is the most hilarious instance of George's theophanic gestures that Woolf recalls); his religion, however, was social - he was a "saint" in sacrificing himself and his family to "the ideals of a sportsman and an English gentleman"(MB 144). The faun in George's nature, Woolf goes on to remark, "was at once sportive and demonstrative and thus often at variance with the self-sacrificing nature of the God": "It was quite a common thing to come into the drawing room and find George on his knees with his arms extended, addressing my mother, who might be adding up the weekly books, in tones of fervent adoration" (MB 145). The social (disguised as moral) rectitude of the god and the emotional outbursts of the faun may have been at variance in nature, but they were united in George's singular determination to rise in the social scale. It was the physical god and social idolater who mercilessly dragged Woolf to teas, at homes and dances, but it was the faun who, as reported in the scandalous penultimate paragraph of her memoir, visited her bedroom after a particularly ghastly evening spent dining with Lady Carnarvon and "took me in his arms". "Yes", she writes, "the old ladies of Kensington and Belgravia never knew that George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also" (MB 155).⁸

But George, who seemed to have usurped and monopolized all the family functions he was most unsuited and disqualified for, did not follow her to Gordon Square; he married. What Woolf did bring with her was training in the protocols of the drawing room and undiminished, if sometimes appalled fascination with the life entertained and on display there. In her memoirs, George ironically emerges as a genius loci of the drawing room and its droll spectacles: he shines as Hermes, a god unveiled in the eyes of Miss Willet; he astonishes as the faun who "lavished caresses, endearments, enquiries and embraces as if, after forty years in the Australian bush, he had at last returned to the home of his youth and found an aged mother still alive to welcome him" (MB 145). The drawing room is the entry, but also the proscenium to the dramatized past, since it was there that the traditions and manners of late Victorian family life were most extravagantly displayed.

This is made clear at the opening of "22 Hyde Park Gate", which begins with the disarming fiction that she is resuming an interrupted conversation:

As I have said, the drawing room at Hyde Park Gate was divided by black folding doors picked out with thin lines of raspberry red. We were still much

under the influence of Titian. Mounds of plush, Watts' portraits, busts shrouded in crimson velvet, enriched the gloom of a room naturally dark and thickly shaded in summer by showers of Virginia Creeper (MB 142).

Vanessa would introduce white and green chintzes and wash down the walls with plain distemper to brighten 46 Gordon Square, thus banishing the physical memory of velvet plush and somber Titian reds. In the first instance, then, Bloomsbury physically signified for Woolf a new brightness in surroundings and outlook that allowed her to see "things one had never seen in the darkness there – Watts pictures, Dutch cabinets, blue china," things that now "shone out for the first time in the drawing room at Gordon Square" (MB 162). 22 Hyde Park Gate dimmed when it did not obscure the shiny aura of beautifully made objects.

But it was less the décor than the furnishing of the Hyde Park Gate drawing room that symbolized for her the kind of life that was lived and observed there. Woolf drew particular attention to the presence and importance of folding doors:

How could family life have been carried on without them? As soon dispense with water- closets or bathrooms as with folding doors in a family of nine men and women, one of whom into the bargain was an idiot. Suddenly there would be a crisis - a servant dismissed, a lover rejected, pass books opened, or poor Mrs Tyndall who had lately poisoned her husband by mistake come for consolation (MB 142).

The folding doors were the essential stage machinery for mounting the theatricals of family life. On one side of the door, Woolf saw or imagined incidents lively and plentiful enough - servants dismissed, lovers spurned, money lost or stolen, death by misadventure - to provide narrative material for any number of sensationalist tales of domestic life. But what engages her novelistic attention are the less "dark and agitated", more ordinary scenes of life that took place "on the other side of the door, especially on Sunday afternoon". There, Woolf recalls, life

was cheerful enough. There round the oval tea table with its pink china shell full of spice buns would be found old general Beadle, talking of the Indian Mutiny; or Mr Haldane, or sir Frederick Pollock - talking of all things under the sun; or old C.B. Clarke, whose name is given to three excessively rare Himalayan ferns; and Professor Wolstenholme, capable, if you interrupted him, of spouting two columns of tea not unmixed with sultanas through his nostrils; after which he would relapse into drowsy ursine torpor, the result of

eating opium to which he had been driven by the unkindness of his wife and the untimely death of his son Oliver who was eaten, somewhere off the coast of Coromandel, by a shark. (MB 142)

Note the transit of this remarkable sentence that takes us from spice buns feeding a crusty general, dreaming of empire, to a professor eating opium to help him escape the memory of an unkind wife and the son who had become the food for sharks. En route Woolf manages to evoke the imperial memories and convictions, the domestic tragedies, and the broad Dickensian comedy of Victorian patriarchs and pedants. Late Victorian and Edwardian society as it was encountered, accommodated and entertained by a large, rambling, emotionally congested family converges in that drawing room.

How different the life encountered in the drawing room at Gordon Square, especially at Thoby's Thursday evenings, "the germ," Woolf claims, "from which sprang all that since came to be called - in newspapers, in novels, in Germany, in France – even, I daresay, in Turkey and Timbaktu - by the name of Bloomsbury" (MB 164). It was at these Thursday evenings that she heard talk of enormous interest and significance to her, talk about art that was at once abstract and technical, speculative conversation shot through with wit and learning. In the company of ardent but unmannerly and often shabbily attired young men, Woolf gratefully remembers, "[a]ll that tremendous encumbrance of appearance and behavior which George had piled upon our first years vanished completely" (MB 169). She particularly remarks the stark differences in life and feeling between the two drawing rooms: "In the world of the Booths and the Maxses we were not asked to use our brains much. Here we used nothing else. And part of the charm of those Thursday evenings was that they were astonishingly abstract" (MB 168).

It was too abstract, in fact, to be altogether appealing to any but the most theoretical and rigorously logical mind, neither of which Woolf's mind could be said to be. In reporting her own reactions and contributions to those Bloomsbury evenings, Woolf appears less interested in reporting the actual words of what people said than in recreating the rhythm of their exchanges, by which she seems to be taking the pulse, increasingly vigorous, of the new life germinating before her eyes:

Now Hawtrey would say something; now Vanessa; now Saxon; now Clive; now Thoby. It filled me with wonder to watch those who were finally left in the argument piling stone upon stone, cautiously, accurately, long after it had completely soared above my sight. But if one could not say anything, one could

listen. One had glimpses of something miraculous happening high up in the air (MB 168).

Woolf represents her young self at these occasions as a witness rather than co-creator of the conversational miracles she would later memorialize. This may be ascribed to the modesty inculcated by the tea-table training of 22 Hyde Park Gate; her disinclination to scale the heights of argument may also represent the reluctance of a young woman to speak before she has found her public voice. One last explanation: Woolf may think it easier to evoke the excitement of those Thursday evenings from the point of view of the young, unproven novelist (in this case, herself) beginning to discover her human subject and her relation toward it. It is the novelist, then, as much as the memoirist who chose not to reproduce the talk she heard, but to revisit instead her first vivid impressions of those who held forth on those Thursday evenings. And what different as well as indelible impressions they were - the impressions made by the innocence and enthusiasm of Clive Bell, by the wit of Lytton Strachey who was, somewhat alarmingly, "the essence of culture", a culture so condensed yet rarefied that he was capable of bursting into Thoby's room and crying, "Do you hear the music of the spheres?" and then falling into a dead faint; and the singular impression made by an "astonishing fellow - a man who trembled perpetually all over...as eccentric, as remarkable in his way as Bell and Strachey in theirs" (MB 166) - a Jew by the name of Leonard Woolf.

These droll recollections of the characters and talk that defined Old Bloomsbury suggest that Thoby's Thursday evenings did not so much abandon as transform the conventions of the Hyde Park Gate drawing room. The talk Woolf was to hear would still be of all things under the sun, but now it would be more "concentrated"; arguments would distill the essence of a question rather than diffuse it in euphemism and evasion. Conversation was more candid, but, as Woolf also recalls, it could languish in a way that would be impossible at Hyde Park Gate. 46 Gordon Square, then, succeeds but does not totally obliterate 22 Hyde Park Gate as a scene of human interchange that interests her as much for its unspoken drama as for its open conversations. Woolf, whose literary personality and prospects are predominantly identified with a room of her own, began her professional life as a writer equally absorbed with the life of the drawing room. Indeed it is arguable that without the training she received and the human dramas and behaviors she observed there, her fiction, however exalted in its visionary musings and lyrical transports, would have been humanly barren.

That Woolf herself understood as much is evident in her first efforts at fiction, of which two short pieces are particularly valuable for the glimpse they give us of how Woolf was imagining her former and present life from her new vantage point of 46 Gordon Square. The first was a short story entitled "Phyllis and Rosamond", written in 1906, a little over a year after Thoby's Thursday evenings had begun. The eponymous "heroines" are two sisters destined, we are immediately informed, to remain "what in the slang of the century is called the 'daughters at home'".⁹ In representing their social fate, Woolf seems to be imagining the life that would have been hers had she remained at 22 Hyde Park Gate. This being possibly so, it is telling that the most important thing Woolf can think to tell us about them is that

[t]hey seem indigenous to the drawing room, as though, born in silk evening robes, they had never trod a rougher earth than the Turkey carpet, or reclined on harsher ground than the arm chair or the sofa. To see them in a drawing room full of well dressed men and women, is to see the merchant in the Stock Exchange, or the barrister in the Temple. This, every motion and word proclaims, is their native air; their place of business, their professional arena. Here, clearly, they practice the arts in which they have been instructed since childhood. Here, perhaps, they win their victories and earn their bread (CSF 18).

Woolf is quick to denounce the condescension as well as incompleteness that mar this extended analogy, even if it is one of her own devising. The drawing room, however much it may seem their native habitat, is neither the exclusive nor the sole professional domain of daughters at home. The narrator contends that only by following these dutiful daughters through their daily rounds for many days would "you...be able to calculate those impressions which are to be received by night in the drawing room" (CSF 18). We are accustomed to associate Woolf's professional life as a writer with a room of one's own and 500 pounds a year, her own calculation of how women might materially secure their imaginative independence. But psychological liberation is not so easily achieved, a fact Woolf imaginatively acknowledged in conjuring the drawing room life of 22 Hyde Park Gate when she first tried her hand at fiction. It is in the Edwardian household, especially in the drawing room, that she could directly confront the problem of the novelist - how to calculate the value of those impressions that make up "the life of Monday and Tuesday", as she famously described her own work in "Modern Fiction".¹⁰ 46 Gordon Square was inhabited and enlivened by two young women eager to institute all kinds of "reforms and experiments", from doing without table napkins and taking "coffee after dinner instead of

tea at nine o'clock" (MB 163) to the bolder experiments of working as artists, writing and painting.¹¹ Yet when she came to write in her private room, Woolf chose not to represent the new world opening before her, but to return to the traditional life of women for whom the drawing room is a place of business and not speculative conversation.

In recreating the world of the conventional drawing room, Woolf seems to be seeking a suitable place to practice her fledgling art of novelistic self-projection. Each sister gives voice to a different aspect of her own mind, character and opinions. Rosamond is perhaps the closest to Woolf's writing self, endowed as she with what we might call a proto-novelistic imagination. This is how the narrator describes her mental acuity: "Rosamond, possessed of shrewd and capable brains, had been driven to feed them exclusively upon the human character and as her science was but little obscured by personal prejudice, her results were generally trustworthy" (CSF 22). Rosamond certainly lacks the room of her own, and perhaps (we will never know) the art to express her impressions in writing. Woolf nevertheless praises her "science" of character-reading for its impartiality and accuracy.

If Rosamond's science is a projection and prototype of Woolf's own novelistic art of representing and judging character, Phyllis's emotionalism anticipates the indignation that will animate Woolf's satires against the regime of the traditional drawing room, where feeling and brains are routinely discouraged or suppressed. She dramatizes and exploits Phyllis's equally shrewd if more partial judgment of character in the concluding episode, a visit the sisters pay to the Tristrams. The Tristrams are a family which regards love not as "something induced by certain calculated actions" but "a robust ingenuous thing which stood out in the daylight, naked and solid" (CSF 16-17). The family name is worth pausing over. Like Joyce's choice of Dedalus as the name of his young fictional alter-ego, Tristram seems at once symbol and prophesy of Woolf's nascent artistic identity. It conjures up the ghost of Sterne, the creator of *Tristram Shandy*, and the Wagner of *Tristan and Isolde*, representatives, respectively, of the humorist and the high romantic fabulist that co-existed within her own imagination. The Tristrams, like the Stephens after 1904, live in "a distant and unfashionable quarter of London" (CSF 24) known as Bloomsbury. To describe how Bloomsbury might appear to sheltered maidens from Kensington (of whom, of course, Woolf once counted herself), Woolf turns to the more fanciful Phyllis, who, with less novelistic science than her sister, is both envious and exhilarated by the prospect of a different pattern and tempo of life beyond the pillars of Belgravia and South Kensington:

That was one of the many enviable parts of their lot. The stucco fronts, the irreproachable rows of Belgravia and South Kensington seemed to Phyllis the type of her lot: of a life trained to grow in an ugly pattern to match the staid ugliness of its fellows. If one lived here in Bloomsbury, she began to theorise waving with her hand as her cab passed through the great tranquil squares, beneath the pale green of umbrageous trees, one might grow up as one like. There was room, and freedom, and in the roar and splendor of the Strand she read the live realities of the world from which her stucco and her pillars protected her so completely (CSF 24).

Phyllis, whose name literally means green leaf, is a poignant shadow figure of Woolf's own exultant entry into modernist territory. Her hungry and clamoring spirit welcomes the new sense of human possibility revealed to her; the sensationalist dramas of abandoned lovers and disgraced servants enacted in the staid drawing rooms of Kensington instantly become dated when exposed to the robust roar and modern splendor of the Strand.

It is from Phyllis's awed, yet increasingly intimidated perspective that Woolf attempts her first fictional account of the conversations that came to define and distinguish the cultural life of Old Bloomsbury:

The talk was of certain pictures then being shown, and their merits were discussed from a somewhat technical standpoint. Where was Phyllis to begin? She had seen them; but she knew that her platitudes would never stand the test of question and criticism to which they would be exposed. Nor, she knew, was there any scope here for those feminine graces which could veil so much. The time was passed; for the discussion was hot and serious, and not one of the combatants wished to be tripped by illogical devices. So she sat and watched, feeling like a bird with wings pinioned; and more acutely, because more genuinely, uncomfortable than she had ever been at ball or play. She repeated to herself the little bitter axiom that she had fallen between two stools and tried meanwhile to use her brains soberly upon what was being said. (CSF 24-25)

Although Woolf's personal circumstances and modern outlook align her with "the strange new point of view" (CSF 25) of the Tristrams, she is more concerned, even anxious to describe how the uncensored conversations and frank opinions entertained in a Bloomsbury drawing room appear to those outside, if drawn to, such enlightened and ebullient society. The narrator thus reports how Rosamond and Phyllis, amazed by the new ideas and attitudes they encounter, quietly listen "unconscious of their own silence, like people

shut out from some merrymaking in the cold and wind; invisible to the feasters within" (CSF 26).

I find it symptomatic that one of Woolf's first completed sketches as she was settling into Bloomsbury involves a story of two young women who long for a modernity that feel entirely unsuited for, who fall, in a mood of "comic despair," between two stools. I am not suggesting that Woolf was personally unsettled or displaced within the small, concentrated society that opened up for her in Gordon Square. On the contrary, I am marveling that she felt secure enough to explore imaginatively what was both inside and outside the new world of Old Bloomsbury. In "Phyllis and Rosamond" Woolf is actively experimenting with the personally discomfiting but narratively rewarding effects of bi-location. Bi-location is the positive and counterpart to falling between two stools. Falling between two stools lands one in an indefinite and often inglorious mental or social space between two established and equally attractive or creditable positions. Those adept in bi-location occupy both, rather than fall between, those positions. By exercising her skill in bi-location, Woolf narratively situates herself both within and outside of the human scene she is representing. In the Tristrams' drawing room, she transparently represents her new-found life in Bloomsbury; in Sylvia Tristram, the youngest daughter, she depicts the modern (sympathetic) female artist she aspired to be - substantial in character, abstract in thought, in Phyllis's words, "a solid woman in spite of her impersonal generalizations" (CSF 26). But Sylvia has as much to learn from Phyllis and Rosamond as they from her. She suddenly realizes that she "had never considered the Hibberts as human beings before; but had called them 'young ladies,' a "mistake" she admits that she is eager to correct "both from vanity and from real curiosity" (CSF 26). Neither her vanity nor her curiosity lead her to the reality of the Hibberts' lives, as Woolf makes clear to us when Sylvia somewhat presumptuously suggests to Rosamond and Phyllis that "we are sisters": "O no, we're not sisters," Phyllis bitterly objects; "at least I pity you if we are. You see, we are brought up just to come out in the evening and make pretty speeches and well, marry I suppose, and of course we might have gone to college if we'd wanted to; but as we didn't we're just accomplished" (CSF 27). It is Phyllis, not Sylvia, who is the realist, in both the common and novelistic sense of the word.

This sketch is followed in 1909 by "Memoirs of a Novelist," in which Bloomsbury reappears in a somewhat different light. "Memoirs of a Novelist" is a fictional review of a biography of an imaginary female novelist named Miss Willatt. Woolf's tone in this fanciful portrait is low and broad enough for satire, but close enough to its (imaginary) human subject to capture the pathos of Miss

Willatt's fretful and somewhat misbegotten creative endeavors. The following passage makes this comically clear:

It did not seem, to judge by appearances, that the world has so far made use of its right to know about Miss Willatt. The volumes had got themselves wedged between Sturm 'On the Beauties of Nature' and the 'Veterinary Surgeon's Manual' on the outside shelf, where the gas cracks and the dust grimes them, and people may read so long as the boy lets them. Almost unconsciously one begins to confuse Miss Wilatt with her remains and to condescend a little to these shabby, slipshod volumes (CSF 70).¹²

The narrator acknowledges, but ultimately resists, the urge to condescend to those prevented by death from becoming as enlightened as we, the living, so self-assuredly are. She is equally impatient, however, with the biographer's idyllic account of Miss Willatt's youth. She offers her own suppositions of what Miss Willatt's youthful character might have been, suppositions that soon take the form of self-projection. Item in point: taking up the characterization of Miss Willatt as a "shy awkward girl much given to mooning", the reviewer-narrator goes on to imagine her as a young woman who

walked in to pigsties, and read history instead of fiction, did not enjoy her first ball....She found some angle in the great ball room where she could half hide her large figure, and there she waited to be asked to dance. She fixed her eyes upon the festoons which draped the city arms and tried to fancy that she sat on a rock with bees humming round her; she bethought her how no one in that room perhaps knew as well as she did what was meant by the Oath of Uniformity; then she thought how in sixty years, or less perhaps, the worm would feed upon them all; then she wondered whether somehow before that day, every man now dancing there should have reason to respect her (CSF 72).

The rough biographical similarities between the imaginary Miss Willatt and her creator Miss Stephen - both shy, mooning young women embarrassed by their body, dreaming of becoming historians, beginning their creative life in earnest after the death of a father - are only interesting to the extent that they reveal how even at this early stage in her career Woolf possessed not just the talent, but the courage, for self-parody.

Woolf is especially impressive when she confronts - and proceeds to mock - her own proclivities toward mystical flights of imagination. She is, in fact, quite remorseless in describing how Miss Willatt, who in her youth could

clarify and correct any misapprehensions about the Uniformity Law, matures into an enormously stout seer who, "in her hot little drawing room with the spotted wall paper," presides over "intimate conversations about 'the Soul'": "'The Soul' became her province, and she deserted the Southern plains for a strange country draped in eternal twilight, where there are qualities without bodies" (CSF 77). In Miss Willatt Woolf entertains the possibility of a new writerly incarnation - the Sibyl of the drawing room: "We felt often that we had a Sibyl among us," one of Miss Willatt's acolytes testifies, a remark that prompts the narrator to speculate that "if Sibyls are only half inspired, conscious of the folly of their disciples, sorry for them, very vain in their applause and much muddled in their own brains all at once, then Miss Willatt was a Sybil too" (CSF 78). Miss Willatt's elevation to Sybil-hood is at once comic and doleful, comic in her vainglorious soulfulness, doleful in

the unhappy view that it gives of the spiritual state of Bloomsbury at this period - when Miss Willatt brooded in Woburn Square like some gorged spider at the centre of her web, and all along the filaments unhappy women came running, slight hen-like figures, frightened by the sun and the carts and the dreadful world, and longing to hide themselves from the entire panorama in the shade of Miss Willatt's skirts (CSF 78).

Today we associate Bloomsbury with a happier, certainly less gloomy spiritual state, one in which women are no longer frightened by the sun nor spooked by the agitations of the "dreadful world".

Imaginative courage to face and represent the world, dreadful or not, is not a moral gift bestowed by the accidents of birth and temperament, however. It is achieved as much as found. For Woolf, imaginative courage is often found through the sound and sense of laughter. Woolf knew the value of laughter early on and commented on it persuasively in an essay that also belongs to the story of Woolf's move to Bloomsbury. In "The Value of Laughter", she proposed that "there are some things that are beyond words and not beneath them, and laughter is one of these".¹³ Woolf then went on to elaborate a distinction that I believe is key to understanding Bloomsburyan Woolf and all the writing to come after:

Humour is of the heights; the rarest minds alone can climb the plateau whence the whole of life can be viewed as in a panorama; but comedy walks the highways and reflects the trivial and accidental - the venial faults and peculiarities of all who pass in its bright little mirror. Laughter more than anything else preserves

our sense of proportion; it is for ever reminding us that we are but human, that no man is quite a hero or entirely a villain (Laughter 59).

Bloomsbury released and confirmed the power of laughter in Woolf's spiritual outlook and fictional imagination. It helped her maintain a sense of proportion, grounded her,¹⁴ reminded her of what it is to be all too human. But it did something else as well. It reinforced her sense of herself as a female novelist writing in the tradition of women who had profited from their long and demanding training in the science of character-reading. "I believe," Woolf confessed, "that the verdict that women pass upon character will not be revoked at the Day of Judgment" (Laughter 60). For Woolf, training in these novelistic arts of judgment had come, as it had for Rosamond, as it had for so many of her literary mothers, in the drawing-room.

Woolf would return to the female traditions and feminine arts untiringly practiced in the drawing room in the tableau that concludes her final novel, *Between the Acts*. In the novel's last page, the family of Pointz Hall foregathers before retiring for the long dark night ahead. The year is 1939, the place is outside London. Although there have been several complaints by various characters in the novel that surely it was time that someone invented a new plot or that the author came out of the bushes, the old plots, we come to understand, will have to suffice and the author will not be courting applause, much less celebrity, any time soon. Only at the moment when Isa, the novel's abortive poet and restless seeker after latent and larger meanings, lets her sewing drop, does a new human vista emerge:

The great hooded chairs had become enormous. And Giles too. And Isa too against the window. The window was all sky without colour. The house had lost its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks. Then the curtain rose. They spoke. (219)

We do not of course hear these first words. But I like to think that those spoken words might include snatches of conversation that Woolf overheard at Thoby's Thursday evenings, words, at any rate, punctuated by bursts of laughter. Even without knowing what those words might be, we might respond to their power. Through them, Woolf speaks to us in her last work as a sublime humorist who "alone can climb the pinnacle whence the whole of life can be viewed as in a panorama." From that pinnacle she beheld the entire human panorama from the momentary shelter of the present moment back to the night

before roads were made. But for Woolf the climb to that pinnacle begins in the drawing room. If Sibyls are half visionaries in whose gaze the whole of life is comprehended, and half comic seers conscious of "[a]ll the hideous excrescences that have overgrown our modern life, the poms and conventions and dreary solemnities" (Laughter 60), then Virginia Woolf is a Sibyl too. In her last fiction, indeed, she appears as the most humorous incarnation of that Bloomsburysian figure: the Sybil of the drawing room.

NOTES

- ¹ Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, I. ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p.149. All further citations will be noted as L-I.
- ² There are many personal recollections and personal accounts of Bloomsbury. Still the indispensable work is S.P. Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury* 2 volumes (New York: Macmillan. 1994).
- ³ *Letters I*, p.119
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ *Letters I*, p. 147.
- ⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being* edited, with an introduction and notes, by Jeanne Schulkind (London and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976) p.170. All further citations in the text will be noted as MB.
- ⁷ Thanks to Christine Froula for reminding me that George's pig eyes were as essential to Woolf as his dark crisp ringlets for understanding his nature.
- ⁸ When she recapitulates the last abruptly scandalous pages of "22 Hyde Park Gate" at the opening of "Old Bloomsbury", Woolf recalls George's attentions this way: "It was long past midnight that I got into bed and sat reading a page of two of Marius the Epicurean for which I had then a passion. There would be a tap at the door; the light would be turned out and George would fling himself on my bed, cuddling and kissing and otherwise embracing me in order, as he told Dr. Savage later, to comfort me for the fatal illness of my father - who was dying three or four storeys lower down of cancer" (MB 160). The entire question of George Duckworth's sexual "malefactions" is a complex and much disputed one, but for the most careful weighing as well as reading of the evidence, see Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (New York : Knopf, 1997) pp. 147-156.
- ⁹ Virginia Woolf, "Phyllis and Rosamond", *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf* (CSF), ed. Susan Dick (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, 1985), p.18. All future references will be noted in the text.
- ¹⁰ The phrase is Woolf's elegant shorthand for the ordinary life of an ordinary day with which, Woolf argues, the modern novel ought to concern itself. See Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction", *The Essays of Virginia Woolf IV*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (San Diego and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1986) pp. 157-65.
- ¹¹ See especially, Christine Froula, "Civilization and 'my' civilization" Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde in *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) pp.1-34.

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- ¹² Virginia Woolf, "Memoirs of a Novelist", *Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf* (CSF), p.70. All future references will be noted in the text.
- ¹³ Virginia Woolf, "The Value of Laughter", *The Essays of Virginia Woolf I*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (San Diego and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986) p. 59. All future references will be noted in the text.
- ¹⁴ "Tell me, Bart", Lucy Swithin asks her brother, "what's the origin of that? Touch wood...Antaeus, didn't he touch earth?" Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (San Diego and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969) p.25. All future citations will be to this edition.

A faint, grayscale background image of a woman's profile, facing left. Her hair is dark and pulled back, and she appears to be wearing a light-colored garment. The image is very soft and faded, serving as a backdrop for the text.

Morning

'A WONDERFUL COMPASS OF VOICES': FROM A PASSIONATE APPRENTICESHIP TOWARDS FULL-SCALE WRITING

Natalya Reinhold – Moscow University for the Humanities

The Conference celebrating the Centenary of the Bloomsbury Group and the beginning of Virginia Woolf's professional career as a writer proves to be an excellent occasion for the research done on her early work.

In my article I am going to look closely at the diversity and complexity of the ways through which Woolf's identity was sought. I intend to turn to her early diaries and essays of the late 1890s and early 1910s, to examine the process of identification shaping itself. Taken in this perspective Virginia Woolf's (then Stephen's) diaries and essays are a remarkable subject for analysis. They reveal (and this is something I am going to expand on below) numerous links between the early semi-obscure pieces written at the dawn of her career as a professional writer, and her mature works of the 1910s and 1930s. I claim that glimpses of Woolf's specific understanding of the writer's identity that we get from her early work are much more self-revealing than the ones we find in her later texts.

Assuming that Woolf's early work is marked by the writer's identity taking shape, I further claim that a certain mistrust of 'I', a suspicion of its being limited and narrow found in the early work by Woolf, signals the underlying significance of 'the Other'. It is 'Otherness' that links Woolf as early as the 1900s with the broad milieu of modernity.

Let us turn to Woolf's early diaries and essays to examine the process of identification taking shape, agreeing with Foucault that one of the formal means for identity to express itself is the writer's or speaker's use of this or that personal pronoun.¹ Taken in this perspective Virginia Woolf's (then Stephen's) diaries and early essays are remarkable in the predominant use of the first-person plural. The latter is multifunctional. There are obvious cases of her using 'we' as a parody of the stiff quasi-academic convention. For

example, "these [the details] we have a melancholy pleasure in now presenting to the reader" (APA 150); "but we must hasten our unwilling pen to enter in upon the details of the disaster" (Ibid. 151).

Often, however, it acquires an autobiographical family connotation of sisters and brothers who are used to thinking about themselves as 'we'. Note, for instance, the spontaneity of using the first-person plural in the entry of her diary at Warboys during the summer holidays of 1899:

This being *our* first night, & such a night not occurring again, I must make some mark on paper to represent so auspicious an occasion, tho' my mark must be frail & somewhat disjointed. However we came here sober [?] & with not much bother of spirit - save that twice we had to change (APA 135; my italics).

What is interesting about those instances of Woolf's modelling her identity via family 'we' are cases of a literary shift in meaning. By the latter I mean Woolf's associating herself with writers whom she thought to be dear and familiar to her, in whose company she loved to spend time while reading and speculating. She would register this experience in her diary piece "The Talk of the Sheep" (1903): "My solitude is genuine; ... & I sit down too much for any real dogs temper. But like Wordsworth - like many distinguished people (it is well to be in good company) I find solitude sufficient, strangely so" (APA 197). There is something of that sense of speaking from the heart of her love for certain English writers in her use of the first-person plural in the early essay "Haworth, November 1904": "Our only occupation was to picture the slight figure of Charlotte trotting along the streets in her thin mantle, hustled into the gutter by more burly passers-by" (BP 167). What is noteworthy here is the spirit of nostalgia, which is registered in this essay written in the year of Leslie Stephen's death. The speaker goes back - in memory and body - to her favourite writers, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, reviving them in her imagination not as great writers but as slim figures walking along the road to Keighley. Woolf's 'our' seems to embrace herself, her father and the writers dear to her in one imaginary sweep. Her using the first-person plural defines her identity as the one belonging to the literary family. (Though, certainly, the surface meaning of the first-person plural denoting a group of travellers visiting Haworth in the deep autumn of 1904 remains there as well). Besides the autobiographical and personal literary implications of Woolf's early use of 'we' in some particular instances, there are early cases of her referring to 'we' while attempting to model her reader, the latter being the intention she

would sometimes be explicit about: "An innocent reader (I suppose a reader sometimes for the sake of variety when I write; it makes me put on my dress clothes such as they are)..." (APA 144).

It is of note that the reader's first-person plural often appears in an opposition to some striking personality, as is the case described in Woolf's essay "Elizabeth Lady Holland" (1908). Her heroine is made to look an extraordinary woman, ahead of her time, openly speaking her mind, independent and happy in marrying a man whom she loved though at the cost of breaking certain social conventions. Lady Holland's character is given here as a presence in the room (the first instance of Woolf's comparing a woman's personality to someone's presence in the room, which would later grow into a symbol of the woman's world). In her essay she wrote:

But there is some quality in a scene like the following, trivial as it is, which makes you realise at once the effect of her presence in the room, her way of looking at you... We seem to feel, however dimly, the presence of someone ...who has an extraordinary force of character. She makes certain things in the world stand up boldly all round her; she calls out certain qualities in other people. While she is there, it is her world (BP 193).

Much in the same way (as in "Elizabeth Lady Holland") a woman of striking personality is given as a desirable identity in another of Woolf's early essays, "The Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt" (1908). Here Sarah Bernhardt's life is made to look no less than a way to resist 'the floods' of death and oblivion: "... but still she [Sarah Bernhardt] will sparkle, while the rest of us - is the prophecy too arrogant? - lie dissipated among the floods" (BP 207). Curiously, however, the speaker who is obviously attracted by the actress's sense of identity would never use the first-person singular either in reference to Sarah Bernhardt or to herself. Throughout the essay only 'she' and 'we' are used to denote the heroine and the speaker respectively. It sounds as if the speaker would not commit herself to the unconventional 'I', though it is clear that she stresses the necessity for every one to have a strong sense of identity to be able to fight death back.

Speaking more generally, it looks as if for some reason 'I' as a voice did not come easily to Woolf in her early diaries and essays.

Later, in her "The Modern Essay" (1925), Woolf would justify the use of the first-person plural by a modern essay writer in socio-cultural terms. Her suggestion was that the new democratic age was contributing to the long-term

practice of English essay writing by making the essayist more open to the reader:

Paradoxically enough, the shrinkage in size [of the essay form] has brought about a corresponding expansion of individuality. We have no longer the "I" of Max [Beerbohm] and of Lamb, but the "we" of public bodies and other sublime personages. It is "we" who go to hear the *Magic Flute*; "we" who ought to profit by it; "we", in some mysterious way, who, in our corporate capacity, once upon a time actually wrote it (CR1 279).

Woolf's contemporaries did not find her arguments for using 'we' in her writing convincing. A well-known example is Desmond McCarthy's class-critique, made in *The Sunday Times*, of her essay "The Leaning Tower"; Woolf argued against McCarthy "that her education gave her the right to say 'we' when she talked to the Workers' Educational Association".² There are some strong points both in favour of Woolf's democratic/feminist stance expressed via 'we', as well as in her contemporaries' class-critique of it. However, in a sense it would be useless to pursue this argument any further, for it deals with both sides' declarations rather than the tones and undertones of Woolf's using the first-person plural in her writing.

If we now look at the identity issue in Woolf's writing from the point of view of the critic's reflection, we will not fail to identify the theme of the striking personality as opposed and thwarted by society. The reception of a writer as opponent suppressed by society looks as a hint of 'the Other', in Foucault's sense of the word. In her essay "Coleridge as Critic" (1918) Woolf offers her reading of Samuel Taylor Coleridge as an extraordinarily gifted person who had to live in a society with limited intellectual and artistic claims. It gave his talents no chance of blossoming. It did not devise any means of satisfying his powerful and diverse ideas. Woolf thinks this discrepancy to be the major reason for Coleridge's works having been left unfinished. She comes up with a paradoxical observation: a reader who becomes conscious of his own dumbness and blindness when compared to Coleridge cannot help thinking that it is exactly his lacking a powerful 'I' that makes him accepted today:

The reader of the "Table Talk" will sometime reflect that although, compared with Coleridge, he must consider himself deaf and blind as well as dumb, these limitations, in the present state of the world, have protected him and most of his work has been done within their shelter (BP 34).

Woman's 'I' as a split one is hinted at in Woolf's early essay "On a Faithful Friend" (1905). Half-jokingly a woman's identity is related there to the dog's or cat's 'I'. Very much like the animals who are tamed and suppressed without any notion of their ancient origin, women have been considered for centuries to be household pets devoid of any inner world of their own. Woman (implied in the image of 'the silent critic on the hearthrug') is described in the essay in terms of mythical Pans, dryads and nymphs, again putting the researcher into thinking of the writer's guilty subconscious, with 'the Other' as materially and socially suppressed:

One cannot help wondering what the silent critic on the hearthrug thinks of our strange conventions... There is something, too, profane in the familiarity, half contemptuous, with which we treat our animals. ...It is one of the refined sins of civilization, for we know not what wild spirit we are taking from its purer atmosphere, or who it is - Pan, or Nymph, or Dryad - that we have trained to beg for a lump of sugar at tea (BP 10).

This passage predicts Woolf's future *Flush* (1934) with its representation of events through the eyes of a dog - that 'silent critic' - who possesses his own mysterious inner world hidden under his common appearance. Is not this two-fold nature the reason for a likeness between Flush and his new hostess, Elizabeth Barrett? "There was a likeness between them. As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I - and then each felt: But how different!" (F 26). The woman poet and the dog are alike in their being outsiders: Flush is a stranger in the world of human beings, whereas Elizabeth Barrett is a stranger in a culture which is man-made and man-oriented. It is no accident that her room seems to Flush to be illusory as if split in identity: "...everything was disguised. ...Nothing in the room was itself; everything was something else" (F 24).

In the essay "Swift's Journal to Stella" (1925) Woolf interprets Swift's life in terms of the writer's live feelings being driven by societal conventions into a cryptic discourse of journals and letters. Identity got split, points out the essayist, and it was only at the end of his life that Swift managed to regain his 'I'.³

Thus what Woolf's early diaries and essays reveal in relation to the identity issue is a certain tension in the writer's use of 'I'. Woolf would rather stick to the first-person plural with its spectrum of meanings, or set on modelling a reader's image, or associate herself with the writers of the past long dear and familiar to her, than use her autobiographical 'I' directly

and explicitly. This, together with her interest in the literary-historical cases of split identity seems to point at the 'Otherness', be it the writer's guilty subconscious, or her sense of opposition. We could predict her experimenting with 'I' in her early pieces of writing. There is an instance of her playing the part of a fake newspaper correspondent in the diary entry of August 1899:

Extract from the Huntingdonshire Gazette.

TERRIBLE TRAGEDY IN A DUCKPOND

A terrible tragedy which had its scene in a duck pond has been reported from Warboys. Our special correspondent who was despatched to that village has had unrivalled [sic] opportunities of investigating the details as well as the main facts of the disaster, & these we have a melancholy pleasure in now presenting to the reader (APA 150).

The use of the first-person plural here is certainly a pure convention. It is a slight attempt at pretending to be a journalist without any knowledge of what his identity is like. Nevertheless, it should not be dismissed as something worthless, for it opens a succession of fake identities of fake speakers in Woolf's essays written between 1916 and 1934. In fact, by first using it Woolf struck upon a way of going about identity in her essay writing which, as I will show below, would prove to be a rewarding and far-reaching strategy. Also registered in those early diaries is Woolf's obvious wish to fictionalise newspaper facts. As early as 1903 she developed that line of writing out imaginary 'lives' which later would produce "An Unwritten Novel" (*Monday or Tuesday*, 1922), Judith in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and many others. In her diary of 1903 she gives a newspaper fact first and then goes on to expand on it:

I read it & it has stuck in my memory so that I can write it here. Yesterday morning then, the first Park Keepers saw something afloat in the Serpentine - *What* it needed little looking to tell. Bodies in the Serpentine are not uncommon in the early morning. They drew it ashore & found that it was a woman who had been drowned... (APA 211-2).

From a newspaper article Woolf would turn to imagining what that poor woman's life could have been. Then in one sweeping phrase she would identify herself with the woman by using 'I', which is quickly abandoned first for the third-person singular and then for a general 'you':

Then of a sudden comes that pang - Without husband or children, I yet had parents. If they were alive now I should not be alone. ...For the first time in her

life perhaps she weeps for her parents... That sorrow I say is bitter enough in youth... Your husband may die & you can marry another... but if your father & mother die you have lost something that the longest life can never bring again (APA 212-3).

A shift in identity embraces the 'she' of a drowned woman, Woolf's autobiographical 'I' for identifying herself with the unhappy creature, the 'I' of a speaker ('that sorrow I say is bitter enough in youth'), and the 'you/your' of the speaker who identifies herself with others, with anybody. Thus what this early diary piece reveals is that the situation of fictionalising a fact or imagining on the basis of a fact in an essay or diary proves to be a good means for Woolf to become flexible in her identity.

For the first time a fully developed strategy of assuming a fake identity as an author's mask and speaking via it occurs in Woolf's essay "Heard on the Downs: the Genesis of Myth" (1916).⁴ Its subtitle "From a Correspondent" seems to point to the authenticity of a report allegedly sent direct from the battle front. The result, however, is exactly the reverse: its explicitly female approach to the war makes it a fake. The whole essay then is turned into a subtle play on identity: what is a correspondent? we ask. Obviously a war correspondent cannot be a woman, and yet so woman-like it is that it cannot belong to a man. Thus the second part of the title "The Genesis of Myth" is unexpectedly justified and foregrounded: it may be applied both to the theme of the essay and to the very process of writing it.

This seemingly marginal essay opens up a succession of Woolf's essays and biographies based on exotic personages who pose there as speakers or commentators, protagonists or characters, while being in fact either fakes or fantasies in spite of their convincing historical titles, names, data, etc. Take, for instance, Judith, a fake sister of Shakespeare from *A Room of One's Own*. Or *Flush*, a real dog once belonging to the Brownings but transformed in Woolf's essay into a semi-fantastic creature with a superb gift of understanding, who is made the commentator of the events related. Or take Nicholas Greene from *Orlando* (1927): his surname and the context are convincing enough to bring up literary-historical associations with Robert Greene (1558-1592), though his first name, Nicholas or Nick, suggests that the whole thing is an element of fiction (O. 82-3).

Taken in a biographical perspective, this identity trick of Woolf's hiding behind a quasi-historical 'I' to play out a different history in her imagination seems to be analogous to her gesture of 'wrapping' her diary and essay writing

in the pages of some old book. She struck upon the latter as an exciting idea in her diary entry of 18 September 1899:

A sudden idea struck me, that it would be original useful & full of memories if I embedded the foregoing pages in the leaves of some worthy & ancient work ...My work - the present volume, attracted my attention firstly because of its size, which fitted my paper - & 2ndly because its back had a certain air of distinction among its brethren. I fear the additional information given on the title page that this is the Logic of the "Late Reverend & Learned Isaac Watts D.D." was not a third reason why I bought it. Any other book almost, would have been too sacred to undergo the desecration that I planned; but no one methought could bewail the loss of these pages (APA 159-60).

The implied irony of the gesture hinted at by the phrase, "I fear the additional information given on the title page that this is the Logic of the 'Late Reverend & Learned Isaac Watts D.D.' was not a third reason why I bought it", is revealed via the description of the Warboys journal provided by the editor in his footnote: "AVS used the Warboys journal for [...] essay-writing during her holiday and for experimenting with various nibs; in many instances she used the same page for both purposes, and this gives the original journal its appearance of immense chaos" (APA 160; fn 8).

To play havoc with the old and dignified book on Logic, thereby deceiving the expectations of any one who would take up the book, is very Woolfian. Much to the same effect is another of Woolf's tricks. As is known, she sent a copy of her novel *To the Lighthouse* (1927) to Vita Sackville-West with the inscription *Vita from Virginia (In my opinion the best novel I have ever written)*. The copy, however, was a dummy: the reader opened it to find blank pages.⁵ Although the cases mentioned above are different in content, function and effect upon the reader, there are two common points about them. One is Woolf's decision to use someone else's identity; the other is deceiving the reader's expectations raised by that identity by playing around the subject. Behind these cases there stands the same strategy of breaking stereotypes of logic and rational thinking. Also, the putting on strangers' identities and taking them off like masks may be well related to what Woolf wrote in her diary on 30 June 1903:

last night I could lie with my nightgown open & my hair tumbled over my forehead as it is at this moment. I often think of that famous painter who would only work in his court dress - or kept different dresses for different

occasions. Though I hate putting on my fine clothes, I know that when they are on I shall have invested myself at the same time with a certain social demeanour - I shall be ready to talk about the floor & the weather & other frivolities, which I consider platitudes in my nightgown. A fine dress makes you artificial (APA 169).

However critical and suspicious Woolf is about the identity-in-disguise mode of writing in her early pieces, for her own essays it proved to be a rewarding strategy. Thanks to the writer investing her 'I' in the clothes or the voice of a definite social type, it is culturally and historically bound. Also, a speaker's identity being foregrounded, it allows for the writer's irony. This practice of fake identification proved to be rich and flexible in socio-cultural and ideological accents, a fact which Woolf acknowledges in "A Letter to a Young Poet" (1932) written after twenty years or so of practising the fake-identity mode:

The art of writing... can be learnt... much more drastically and effectively by imagining that one is not oneself but somebody different. How can you learn to write if you write only about one single person? ...if you want to satisfy all those senses that rise in a swarm whenever we drop a poem among them - the reason, the imagination, the eyes, the ears, the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet, not to mention a million more that the psychologists have yet to name, you will do well to embark upon a long poem in which people as unlike yourself as possible talk at the tops of their voices (CE-II 193).

Let us now contextualise the identity-in-disguise mode and evaluate it against the background of the impersonality theory which is considered to be part and parcel of the concept of Modernism. For what the identity-in-disguise mode of writing comes to is, in terms of literary theory, de-explicating or impersonalising the author. Let us note that Woolf provided her own arguments for her substituting historical and quasi-historical figures for 'I'. To a great extent these were shaped by her thinking that literature had little to do with an author's emphasizing his/her 'I', his/her ideas or political priorities. She would choose the position of an artist with a neutralised 'I', that of an observer. In *Flush* there is brought into relief a suspicion that nothing could be more dangerous for art than a writer's wish 'to be somebody'. It is given a playful shape through the poet's and the dog's achieving a satisfactory state of being via the symbolic (and certainly humorous) act of clipping off *Flush's* luxurious 'coat':

It was the coat that Mr. Browning now proposed to sacrifice. He called Flush to him and, 'taking a pair of scissors, clipped him all over into the likeness of a lion'. [...] To be nothing - is that not, after all, the most satisfactory state in the whole world? [...] His spirits rose. [...] So might a clergyman, cased for twenty years in starch and broadcloth, cast his collar into the dustbin and snatch the works of Voltaire from the cupboard. So Flush scampered off clipped all over into the likeness of a lion, but free from fleas. [...] The true philosopher is he who has lost his coat but is free from fleas (F 127-8).

'Fleas' being an intertextual reference to de Goncourts' diaries ⁶ with a metaphorical meaning of the artist's overdeveloped vanity attributed to it, the passage reads as an implied author's statement about the writer's truly rewarding status in the world as 'to be nothing'. However playful and insignificant this 'definition' may seem to be, it does bear the weight of Woolf's long-term speculation about the social aspect of a writer's identity. What I think is important to stress is the fact that Woolf is distinguished from a typical modernist writer by her focusing as much on the socio-cultural implications of depersonalising a writer's identity as on the formal technique of de-explicating the author in the narrative.

This observation makes us turn to Henry James's and Ford's experiments with point of view in the novel, so as to contextualise Woolf's identity-in-disguise mode of writing. From the formal perspective Woolf's identity technique may be taken for just another example of Henry James's strategy as described in the Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*: "'Place the centre of the subject in the young woman's own consciousness', I said to myself, 'and you get as interesting and beautiful a difficulty as you could wish'". ⁷ Technically it is a well-known approach, with the only difference in whether it is applied to an imaginary generalised type or a fantastic being, or to a fake quasi-historical personality. But what Woolf's writing mode does differ in from Henry James's manner is the implicit view of the writer as an outsider, or 'the Other' in relation to the order of things. We get glimpses of Woolf's specific understanding of the writer's identity both in her early and later work. A remarkable instance of her defining her identity as a wanderer, a gipsy, occurs in her early sketch "Wilton Fair":

I never see a gipsy cart without longing to be inside it. A house that is rooted to no one spot but can travel as quickly as you can change your mind, & is complete in itself is surely the most desirable of houses. Our modern house with its cumbersome walls & its foundations planted deep in the ground is

nothing better than a prison; [...] & more & more prison like does it become the longer we live there & wear fetters of association & sentiment, painful to wear - still more painful to break (APA 208).

Becoming 'one' with the world, blending 'one's room' of creativity with the world at large means to achieve desirable anonymity, which seems to be Woolf's view of the writer's identity in her essay "I am Christina Rossetti" (1930):

...so great the miracle of poetry, that some of the poems you wrote in your little back room will be found adhering in perfect symmetry... when Torrington Square is a reef of coral perhaps and the fishes shoot in and out where your bedroom window used to be; or perhaps the forest will have reclaimed those pavements and the wombat and the ratel will be shuffling on soft, uncertain feet among the green undergrowth that will then tangle the area railings (CR2 244).

What is put here in semi-mystical, semi-playful terms as a future posthumous life of a poet's work in the world is in fact a re-statement of Woolf's identity idiom of the writer as anonymous and all-embracing presence. To sweep the cobwebs off this mythologised image we need go back to the Ms version of *A Room of One's Own*, where Woolf identifies a writer with an anonymous medieval pedlar walking from place to place singing ballads (WF 3). This instance is absent from the final text. Yet the very fact of its being omitted by Woolf, as well as her early sketch with the gipsy image and the recurrence of the latter in *The Waves* (TW 237), show the writer's identity as a medieval ballad-singer who comes and goes as being meaningful to Woolf. What we need now is to contextualise it in cultural terms. That Woolf tended to think of the writer's identity in terms of the past rather than the present, of the writer's enlightening function rather than the artistic function of creating 'pure art'⁸; of the writer's anonymity, as well as of the centralized 'I' in the text as a disadvantage - all these look to be proper modernist features in her early work.

However, these are not the only things that the writer's identity idiom implies. There have cropped up other themes and issues in my study of Woolf's letters and diaries that would be worthwhile to define. As was pointed out by Colin MacCabe, in the modernist text "the lack of a centre becomes the explicit focus of the text", "an authorial and authoritarian 'metalanguage' [in it which] judges and controls all the other discourses in the text" is subverted.⁹ Indeed,

instead of an 'authoritarian' voice, there is a polyphony of selves, as in the work of Woolf.¹⁰ And I intend to go further and beyond the formal aspect, by looking into the possible socio-cultural sources or implications of such defocused narrative. There may be something to Lukács's and post-Lukácsian statements about the modernist writer's view of man as a fragmentary being responsible for the fragmentary mode of writing.¹¹ Proceeding, however, from the assumption that Woolf's early work is marked by the writer's identity taking shape, I propose to consider the defocused narrative as a sign of search for identification beyond and above 'I', as was established then by the previous literary and cultural practice. This search needs to be evaluated, I think, in broader terms than just technical, or as a modernist feature. I take it to be part of the then burgeoning modernity. A certain mistrust of 'I', a suspicion of its being limited and narrow, which is always there in the work of Woolf, signals the underlying significance of 'the Other'.

In early Woolf's work 'the Other', hinted at by various masks her narrators put on, resembles 'otherness' as a socially oppressed state (of both men and women), constituting, therefore, part of her guilty subconscious.¹² 'Otherness' links Woolf with the broad issue of modernity. Accordingly, with Woolf, 'voice' is closer to social-cultural and behaviour practices. Of special note is the fact that the writer deals with the reader's stereotypes. Woolf does so by evoking a cultural stereotype and making the reader question it while questioning something else, for instance, the view of literary history.

To sum up *en passage*, the combination of modernist and modernity features, as revealed by the study of the identity aspect in Woolf's work, makes the investigation of the aspect of writing an important point. It was writing that she questioned in certain specific ways. I assume that the study of her questioning writing will also bring up, alongside some well-known and established modernist characteristics, a different and broader perspective.

I now propose to consider some of the discourse and social-cultural practices of writing in Woolf's work. I intend to look closely at the language aspect of the writer's work, which has been given little attention if any from this particular point of view. To consider the ways in which language was questioned by Woolf would mean our getting a clearer view of the writing mode taking shape in her work. The study here may be rewarding in its focusing on the letter and diary discourses which are, at least partly, unchecked, and therefore preserve a writer's personal, cultural and social accents, rather than on a finished piece of writing which is normally characterized by a high degree of self-consciousness and control.

Woolf's early diary-writing strikes one with a certain social stiffness. It sounds socially bound, upper-middle class and now out-of-date. Note her using 'methinks' or 'perchance': "The God babies methinks are amusing themselves" (APA 137); "monotony, so methinks, dwells in these plains" (Ibid.138); "I must blurt out crude ecstasies upon sky & field; which may perchance retain for my eyes a little of their majesty in my awkward words" (Ibid.). The monotony (to borrow Woolf's word) of one social voice which she soon outgrew contrasts vividly with the relish she found in verbal exuberance and the very process of writing. In her diaries Woolf remarks that she loves all the attributes of writing, pen and paper included. She is distressed when something interferes with the fluency of her writing:

My pen, I must add, is rather unwell at present, & the aspect of this book distresses me. I cannot write prettily when my pen scratches & all joy in the art is lost to me. I love writing for the sake of writing, but when my pen is enfeebled it becomes a task & bother to me. The domestic Mary "a nice girl, but very empty Miss" investigated the mechanics of my pen before we came away, & something of its divinity has fled since (APA 139).

Writing is joy, drive; it gives you a sense of freedom, being marked with some exceptional power ('something of its [pen's] divinity'). Also, there is awareness of the inexhaustibility of a writer's occupation, of responsibility and a devoted wish to do better: "So ended a somewhat grim day of pleasure. This has taken me considerably longer to write than the whole day itself: such a relation of details is extraordinarily difficult, dull & unprofitable to read. However there is no end to writing, & each time I hope that I may make better stuff of it" (Ibid. 149-50).

The new sensibility about writing which I think is outlined in Woolf's early diaries can be found in her focusing on her own writing techniques as well as in her critical evaluations of other writers' styles. In those early diaries she would often leave traces of writing while going back in thought or saying she has forgotten what she was writing about. A parenthesis like the following one in the entry of 1903 is quite common with Woolf: "I am sorry that I began to write this page - I forget now where it was to lead me, or why I chose this circuitous path" (APA 177). This turn reminds us of Woolf's future moves of this kind in *A Room of One's Own*.¹³ She obviously tries to get her thoughts and feelings on paper unchecked as they come and go. The critic in her would register some notes in passing, but the whole process is set on the flow or the drive of writing:

the diary of some ancient Bishop written in flowing ancient English that harmonised with this melancholy melodious monotony (what an awful sentence!) of bank & stream. Activity of mind, I think, is the only thing that keeps one's life going, unless one has a larger emotional activity of some other kind (APA 138).

The approach to writing suggested here and in the above-quoted passages runs parallel to the modernist sensibility of setting 'I' free on paper rather than of organizing the impressions into a clear-cut and coherent artistic whole. (With the obvious reservation that I base myself on Woolf's diary which necessarily presupposes a certain formlessness). Her critical comments on Henry James's *Roderick Hudson* (1876), which she was reading then, also point at her sense of the limitations of the Jamesian style of writing:

That is a book which reminds me of an infinitely fine pencil drawing; it lacks colour, it lacks outline, but it is full of exquisite drawing, as an artist would say - & the slightest stroke, you see, has its meaning. You don't get any of that spontaneous & unreflecting pleasure out of it that you do out of the great books, [...] but you get a marvellous amount of reasoned enjoyment. It is the enjoyment of the intellectual palate tickled by something fine & rare - you need be a little of an epicure to see how very fine & rare it is. [...] But this isn't an altogether satisfactory style of art (APA 205).

She is no less critical of Hardy's writing in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), though on grounds different from her remarks about Henry James's novel. She is suspicious of the *Tendenz* in Hardy's novel. To her thinking it destroys the novel as such: "the writer is so sternly determined that we shall see the brutality of certain social conventions that he tends to spoil his novel as a novel" (APA 206). She seems to have in mind a certain balance which there should be in a literary work. Something of it is hinted at in Woolf's evaluation of Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson* (1775): "Boswell somehow manages to cut out a whole chunk of the earth & air & stick it all alive under a glass case for us to come & see" (APA 206).

Alongside its obvious modernist slant, Woolf's sensibility about writing, even at this early stage, has other implications as well. These may be defined as the beginnings of the discourse of modernity. Her critical attitude to the genre of the maxim points at a sensibility which sets out to express itself via a profound and rich experience shaped as an illuminatory and exuberant discourse:

I foresee that one day I shall write a book of maxims - like a French-woman. I often think of things that sound to me remarkably like what in English we call 'Thoughts'. But mine have this drawback - they are very obvious - a little false - & after all where will one sentence lead you? All the thoughts, maxims, &c. &c. &c. which we can see so laboriously printed & translated from one language to another as though no one literature could be selfish enough to keep these treasures for itself - all, I say, have only one moment of legitimate life. I can imagine that they sound well at a dinner table - go off with an enlivening pop, as of dexterous little crackers. But they won't blow up anything or do much in the way of illumination (APA 177).

However, it is her thinking that writing is good when it achieves a 'compass of voices' that is most remarkable. The notion of 'voice' is used in her early diaries as a positive characteristic. Though in the example I quote it is applied to the wind, it has, I think, a wider application:

It is easier to write tonight than to sleep. A wind which has been playing about all day, suddenly goes to work in dead earnest. It is battering at my windows pressing them as tight against the frame as possible, & then swerving aside so that the pane released from pressure rattles loose. The wind has a *wonderful compass of voices* (APA 205; my italics).

The stress laid by Woolf on the diversity of voices raises the issue of her increasing awareness of the social-cultural aspect of writing. The exuberance of discourse Woolf sought (note her 'wonderful compass of voices'), which would reflect the diversity and spontaneity of experience, points at a new sensibility she was aiming at. That the issue of a new sensibility about writing was an open and challenging one with her, is evident in the point of tension mentioned above; with Woolf, it is her focus on developing the social-cultural discourse of modernity via writing that is important to examine. What matters now is to expand on these issues by providing the details, examples, so as to reveal further implications of her writing as related to identity. Let us turn to Woolf's early novels.

Here I will limit myself by focusing on the writing technique as revealed in *Night and Day* (1918). In particular, I focus on the issue of a new sensibility about writing which, in Woolf's case, implied a 'compass of voices', as well as critical awareness of the work of Henry James and Hardy as limited in terms in experience or too tendency-bound. The aim of my study is to justify my assumption that Woolf came to develop the social-cultural discourse of modernity by writing open-ended novels based on the de-centralised 'I'.

Basing myself on the study of identity in Woolf's early diaries and her essays pursued above, I assume that the new sensibility in Woolf's writing took shape along with the search for a broad life experience combined with her intention to get 'a compass of voices' into her discourse. The plurality and interplay of selves, i.e. the 'I', 'you', 'we', 'one', third-person positions, were seen as a possible way of gaining in width of social observation and thereby overcoming a certain social stiffness in her early discourse. The search for a flexible novel form was undertaken as a means to go beyond the limitations of the novels created by the writers of the older generation.

Some of these crucial aspects of Woolf's new sensibility in writing are well expressed in her early essay, "Sterne" (1909):

The fascination of novel writing lies in its freedom; the dull parts can be skipped, and the excitements intensified; but above all the character can be placed artistically, set, that is, in fitting surroundings and composed so as to give whatever impression you choose. [...] Again, a real life is wonderfully prolific; it passes through such strange places and draws along with it a train of adventure that no novelist can better them, if only he can deal with them as with his own inventions (GR 168).

Here is stated Woolf's early intention to make her discourse as open to life-experience as possible (to get 'a compass of voices'), simultaneously giving it the modern artistic edge, or shape. Let us see whether or how it was realised in her writing practice.

In *Night and Day* (1918) modern culture comes broadly into the novel with the accurate descriptions of the life-style of the young in the 1910s. For instance, the description of the reading of the paper at Mary Datchet's place (ND 46,49) has the same cultural background as Woolf's autobiographical sketch "Old Bloomsbury" (1921/22?) (MB 159-79) or as some old photos, for example, the photo of Katherine Cox in 1911 (L-II ill). There is a view that the modernism of *Night and Day* consists in 'the search for order' which is present there. According to Jane Marcus, it "impelled Eliot and Joyce to shape their feelings of despair in ancient mythological structures" and "was the same impulse which drove Virginia Woolf to shape *Night and Day* around the imitation, quest, and journey myths of *The Magic Flute*".¹⁴ A formal approach like this may certainly help discover interesting intertextual parallels between this novel and the literature of the past (Ibid. 99). But it also may dim and ultimately ignore the modern agenda which is explicit in this novel. The discourse of modernity is perhaps best to be looked for not in Woolf's direct response to the war, of

which there is none (a fact that disturbed her contemporaries, though the writer's silence on a certain subject may sometimes be as eloquent as his or her straightforward discussion of it), but in the further shaping of modern sensibility out of the texture of social and family relationships.

The stress here laid on the plurality of approaches is made more pronounced and pointed than anywhere before in Woolf's writing. It is there in the emphasis placed on the analysis of one's emotions as a positive value, and a way out of conventional dramas and false relations, that reminds the reader of G. E. Moore's ethics which provided, as is known, one of the central points in the Bloomsbury outlook.¹⁵ For instance, in the following dialogue between Katherine and Rodney:

'Sit beside me. Let's consider sensibly —'

'Your sense has been our undoing —' he groaned.

'I accept the responsibility.' ...

'Yes, we should both be free. ...' he could not deny that a divine relief possessed him, and that the future, instead of wearing a lead-coloured mask, now blossomed with a thousand varied gaieties and excitements (ND 302-3).

The reasonable attitude of the protagonists to the conventions and to people's relations and feelings sounds very Moore-like, but, in historical retrospect, it has broader implications than this. Open talk about one's feelings, as in the dialogue between Katharine and William (ND 270), sorting out one's own and others' emotions rather than subjecting them to strictures on the basis of traditions, rules, and the experience of the past, seem to have become since then a sign of modernity.

Another modern idea of the past and its status in a young generation's life is played out in the novel in several ways. One is the past as claiming the present, which is treated with gentle irony here:

Above her [Katharine's] nursery fireplace hung a photograph of her grandfather's tomb in Poet's Corner, and she was told in one of those moments of grown-up confidence which are so tremendously impressive to the child's mind, that he was buried there because he was a 'good and great man' (ND 34).

Katharine's 'experimenting in living' when 'the great age [of her ancestors] was dead' is part of the position of the generation of the moderns in relation to the Victorian past:

Perhaps it is a little depressing to inherit not lands but an example of intellectual and spiritual virtue; perhaps the conclusiveness of a great ancestor is a little discouraging to those who run the risk of comparison with him. It seems as if, having flowered so splendidly, nothing now remained possible but a steady growth of good, green stalk and leaf. For these reasons, and for others, Katharine had her moments of despondency. The glorious past, in which men and women grew to unexampled size, intruded too much upon the present, and dwarfed it too consistently, to be altogether encouraging to one forced to make her experiment in living when the great age was dead (ND 35).

Throughout the novel there goes on a critical discussion of Victorian values and the nineteenth century as a whole.¹⁶ The whole issue of the Victorian past is made complicated, and the way out offered in the novel is rather via some surreptitious escape, which looks comic:

It was like tearing through a maze of diamond-glittering spiders' webs to say good-bye and escape, for at each movement Mrs Hilbery remembered something further about the villanies of picture-framers or the delights of poetry, and at one time it seemed to the young man that he would be hypnotized into doing what she pretended to want him to do, for he could not suppose that she attached any value whatever to his presence (ND 19).

One of the aspects of the novel adding to its comic tone is the description of identity as split into mechanical reactions to social conventions, rules, routine duties, etc., and spontaneous intimate responses which have very little or nothing to do with conventionalism. What makes this division comic is the mathematical, absolutely unromantic precision it is marked with, and the unmistakably ironic voice of the implied author:

If Denham could have seen how visibly books of algebraic symbols, pages all speckled with dots and dashes and twisted bars, came before her eyes as they trod the Embankment, his secret joy in her attention might have been dispersed. She went on, saying, 'Yes, I see. ...but how would that help you?... Your brother has passed his examination?' so sensibly, that he had constantly to keep his brain in check; and all the time she was in fancy looking up through a telescope at white shadow-cleft disks which were other worlds, until she felt herself possessed of two bodies, one walking by the river with Denham, the other concentrated to a silver globe aloft in the fine blue space above the scum of vapours that was covering the visible world (ND 278-9).

The intention to achieve a 'compass of voices' works in the novel in

several ways. One is by bringing together the two socially different figures of Katharine Hilbery, who belongs to the middle-class intellectual and cultural elite, and Ralph Denham, a young Jew, a journalist who writes on legal matters. Also, it is marked by discourses which are made to sound socially different. Katharine's is marked with stiff upper-middle-class accents as in, "I dare say I shouldn't try to write poetry" (ND 15). In contrast to Katharine's, Ralph's discourse is more relaxed both in meaning and in form: "It must be a bore, though, showing your things to visitors", he added reflectively" (ND 14). Or, "I couldn't bear my grandfather to cut me out" (ND 15).

So, the analysis of the strategies Woolf elaborated in *Night and Day* to enhance its 'compass of voices', allows us to see deeper into the means she would use to restructure her writing technique in Jacob's Room.

To sum up, Woolf's strategies at shaping a new sensibility in writing developed along two main lines. One was connected with literary artefacts of the past; the other was a challenging issue of giving voice to those ambitions, which had not been given any definite literary form by the writers of the present or previous generations. Of the artefacts of the past Woolf gave priority to nineteenth-century literature, which can be well seen in the critical irony of Woolf's distinguishing the social conventional 'I' and the individual 'I' in the identity of her contemporaries. The presence of the nineteenth-century tradition (with the traces of it being foregrounded) in her early work makes it predictable that Woolf would be looking for ways of reconsidering or transcending it. As for exploring the new possibilities in writing, it is here that she found herself to be a 'voyager out' in search of 'a wonderful compass of voices'.

NOTES

- ¹ This is interpreted by Michel Foucault as the sign of the author in a text, in his 'What is an Author?' In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ed. with an Introduction by Donald F. Bouchard. Trans. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Oxford: Blackwell, 1977.
- ² Quoted from Lee, Hermione. *Virginia Woolf*, p. 754.
- ³ Cf. "Years passed; insanity overcame him; he exploded in violent outbursts of mad rage. Then by degrees he fell silent. Once they caught him murmuring. 'I am what I am', they heard him say" (CR2 77).
- ⁴ Woolf, Virginia. *The Essays*, Vol. 2, 40-2.
- ⁵ See Sutherland (ed.), 334.
- ⁶ See Goncourt, Edmond et Jules de, 243.
- ⁷ Quoted from Peter Faulkner's 'Introduction' to Peter Faulkner (ed.) *A Modernist Reader*, 16.
- ⁸ Cf. Jürgen Habermas's view which associates 'modernist impulse' 'with the bourgeois Enlightenment and with the latter's still universalizing and Utopian spirit'. See his 'Modernity - An Incomplete Project?', in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic*, Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983, 3-15. The essay was first published in *New German Critique*, 22 (Winter 1981), 3-14, under the different title 'Modernity versus Postmodernity' (see ref. in *Modern Criticism and Theory*. Ed. by David Lodge. London and New York: Longman, 1988, 383).
- ⁹ MacCabe, Colin. 'Language, Linguistics and the Study of Literature' (1979). Quoted from *Modern Criticism and Theory* 436, 431.
- ¹⁰ Cf. 'In Woolf's fiction, her fluctuating narrative persona, her deliberate experiments with literary form, her subversion of conventional reading expectations and the changing interrogative strategies she developed throughout her work are all invariably provocative'. Quoted from Flora, Luísa Maria. "'So Men Said': Virginia Woolf and a History of Women's Creativity", in *Feminine Identities*. Ed. by Luísa Maria Flora, Teresa F. A. Alves and Teresa Cid. Cadernos de Anglistica-5. University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies, 57.
- ¹¹ Cf. 'Man is reduced to a sequence of unrelated experiential fragments; he is as inexplicable to others as to himself'. From G. Lukács's 'The Ideology of Modernism'. Quoted from *The Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. David Lodge. *A Reader* (1972). London and New York: Longman, 1991, 480.
- ¹² For the given interpretation of 'the Other', see Val Cunningham's *In the Reading Gaol* (350). The issue of 'the Other' as materially or socially or colonially oppressed is present in Woolf's writing. Here it is worthwhile to refer to her early essay

'On a Faithful Friend' (1905) (BP 10-3); her diary entry of 6 January 1918 (D-I 100-1); *A Room of One's Own* (1929); *Between the Acts* (1940), etc. Of the extra-literary sources it is of use to refer to Leonard Woolf's experience as a colonial officer in Ceylon of which she certainly knew and whose highly critical attitude to colonialism she shared.

- ¹³ Cf. 'For this reason - that my memory failed me - the argument flagged for want of material'; 'For truth ... those dots mark the spot where, in search of truth, I missed the turning up to Fernham' (AROO 22-3).
- ¹⁴ Marcus, Jane. 'Enchanted Organs, Magic Bells: *Night and Day* as Comic Opera'. In *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity. A Collection of Essays*. Ed., with an Introduction by Ralph Freedman. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980, 97.
- ¹⁵ Without going into the intricacy of the issue of the relationship between G. E. Moore's views and Virginia Woolf's works, which has been studied by J. K. Johnstone in *The Bloomsbury Group*. New York: Noonday, 1954, 20-45; Quentin Bell in *Virginia Woolf*, vol.1, 139; S. P. Rosenbaum in 'The Philosophical Realism of Virginia Woolf', in *English Literature and British Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971, 316-356; Ralph Freedman in his *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1963, 197-200; and 'The Form of Fact and Fiction: *Jacob's Room* as Paradigm' in *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity*, 136-7 (to which I owe this reference), I would like to stress the link between Woolf's *Night and Day* and Moore's concept of 'a refutation of idealism' (1903) which has so far been overlooked by Woolf's scholars.
- ¹⁶ "'No, we haven't any great men' Denham replied. 'I'm very glad that we haven't. I hate great men. The worship of greatness in the nineteenth century seems to me to explain the worthlessness of that generation'" (ND 17).

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VIRGINIA WOOLF – MOMENTS OF BEING

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Put before the labyrinth and proliferation of critical perspectives, studies and readings on Virginia Woolf, entangled in articulations of teleologies and epistemologies, the critic faces a question: from where should she/he start writing, on what and from which critical perspective? These were the circumstances that dictated my choice of writing on "A Sketch of the Past", published in *Moments of Being – A Collection of Autobiographical Writing*, (1976, 1985) and of analysing the narrative strategies used by the author to tell herself, to construct her identity and power, giving voice and authority to herself as a discursive formation.

In 1929, in *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf explained the non-existence of authoritative female figures, metaphorically represented by Shakespeare's sister: when wondering about the reasons why women had not written as much as men, her conclusion was that historically women had been deprived of education, money, status and a room of their own in which to write. Were women given the intellectual and material conditions - "[i]f we have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room [...] If we face the fact that there is no arm to cling to" (AROO 148-149) -, then Shakespeare's sister would be born.

The repression of the feminine discourse condemned it to silence and Shakespeare's neglected sister was only born when women were given the power of the word and of representation, when women projected in history an identity which does not fit into the androcentric paradigm of inflexible egos; she was born when women revealed their identity by acknowledging the presence of the other, an identity that is both unique and relational – a flexible ego in a world characterized by relationships.

While the masculine tradition of autobiographical writing has taken as a premise the capacity of the writer to create a mirror effect and has made use of a stable and fixed perspective to constitute the self as the unifying element

of time, space and identity, showing a stable and autonomous self as a hero, the self, created in a feminine text, is not a teleological entity, nor an isolated being, but rather a self constructed on the consciousness of the meaning of the cultural category - to be a woman.

The feminine autobiography writes another story, as it has helped women to be reborn in the act of writing and of reconstructing several discourses - of representation and of ideology - in which subjectivity has been formed. The autobiographical self is no longer a singular entity but a net of multiple and heterogeneous differences within which the self is inscribed (cf. Gilmore), changing the monocultural imperatives of the being.

In her *Diary* (18 Nov. 1940) Virginia Woolf writes that "male autobiographies are little boy's sand castles: I am the sea that demolishes those castles". Assuming her role as an agent of change, powerful enough to write a project of becoming (cf. Hall), Woolf takes for herself the cultural agency as the product of diagrams of mobility and placement which map the possibilities of where and how certain vectors of influence can stop and be replaced.

Writing and thinking within a male-oriented and male-defined tradition, Virginia Woolf refuses the formal paradigms, "to make an orderly and expressed work of art, where one thing follows another and all are swept into a whole" (MB 75). She shapes events into a story with an end, using a strategy which brings a closure on time, on knowledge and on the self (cf. Robbins).

Positioning myself in a critical agenda which reads autobiography not as life itself, but rather as a text of life, I consider that we can read "A Sketch of the Past" as a geography of the possible (cf. Probyn 1993), as a map of possibilities of the self, where Virginia Woolf (subject and object of the autobiography) and the reader move and acknowledge conditions of possibility or plausibility (cf. Sinfield) for an individual and social existence. To do this we have also to bear in mind some questions concerning representation and memory, as it is by means of these that experiences are reshaped and the self recreated in a new landscape.

In the process of rewriting the self we tell a story, by definition not a recounting of experience as it was, but a fiction of the self, a selective and imaginative construction of who we have been and who we are; an autobiography is a story we weave out of the tangled threads we believe to be responsible for the texture of our lives (cf. Freeman).

To understand the autobiographical writings of Virginia Woolf as a geography of the possible is to understand it as the consciousness of the author in choosing and in selecting the ways of what should be represented in

the autobiographical text and how to do it, leaving to the reader the task of knowing and discovering the identity who knows itself and who materializes itself through discourse; of discovering the identity who chooses strategies, practices and technologies to represent itself as a cultural construction of power, through discursive alliances and in a network of voices and positions.

Writing autobiographically is an act of interpretation, where the lived experience is shaped, constrained and transformed by representation, to which the self owes its existence, and in which it evolves and finds expression. This representation implies the positions from where one writes or speaks (cf. Hall), which, in turn, imply the enunciative positions that constitute the self as a new kind of subject. As Gilmore argues, the autobiographical identity and agency are not identical to the real identity and agency; the former are representations of the latter, or better their construction. Between the self-narrator and the self-narrated there is a temporal and spatial distance which determines the enunciative position. We write and we speak from a particular time and place, within a specific history and a culture: what we say is always contextualized and positioned.

The position we occupy in a social space, the practices and the identities are not separated categories in a deterministic or hierarchical relationship; they mutually inform each other, creating a dense and detailed texture of narratives, of relationships and of experiences. The self is a set of techniques and practices based on daily life (cf. Probyn 1993). But it is not only the writers who are influenced by the social world. The readers, by bringing their horizons of expectation to their reading, also construct a narrative, since the different horizons of expectation, the different readings and different interpretations of each reader are determined by already constituted social differences, which construct the experiential context in which the readers appropriate the text.

Either representing a public realm or a private, more intimate one, autobiography draws a terrain where both authors and readers move and where they recognize conditions of plausibility for the representation of their experiences. Representing the self in a filigree of ontological, epistemological and organizational principles of identity, "A Sketch of the Past" can be read as a geography of the possible where the self is represented by means of several technologies of power and several trajectories, establishing a dynamic relationship between author, text and reader.

As a form which invents, in its fictional representation, an identity which only exists in the common and shared space of the narrative, the "Sketch" is the product of Woolf's consciousness and capacity to invest in affective

elements which, in turn, allow the reader to feel that space as a knowable space of relations, drawing maps of meaning. By choosing and selecting the moments and the facts from where she creates, Virginia Woolf is not only representing her own experience, she is also bringing to the fictional space of communication what she wishes and wants to be known, revealing the past by the forms she chooses, stressing the fact that "these separate moments of being were however embedded in many moments of non-being" (MB 70), of which she doesn't speak.

The postulation of a meaning to a past event dictates the choice of the facts which she wants to retain and the details which she wants to preserve or forget, according to a preconceived intelligibility and leads her to know that

in certain favourable moods, memories - what one has forgotten - come to the top. Now if it is so, is it not possible - I often wonder - that things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds; are in fact still in existence? And if so, will it not be possible, in time, that some device will be invented by which we can tap them? I see it - the past - as an avenue lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions (MB 67).

This choice determines the type of story she wants to tell, in it the faults, the lapses and the deformations of memory take place. These faults, in spite of not being the product of a physical cause or of mere hazard, are the result of a conscious choice of the author who remembers and who wants to gain recognition of a revised and corrected version of the past. As a matter of fact, the author participates in that fictional space of communication before the reader, as what the former gives to the latter is her interpretation, as an active agent in the choices of what is fictionally created. Virginia Woolf, aware of this narrative technique, questions herself: "Why have I forgotten so many things that must have been, one would have thought, more memorable than what I do remember?" (MB 70).

In "A Sketch", the obstacles to a full reconstruction of the past turn visible and inevitable that there is the creation of a new past, similar to it but also different from it. In spite of all the efforts at truthfulness, the truth the text produces is always necessarily revisited, corrected and revised in its telling, a mixture of past and present, a process of self-invention. In this reconstruction of the past, memory is a fundamental tool, a technology of power (cf. Foucault 1988), as it selects the images which the subject wants to transmit according to the place and the time of the enunciation. Fully aware of

this power Woolf, from the standpoint of the present, writes "some of my first memories. But of course as an account of my life they are misleading, because the things one does not remember are as important; perhaps they are more important" (MB 69). Past has no other existence besides the representation not of facts withdrawn from memory, but the representation by the words based on the residual images of memory, as they are the only appropriate means of communication - the verbal configuration of reminiscences that "leave out the person to whom things happened. The reason is that it is so difficult to describe any human being" (MB 65).

To tell a life is to represent what no longer exists, it is a means to deal with the irrecoverability of the past (cf. Eakin), it is a representation which extends itself in time, like a succession of signs. Memories and the different voices by which Woolf enunciates herself allow her to convince the reader of the existence of another level of abstraction, the one of her individual being. This ontological position is articulated with an epistemological project, to the extent that, while a dimension of the being is proposed, it is based on a historical context. Under the disguise of showing herself as she was, Woolf exerts the right to recover the possession of her existence then and now.

Autobiography is never the final and fixed image of a life, because "it is so difficult to give any account of the person to whom things happen. The person is evidently immensely complicated" (MB 69). The image of the self is always constructed, since memories look for an essence beyond existence, and, by doing it, create that essence. To represent a life only reveals an image of that same life, an image which is distant and incomplete, distorted by the fact that the subject who remembers is not the same who as a child, as an adolescent or even as a young adult lived the past, showing thus that change is the operative metaphor in the autobiographical discourse (cf. Barros).

The image of childhood and adolescence to which the reader has access in "A Sketch" is but the result of an act of imagination of those phases of life. Memory produces a narrative subjectivity, working upon consciousness, dissolving it and fragmenting it, diluting the frontiers between past and present.

The passage, in memory, of the effective experience to consciousness accomplishes a kind of repetition of that same experience and helps change its meaning. The remembered past loses "its flesh and bone" (Gusdorf), but gains a new and more intimate relation with individual life which, after having been dispersed, can be discovered and reorganized in a non temporal way. The inclusion of all the memories and meanings in the autobiographical text, with the aim of making sense of the structure of the past, is nothing else than the

construction of a fiction, an imaginative, selective and literary construction of who she has been and of who she is at the moment of writing.

Paradigmatically autobiographical writing implies a certain distance of the self in relation to her/his other self, in order to reconstitute it as a unity and as an identity throughout time. The process of self-comprehension is reminiscent, in the sense that it gathers together all the dimensions of the self, the dimensions which had been until the moment of writing, unarticulated, dispersed, scattered or lost. This reminiscence is, in "A Sketch" a critical and active process which combines emotions and moments of self-reflection and which gives access to omitted experiences, allowing memory to see the events of the past in a new way, in a new landscape. The order given to the events is not inherent in the events themselves, but rather an option of the author and a reflection upon herself.

Manipulating the act of writing and the act of remembering, in order to attain her main goal: to write about her first memory - her mother's lap - and about her obsession - her mother, "the whole thing" (MB .83), Virginia Woolf inverts the order of the events:

Perhaps we were going to St. Ives; more probably, for from the light it must have been evening, we were coming back to London. But it is more convenient artistically to suppose that we were going to St. Ives, for that will lead to my other memory, which also seems to be my first memory, and in fact it is the most important of all my memories (MB 64).

"A Sketch of the Past" articulates a moment in Virginia Woolf's life and is inserted in a collection of memoirs, constituting each of them fragments of the author's life, written for different audiences, at different times, where Woolf expresses her view of the self in general and of herself in particular. These sketches work as a place of identification, a place that is alternative to the fiction; she has a formal consciousness of the act of writing, putting an emphasis in the self-reflexivity of the writing and of the narrated self. While writing about herself, Woolf creates a story informed by a dynamics of self-consciousness (cf. Anderson). This makes her write that "among the innumerable things left out in my sketch I have left out the most important - those instincts, affections, passions, attachments - there is no single word for them, for they changed month by month" (MB 79-80). The texts collected in *Moments of Being* come to be a meditation on her own relationships, on her responsibilities and on her art.

Interesting also, is the fact that the selection and possible editing that her husband did, for the publication of *A Writer's Diary*, gave the reader the idea that Virginia Woolf was mostly concerned by her professional, intellectual and literary life, leaving behind all the ontological levels of her existence as a woman and her intense interaction with people in her day-to-day life. Leonard Woolf wanted his wife to be read as someone who was fully inside the literary and professional canon of the elitist intellectual circles of the beginning of the century. But Virginia left us another lesson - the possibility of a double articulation of the knowledge of the self and the care of the self, of the constraints of daily life and of the intellectual circles.

In "A Sketch of the Past" we have a narrative that frames the narrative of the past, in a juxtaposition of the past and of the present selves. By introducing each entry with fragments of her present self Virginia Woolf chooses a strategy which makes the reader aware that her mature consciousness is continually searching and commenting on the past, explaining for herself and for the reader the meanings and the positions which at the time of happening had not been clear and evident for the self who had experienced them. At the moment of writing, a moment which has already determined the beginning and the end of the story, as well as the mode how the self is represented and has developed throughout the times, Virginia Woolf finds the strategy to represent memories of the past, and knows that to represent a past experience means to reflect on it in the present: "I write the date, because I think that I have discovered a possible form for these notes. That is, to make them include the present - at least enough of the present to serve as platform to stand upon" (MB 75).

It is from the critical position of the present, an adult, mature and widely recognised as a literary figure, that she looks at the past, using, as she says, her present experiences as a platform, as a filter to look back; it is only in the present that she can represent the lived experiences and conceive the past and the future, in a temporal dynamics (cf. Pickering). We are before a self who is filtering past experiences through a succession of present selves, in a process of rewriting the self. Through a backward and forward movement, the past and the experience structure and restructure themselves mutually (cf. Pickering) allowing the reader to understand the fictional strategies of Virginia Woolf in her emphasis on the changes and continuities of an individual identity, putting the stress on what Luisa Flora (2002: 57) has called "the fluid contradictory method Virginia Woolf developed".

Thus, "A Sketch of the Past", mapping possibilities of the self, figures a possible representation, a moment of being in a geography of the possible

- in a landscape of being - where "this past is much affected by the present moment. What I write today I should not write in a year's time" (MB 75). The author knows that the process of recounting an experience, of rewriting the self is a process that "leave[s] out the person to whom things happened" (MB 65). Questioning, "Who was I then?" (MB 65) Woolf claims that "[i]t would be interesting to make the two people, I now; I then, come out in contrast" (MB 75). In the act of remembering the past in the present, she imagines the existence of another person, of another world, none of which real and under no circumstance having a possibility of existing in the present. The horizontal axis of the past is crossed by the vertical axis of the present, the one that contains in itself the immediate and the real (cf. Gilmore).

For Virginia Woolf, to write these autobiographical fragments is an act of interpretation, where the lived experience is shaped, constrained and transformed by representation to which the self owes its existence and in which it evolves and finds expression:

Many bright colours; many distinct sounds, some human beings, caricatures; comic; several violent moments of being, always including a circle of the scene which they cut out; and all surrounded by a vast space - that is a rough visual description of childhood. This is how I shape it; and how I see myself as a child (MB 79).

Accepting that the self represented in "A Sketch of the Past" is a fluctuating one, a self that represents itself in several layers of meaning, the text constitutes a discursive arrangement that brings together, in tension, the different lines of meaning of the self and raises a fundamental question: how does Virginia Woolf organize the experience and the knowledge of the self? By means of a process of choice and selection, she creates the coherent knots and the insertion in the real. Woolf is profoundly aware that in all the writing she had done - as critic or as novelist - she had had to find a representative scene, "a means of summing up and making a knot out of innumerable little threads" (MB 142). This acquired capacity and technique is very valuable when writing about herself, since "scene making is my natural way of marking the past" (MB 142).

In "A Sketch of the Past" the process of selection and of scene making culminates in the representation of a few important knots - the most intimate memories of Virginia Woolf: the relationship with her mother, leading the reader to a private, emotive, affectionate realm of existence, and the relationship with her father. The latter takes the reader to the intellectual circles which she

knew from the inside and to the house in Hyde Park, described as the cage, conveying her discomfort in living in such a neighbourhood:

The street below was a cul-de-sac. Our house was near the blank brick wall at the end. Hyde Park Gate, which led nowhere, but made a little sealed loop out of the great high road running from Hammersmith to Piccadilly, was something like a village street. a place which led nowhere" (MB 119).

The memories of her mother are memories of an obsession – "She was the whole thing" (MB 83) - of an omnipresent creator, in the very centre of "that great Cathedral space which was childhood" (MB 81) of the creator of "that crowded merry world which spun so gaily in the centre of my childhood" (MB 84).

Her father was also an obsession to Virginia Woolf; he keeps alive in her memory as the writer, rather than as the father; "I call him a strange character" (MB 107), "a little Victorian early Victorian boy, brought up in the intense narrow, evangelical yet political, highly intellectual yet completely unaesthetic, Stephen family, that had one step in Clapham, the other in Downing Street" (MB 108).

Through his books I can get at the writer father still; but when Nessa and I inherited the rule of the house, I knew nothing of the sociable father, and the writer father was much more exacting and pressing than he is now that I find him only in books; and it was the tyrant father - the exacting, the violent, the histrionic, the demonstrative, the self-centred, the self-pitying, the deaf, the appealing, the alternately loved and hated father - that dominated me then (MB 116).

However, she is able to exert her present consciousness and critical capacity and look back in time, recognizing that, in the moment of writing, she is able to understand and see what she had not been able to see - "the gulf between us, that was cut by our difference in age" (MB 147) - was but the gulf between two ages - the Victorian and the Edwardian -, where the latter wishing to look into the future was still under the power of the former and thus creating a friction and a conflict.

We were not his children; we were his grandchildren. There should have been a generation between us to cushion the contact. [...] Explorers and revolutionists, as we both were by nature, we lived under the sway of a society that was about fifty years too old for us. It was this curious fact that made our struggle so bitter

and so violent. For the society in which we lived was still the Victorian society. Father himself was a typical Victorian. George and Gerald were consenting and approving Victorians. So that we had two quarrels to wage; two fights to fight; one with them individually; and one with them socially. We were living say in 1910; they were living in 1860 (MB 147).

The description of the house is also revealing of Virginia Woolf's strategies in representing herself and the social and historical conditions of her life. Totally Victorian in style, "a complete model of Victorian society" (MB 147), it was a three-storey house, where, as she recalls, her two realms of existence co-existed: downstairs there was pure convention, "The tea table, the very hearth and centre of family life [...]. The tea table rather than the dinner table was the centre of Victorian family life (MB 118); upstairs pure intellect, there "[f]rom ten to one Victorian society did not exert any special pressure upon us" (MB 148); Virginia could dedicate herself to her realm of creativity.

However, as she says "I was thinking; feeling; living; those two lives that the two halves symbolized" (MB 124).

In "A Sketch of the Past" we can find a balance between the meaning to express the experience of the self, in its physical and mental component and the way how that experience is verbalized, given to the others in the contexts of social experience. The epistemological use of experience proves the interrelation of structural determination and the individual relationships; if at an ontological level experience postulates a separate realm of existence – "the immediate experiential self"- (Probyn 1993: 16), at an epistemological level, Virginia Woolf reveals herself in her conditions of possibility and finds alternative enunciative positions in the construction of the self in general and of herself in particular. In an articulation of subject, discourse and history, Woolf constructs a self who has no existence prior to the text and who does not coalesce with its creator.

The several enunciative modalities, the discontinuity of the planes (cf. Foucault 1972) Virginia Woolf uses as daughter, sister, friend and woman of letters, do not refer to a synthesis or to a unifying function, but rather show dispersions, revealing the different states, places and positions that she occupies or is given in the moment of writing.

In tracing maps of identification and belonging (cf. Grossberg), the act of remembering is a political act in the sense that what is recollected and what is obscured is central to the cultural production of knowledge about the past and thus to the terms of Woolf's self-knowledge and authority.

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'HAPPILY I'M *BLOOMSBURY*': VIRGINIA'S BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY'S VIRGINIA

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1905 may be considered as the year of Virginia Woolf's (Stephen at the time) coming of age. Up to then she had voraciously read everything her father's library provided; she had learned Latin and Greek and was familiar with the classics; she had developed an innate gift for literary criticism; and she had nurtured an extraordinary capacity to capture and study the hidden secrets of the human mind. By that time, she had learnt already that she had to subdue her strongest emotions, lest she might collapse again into the depths of mental disorder as she went through after her mother's death in 1895 and, again, very recently, when her father died in February 1904. She was now ripe for putting her talents to good use.

After having consistently felt unworthy and ungifted, she could finally test her capacities, because her terrible judge and model – her father – was no more. While she was being nursed by Violet Dickinson (one of the most prominent feminine figures in her life), her sister and brothers moved from Hyde Park Gate, the sombre house in fashionable Kensington, to the bohemian and socially stigmatized surroundings of Bloomsbury. This had been Vanessa's doing. As Virginia recalls in "Old Bloomsbury":

When I recovered from the illness which was not unnaturally the result of all these emotions and complications [deaths and changes], 22 Hyde Park Gate no longer existed. While I had lain in bed at the Dickinsons' house at Welwyn thinking that the birds were singing Greek choruses and that King Edward was using the foulest possible language among Ozzie [Violet's brother] Dickinson's azaleas, Vanessa had wound up Hyde Park Gate once and for all. She had sold; she had burnt; she had sorted; she had torn up. [...] The four of us were therefore left alone. And Vanessa - looking at a map of London and seeing how far apart they were - had decided that we should leave Kensington and start life afresh in Bloomsbury (MB 161-2).

In fact, Virginia had participated in the tiresome house-hunting program before her "illness", as she euphemistically refers to her "nervous breakdown" or downright "madness" that afflicted her all through that summer. But at that time Bloomsbury did not attract her. On the contrary: the houses seemed "dingy", "Lord how dreary!"; the district unattractive, "so far away, and so cold and gloomy" (L-I 119, 31 December 1903). It was only after Vanessa's magic wand had transformed 46 Gordon Square into a cosy home, full of light and air, an appropriate shrine for young and promising artists, that her sister surrendered to its charms and possibilities and could earnestly feel that Bloomsbury was more interesting than Kensington. There she came to experience a never before felt sentiment of freedom and creation. Particularly decisive to the future writer's build-up was surely this blessed "untutored" eight year period (with no judge or model), from her father's death to her marriage in 1912. Free and unconstrained as she had never been, Virginia Stephen experienced - at long last - the euphoric sensation of being a self-responsible, independent, determined adult, capable of acting as she wished, writing and experimenting with writing, conquering for herself a position in the intellectual world.

Her diary for 1905 lets us see how fruitful a month January was: on the 6th she wrote: "I am to start a girls club at Morley, & talk about books & c." (APA 217); on the 9th she " [b]egan, being Monday, work on the note for Fred" (APA 219), this being a biographical note on her father, which Frederic Maitland asked her to contribute for the biography he was writing; on the 10th she received her first wages for the articles contributed to *The Guardian*: "Found this morning on my plate my first instalment of wages - £2.7.6." (APA 219); and the month closed with an entry stating "Wrote all the morning at a paper". This would become "Street Music" and be accepted for publication in the *National Review* (APA 229-30 & n). To culminate this shower of achievements, Virginia started to contribute reviews and essays to the *Times Literary Supplement*, a relationship she would maintain all her life. On 17 January she had met Bruce Richmond of the *Times* at a friend's dinner party, and on 8 February the same friend, Mrs. Cums, invited her for tea, there to meet again Mr. Richmond, who, in Woolf's words, "very soon came to business". "Then he asked if 'we', The Times, that is, might send on books for review also - So I said yes - & thus my work gets established, & I suppose I shall soon have as much as I can do, which is certainly satisfactory" (APA 234). It is, indeed, highly satisfactory and extraordinary, that a girl (especially being *a girl*) of no experience, became, all of a sudden, introduced and appreciated in the world of literary writing.

And in March she can be said to enter a new world and a new life:

she had finally the opportunity to experience the savour and explore the potentialities of a social literary coterie of heterogeneously gifted young people, male and female. Something unthinkable according to Kensington rules of *bienséance*. Thoby, Virginia's elder brother, had asked his friends – mostly from his Cambridge days and from the *Midnight Society*¹ they had formed back in 1900 – to call on them informally on Thursday evenings to discuss literature and art. His sisters would attend the meetings, and "cocoa and biscuits were 'on the house'" (Dunn 96). On 16 March Virginia could joyously record in her journal: "The first of our Thursday Evenings!" (APA 253).² She specifies that two only visitors were present, the "sphinx-like civil servant" (Dunn 98) Saxon Sydney-Turner and the Stephens' half brother Gerald Duckworth; but that small seed of a gathering would soon sprout: only a week later, Virginia tells us, "nine people came to our evening and stayed till one" (APA 255). Within two months, most of the young men had become regular visitors (including Clive Bell and Desmond MacCarthy), and the two sisters had gladly joined that "motley, shabby crew of Thoby's friends, to whom social etiquette was an unnecessary encumbrance" (Dunn 95). Besides, they soon felt themselves and were seen by the group as the very heart and life of the meetings.

Gradually, Thoby's modest project would develop into the most informally revolutionary group, that changed the mentalities of the time and has not ceased to attract devotees and detractors throughout the hundred years elapsed to the present, with prospects of increasing interest in the times to come. Being innovators who contested the *status quo* of their society's conventions, particularly the Victorian scale of values, the members of the group could only expect hostility and incomprehension from their social equals and even from the intellectual milieu of their time. They faced this situation sticking to one another and, in their first phase, to G.E. Moore's philosophy summarized in *Principia Ethica*, particularly where it states that "personal affections and aesthetic enjoyments include all the greatest, and *by far* the greatest goods we can imagine", forming "the rational ultimate end of human action and the sole criterion of social progress".³ These Moore disciples also extracted from his doctrine a possibility of justification for homosexual relations. However, not all the members of the set or even of the former Cambridge Apostles were homosexual, and this disparity of interpretation of the Master's words made that "being a disciple of Moore meant very different things to the different people who became part of Bloomsbury" (Spater & Parsons 33). In general, Moore's ideas instilled in the company of friends a sense of self-contentment and self-sufficiency which might be felt by outsiders as priggish and snobby, as

vain highbrow manifestation. These characteristics Woolf acknowledged and discussed in her writings, particularly in "Middlebrow" (CE-II 196-203) and "Am I a Snob?", a paper read to the *Memoir Club* (MB 181-98),⁴ where she expressly shows her acceptance of the "highbrow" libel whilst denying the "snob" epithet only in so far as considered a personal trait of exaggerated self-assertion. She does say:

The essence of snobbery is that you wish to impress other people. The snob is a flutter-brained, hare-brained creature so little satisfied with his or her own standing that in order to consolidate it he or she is always flourishing a title or an honour in other people's faces so that they may believe, and help him to believe what he does not really believe – that he or she is somehow a person of importance. / This is a symptom that I recognise in my own case (MB 184).

But she makes this statement after having brought into question:

"Am I a snob in my egotism when I say that never does the pale light of dawn filter through the blinds of 52 Tavistock Square⁵ but I open my eyes and exclaim, 'Good God! Here I am again!' – not always with pleasure, often with pain; sometimes with a spasm of acute disgust – but always, always with interest?" (MB 183).

In the 1920s, when Virginia wrote "Old Bloomsbury" for the *Memoir Club*, she could affirm: "These Thursday evening parties were, as far as I am concerned, the germ from which sprang all that has since come to be called [...] by the name of Bloomsbury" (MB 164). The fate of that name of Bloomsbury had to go through many adverse judgements, as, for instance, Wyndham Lewis's persistent antagonism, D.H.Lawrence's avowed sentiments of repulsion, or F.R.Leavis's negative criticism. But, after Woolf's recuperation by feminists in the 1970s and particularly after the Bloomsbury revival of the 1990s, a general perception arose, as Regina Marler stresses in 1997, that "what this group of friends said and felt seventy years ago can still affect us" (Marler 4).

The Group never became a club, and its boundaries were very fluid. The basic groundwork disposition of the Stephen siblings was anti-Victorianism, anti-Kensington life style, a disposition of freedom, youth and open-mindedness. As Virginia describes them: "We were full of experiments and reforms [...] we were going to paint; to write; to have coffee after dinner instead of tea at nine o'clock. Everything was going to be new; everything was going to be different. Everything was on trial." (MB 163). On the initial Thursday evenings, the visitors

were mostly silent, unaccustomed to the feminine presences that made all the difference from the Cambridge meetings. They had first to get used to the new circumstances, but these soon became a trump instead of a hindrance, and conversation acquired a looseness of comradeship that was to last for ever... although, at the beginning, in a serious, respectable tone. As Leon Edel recalls: "The first phase of Bloomsbury, with women acting as a dam to the free flow of male talk, tended to be abstract and philosophical. Saxon told nothing but the truth; and then beside the Truth there were 'the Good' and 'the Beautiful' – and G.E.Moore's exploration of all three in the *Principia [Ethical]*" (Edel 125).

Without elders to supervise their behaviour, totally unencumbered, they began tentatively to establish for themselves a new and free style of life. They learnt to criticize one another but also to expect assistance from one another. By that time Virginia did not take her brother's friends as seriously as they would have wished: her unpublished review of *Euphrosyne*, an anthology of their poetic writings, is rather caustic and negative.⁶ But she accepted from the beginning, and she praised, their criticism and advice concerning her own work. Liberty of expression came little by little, with the substantial help of Lytton Strachey's irreverence. Estimations and critics of the Bloomsbury Group tend to disregard the considerable specificity of each phase and each epoch, appraising *Bloomsbury* as a whole, and that is exactly one of the reasons why opinions diverge so profoundly. One rather accurate but incomplete description is to see *Bloomsbury*, as Leonard Woolf did, as "primarily and fundamentally a group of friends" the roots of whose friendship were in Cambridge University (Hussey 34). In Virginia's view, the initial *Bloomsbury* was merely a "small concentrated world dwelling inside the much larger and looser world of dances and dinners" (MB 170); essentially, they were from the start an ill-defined group, not easily classifiable. Many influences worked in the building of the concept of *Bloomsbury*. Hermione Lee considers that Virginia Woolf and her friends looked askance on "those on the outside of the pale", and she believes that *Bloomsbury*, "though reacting against its ancestry, followed an earlier preoccupation with what has been called 'the question of access'". Those young people "created their own concept of a 'best circle', which remained founded on family allegiances" (Lee 54). "Virginia Woolf was 'modern' but she was also a late Victorian" (Lee 55). Jane Dunn thinks that "Bloomsbury functioned much as a large family would"; "it was not a commune but rather a tendency, a mutual philosophy of work and life"; Dunn refers "its sense of natural superiority and self-containment", "its fierce loyalties and impenetrable solidarity when facing criticism from outside", although she

confirms that "it is not entirely clear who exactly were its constituents" (Dunn 98). Those "constituents" had themselves different views on the group, when questioned on or referring to it. Leonard Woolf, in another instance, calls it "a society or group" which "grew up in London during the years 1907 to 1914" (*Sowing* 155). His lack of accuracy regarding dates is due to the fact that he was in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) at the time and his only account of the event came from Thoby's or Strachey's letters.

As to Virginia herself, she enjoyed the new conditions of her life and did not seek definitions. Most important of all, she and Vanessa (who soon founded the *Friday Club* for discussion of the visual arts) were now free from that world of social dinners and parties which George Duckworth had wanted to impose on them. Their new home seemed to Virginia "the most beautiful, the most exciting, the most romantic place in the world" (MB 164). Having earned money with her writing, Virginia wanted to travel. On 29 March she and Adrian went by train to Liverpool where they embarked on the *Anselm*, "all white & clean and luxurious" (APA 258), bound for the Iberian Peninsula. On 5 April they arrived at Porto's harbour, Leixões – *Leshoenis*, as she explains the word is pronounced –, and she notes that it "is a red roofed Southern looking town, flashing in the evening sun, behind which there is a steep bank with feathery trees" (APA 261); but they could only land next day in the morning. They took a tram to Porto "in a broiling sun, an English August sun"; they went to the ship's agents and then "with Lloyds to see over the 'Lodge' of one of the great port wine merchants, which was a cool scented place (probably, Silva and Cosens of Vila Nova de Gaia)" (APA 261). In the evening they took the train to Lisbon, where they arrived at 10:30 pm.

In 1906 Virginia wrote her first short fiction, which she left untitled and is now known by the name of its protagonists, "Phyllis and Rosamond", since Susan Dick included it in her edition of Virginia Woolf's *Complete Shorter Fiction* (pp. 17-29). In this narrative we find the description of two young girls of a Victorian milieu, who had no further prospects for the future other than using their social skills to attract and secure a prospective husband. Victorian girls were not asked to use their brains, but some of them did, in a subterranean, unuttered way, merely for personal use in behaviour strategy. Of the two sisters, Rosamond is the one who thinks, whose advices are followed, who "might have done better", in her sister's opinion. In Woolf's fiction, written between 20 and 23 June 1906 (APA 309), the situation of the Hibbert sisters and the rules and rituals of their Victorian Kensington family are shown in contrast to the life of another London family, the Tristrams, who, very symptomatically,

live in Bloomsbury, a "distant and unfashionable quarter of London" as the text clarifies (CSF 24). One evening, the Kensington girls – or, rather, young ladies – pay a visit to the Bloomsbury friends, and they wonder and marvel at the different world they find there. Phyllis, who arrived later because she had to accompany her parents to a very formal dinner party, feels ill at ease when she notes how overdressed she is:

She saw herself enter into the smokey room where people sat on the floor, and the host wore a shooting jacket, with her arch little head held high, and her mouth pursed as though for an epigram. [...] She kept looking round at the dozen people who were sitting there, with a sense of bewilderment. [...] So she sat and watched, feeling like a bird with wings pinioned; and more acutely, because more genuinely, uncomfortable than she had ever been at ball or play (CSF 24).

Even in such early writing, the author brings the reader to the core of the action, makes him/her observe and judge some flashes of real life, of intimate thoughts and schemes, as she would do later in *The Voyage Out*, where the text, a seemingly conventional plot of love and adventure, may sometimes lead the reader's imagination to a palimpsest of the things that are not overtly said. In a way or another, Woolf would act likewise in all the remainder of her writings, using – as Marshik points out – "irony, humour and plot to encourage readers to re-examine the world around them, particularly to reevaluate the censorship that remained an obstacle to the full and free exercise of public speech" (Marshik 90); mainly, it should be added, the censorship that was an obstacle to women's development.

It is remarkable that this life-long concern of Woolf's should be so firmly present in her first attempts with words. In "Phyllis and Rosamond", the future Virginia Woolf shows the two worlds side by side, clearly to the advantage of the new one, as stressed in the dialogue of Phyllis with Sylvia Tristram. When comparing their respective lives, Phyllis notes: "Really, Miss Tristram, you must remember that most young ladies are slaves; and you mustn't insult me because you happen to be free." (CSF 27). The slave condition of the female sex in Victorian society can be said to leave the fashionable Hibbert sisters at the level of prostitutes, considering that both conditions were "produced by and yet excluded from the masculinist culture that led to the Great War" (Marshik 107). Such a consideration lends an extra poignancy to Phyllis's final remark to her Bloomsbury friend: "don't you see what an ideal life yours is?" (CSF 27).

Woolf is so often autobiographical in her writings that here, too, we

can find matter for parallels between fiction and life. The two sisters might be Vanessa and Virginia, the younger one being the one who thinks. And the coexistence of these two so different worlds as depicted in this text may well be a paradigm of the two distinct worlds to which Woolf belonged. The marks they left in her writings are quite noticeable: Bloomsbury (and by Bloomsbury I mean the way of life the Stephen siblings led in their new home) helped her acquire a life of her own, whilst her writing helped her exorcise her Victorian roots and upbringing which were ever so strong. As the writer herself ponders in a moment of self-appreciation, one of the wilful habits of the brain makes it work only at its own terms. To cope with this duality of perspective, the writer had to face it from the beginning, and this she did by actualizing the two different worlds in "Phyllis and Rosamond".

Years later, a counterpart of this dual situation is described with more refinement of writing and details in Woolf's second novel, *Night and Day*, where the conventional family is given the name Hilbery, in close correspondence to Hibbert. Katharine Hilbery, a mixture of Phyllis and Rosamond Hibbert, encounters and compares life styles and intellectual interests with Mary Datchet, a progressive feminist version of the Tristram sisters. As so often in her writing experience, Woolf needed more than one attempt to dispose of the problematic or painful remembrances of her past. The inner struggles between her two worlds and her two dispositions were visible throughout her life and work, and neither of them was strong enough to permanently annihilate the other.

One can well imply from Woolf's own confession to the *Memoir Club* that the snob in her is no more than a mask she puts on to hide her shyness and lack of self-confidence. The Bloomsbury Group and their informal meetings gave her the opportunity to discuss the subjects she loved with intellectual peers of both sexes. She could then be entirely herself and display her conversational gifts freely, taking a keen interest in the sometimes rather heated discussions with other writers and artists of her level who happened to be friends as well. Woolf is known to have enjoyed parties and their "fountain of gold and diamond dust which obscures the solid truth" (MB 188), to the extreme of having to be protected from excessive excitement by her devoted guardian of husband. However, it can be observed that she is happy and lively only in those parties where she feels herself in a kind of family "best circle"; to those "outside of the pale" she may indeed seem haughty and snob: she has to protect herself, as implicitly revealed in her "Am I a Snob" confession. She is then not far from that Victorian prototype Phyllis in the Bloomsbury Tristrams

party, although time and friends have wrought a difference in her behaviour: an icon, almost a priestess within the Group, she is protected by that armour when confronting the mob she secretly fears, and she puts on a show of the haughty intellectual, the untouchable quasi-divinity who may condescend to smile in favourable moments but who may turn dangerously offensive and sarcastic when displeased. Woolf herself tells us in 1924 that Vita Sackville-West's cousin, "the heir of Radcliffe", "implores her to resist the contamination of Bloomsbury, personified in the serpent destroyer, V.W." (D-II 324). After all, she was used already to such and similar opinions, but the only judgements that counted for her were those of her close friends.

As far back as 1904, just after the severe breakdown that incapacitated her during the summer months, Virginia Stephen had already the notion of her excessive self-consciousness that might lead her to act as a kind of "self-centred outsider" in the world. She confides then to Violet Dickinson: "I do think I may emerge less selfish and cocksure than I went in and with greater understanding of the troubles of others" (L-I 143). This was also, in a way, the "Bloomsbury therapy": the comfort of counting on a circle of faithful friends, the mind-enriching life in a mixed group of her intellectual level, helped Woolf strengthen her personality and, with it, that kind of broader disposition towards humanity in general, and particularly towards the members of her set.

"Happily I'm *Bloomsbury* myself", she says when she stresses

the dominion that *Bloomsbury* exercises over the sane and the insane alike seems to be sufficient to turn the brains of the most robust. Happily, I'm *Bloomsbury* myself, and thus immune; but I'm not altogether ignorant of what they mean, & its a hypnotism very difficult to shake off, because there's some foundation for it (D-I 105, 14 January 1918).

Woolf feels herself immune since she *is Bloomsbury*, but in reality she could not be immune to the *Bloomsbury* dominion and hypnotism, that peculiar flavour and atmosphere which actually helped build her adult self, both as a human being and as a writer. In return, however, she gave a decisive contribution to *Bloomsbury's* brilliance and everlasting important place in English literature and society.

NOTES

- ¹ *The Midnight Society*, a reading group meeting at Clive Bell's rooms in Cambridge, included Thoby Stephen, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf and Saxon Sydney-Turner.
- ² The meetings were meant to start a month earlier, but on 16 February only Sydney-Turner had turned up (cf. Bell, 97: "he and his host and the dog Gurth formed the entire company").
- ³ Quoted in Spater and Parsons, p.33.
- ⁴ The *Memoir Club* was an idea of Desmond MacCarthy's wife, Molly, in the 1920s. At each meeting one member of the Group would partake with the others some personal reminiscences uttered (or read) with the utmost openness and no prejudices. This practice helped establish some points of the respective authors' biographies.
- ⁵ Woolf's Bloomsbury home at the time.
- ⁶ Quentin Bell says, in *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, that *Euphrosyne* "was a volume of poems, published privately in 1905, to which Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, Walter Lamb, Saxon Sydney-Turner, Leonard Woolf and some others contributed and to which they seldom alluded in later life, so that the book would have been forgotten if Virginia had not been careful to keep its memory green. It was certainly an anti-climax; none of the contributors were true poets. Virginia laughed at it and began a scathing essay upon it and its contributors (See Appendix C)" (98).

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A faint, grayscale background image of a woman's profile, facing left. Her hair is dark and styled in a bun or updo. The image is very light and serves as a backdrop for the text.

Midday

ON FRENCH AND BRITISH FREEDOMS – EARLY BLOOMSBURY AND THE BROTHELS OF MODERNISM

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When that Byronic gay blade of Bloomsbury Clive Bell proposed in his 1923 pamphlet *On British Freedom* that "Great Britain is one of the least free countries in the world", he had in mind not the great British political freedom admired by all Europe but such everyday personal, social and public freedoms as ordinary Frenchmen take for granted.¹ In France art, literature, and theatre flourish without a censor's interference; bars and restaurants may be open at all hours yet do sometimes close without a curfew; people pursue their amatory affairs without state supervision; and a working man can raise a point of Biblical textual criticism without fear of prosecution by the state. An "ordinary Englishman" enjoys none of these freedoms, Bell argued, and indeed "is, on the whole, less free than a Roman slave in the time of Hadrian" (OBF 4). From the Puritan revolution to the 1737 Licensing Act that shackled the playwrights of Shakespeare's land through the nineteenth-century "reign of the Puritan middle-classes", the ordinary Englishman's everyday freedoms have been so far curtailed that such writers as Shaw and Wells, "when they sit down to work for humanity", must "wonder whether what they want to say will be sanctioned by some shop-keeping alderman, or illiterate fox-hunter, or by a committee of dyspeptic and time-worn virgins" (OBF 13, 10).

Although Bloomsbury's significance as a modern movement is often dismissed on grounds of class privilege, Bell writes here on behalf of "ordinary" Englishmen. The English aristocracy after all suffered few practical restrictions on their personal and social freedoms, and the Bloomsbury Group had long before seceded from the upper-middle-class milieu of their youth to what seemed, after Roger Fry's 1910 "Manet and the Post-Impressionists" exhibition, almost a faubourg of Paris, a province of France – not a bohemia, exactly, but a safely middle-class colony of artists and intellectuals who practiced privately

the personal and social freedoms Bell advocates for ordinary Englishmen. What marks and limits Bell's screed on freedom is less class than gender, for his ordinary English subject is as masculine as his ordinary Frenchman – and his rather idealized Roman slave, who "had never heard of *Magna Charta* or the *Bill of Rights*", yet when at leisure could (at least in theory) "read, or hear read, what he liked; no committee of old maids claimed the right to deprive him of the superb indecencies of Juvenal or the malicious indecencies of Petronius or the mellifluous [ones] of Ovid, or even the latest [...] *simplicitas romana* (frank smut)" (OBF 6, 5). Bell's Roman slave "might enjoy a play by Aristophanes", but "can you fancy an unexpurgated [...] *Lysistrata* being given in Miss Horniman's house?" He "might eat and drink whatever he could pay for at whatever hour he chose; without let or hindrance [...] gratify his sexual tastes"; and bet on "a cock-fight unmolested by the police" (OBF 5). By contrast, the "free Manchester wave-ruler is shot out of the bar at ten, haled before the magistrate if he winks at ('annoys') a wench on his way home, and fined if to console himself he indulges in a quiet game of put-and-take" (OBF 6).

Likewise "our fortune friend" the Frenchman can laugh on a Saturday evening at "some *Palais-Royal* farce of which the censor here would have made the shortest work"; then, over a drink in his local café, play cards, amuse himself with "a comic paper, full of pictures and anecdotes which in this land of the free would have led [...] to police intervention", or read a novel by Balzac or Zola "the like of which no modern British author dares publish in his own free country"; or "regale himself all night long with as much female society, bad music, dancing even and sweet champagne, as his heart desires" (OBF 6-7). No "Norman rake-hell" but "the father of a family and a pillar of the State", Bell's Frenchman "would be astonished to learn that, were he resident on the other side of the Channel, in this one night he would have committed crimes enough to have cost the tax-payer a small fortune in policemen, courts and magistrates, and himself a quarter's salary in fines: the purveyors of his pleasures would, of course, have been ruined" (OBF 7).

Surely Virginia Woolf applauded this salvo in the cause of freedom by that "sprightly journalist", her friend Clive?²² Wasn't she forced to navigate the wandering rocks of British censorship as writer and publisher? Wouldn't her fledgling Hogarth Press have been legally constrained from publishing Joyce's *Ulysses* even had it possessed the resources to do so; didn't she later attend the *Well of Loneliness* obscenity trial ready to testify in its defense?²³ On the other hand, that the French and Roman freedoms Bell advocates are strongly marked as masculine may explain the near-silence of her diary and letters

on Clive's pamphlet.⁴ How then might Woolf have understood the French and British freedoms Clive describes? What comment upon them do her own life and work suggest? In exploring these questions, I shall suggest that when we place Vanessa and Virginia Stephen at the center of the group they not only belonged to but in many ways led, Bloomsbury appears neither a Parisian outpost nor the English afterlife of modern French art. Rather, these sister adventurers and revolutionaries actively forged their new freedoms in critical and creative dialogue with the French and British freedoms Bell describes. Far from a late-blooming derivative of France - a poor cousin in respect to the personal, social, and public freedoms that fostered the tremendous creativity that made the country across the Channel the capital of modern art - the Stephen sisters' Bloomsbury emerges dialectically not just from the differences between French and British freedoms but from the gender differences within them.

To take by the horns the matter of Bell's Frenchman who could gratify his sexual tastes without let or hindrance, let's begin with Robert Scholes's article, "In the Brothel of Modernism: Picasso and Joyce". Scholes makes Paris the center of a modernism characterized as "a masculinist activity that positioned women voyeuristically and turned would-be agents into patients to an astonishing extent" - "a gendered movement, driven by the anxieties and ambivalences of male artists and writers", that brought "the figure of the prostitute to the center of the modernist stage"⁵. For Scholes (following T.J. Clark, Charles Bernheimer, and others), prostitution played an "extraordinary role [...] in the development as modernists of those two giants of the movement, Joyce and Picasso" (IBM-I 2). From Baudelaire, Manet, and Degas to Picasso and Joyce, the brothel as "subject matter" constituted modernism and "excluded women who were not [...] prostitutes" (IBM-III 5). Thus "if we [...] try to imagine one of Joyce's sisters becoming a modernist writer", Scholes writes, "we can readily see how a certain crucial experience of prostitutes and brothels was simply impossible for her, while it was almost inevitable for her brother" (IBM-III 5).⁶ For this reason, Woolf "never quite becomes a modernist, in my view", a judgement he intends as "purely descriptive" not "evaluative"; she "remains an impressionist or post-impressionist throughout her career" (IBM-I 2).

Now, when Scholes highlights the differential sexual experiences of brothers and sisters to prove Woolf's exclusion from modernism, he knocks over the very can of worms with which I hope to disrupt his argument. For early Bloomsbury, I suggest, unfolds a different and quite arresting tale of the brothels of modernism - one that foregrounds the presumptive masculinity of

Bell's exemplary free citizen, queries Scholes's confidence in the masculine modernist's privileged gaze, and challenges the popular image of a French provincial Bloomsbury in the wake of Fry's 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition.

Fry's "Manet and the Post-Impressionists" exhibition is a rich site at which to begin to investigate the gender of modernist artistic freedom, for it brought home - and, in the controversy it provoked, brought to life - such differences between French and British freedoms as Bell's pamphlet remarks.⁷ As everyone knows, the art that caused such a sensation in 1910 London was history in Paris. Roger Fry had asked Desmond MacCarthy to accompany him as he traveled through France selecting art for the exhibition. "I enjoyed choosing the pictures (which will by the bye give you the most tremendous shocks)", MacCarthy wrote his wife Molly from France; he expected the British Public to raise "a howl of fury and derision" on beholding, say, Vincent Van Gogh's 1889 postman - "wonderfully hideous, alive, and as disconcerting as a face put suddenly three inches from one's own".⁸ Nor was the art on display uncensored. "At these interviews with dealers I used to pose as M. le Publique", MacCarthy explained, "and on one point my verdict was final: Was there, or was there not, anything in some nude which might create an outcry in London?"⁹ Expecting "a huge campaign of outraged British Philistinism", Fry took care to focus attention on the modern French artists' embrace of primitivism - on their revolt against "the tempered realism of the last four hundred years" - and not their indifference to the moral sensibilities of the British Public.¹⁰ The pictures constituted, MacCarthy wrote, "an imaginative declaration of rights" to be "independent of literal representation", "to handle nature with more imaginative freedom; and above all, [...] to experiment".¹¹ Gauguin's 1892 *L'Esprit veille/Manao Tupapau - The Spirit of the Dead Keeps Watch* and Picasso's 1905 *Girl with a Basket of Flowers* are two nudes that passed muster before M. le Publique. Notwithstanding Fry's emphasis on the modern French artists' rejection of photographic realism, exhibition secretary MacCarthy recalled, "I kept overhearing such remarks as 'Pure pornography', 'Admirably indecent'. Not a word of truth, of course. [...] As M. le Publique, I had been careful to exclude too frankly physiological nudes and, indeed at the last moment, instead of hanging two of the pictures, I told Roger they had better be kept, for a time, in my sanctum downstairs".¹²

That the British Public found much to deplore in the French paintings even after their censorship by M. le Publique casts a telling light not only on the gap between its sense of decency and Bloomsbury's but on the gender and class of decency. The anti-imperialist aristocrat-poet-statesman Wilfrid

Scawen Blunt, who (Lucy McDiarmid tells us) "had thirty-eight lovers in forty-eight years (1862-1910) and would be considered a serious amorist by most standards", was shocked - shocked - by Fry's "pornographic show".¹³ The Duchess of Rutland, a faithfully literal draughtsman herself, professed to be "very, very much upset", indeed "so *horrified*" to have sponsored "such an awful exhibition of horrors" that she wished her name removed from the catalogue.¹⁴ (It was.) Virginia Stephen, on the other hand, remarked that she thought the pictures less good than books, "but why all the duchesses are insulted by the post-impressionists, a modest sample set of painters, innocent even of indecency, I cant conceive" (L-I 440, 27 November 1910). By then six years resident in Bloomsbury, the Stephen sisters had diverged from philandering poet-statesmen and offended duchesses not just in appreciation of modern French primitivism but in fine moral discrimination. When, some weeks later, Vanessa and Virginia fleshed out their aesthetic judgements by dressing as living Gauguins at the Chelsea Art Club ball for the Slade students' parody exhibition, "Septule and the Racinistes", the duchesses and their ilk were not amused. "Mrs. Whitehead was scandalized", Virginia reminisced:

She said that Vanessa and I were practically naked. My mother's ghost was invoked [...] to deplore the fact that I had taken a house in Brunswick Square and had asked young men to share it. George Duckworth came all the way from Charles Street to beg Vanessa to make me give up the idea and was not comforted perhaps when she replied that after all the Foundling Hospital was handy. Stories began to circulate about parties at which we all undressed in public. Logan Pearsall Smith told Ethel Sands that he knew for a fact that Maynard had copulated with Vanessa on a sofa in the middle of the drawing room. It was a heartless, immoral, cynical society it was said; we were abandoned women and our friends were the most worthless of young men.¹⁵

Laughing a century later at Woolf's parody of gossiping dowagers, we might take the usual view that Bloomsbury began when the Stephen children forsook irreproachable Kensington for the disreputable neighbourhood of the British Museum. Yet when it comes to the brothels of modernism, was it not the other way round? In this same memoir, "Old Bloomsbury", Woolf recalls the hypocrisy and repression of a Kensington evening with George Duckworth and Countess Carnarvon around 1900 - in the course of which George kissed Lady Carnarvon behind a pillar, bundled them all out onto the pavement when French actors made as if to copulate onstage, and, safe home at 22 Hyde Park Gate, burst into Virginia's room and flung himself on her bed - having given her

to understand, Quentin Bell tells us, "that Vanessa's unkindness" in refusing to accompany George on such evenings might "drive him from home" to seek "consolation in the arms of whores. It was for Virginia to rescue him from this awful fate".¹⁶ In "22 Hyde Park Gate" Virginia remembered pondering the "dark and extremely lurid" intelligence "that the chaste, the immaculate George Duckworth would be forced into the arms of whores": "Needless to say he did not put it like that; and I could only conjure up in my virgin consciousness, dimly irradiated by having read the 'Symposium' with Miss Case, horrible visions of the vices to which young men were driven whose sisters did not make then happy at home".¹⁷

In juxtaposing this Kensington sexual farce to the comparatively chaste Bloomsbury evening when the young company celebrated their new free speech by pronouncing the word "semen" aloud for the first time, Woolf makes a deadly serious point: it was not Bloomsbury but 22 Hyde Park Gate where Vanessa and Virginia endured seven "Greek slave years", pressed into service to preserve their "incestuous brother" from the arms of whores.¹⁸ It was not the denizens of Bloomsbury but "the old ladies of Kensington and Belgravia" who fled the French actors like nymphs from a satyr and took leave of young Virginia by saying they did hope she wasn't tired ("which meant, I felt, she hoped I wouldn't lose my virginity or something like that") yet "never knew that George Duckworth was not only father, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also" (MB 177, 181). It is the Kensington ladies who might have been well and truly scandalized to witness one of Virginia's late evenings with George – the "tap at the door", the light turned out, George's "cuddling and kissing and otherwise embracing me in order, as he told Dr. Savage later, to comfort me for the fatal illness of my father" – except that (like Clarissa Dalloway, who refuses to hear a word against Hugh Whitbread, accused of kissing Sally Seton in the smoking room) they perhaps would not have consented to hear a word against George.¹⁹

In any case, just here in "Old Bloomsbury" Woolf observes that "46 Gordon Square could not have meant what it did had not 22 Hyde Park Gate preceded it" (MB 182). At 46 Gordon Square she had her first "room with a lock on the door", ensuring the bodily autonomy and security that *A Room of One's Own* makes the first condition of a woman's freedom of mind.²⁰ And it is her old room at 22 Hyde Park Gate – a room with no lock on the door – that she cannot force herself to reenter in memory as she struggles to write her late memoir (MB 136). In short, it was in "respectable" Kensington that the motherless Stephen sisters found themselves immured in a house that rather resembled a

brothel, and in déclassé Bloomsbury that they first tasted freedom, as young women and as artists aspiring to represent their modern world. If, for Scholes, the brothel served Picasso and Joyce as a screen on which to project anxieties about their own art's commodification, the documents of early Bloomsbury bring to light a quasi-brothel within "respectable" Kensington - one that must surely have outraged the puritanical British Public had not actual censorship, internalized censorship, and a little remarked public complicity impeded its public representation.

How then does the Stephen sisters' "Greek slave" experience in this hidden brothel - its very existence repressed by respectable old ladies and disclosed only to such intimates as the Bloomsbury Memoir Club - qualify Scholes's claim that modernism is inherently "masculist"? Modernist artists "were fascinated by prostitutes because they saw in them an image of themselves", Scholes writes, observing that the prostitute in Picasso's landmark 1907 *Les Femmes d'Alger* "absorbs" the male gaze "and turns it back upon us, the spectators, in the role of a client of sex or art" as the work evolves from sketch to painting (IBM-II 10). Building on Scholes's point, we can also note the migration of the fierce dark eyes that gaze from Picasso's self-portraits of 1906 and 1907 to the (at first eyeless, as a 1907 sketch shows) demoiselles. (Lest reading the demoiselles as self-portraiture seem farfetched, consider Barbara Bagenal's 1959 photograph of Picasso with Clive Bell - Picasso in corduroys below, blonde wig and seductive tart's mask above, his hands pushing out his turtleneck in parodic gunslinger breasts.²¹) But if *Les Femmes d'Alger*' fierce gaze is really Picasso's, the fierce gaze in the documents of early Bloomsbury is a woman's. Like the temporally compound gaze by which the mature Joyce depicts the Dublin that his young self experienced, Virginia Stephen Woolf's gaze spans time lived, remembered, and represented in diaries, letters, fiction, and memoirs. No less powerfully than Joyce's, Woolf's intense gaze foregrounds what Scholes overlooks: the modern sex/gender system that made prostitution continuous with the bourgeois marriage system.²² In doing so, both artists excavate the socioeconomic links between pornography (from the Greek *porne*, harlot or female slave, thus: literary or pictorial representation of whores) and sex slavery, and they open the question of their relation to modernism.

As daughters of Leslie and Julia Stephen, Virginia and Vanessa were of course poised to be molded by that system or "social machine" into "respectable" married ladies - and might have been had their mother Julia (d. 1895) or half-sister Stella Duckworth (d. 1897) lived (MB 153). In that case, Virginia

might not have remembered Vanessa's "first party, [...] where she wore white and amethysts perhaps" and "Desmond remarked her 'like a Greek slave'", in quite these terms (MB 106). As it was, the older, richer, social-climbing George, impresario of his recalcitrant young half-sisters' nightlife, insistently applied the machine's "emphatic" "pressure" (MB 150). Woolf describes how "upper middle class Victorian society" sprang to life about seven-thirty "when the lights went up" and "dress and hair overcame paint and Greek grammar":

We slipped off our day clothes and stood shivering. [...] Neck and arms had to be scrubbed, for we had to enter the drawing room at eight with bare arms, low neck, in evening dress. [...] I would stand in front of George's Chippendale mirror trying to make myself not only tidy, but presentable. On an allowance of fifty pounds it was difficult, even for the skilful, and I had no skill, to be well dressed of an evening. A home dress [...] could be had for a pound or two; but a party dress [...] cost fifteen guineas. The home dress therefore might be [...] made cheaply but eccentrically, of a green fabric, bought at Story's, the furniture shop, [...] for chairs, presumably. [...] Down I came one winter's evening about 1900 in my green dress; apprehensive, yet, for a new dress excites even the unskilled, elated. [...] [I]n the drawing room [...] by the blazing fire George sat, in dinner jacket and black tie. He [...] fixed on me that extraordinary observant scrutiny with which he always inspected our clothes. He looked me up and down [...] as if I were a horse brought into the show ring. Then the sullen look came into his eyes [...] which expressed not simply aesthetic disapproval; but [...] deeper, [...] moral, [...] social, disapproval, as if he scented some kind of insurrection, of defiance of his accepted standards. I knew myself condemned from more points of view than I could then analyse. [...] I was conscious of fear; of shame; of something like anguish - a feeling [...] out of all proportion to its surface cause. He said at last: 'Go and tear it up' [...] in a curiously tart, rasping, peevish voice; the voice of the enraged male [...] which expressed his serious displeasure at this infringement of a code that meant more to him than he could admit (MB 150-51).

Making the case for a modernism inextricable from the brothel, Scholes cites Ovid as a common source for Picasso's minotaur and Joyce's Daedalus figures in their mythic self-portraiture, as in Picasso's 1935 etching *Minotauromachy*. Yet, particularly if we keep in mind the yearly tribute of Athenian maidens offered up to the minotaur, do not Woolf's various portraits of George - "dancing into the room rubbing his hands, wrinkling his forehead, the most remarkable figure, as I sometimes think, that our household contained" - evoke a minotauromachy as compelling as Picasso's?²³

His hair curled naturally in dark crisp ringlets; he was six foot high; he had been in the Eton Eleven; he was now cramming at Scoones' in the hope of passing the Foreign Service examination. When Miss Willett of Brighton saw him 'throwing off his ulster' in the middle of her drawing room she was moved to write an Ode Comparing George Duckworth to the Hermes of Praxiteles - which Ode my mother kept in her writing drawer, along with a little Italian medal that George had won for saving a peasant from drowning. Miss Willett was reminded of the Hermes; but if you looked at him closely you noticed that one of his ears was pointed; and the other round; you also noticed that though he had the curls of a God and the ears of a faun he had unmistakably the eyes of a pig. So strange a compound can seldom have existed. And in the days I speak of, God, faun and pig were all in all alive, all in opposition, and in their conflicts producing the most astonishing eruptions.²⁴

Summoned from Greek grammar to bare-armed, low-necked display on the genteel marriage market, the aspiring young artist who suffered George's "sullen look" "like a horse in a show ring" while feeling "condemned from more points of view than I could then analyse" looks back at this privileged male subject of the sex/gender system and, two decades later, renders god, faun, and pig in cubist simultaneity. As Picasso imagined "the horned intruder" of his 1936 etching *Faun Unveiling a Sleeping Girl* "wondering whether the girl 'loves him because he is a monster'", Woolf's minotauromachy depicts George from the split and doubled vantage of two sacrificial virgins.²⁵ To "Miss Willett of Brighton" - a fictional alter of young Virginia, as far as I have been able to determine - George is a sort of flasher-Hermes, whose sexual body her idealizing allusion covers with a chaste classical figleaf. Meanwhile, "I" - the memoirist - qualifies Miss Willett's enraptured gaze by recalling the closer vantage of her youth, from which "you" (even Miss Willett, presumably) could distinctly observe George's faun's ears and pig's eyes. As Picasso dreams a faun uncovering a girl who loves his very monstrosity, Woolf's ambivalent maidens unveil a monster, a spectacle compounded of god, faun, and pig, alarmingly "alive" and (in a deft abstract stroke that leaves much to the imagination) "producing the most astonishing eruptions".

Miss Willett has most of her name in common with another of Virginia's early castoff selves, the fictional Victorian novelist "Miss Willatt", subject of the fictional review, "Memoirs of a Novelist" (1909). As Joyce, from the safe distance of Rome, produced in Gabriel Conroy a life and self that might have been his had he not flown Dublin's labyrinth, Virginia imprisons Miss Willatt in a psychic labyrinth from which Virginia herself is already devising an escape.

Miss Willatt's life is marked by an excessive and reticent propriety, which her devoted biographer, Miss Linsett, does not pierce through but only reinforces. To the alert but disappointed reviewer, Miss Willatt's life and letters seem an elaborate tissue of evasions: Miss Willatt "thought it indecent to describe what she had seen, so that instead of a portrait of her brothers (and one had led a very queer life) or a memory of her father (for which we should have been grateful) she invented Arabian lovers and set them on the banks of the Orinoco [...] in an ideal community, for she enjoyed framing laws" (CSF 69). Her talent diverted from realism to escapist utopias, Miss Willatt dies with her "indecent" stories untold, her witness to her brother's extraordinary life unuttered. Sifting the tedious remains of Miss Willatt's life and letters, which do not document but displace "what she had seen", the fictional reviewer probes the social repression that silences women's testimony, relegates it to the obscene. As the novelist Miss Willatt foreshadows the poet Miss Willett, whose sentimental ode to George reposed in his (and Virginia's) mother's "writing drawer", "Memoirs of a Novelist" subtly challenges Bloomsbury's aspiring New-Woman novelist - its author, Virginia Stephen - to soar over the concealing walls of the private house into public speech.

When her friend and former housemate John Maynard Keynes pronounced her 1920 sketch of George her "best thing" to date, Woolf scoffed at the idea that George was her "climax".²⁶ But documents of her own minotauromachy - resonant in Miss Willatt's brother's unspeakable life - lie scattered amid her masterworks throughout her writing career. In 1903, even as George was exerting himself to tame and groom his half-sisters to the genteel servility for which women of their class were destined, Virginia was posting comic vignettes of him and Gerald to her close friend and confidante Violet Dickinson, promising that "if ever I write a novel those two shall go in large as life" (L-I 101, 11? October). In 1911 she recounted to Vanessa that talking of "copulation" with her old Greek tutor Janet Case "led us to the revelation of all Georges malefactions"; Case used to express disgust "when he came in and began fondling me over my Greek"; "When I got to the bedroom scenes, she [...] gasped like a benevolent gudgeon" (L-I 472, 25? July). In 1922 she tells Vanessa that she confided "the story of George" to that "gigantic mass of purity" Elena Richmond (wife of Woolf's *TLS* editor Bruce Richmond), who traveled in George's social circles. Elena, who had "never liked him", was "shocked at first" but on reflection allowed that "much more goes on than one realises" - perhaps, Woolf speculates, "alluding to her father and Miss Lulling". Imagining that Elena would tell Bruce, who as a "perfect gentleman" would then "have to

spit in Georges face in the Club", Virginia asks her sister, "Don't you think this is a noble work for our old age - to let the light in upon the Duckworths - and I daresay George will be driven to shoot himself one day when he's shooting rabbits" (L-II 505, 20 February). As things turned out, George not only eluded that fate but played the social machine "so assiduously that he emerged at the age of sixty with a Lady Margaret for wife, [...] a knighthood, [...] a sinecure [...], three sons, and a country house" (MB 153). Here Woolf's "noble work" of illuminating Kensington's darker precincts runs aground on the gender of free speech.

Not every privileged "masculist" subject was as oblivious as George to the analytic gaze young Virginia trained on him. After their father died in February 1904, Vanessa, Virginia, and Thoby toured Italy and in early May, on their way home, stopped in Paris. There, they saw Thoby's Cambridge friend Clive Bell, whom they had met once before at a Trinity College Ball and who was sojourning there on a Trinity research grant.²⁷ Clive was an habitué of the Montparnasse restaurant *Chat Blanc* where, in an upstairs lair "reserved for [...] artists, their friends, models and mistresses", he met expatriate painters such as Gerald Kelly, J.W. Morrice, and the saturnine Irishman Roderick O'Connor, who had studied with Gauguin at Pont-Aven and would exhibit work influenced by Cézanne at the 1905 *Salon d'automne* and *Les Indépendants*.²⁸ "Only once", wrote Clive, "did I see [O'Connor] impressed by a human being, and that was by [...] Virginia Stephen. [...] In 1904 she was very young and quite unknown, having published nothing: but O'Connor confessed after their first and, I think, only meeting - 'she put the fear of God into me'" (168).

Just what Virginia did to incur this distinction Clive, if he knew, did not divulge. But O'Connor's unwonted awe lends force to Clive's declaration that, of all his wide acquaintance - from John Maynard Keynes ("the cleverest man I ever met"), Lytton Strachey, and Fry to Rodin and Jean Cocteau - the only two "from whom emanated simply and unmistakably a sense of genius" were Picasso and Woolf.²⁹ He would have felt it, he says, had he never seen a Picasso or read a Woolf novel. For her part, Virginia wrote Violet from Paris that she had found in her pocket an unposted letter that "should have been sending shocks and thrills through [Violet's] maiden bosom" and regales her with an account of taking "the valiant old Heathen" Beatrice Thynne "to dine with Bell last night, a real Bohemian party" where everyone smoked "half a dozen cigarettes a piece" and Thynne and Kelly argued over painting ("He actually shook his fist at her across the table, and at one moment I held her down - a stormy scene"). Beatrice "originally meant to stay 6 weeks with us", she deadpans, but "left early this morning". The Stephens planned a "last

expedition" to "Rodins studio"; and if, on her return, Violet could find her "a great solid bit of work to do [...] that will make me forget my own stupidity", Virginia will be "so grateful. I *must* work", she adds; "I would sell [my brains] cheap at this moment" (L-I 139-40, 6? May 1904).

On 9 May 1904 Vanessa and Virginia, "escorted by George Duckworth", returned from Paris to 22 Hyde Park Gate (VWB-I 193). The very next day Virginia "suffered a severe mental breakdown" - lending force to Scholes's point that the brothels of modernism did much to turn would-be agents into patients (L-I 141, editors' note). While Virginia lay ill - first attended by three nurses, then staying with Violet, once flinging herself from a window (a low one, as if to say she wanted to live but could not see how) - Vanessa dismantled 22 Hyde Park Gate and organized the move to 46 Gordon Square. In August and September Virginia was well enough to rejoin her family on holiday at the Manor House in Teversal, Nottinghamshire, with a nurse in attendance. She did not attend George's wedding to Lady Margaret Herbert on September 10, but remained in Nottinghamshire, where Violet Dickinson came to stay with her. After the first night of wedding festivities, the stoic Vanessa, a bridesmaid, wrote her sister that "George embraced me and fondled me in front of the company - but that was only to be expected".³⁰ For Vanessa's biographer Frances Spalding and others, "The fact that this fondling occurred in front of polite society raises the question as to its precise nature. As Virginia is our chief source on this matter it is possible that her accounts of George's behavior were exaggerated" (VB 19). Although Spalding assumes that this company of earls, countesses, bishops, Eton housemasters and the like would not have countenanced improper fondling, Virginia's later accounts of talks with Janet Case and Elena Richmond suggest quite the opposite: the very great extent to which upper-class society was habituated to overlook improper behavior in one of their own, as long as that one was a man. Woolf later stages this phenomenon in such fictional scenarios as the disagreement between Helen Ambrose (the Vanessa figure) and Rachel Vinrace (the Virginia figure) over Richard's kiss in *The Voyage Out* and the Sally Seton/Hugh Whitbread affair in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that hardly were George's nuptials concluded when Virginia's health dramatically improved. Only a week after the wedding she wrote Violet that her visit had "set us on our legs again" and praised her "beneficent powers" (L-I 141-2, 17 September 1904). A few days later she pronounced herself "a recovered bird. It is the oddest feeling, as though a dead part of me were coming to life. I can't tell you how delightful it is. [...] All the voices I used to hear telling me to do all kinds of wild things

have gone"; she added, "I really think Vanessa is happy with me now" (L-I 142-3, 22? September). On 26 September, sixteen days after the wedding, Virginia rejoiced, "Oh my Violet, if there were a God I should bless him for having delivered me safe and sound from the miseries of the last six months! You cant think what an exquisite joy every minute of my life is to me now, and my only prayer is that I may live to be 70" (L-I 143). That autumn Virginia plunged into "solid" work at last, publishing her first pieces in the *Guardian*. Early in 1905 Dr. Savage pronounced her well, and on 10 March - six months to the day after the wedding - her first *TLS* piece appeared.

The year 1904, then, marked a critical turning point in young Virginia's minotauromachy, her battle against that "sportive and demonstrative" (MB 167) god-faun-pig George, as Quentin Bell makes clear. The Stephens had planned for Bloomsbury "to be an escape from the past and all its horrors", he writes, but they encountered "one fatal, one appalling drawback": "George, always affectionate and kind, could not bear the idea of leaving his sisters with nobody but Thoby and Adrian, who from a social point of view were worse than useless [...] [G]o with them he ought and must". The dismayed Stephen children "hardly knew how to oppose so much well-intentioned fraternal feeling", hence "were weak to the point of pusillanimity: for the long story of George's attentions had [...] been made so far public that he could surely have been called to account". But how far was "so far"? Bell takes Woolf's remark that George, confronted by Dr. Savage, excused his behavior as intended "to comfort me for the fatal illness of my father" to mean that George was called to account that summer: Vanessa, he speculates, told Dr. Savage, who "taxed George with his conduct". But this interview, if it occurred, can scarcely be called *public*. In any case, no such rebuke as Dr. Savage may or may not have offered could deter George from his purpose. "Gone then were their hopes of flying from the past", writes Bell; "the past was coming to live with them" (VWB-I 95-96). If George announced his intention to live with his half-sisters in Bloomsbury on their return from Paris that May - if nothing and no one could prevent him from making himself at home in 46 Gordon Square - the suicidal madness into which twenty-one year old Virginia then fled might have seemed the only possible escape from the emotional labyrinth that threatened to entrap and destroy her. That she survived to create *Mrs. Dalloway* - which, "by the madness which interrupts it, [...] opens a void, a moment of silence", wherein "the world finds itself arraigned [...] and responsible before it for what it is" - gives Woolf the stature of Joyce and Picasso and makes *Mrs. Dalloway* a work to set beside *Ulysses* and the *Minotauromachy*.³¹

But in May 1904, when Virginia broke down after being escorted home from Paris by George, thirty-six year-old George had for some time been trying to settle his own future, and once he did his fervent solicitude for his young sisters abruptly ebbed. Woolf remembered that when Wilfrid Blunt's daughter Judith "refused him he sat at the head of the table sobbing loudly, but continuing to eat". Next Lady Flora Russell briefly accepted him, on which news young Virginia wired enthusiastically, "She is an angel" and signed her family nickname "Goat". That the telegram delivered read "'She is an aged Goat' [...]" had something to do, George said, with Flora's reluctance to ally herself with the Stephen family" after all (MB 167). Woolf hangs this comic anecdote on an error of transmission, and anyone who worked with Woolf's elegant but elliptical handwriting knows the telegraph operator's predicament. Still, since the assumption of conjugal duties by the elder fiancée or "aged Goat" would have relieved the hapless young Goat of her duty to save George from "the arms of whores", we can't rule out a Freudian slip. No matter. Suddenly that summer, Bell writes, "like a Goddess from a Machine, came Lady Margaret Herbert. George proposed; she accepted [...] they were married. [...] The Bloomsbury ménage was saved from disaster", and Virginia emerged from suicidal madness to embark on the brave new world of 46 Gordon Square (VWB-I 96).

Putting first hand experience of modernism's unacknowledged brothels behind them at long last, Vanessa and Virginia embraced Bloomsbury's new freedoms by degrees, as the evolution of Vanessa's style from *Iceland Poppies* (1909) to *Nude with Poppies* (1916) illustrates. Possibly Virginia's mockery of *Euphrosyne*, a book of poems by Thoby's Cambridge friends printed in 1905 - among them a male speaker's insipid lament of having himself earlier ruined a young woman he has encountered again by chance in a brothel - owed something to the hyper-alertness to obscenity, hypocrisy, and indecency her minotauromachy had thrust upon her.³² But mid-1906 marks a watershed between repressive Kensington hypocrisy and Bloomsbury freedom. "Margaret [Duckworth] sends a post card", Virginia tells Violet on 29 June, "to say 'I quite understand. Shant expect you at Devonshire House or Osterley or anywhere' is that a snub? I think so - but we had to bring it upon us, and the sooner the better. And now we are free women! Any form of slavery is Degrading - and the damage done to the mind is worse than that done to the body!" (L-I 228).

Just days before Virginia issued this elated emancipation proclamation, she wrote her first extant short story, dated 20-23 June 1906. Unpublished and untitled by its author, it now bears the rather misleading title "Phyllis

and Rosamond".³³ Its eponymous characters - two sisters of marriageable, indeed urgently marriageable, age - follow a Kensington evening like those the Stephen sisters had by 1906 forever escaped with a late-night visit to the beautiful Miss Tristram and her sister, Sylvia, in a Bloomsbury square. The story thus doubles and mirrors the Stephen sisters' two lives in two London neighborhoods as each pair of sisters regards the other across an unbridgeable social abyss. Phyllis and Rosamond are the women Vanessa and Virginia would have had to struggle not to become had their parents and Stella lived, while the orphaned Tristram³⁴ sisters dwell in a freedom Phyllis and Rosamond only dimly glimpse through their "slavery" (CSF 22). Whereas these sisters cannot escape the marriage market - portal to the only future either can conceive - the young novelist Sylvia Tristram and her sister inhabit a symbolic periphery of the sex/gender system. They have money enough to live in rooms of their own, discuss sex and marriage freely in mixed-sex conversation, can choose to marry or not, and meanwhile flourish in stimulating company. Was this the story Virginia sent her friend Madge Vaughan, only to be told she had "no heart - at least in my writing"? "[R]eally I begin to get alarmed", Virginia mused to Violet. "If marriage is necessary to one's style, I shall have to think about it. There is some truth in it, isn't there? - but not the whole truth. And there is something indecent, to my virgin mind, in a maiden having that kind of heart. 'The air is full of it' says Madge: but I breathe something else" (L-I 228, June? 1906). Far from Kensington's hidden brothels Virginia breathes freedom in a Bloomsbury home that could never have meant what it did had not 22 Hyde Park Gate preceded it - and, instead of entering the socioeconomic marriage system, vivisects it.

For Vanessa and Virginia, modern women artists who wrested control of their destiny from the marriage market, love and mating were almost as free as thought and speech. Their new freedom had a basis at once economic - their modest inheritances, stretched by communal living and supplemented by paid work (Virginia celebrated her first checks for articles and reviews) - and social. At 46 Gordon Square the Stephen brothers and sisters were ontological if not economic and political equals: the levelling effect of siblinghood (and birth order) counteracted their differential privilege in the sex/gender system.³⁵ Disengaged from George, Lady Margaret, and all those friends and connections who *in loco parentis* expressed alarm at the air the sisters now breathed, Vanessa and Virginia lived their new freedom each in her own way.³⁶ The adorably bawdy Vanessa (to whose own minotauromachy Duncan Grant's 1917 *Leda and the Duck* may allude) married the wealthy libertine Clive, took Fry

and Grant as lovers, raised three children, and pursued her painting on the path opened by the 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition, having discovered in the French paintings "a sudden liberation & encouragement to feel for oneself which were absolutely overwhelming. [...] It was as if at last one might say things one had always felt instead of trying to say things that other people told one to feel. Freedom was given one to be oneself & that to the young is the most exciting thing that can happen".³⁷ Vanessa's life and art not only give the personal, social, and public freedom of Clive's French model a local habitation and a name but, like Virginia's, make women the gazing subjects (and "agents") rather than mute objects (or "patients") of that freedom. Her 1913-14 *Adam and Eve* designs for Omega Workshop domestic furnishings - a screen, a bedstead - evoke a joyous sensual paradise free of hypocritical prohibition, whether divine, parental, or imposed by the British Public, while the quiet intensity of her 1917 *Tub* stands with Gauguin's and Picasso's expressionist nudes. Vanessa's Bloomsbury, in short, parleys French bohemia into a mixed-sex artists' milieu, and French expressionism into an emancipatory³⁸ modernism that, a century later, still eludes androcentric cultural historians.

In Virginia Woolf's life and work we see a different confluence of "French" personal, social, and public freedoms with "British" political freedoms. Virginia married Leonard Woolf, a "penniless" though Cambridge-educated "Jew"; had a passionate affair with Vita Sackville-West; and, from her first short story onward, produced an oeuvre that rivals Picasso's and Joyce's in conceptual power, analytic depth, stylistic range and invention, and sheer imaginative genius (L-I 500, 4 June 1912). Unlike Vanessa, Virginia claimed for women not only the personal, social, and expressive freedom Clive associates with France but the political freedom he associates with England. Thus in 1910, while enjoying the French paintings Fry and MacCarthy had brought to London, Virginia was also stuffing envelopes and attending suffrage meetings. Although Leonard, who revered Pericles's funeral oration on civilization's unwritten laws, privately called her "Aspasia" after Pericles's learned and eloquent mistress, it was not lost on Virginia that Aspasia was neither Pericles's wife nor (like other Greek women) a citizen of his great democracy. When the name "Aspasia" surfaces briefly in the 1921 manuscript of *Jacob's Room*, Jacob is thinking of the London prostitute who sits on his knees as "did all good women in the days of the Greeks" - her name "bestowed [...] by a painter who had wished it to signify that the flower of her maidenhood was still unplucked": Florinda, who, had she "had a mind, [...] might have read" the contradictions of her position "with clearer eyes than we can".³⁹

By the time she wrote those words, Woolf was a modern Aspasia with a vote, a pen, and a press - a genius on the order of Picasso whose portrayal of the "horribly brainless" Florinda pursues the "noble work" of letting light in on London's brothels in a way that protects the horribly brainless George from having to shoot himself (JR 80). For Woolf as for Joyce, the brothel was no mere "aesthetic space" but a realist underworld where an unflinching gaze could divine truths about modern society and its future (IBM-I 1). Not only did she survive her minotauromachy to embrace freedom of body and mind, founded on a room of her own with a lock on the door and sustained by her inheritance, paid journalism, aunt's legacy, novels, and Press; the emancipatory voice that sounds from her first short story to *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* speaks increasingly to women and men around the world. Both the art Woolf created out of her "French" personal, social, and public freedom and her advocacy of women's right to "British" political freedom resonate far beyond Bloomsbury's temporal and spatial borders. Finally, what makes Woolf an author "at least as interesting as Joyce" (IBM-I 2) - and one no adequate understanding of modernism can ignore - is not that she wrote from within modernism's brothels but that she emerged from her minotauromachy, wounded but victorious, to write with such vision and power from outside them.

NOTES

An illustrated version of this paper appears in *Modernism/Modernity* 12:4 (November 2005): 553-80; a text-only version appears in *Cahiers victoriens et edouardiens*, Special Issue on the Legacy of Bloomsbury, ed. Christine Reynier, 62 (octobre 2005): 137-56; a précis appears in *Woolf and the Art of Exploration: Selected Essays from the Fifteenth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Helen Southworth and Elisa Kay Sparks (Clemson, S.C.: Clemson University Press, 2006): 30. I thank Maria Cândida Zamith Silva, Luísa Maria Flora, Christine Reynier, Rishona Zimring, and Lawrence Rainey for the invitations from which it developed, and audiences at the Porto conference, the Fifteenth International Woolf Conference, and the University of Michigan for astute questions and comments.

¹ Clive Bell, *On British Freedom*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1923, 1. Henceforth abbreviated OBF.

² *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell, 5 vols. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977-84, D-II 160, 6 February 1922.

³ On Woolf's negotiation of state censorship, see Celia Marshik, *British Modernism and Censorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, chap. 3: "Virginia Woolf and the Gender of Censorship".

⁴ Around May 1923 Woolf importuned Clive to send "your pamphlet" for Hogarth (*The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols.. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975-80, L-III 33). He appears to have done so, for on 29 May she tells him that she wrote him "the most brilliant charming, and flattering letter that I have ever written, or you received" but stuffed it in a rose catalogue by mistake; and reports remarking to Leonard and T.S. Eliot that, unlike Raymond Mortimer and F.L. Lucas, Clive is not "afraid to have an idea", so that "besides perking it with the best of them; something solid remains" (*Congenial Spirits: The Selected Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Joanne Trautmann Banks. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989, CS 167-68). *On British Freedom* appeared that summer.

⁵ See Robert Scholes, "In the Brothel of Modernism: Picasso and Joyce" (IBM), www.brown.edu/Departments/MCM/people/Pic_Joy (n.d.), Part I of III, 1. Scholes writes, "This essay has existed in a number of forms", among them a 1991 lecture to which Gayatri Spivak posed objections that his on-line version addresses (I 1).

⁶ Scholes III 5, Cf. Woolf's treatment of this theme in *The Pargiters*.

⁷ On the exhibition's reception see J.B. Bullen, ed. *Post-Impressionists in England*. London: Routledge, 1988; Ian Dunlop, *The Shock of the New: Seven Historic Exhibitions of*

Modern Art. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972, chap. 4; and Peter Stansky, *On or About 1910: Early Bloomsbury and Its Intimate World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996, chap. 8.

- ⁸ Hugh and Mirabel Cecil, *Clever Hearts: Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, A Biography*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1990, 107, 109; cited by Stansky, 177-78. Van Gogh died in 1890.
- ⁹ Cecil and Cecil, *Clever Hearts* 108, cited by Stansky, 177.
- ¹⁰ *Letters of Roger Fry*, ed. Denys Sutton. London: 1972, 1:337, cited in Stansky 181; Roger Fry, "The Grafton Gallery — 1", *The Nation*, 19 November 1910, 331, in Bullen, *Post-Impressionists in England*, 121. The plan was, MacCarthy recalled, "No gradual infiltration, but — Bang! An assault along the whole academic front of Art" (Cecil and Cecil, *Clever Hearts*, 109). "Presumably", Stansky writes, "the theory was to produce only one sort of shock and not compound the situation through more traditional ways of offending conventional morality" (177).
- ¹¹ Cecil and Cecil, *Clever Hearts*, 111.
- ¹² Desmond MacCarthy, "The Art Quake of 1910", *Listener*, 1 February 1945, 124, cited in Stansky 210-11. As MacCarthy saw it, "anything new in Art is likely to provoke the same kind of indignation as immoral conduct, and vice is detected in perfectly innocent pictures. Perhaps any mental shock is apt to remind people of moral shocks they've received and the sensations being similar, they attribute them to the same cause" (Cecil and Cecil, *Clever Hearts*, 110-11).
- ¹³ Lucy McDiarmid, "A Box for Wilfrid Blunt", *PMLA* 120:1, January 2005, 163; W.S. Blunt, *My Diaries*, London, 1921, entry for 15 November 1910, in Bullen, *Post-Impressionists in England*, 114.
- ¹⁴ Cecil and Cecil, *Clever Hearts*, 112.
- ¹⁵ Virginia Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury" (1921-22), in *Moments of Being*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985 (MB 200-1). Gwen Darwin Raverat recalled that "Virginia's childhood friend, the poet Rupert Brooke, had called Brunswick Square a "bawdy house" (Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*. New York: Knopf, 1997, 291). On "heartless" Bloomsbury see L-I 228, June? 1906, quoted below.
- ¹⁶ MB 181; Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, 2 vols.. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971, VWB-I 76.
- ¹⁷ "22 Hyde Park Gate" (1920), in *Moments of Being*, MB 172-73.
- ¹⁸ MB 195; Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past" (1939-40), *Moments of Being*, 106; L-VI 56, 14 July 1936
- ¹⁹ MB 182. On Hugh Whitbread as a portrait of George, see my *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, 119-26.

- ²⁰ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981, 105.
- ²¹ Photograph by Barbara Bagenal (1959), rpt. in Mary Ann Caws and Sarah Bird Wright, *Bloomsbury and France*. New York: Oxford, 2000, 89.
- ²² For an analysis of Joyce's representations of the brothels that diverges from Scholes's and aligns Joyce more closely with Woolf, see my *Modernism's Body: Sex, Culture and Joyce*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, chap. 3, esp. 136-58, 170-96.
- ²³ The Minotaur — a monster, half man, half bull, son of Minos's wife Pasiphaë and a bull — was imprisoned in a labyrinth designed by Daedalus; there he devoured each year a tribute of seven maidens and seven boys, exacted of the Athenians, until he was slain by Theseus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 8). The suffix *-machy* (battle, fighting) is a learned borrowing from Greek used in the formation of compound words.
- ²⁴ MB 166. "Miss Willett of Brighton" may be a fictional or fictionalized character - and an alter ego of Virginia Stephen - like the fictional Victorian novelist "Miss Willatt" in her 1909 "Memoirs of a Novelist", who died with her witness unuttered except that "Once she raised her left hand, 'upon which she wore her mother's wedding ring', and let it fall again" (Woolf, *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. Susan Dick. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), CSF 69, 73.
- ²⁵ Kirk Varnadoe, "Picasso's Self-Portraits", in *Picasso and Portraiture*, ed. William Rubin. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996, 153.
- ²⁶ Keynes's praise left Woolf (whose greatest works were still in the future) unmoved: "oh dear what nonsense - for if George is my climax I'm a mere scribbler" (D-II 121, 26 May 1921); Jean Blot too judges it "un petit chef-d'oeuvre" (*Bloomsbury: Histoire d'une sensibilité artistique et politique anglaise*. Paris: Editions Ballard, 1992, 57).
- ²⁷ Gerald Duckworth accompanied them in Italy, a plan Virginia accepted with reluctance: "The difficulty seems to be Gerald: however I let that slide with the rest. [...] Somehow Gerald's figure never did make part of the Venetian foreground I have in my mind!" (L-I 134, March 1904, to Violet Dickinson).
- ²⁸ Clive Bell, "Paris 1904", in *Old Friends* (1956), *Civilization and Old Friends*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973, 150. Bell cites Somerset Maugham's "delightful essay" on "the goings on in that upper room" of the *Chat Blanc* in or about 1904 (151-52).
- ²⁹ Bell, "Virginia Woolf", in *Old Friends*, 94.
- ³⁰ Vanessa Stephen to Virginia Stephen, 8 September 1904, Berg Collection, New York Public Library

- ³¹ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Random House/Vintage, 1973, 288-9; cf. x-xi.
- ³² See VWB-I 205-6 & nn; and my *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde*, 20-21 & nn.
- ³³ Virginia's untitled story is titled "Phyllis and Rosamond" by Quentin Bell (VWB Index Volume I) and Susan Dick (*Complete Shorter Fiction* 289n1). I thank Maria Cândida Zamith Silva for bringing this point to our attention in her presentation at the "Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury" colloquium commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the first Bloomsbury "evening", Porto, Portugal, 16 March 2005.
- ³⁴ The Celtic name may mean "herald" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*).
- ³⁵ Thus, annoying as Adrian Stephen may have found Vanessa's delight in "bawdy remark[s]" and Virginia's "daring sallies" and the Bloomsbury "method of wooing" she deployed upon Leonard (i.e., "to talk about nothing but fucking and [illegible] which she calls with a great leer copulation and WCs and I dare say she will be successful, I hope so anyway"), he had nothing of George's sensibility or influence (Jean MacGibbon, *There's the Lighthouse: A Biography of Adrian Stephen*. London: James & James, 1997, 64, 84).
- ³⁶ Woolf captures their differences in the relation between Rachel Vinrace and Helen Ambrose in *Melymbrosia* and *The Voyage Out* (1907-1913), as when Rachel/Virginia urges Helen/Vanessa to embroider "a troupe of naked knights" into her scenic tapestry or laments her not liking women and her passive acquiescence to aggressively sexual males (*Melymbrosia: An Early Version of The Voyage Out*, ed. Louise A. DeSalvo. New York: New York Public Library, 1982, 129).
- ³⁷ Vanessa Bell, "Memories of Roger Fry", Oct. 1934, 7-9; cited by Stansky, 247; "How adorable was Nessa, as she sat, rocking with laughter at the bawdiness of the jokes!" (Lytton Strachey, "Monday, June 26 1916", in *The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*, ed. S.P. Rosenbaum, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995, 32).
- ³⁸ For example, Hugh Kenner (cited by Scholes) equates High Modernism with American and Irish expatriate art (Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Stein) and, discounting Bloomsbury's internationalism, places Woolf with "provincial", "regional" authors such as Faulkner and Williams ("The Making of the Modernist Canon", *Chicago Review* 34. Spring 1984, 49-61).
- ³⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room: The Holograph Draft*, transcribed and ed. Edward L. Bishop. New York: Pace University Press, 1998, 89; *Jacob's Room* (1922). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1950, 76, 77, 79. Marshik (n.3 above) analyses the figure of the prostitute in *The Voyage Out*, *Jacob's Room*, and *Orlando*.

'FOR THERE THEY WERE': *MRS. DALLOWAY*, CLARISSA AND *MRS. DALLOWAY*

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"What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? he thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement? - It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was."¹

This is the way the novel *Mrs Dalloway* comes to its conclusion. The title is precisely "Mrs. Dalloway" and not "Clarissa". This choice by the author seems to mean that Mrs. Dalloway shades, if not darkens, the Clarissa that lies inside her. Not only in its relationship with time, but also from a psychological, emotional and social point of view, this inner dialogue between two characters who are one, is one of the most interesting aspects of this novel, suggesting, from the discourse level to the level of the text's reception, the more or less unbearable fluidity of our perception of life, of its presence in us, of the diluting of what we are into what we think we are; always in transformation, in metamorphosis.

It is obvious that this is closely related with the perception of time, with its course, with chronological time, and also, and above all, with inner time, with the experience of time within. But, in Virginia Woolf's novel, it is also related with the skilful way of dealing with point of view, point of view being a crucial issue in literature and in life, which are almost the same thing when we want to look into the depths of the self and what we see transforms itself from aspect into identity.

What Peter yearns for, at the end of the novel, and what he finally sees, what finally approaches him, is Clarissa, and it is this name he uses to refer to the woman who inflamed his life at the age of 18. But what the reader sees, although what he/she sees goes through the filter of Peter Walsh's viewpoint, is Mrs. Dalloway, the hostess, Richard's wife and Elizabeth's mother, a 52 year

old woman who saw death in the shape of a salmon² and felt it come and go from her party in the shape of Septimus, in a quest for identity, the identity Septimus felt lost and she felt threatened. This is also the reason why she looks for Peter, as if she could find in him a little of her former self, of the Clarissa of Bourton, with the thrill, the flavour, the excitement of over thirty years before.

The perception of this division of a woman in two, which happens, significantly, both within and without, is verbally announced at a decisive moment in the narrative:

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 of 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 any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway (9).

It is, in fact, the discovery of a change, of a metamorphosis, that determines in this woman the definite inexorable separation between past and present. Either because of her marriage and/or her age, or even in consequence of her attitude to life, marked now by successive impressions of decay and death, Clarissa is lost in Mrs. Dalloway.

This woman's self-defense is precisely the flux of life; it is only this stream that grabs her and holds her - "only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them", "astonishing" because it still surprises and fascinates, "solemn" because in it the elementary fight between life and death takes place, a fight in which it is still possible for life to withstand its losses.

This stream that beguiles her, this stream made of little things, of subtle flavours, is essentially represented in two different ways: Mrs. Dalloway's walk through the streets of London, and the party she offers at her home. Both situations stimulate, they are little splendours of living; and the party further conveys an impression of self-control which Mrs. Dalloway is psychologically in need of.³ On the other hand, we must not forget the place where her house opens itself to the outside, allowing the entrance of the magical particles of life - the window; the window that opens to the outside and to the inside. To the inside to the vistas of Bourton, to Clarissa (and to Peter Walsh and Sally Seton), enlightening, from the past, that part of it where the present finds nourishment -

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air (3).

To the outside to the other side of the street, where the front door neighbour, appearing and disappearing, triggers the imagination of Mrs. Dalloway, in an exercise of curiosity and visual extension that chases the "old lady" in the unseen sequences of her movements. And this is also necessary to Mrs. Dalloway so that life can resist and go on. At the window are, in fact, Mrs. Dalloway and Clarissa, two women in one. And if Bourton is essential so that Mrs. Dalloway, because of Clarissa, goes on standing on her feet, the front door neighbour is to Mrs Dalloway also an important part of reality and of the way, perceptible to the reader as well, that enables reality to impose its flavours. This happens because, in fact, from window to window, a contact is established, though superficial as many others in life, between two presences in it. Mrs. Dalloway and the "old lady" in front hardly know each other; however, each one in her room,⁴ by opening the window, switches on the ignition, opens up to the stardust of life and blends with it - it is a myriad of impressions, of perceptions, of movements, of colours, of smells, a rumour that prevails, engine, aeroplane, race - the flux of life. Virginia Woolf at her best - the idea she had conveyed in "Modern Fiction" (CE-II 103-10) materializes again in this novel. When she criticizes in her essay the novelists she called "materialists", because they didn't deal with life as it is, she asks: "Is life like this? Must novels be like this?" -

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being like this. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions - trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; [...] Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged: life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.⁵

The walking in the streets of London allows Virginia Woolf, in the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, to explore the process that materializes the intentions theoretically presented in "Modern Fiction". Following Mrs. Dalloway or Peter, Richard or Elizabeth, and epitomized in a characteristically lively way

by Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf makes us feel, in the street, the stream of life that dissolves each being in it and that, however, nourishes each of them as a vital element:

In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June (4).

The walks through the streets of London, in their main occurrences, express this stream of life, also in the stream of consciousness, in which the characters appear and disappear, appear and disappear, like particles that come up to the surface of the waves and then sink and soon after show up again. This process transmits such a strong impression of flux that some critical opinions argue that maybe there are no "main" characters in this novel; they maintain that there is only life, its manifestation and its expression as a force that creates, that drags and consumes:

There is a point of view from which the subject of the book no longer appears to be the life story of Clarissa Dalloway nor of Septimus Warren Smith, but human life itself, its tension between misery and happiness and its inevitable consummation in death.⁶

One of the main ideas in Woolf's novel, suggested by this process of a stream that carries everything along, is that all of us live through and in each other, through things and in them, and that therefore we survive, thus making death irrelevant:

Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself (8).

Life and death seem to emerge, in that flow, like alternating occurrences of a single strength, which might lead to the opinion of some critics who tend to bring together Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, characters who do not even come to know each other and who, indeed, do not need to know each other, if we follow the point of view of Virginia Woolf and her interesting and consistent way of expressing it in this novel. Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus operate as the positive and the negative poles of one of the faces of reality. Mrs. Dalloway's identification with Septimus, which occurs in her party in Victoria Street, causing a moment of awareness, happens in defense of each other's identity. However, the processes of this quest are rather different, as well as their results. Mrs. Dalloway is sunk in the flux of life, suicide is not worth it, from it she cannot expect the salvation of her identity. Since the flux of life transports everything, from life as from death, suicide ceases to be relevant; Mrs. Dalloway blends herself in with this flux, thus finding a nourishment and a way of preserving her always fragile and threatened identity. In Septimus, on the contrary, suicide is worth it as a way of preserving identity because his egocentric life (with an important value in itself by the isolation it has reached and by the perception that his vision, as well as Lazarus's, is superior) distinguishes itself from everything. His interior journey is a matter of self-worth, and his mental disturbance, caused by the war, collided with his lifelong efforts at promoting his image; therefore, suicide was in fact worthwhile as identification with himself, in an escape from the depersonalization that would arise from Dr. Bradshaw's torpid method of "conversion". The great irony in this novel is exactly the fact that it is the death of Septimus that most sticks Clarissa Dalloway to life, precisely in the middle of a party she organized and that, in her own view, was losing its meaning. The effect of awareness arises from the recognition that the distance between life and death is almost imperceptible, but that you'd better grab life by an act of will, thus helping maintain one or other of its splendours on the surface. Because in fact the splendours of life, even if they are charming, are also fragile and small; they appear and disappear in the tide; the faces of the others are ours, our faces the mirrors of theirs. The reader of this novel understands this notion better because it materializes in the narrative strategies. It is as if the flow of life would work as an engine with valves, allowing to emerge, in successive ignitions, various elements in swift formations, like passing birds in their flight, and an observer in constant expectation would never know what might show up in his visual horizon, nor how much in it would last. This process has the consequence that the spectator occasionally sees something

more or something less than the images offered to him, there resulting an impression of uncertainty that demands the checking of what is real and what is not. On the level of the reception, it is as if the reader would stand at the window with Mrs. Dalloway, looking at the other side of the street at the front door neighbour, trying to see her and her room, following her movements that suddenly you cease to see but whose sequences you are able to imagine. The reader, in fact, must sometimes check how accurate his/her own perspective and range of vision are, he/she must pay attention to the text itself, to the narrative strategies. The process of Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* is, on the one hand, interiorizing enough to require the reader's attention to the fluctuations of the "stream of consciousness", even if the "stream of consciousness" in Woolf's novel is less radical than in some of Joyce's treatments; on the other hand, the expression of life as a flux, remarkably materialized in the characters' progress through the streets that could, from Elizabeth's point of view, be called "the stream of the Strand" (116), implies almost imperceptible changes of viewpoint and particularly subtle occurrences of the free indirect style that will not stand any kind of distraction on the reader's part.⁷ In fact, the reader cannot let him/herself be carried away only by the narrative process and/or by the thematic development. He/she must pay close attention to how the textual building works; sometimes he/she is taken by surprise, interrupts the course of the reading, comes back and corrects an impression.

If we take it for granted that the act of reading takes place under the condition of absolute concentration, we can state that there are novels in which the illusion of reality is so intense that the reader seems to detach him/herself from his/her circumstance to become a part of the fictional situation. In those cases we could say that the power of the text is absolute but, oddly enough, it is in those cases that the reader is not aware of it, i.e., he/she is not aware of the text as "construction". On the other hand, in the novels that stimulate the reader to be aware of aspects of the textual construction, the illusion of reality diminishes, the reader is at times "dis-illusioned"; in compensation, he/she becomes more perceptive and starts a process of discovery of the textual architecture. The widening of the point of view is one of the possible consequences of this reading situation. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, due to the textual strategies, the reader begins to build a point of view that does not mingle with the one of the narrator or the one of the characters; he/she is then forced to interrupt the reading process, to break the rhythm that so often grips him/her, to deliberate and to question: how does Virginia Woolf do this? How does she do that? A new point of view emerges that does not

necessarily coincide with any of the others, but which still takes in all of them and surpasses them, because all of the others reveal people, and the reader's viewpoint confirms them to be 'real', credible human beings; but, on top of that, cognitive awareness of the text does not allow him/her to forget that those people are characters in a novel, characters in a book. In this novel the reader realizes that the end approaches because the party in the house in Victoria Street is coming to an end and from it there remain only the people from within, Richard and Elizabeth, and the two people from without who had been the most important to Clarissa: Peter and Sally. Being used to seeing everything on two levels, the reader notes the absence of the hostess, as a person. This absence is exacerbated by the anxiety felt by Peter Walsh; and he/she reflects, in expectation, upon the way the curtain is going to fall. The hostess shows up and it is Clarissa that Peter sees. But the reader sees Mrs. Dalloway; and above all he/she sees the book, the novel, the title of which is the name of one half of the main character; and when the book comes to a close, in a flash of light from the stream, it allows us to glimpse this woman as Clarissa Dalloway, two in one, bringing past and present together in their exclusive but fleeting reality, which is about to disappear - "For there they were".

NOTES

- ¹ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Oxford University Press, Oxford World's Classics, 1998, p. 165. The quotations and references to the novel are all from this edition.
- ² "That is all," she said, looking at the fishmonger's. "That is all," she repeated [...] (9)
- ³ Even though we should not forget that during the party the hostess's excitement gives way to a moment of awareness of strong depression. Once again, Virginia Woolf confirms the psychological acuteness of her view.
- ⁴ The importance of the front door neighbour to Mrs Dalloway is overtly asserted on p. 108, in which we find one of the clearest expressions of the main character's concept of life.
- ⁵ Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction". *Collected Essays*, Vol. 2, pp.103-10.
- ⁶ Joan Bennett, "The Form of the Novels", in Mark Schorer (ed.), *Modern British Fiction: Essays in Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press (A Galaxy Book), 1961, p.425.
- ⁷ Cf., for example, p.24 from "Then, while a seedy-looking nondescript man" to "Ludgate Circus"; and pp.114 -115 from "Buses swooped" to "it proves she has a heart".

A faint, grayscale background image of a woman's profile, facing left. Her hair is dark and pulled back, and she appears to be wearing a light-colored garment. The image is very faded, serving as a subtle backdrop for the text.

Afternoon

BEARS IN BLOOMSBURY: JANE ELLEN HARRISON AND RUSSIA

Marilyn Schwinn-Smith — Five Colleges

[I]t is no longer within the power of the English mind - the gift may be enjoyed perhaps in Russia - to see fur grow upon smooth ears and cloven hoofs where there are ten separate toes.

Virginia Woolf

October 1924, the first English translation of *The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum*, a 17th century Russian text, was published to good reviews as the 41st imprint of The Hogarth Press.¹ *Avvakum* joined an already impressive list of Russian titles at Hogarth, the press founded and managed by Leonard and Virginia Woolf.² November 1926, the young publishing firm - The Nonesuch Press - issued its 35th publication, *The Book of the Bear*.³ Nonesuch shared neither Hogarth's interest in Russian texts nor new authors.⁴ *The Book of the Bear* is the only translation from the Russian and one of only three children's books among Nonesuch's first hundred titles. *Avvakum* and *The Book of the Bear* were anomalous ventures for both these private Presses, differing though their practices and objectives were.

This essay charts the course of their translator - classical archeologist turned historical anthropologist - Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928), and her role in facilitating a connection between the worlds of privileged Bloomsbury and impoverished Russian refugees.⁵ The story of how these charming, diminutive books came into the world offers a glimpse into the stark divergence between the social reality of Britain - sometimes viewed as relatively unchanged after the horrors of the Great War⁶ - and that of the Russian intellectuals living in what they still believed to be a temporary exile after the cataclysmic events of revolution and civil war. Further, it brings together a number of diverse threads: the close-knit nature of the British literary community, the comparable intimacy among Russians abroad, and Bloomsbury's fascination with an exotic notion of Russia.

English sentiment regarding Russia dates at least from the sixteenth-century English voyages of discovery and their accounts of the Muscovites published by Richard Hakluyt.⁷ The persistence into the twentieth century of the negative national and racial stereotypes fostered by Hakluyt's narratives was accentuated by Russia's cultural and historical isolation from the West. Virginia Woolf highlights the ambiguous human/animal boundary inherent in Hakluyt's depictions of a barbaric Russia in the Russian episode of *Orlando* (1928) - a kind of tribute to the tenacity of ancient stereotypes.⁸

Cultural alienation was paralleled by political animosity. Nineteenth-century competition for the territories of Central Asia intensified a natural antagonism between a "liberal" Great Britain and a "reactionary" Imperial Russia. With the 1907 signing of the Anglo-Russian entente, British hostility to Russia modulated into curiosity. Travel between the two countries increased, paralleled by a notable increase in literary translation.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Constance Black Garnett (1862-1946) was the pre-eminent translator of Russian literature into English.⁹ The 1912 publication of the Garnett translation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* is universally acknowledged as the stimulus to the "Russia Fever" which subsequently consumed the British public. Constance was the first to translate Dostoevsky and Chekhov (the Russian authors most in vogue during the second decade of the twentieth century) into English directly from the Russian.¹⁰ Prior to Garnett's work, British access to Russian literature was largely mediated through French. The literature was read either in French, as Virginia Woolf had read *Crime and Punishment* during her honeymoon, or translated into English from the French.

A further stimulus to British interest in Russia was their allied status during World War I. Among its rationales for the war, German propaganda had promulgated the argument that "Moscovite barbarism" must be defeated. The British periodic press devoted considerable space to the question: who are the Russians? Was Russia civilized or barbaric, part of Europe or the Orient? These were the terms of the debate. Translations of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky became primary texts for addressing the question: who are the Russians? The 1917 Russian Revolution, nearly coincident with the end of the war, created an entirely new focus for the debate. By 1921, British interest in Russia "was undergoing an upsurge [...], spiced now in the post-revolutionary situation by even sharper factionalism than had been the case in the liberal/revolutionary debates before 1914" (Smith, *Mirsky* 87).

There had been a Russian community in Britain before the war, but

the diaspora following the events of 1917 and ensuing Russian Civil War sent into the European capitals an influx of artists and intellectuals who had lived through those seemingly apocalyptic events.¹¹ The explosion of art during the Russian Silver Age (1892-1917) continued along revolutionary paths into the 1920's. This second generation of "Russia Abroad" could potentially mediate access to that mysterious, alien world of such interest, if largely inaccessible, to British youth.¹² For literary Russians, survival itself demanded that they expand their readership beyond the narrow market of their impoverished, *émigré* compatriots. This meant cultivating an understanding of the literature they were producing through good literary criticism. And, of course, through translation. The story of *Avvakum* and *The Book of the Bear* touches on all these factors.

G. S. Smith notes that "[p]ostwar 'New' Bloomsbury inherited and developed an idea of Russia that had been shaped by the translation of Russian fiction and theorized before the Great War [...], an idea that Russia, lying outside the cultured world, cared more for things of the spirit" (Smith, *Mirsky* 98). To exemplify the "idea of Russia as apart, different, preserving primordial spiritual values that had been lost in the West", Smith cites an observation, particularly relevant to the subject of this paper, made by Virginia Woolf: "[...] it is no longer within the power of the English mind - the gift may be enjoyed perhaps in Russia - to see fur grow upon smooth ears and cloven hoofs where there are ten separate toes" (cited in Smith, *Mirsky* 99).

Woolf clearly recognized this power within the sixteenth-century mind of Orlando, who named his Russian princess Sasha, thinking of her as the white fox he had kept as a pet during childhood. The allure of a putative, primordial Other, still existing beyond Western European borders, is apparent as well in her 1940 biography of Roger Fry. She wrote: "And with Coué in his mind he went to the Colonial Exhibition at Marseilles and exclaimed, on seeing the Negroes, 'What we've lost by forgetting how to be animals!'" (RF 249)

Who was Jane Harrison that she should be a pivotal figure linking the worlds of Bloomsbury and Russia? While her co-translator, Hope Mirrlees, was the same generation as 'New' Bloomsbury, Harrison had known most of 'New' Bloomsbury since they were children. G. S. Smith notes that this younger generation's notion of a more spiritual Russia had been partially shaped by Harrison herself (Smith, *Mirsky* 98).¹³ The "Second Jane Ellen Harrison Memorial Lecture", delivered a year after her death, addresses Harrison's relevance and appeal to this younger generation:

[. . .] the historical role played by the science of anthropology and comparative religion in undermining Victorian security was at least as great as that of Russian literature, and the real salt and zest of the great age of English Anthropology seems to me to have resided precisely in the heterodox and unacademic Miss Harrison rather than in her more famous and canonized fellow-workers [. . .]. The way walked by her from the study of Greek vases through that of primitive religion to Freud and Tolstoy will be recognized as one of the most illuminating expressions of the intellectual evolution of the English mind at the turn of two historical epochs (Mirsky, "Jane Ellen Harrison and Russia" 3-4).

The lecture further refers her "historic mission: the destruction of the morality on which the mentality of the 'governing people' [...] of England was based"- a destruction realized in the very lives of 'New Bloomsbury'. "Jane Harrison [...] was much younger than her physical generation and intellectually much nearer to her juniors" (16-17).

Virtually all those who left a record of their acquaintance with Harrison highlight her perpetual youthfulness. Leonard Woolf recalled: "When I knew her she was old and frail physically, but she had a mind which remained eternally young" (26). In perhaps the first published acknowledgement of Virginia's affinity for Harrison, Jessie Stewart makes the following observation: "She was the 'Lady Themis'. She liked to be *Potnia Keron*, the 'Lady of the Sprites' of her letters to G[ilbert] M[urray]. Of that tradition let Virginia Woolf speak" (Stewart 187).¹⁴ She then cites the passage referring to Harrison in *A Room of One's Own*, beginning with "The gardens of Newnham" and running through "out of the heart of spring".

The trajectory, from Greek vases to Russian literature, is seen by Harrison's early biographer Sandra Peacock as "the circle completed". Indeed, Harrison frames her memoirs, *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* (Hogarth Press, 1925), with Russia. The opening sentence reads: "In view of my present cult for Russia and things Russian, I like to think that my first childish memory is of the word 'Moscow'" (9). Nearly all writers on Harrison are captivated by her evocation of "childish memories" of things Russian in *Reminiscences* and cite them extensively. Peacock writes:

Jane fell in love with Russia at an early age because of her father's extensive business dealing with Russian timber merchants, and one of her fondest memories was of a Russian sledge in which he sometimes took her for drives. Describing these outings, Jane remarked, "thank God it held only one, so I could dream undisturbed of steppes and Siberia and bears and wolves" (Peacock 11).

Can we identify the salient features of the trajectory from Greek vases to Russian literature? Harrison had abandoned 'the glory that was', with its reverence for Olympian Greece, when she turned from archeology toward primitive religion. From this shift had emerged her late scholarly book, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (1912). In *Themis*, Harrison located the origin of religion in a collectively held emotion: collective desire for the periodic renewal of life which coalesced in rituals devoted to eliciting the new growing season.¹⁵ Harrison's formulation of recurring return, which established her reputation, underlies the ubiquitous references to the perpetual youthfulness of her character and the force of her influence on British Modernist writers.¹⁶

During the years Harrison was theorizing the emotive origins of religion, a number of Cambridge academics was questioning the narrow strictures of institutional religion. "They formed themselves into a society for 'discussion on problems of religion, philosophy and art'". Harrison read the inaugural paper on 7 December 1909. "Heresy and Humanity", addressing the effect of science on human consciousness, the social order and religion, is a fine introduction to the currents of thought roiling the transition from Victorian England into the modern world. A number of Bloomsbury figures belonged to The Heretics Society (see Robinson 232-5) and significant concepts relevant to the writing of both Woolfs are found in the Society's discussions: 'communal psychology' in Leonard's political writings and 'group consciousness' in Virginia's novels.¹⁷

The shift from Greek archeology to religion, accomplished over the first decade of the century, had prepared the soil for Harrison's cult of things Russian, contemporary and past. The focus on emotions which give rise to the actions of ritual enabled Harrison to recognize ritual manifestations in contemporary life. Identifying points in common between ancient and contemporary cultural practices became central to her study of primitive religion and underlay her cultural anthropology. Russia, its language and culture, was to become, over the course of the following decade, the focal point for much of this new research. Harrison took up the study of Russian to get at the literature, to read Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov in the original. In October 1914, she wrote the oft-cited remark that Russia "still cares more than any other nation for things of the spirit" (cited in Stewart 155).

The road to *Avvakum* and *The Book of the Bear* led Harrison through France before returning to Bloomsbury. When she retired in 1922 from her position at Newnham College, Harrison, together with Mirrlees, moved to Paris which

was fast becoming the cultural and academic center of "Russia Abroad" (see Baranova-Shestov 182). In 1923, Harrison was invited to participate in the annual series of *entretiens* (colloquia) convened by Paul Desjardins at his manor, a former Cistercian abbey at Pontigny in Burgundy.

As Smith remarks: "To be invited to Pontigny was to be recognized as a member of the European intellectual aristocracy" (Smith, *Mirsky* 101). Harrison commanded an international reputation for her work among the Cambridge Ritualists which may have prompted the invitation.¹⁸ With the mystique of Harrison's personal reputation in mind, her biographer, Annabel Robinson, notes the theme of the August 1923 session – 'Perpetual Youth', and suggests the possibility that Desjardins had read *Themis*, a book then taught at French universities (292).

Special attention was devoted at the post-war *entretiens* to healing the rift with Germany and breaking down the nationalist isolation which the Great War had exposed. Harrison's turn to things Russian had evolved over the course of the war. In her most public statement, "Epilogue on the War: Peace with Patriotism" (1914), she had looked to Russia, in whose literature she identified a model of humanistic nationalism to counter the divisive nationalism which led to war. Pontigny, then, ushered Harrison into "Russia Abroad" – the Russian intelligentsia displaced by the events pursuant to 1917 – in terms conducive to facilitating their connection with Bloombury. Further, through the *entretiens*, Desjardins sought to further his ideal of a secular spirituality, bringing together diverse intellectuals who, through independent work on particular themes, might develop a body of new doctrine (Robinson 291). In this sense, Pontigny may be seen as an extension of Harrison's role in The Heretics Society.

Harrison wrote from Pontigny on 29 August 1923: "I sit at present - we change every three days - between the Boche novelist Heinrich Mann, who is a dear, and my adored Russian philosopher Shestov - so I am content" (cited in Stewart 191). The *émigré* philosopher Lev Shestov (1866-1938) was the first "Russian to receive this accolade [an invitation to Pontigny]" (Smith, *Mirsky* 101). Through publication of an article on Dostoevsky in a February 1922 issue of *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (NRF), Shestov had come to the attention of the French public. And more significantly, to the attention of Andre Gide. Gide personally invited Shestov to his own six-lecture series on Dostoevsky, and Charles du Bos¹⁹ began negotiations to publish Shestov's work in French (Baranova-Shestov 230-4). Also on the faculty of Paris University (the "Russian section of the Sorbonne"), Shestov offered a four-semester course, 1923/1924 and 1924/1925, on Dostoevsky, "The Philosophical Ideas of Dostoevsky and

Pascal" (Baranova-Shestov 236). It is certainly possible that Harrison may have attended some of these lectures. Through Shestov, it is most likely she met one of the two Russians who figure most prominently in her translations from the Russian: Aleksei Mikhailovich Remizov.²⁰

Harrison and Mirrlees maintained an active social calendar, bringing together over tea English, French and Russian acquaintances. The milieu was decidedly literary. Gide, du Bos, and other writers associated with the NRF and the Pontigny *entretiens* were frequent visitors to Harrison's Paris flat, together with the Russians who became part of her social-intellectual circle. Among the guests on April 9, 1924 were Logan Pearsall Smith and possibly du Bos, and Jean Schlumberger, novelist and critic, founder with Jacques Copeau and André Gide of the NRF (Smith, *Letters* 66nn18, 19).

Harrison's first letter to Remizov is dated March 1, 1924. They are only recently acquainted, for she begs forgiveness at not yet knowing his patronymic. The letter, written in Russian, expresses disappointment at not seeing him the previous Sunday, invites him for the following, the 9th, and, curiously, gives as her new address: 4 rue de Chevreuse, where she had been living since November 1922. The next letter, dated April 7, invites Remizov and his wife, Seraphima to tea on Wednesday the 9th. "Ce sera un grand plaisir - de recevoir Madame aussi. Nous attendons le prince Mirsky qui vous adore!"²¹

The second Russian to collaborate on the translations was Prince Dmitry Petrovich Sviatopolk Mirsky.²² Harrison's friendship with Mirsky was productive for both. They furthered each other's contacts within their respective communities - Mirsky in Bloomsbury,²³ Harrison in "Russia Abroad". Mirsky was Harrison's, as indeed many English speakers', guide into Russian literature, and Harrison style-edited Mirsky's hugely influential *History of Russian Literature* (1927), dedicated to Harrison.²⁴

Smith dates Harrison's acquaintance with Mirsky to the winter, 1923-1924. Her first letter to Mirsky, written the first week of April 1924, extends an invitation to tea on the 9th to which he had evidently responded by the 7th (Smith, *Letters* 65-6).²⁵ It seems certain, then, that Remizov and Mirsky met over tea in Harrison's and Mirrlees' Paris flat on April 9, 1924 where the subject of Avvakum may have come up.

One senses from Harrison's second letter to Mirsky (19 April) that the acquaintance is still quite new: "We are so glad there is a chance of seeing you again." Harrison extends another invitation to tea, for the 26th, perhaps hoping to lure Mirsky with the prospect of Shestov's attendance. The subject of Avvakum has certainly come up by this date, for she continues: "How kind of

you to try and get me the Avvakum text! But I fear it is difficult" (*Letters* 66-7). Harrison's next letter to Mirsky is dated 14 May:

How kind of you to go on hunting for Avvakum. If you can get a copy from Russia I shall be more than glad to have it - but - for the immediate need, Mr Shestov tells me that Mr Remezov has a copy and will gladly lend it me, also that he will help me with any Old Russian difficulties - isn't it good luck (*Letters* 67).

If Shestov had not been present on 26 April, he certainly was discussing the project with Harrison and Remizov, and the translation was soon underway. The first task was to obtain copies of the text. Through the probable intervention of either Shestov or Mirsky, Remizov wrote to Harrison and Mirrlees confirming the offer to assist with Avvakum and inviting them to what would be a working session. Harrison's response to Remizov must have been written after her May 14 letter to Mirsky and before May 25.

Thank you very, very much for the letter and invitation - we will come on Sunday [the 25th] at 4:30 with great pleasure. It's not possible to express how pleased we are that you and Serafima Pavlovna will read with us the Life of Avvakum. Despite the difficulty in obtaining the book it would be terribly difficult for us to understand such an old text without assistance (Remizov Papers).

On the 26th, Harrison reports to Mirsky on the meeting:

We spent a delightful Sunday afternoon with the Remezovs reading the *Zhitie Avvakuma*. We only got thro' a page or two of the introduction - which charmed me, tho' it is a little stiff in places - I am fairly sure that with the help of the two Remizovs (they are both so kind and delightful) I could make a satisfactory translation (*Letters* 68).

Smith suggests that Mirsky advanced the translation proposal. Though Mirsky had a personal interest in Avvakum (his two great-aunts had been exiled for their support of the Archpriest), the text's status as a literary monument of medieval Russia alone would have motivated him to propose a translation. Mirsky found a vitality in Avvakum's language which he would have preferred to see in the literature currently written in the emigration. Throughout his sojourn in the West, Mirsky actively promoted those contemporary Russian authors in the *émigré* community who satisfied his critical judgments. He was no less active in cultivating English appreciation of Russian literature, working

tirelessly to arrange the publication of English translations. He sent five letters alone to Charles Prentiss at Chatto & Windus promoting publication of English-language translations of Remizov (see Rogachevskii).

On points of language and style, the aesthetics of Mirsky and Remizov coincided: live, colloquial speech was the *sine qua non* for both. In his preface to the translation, Mirsky lectures both contemporary Russian authors and those foreigners who assert that there is "no difference between the spoken and the written language" of nineteenth-century Russian authors:

The use of the language of everyday is a thing unknown to the unsophisticated stages of civilization. This is what makes Avvakum so astonishingly modern. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the Russian literary craftsman of to-day has more to learn from Avvakum than from any writer of the nineteenth century. Turgenev and Tolstoy [...] seem as academic as Rasselas in the presence of Avvakum's daring modernity (27-8).

Mirsky's emphasis on the modernity of Avvakum's language sheds light on the Woolfs' decision to publish a seventeenth-century Russian text and warrants an extended discussion. A 1979 critique of Harrison and Mirrlees' translation notes Mirsky's criterion:

[It] contains numerous serious errors, while its quaintly archaic, rather elevated manner transmits little of Avvakum's dyadic style and fails to illustrate an observation found in D. S. Mirsky's introduction to this very translation, that 'Avvakum's style, archaic in detail, is essentially the same as the (uneducated) spoken Russian of today' (Brostrom, "Preface" vii).

I cite at length Mirsky's remarks concerning Avvakum's language and the problem it poses to an English translator:

[Avvakum's] groundwork is the spoken language of his time, that is, a language essentially the same as the spoken language of to-day (or at least of uneducated classes of twenty or thirty years ago). Wrought into this groundwork are certain elements of the literary Slavonic of the sacred Books. His use of these, however, is quite peculiar: it appears only in the form of quotations from or allusions to familiar biblical and liturgical texts. It is free from bookishness, for the plain reason that all these texts were the common possession of the people. They were familiar to every ear - in the services of the Church - not to the eye, which was unlettered in the average Muscovite. So this literary element is also after all colloquial. It is a matter of historical fact that Avvakum's enormous

influence was largely due to this familiarity of his language. The effect cannot be reproduced in English, for there are not within the English language two elements so much apart from each other as Church Slavonic and colloquial Muscovite. Nor would the colloquial English of the times of Bunyan sound colloquial to the cockney of to-day. Avvakum's Russian, archaic in detail, is essentially the same as the spoken Russian of to-day - which knows (or at least ten years ago knew) no slang (26-7).

Mirsky's emphasis on ear over eye must have been a determining factor in Harrison's choice of language even as she took up the challenge to translate this Old Russian text. She writes on May 26, 1924: "I am fairly sure that [...] I could make a satisfactory translation - & Miss Mirrlees will help me to get a mixed Jeremy Taylor²⁶ + Old Testament style" (*Letters* 68). I cite two examples:

On Pseudo-Dionysus' Doctrine of Divine Names:

[...] God hath two kinds of names, the one kind are eternally - existent and true, the which are his essence; the other sort are accident, that is to say laudatory (Harrison-Mirrlees 33-34).

[...] the divine names which are the eternally connatural and true names for God, those which are proximate and those which are consequent, that is to say, laudatory (Brostrom 37).

[...] о Божественныхъ именехъ, что есть Богу приносящныя имена истинныя, еже есть близостныя, и что виновныя, сирѣчь похвальныя (Житие 1).

Avvakum's "rationalization for assuming leadership in the Old Belief" (Brostrom 242n192):

But as to my excommunication, it came from heretics and, in Christ's name, I trample it under foot, and the curse written against me - why, not to mince my words, I wipe my arse with that [...] (Harrison-Mirrlees 94).

As for that interdict of the apostates, I trample it in Christ's name, and that anathema - to put it crudely - I wipe my ass with it! (Brostrom 75-6).

А то запрещеніе то отступническое, и то я о Христе под ноги кладу, а клятвою тою, -- дурно молить! -- гузно тру (Житие 27).

What is most apparent in these excerpts is the difference in diction. Compare: "eternally-existent" and "eternally connatural"; "the other sort are accident" and "those which are consequent"; "my excommunication, it came from heretics" and "that interdict of the apostates"; even "not to mince my words, I wipe my arse with that" and "to put it crudely - I wipe my ass with it!" Harrison and Mirrlees' choices put the premium on comprehensibility, while Brostrom appears constrained by "bookish" precision. Even the slight tonal

difference between "arse" and "ass" is telling. While "ass" conveys the force of its contemporary American usage to Brostrom's American audience, "arse" directly embraces what Brostrom would convey with: "to put it crudely".

Read side by side, the Harrison-Mirrlees translation more closely reflects Mirsky's analysis of the Russian text: "It is free from bookishness, for the plain reason that all these texts [biblical and liturgical] were the common possession of the people. They were familiar to every ear [...]". There is no aural quality to the Brostrom translation. It is a purely "bookish" ("to the eye") text. The Harrison-Mirrlees translation flows with rhythms and figures long familiar to the British ear, educated and uneducated, cultivated by the Anglican church service. Indeed, the model of Jeremy Taylor, seventeenth-century churchman, brings to the translation a comparable quality of communal, linguistic continuity.

Errors certainly exist, and accuracy was a constant concern to Harrison. In a letter to Mirsky, franked June 23, 1924, she writes: "We badly need help from you about Avvakum as it is often difficult to be quite sure we understand the Remezovs, tho' their patience and kindness is beyond words" (*Letters* 69). After their final consultation with Mirsky during the *décade* at Pontigny (8-18 August 1924) and after the text has been sent to England, Harrison and Mirrlees write to Seraphima Remizov: "Мы кончили Аввакума. Было много ошибок!" [We completed Avvakum. There were a lot of mistakes!] (Remizov Papers). Mirsky himself wrote to Seraphima on August 12:

... доношу Вам, что Аввакум съездил благополучно в Лондон и теперь живет в Понтиньи. Прохожу по нему весь перевод Е<лены> К<арловны> и Н<адежды> В<асильевны>. Ошибок немало" [... just to let you know that Avvakum has successfully travelled to London and back, and now lives at Pontigny. I am going through E. K. and N. V.'s entire translation. There are not a few mistakes] (Remizov Papers, cited in Hughes 360n).

Leonard and Virginia had first met Mirsky in Harrison's Paris apartment in March 1924. In *Downhill All the Way*, Leonard likens Mirsky to "one of those unpredictable nineteenth-century Russian aristocrats whom one meets in Aksakov, Tolstoy, and Turgenev" (23-24). He further characterizes him: "In all our relations with him he seemed an unusually courteous and even gentle man, highly intelligent, cultivated, devoted to the arts, and a good literary critic". But of his darker side, Leonard remarks: "Prince Mirsky would have found himself spiritually at home in *The Possessed* or *The Idiot*" (24). The Woolfs knew Mirsky from Paris, where he spent half his time, but especially in London,

receiving him in their home at Tavistock Square. They continued to receive him in Bloomsbury until his return to the Soviet Union in 1932. Of their last meeting, Virginia wrote presciently:

So hot yesterday - so hot, when Prince Mirsky came [...] but Mirsky was trap-mouthed: opened and bit his remark to pieces: has yellow misplaced teeth: wrinkles in his forehead: despair, suffering, very marked on his face. Has been in England, in boarding houses, for 12 years; now returns to Russia 'for ever'. I thought as I watched his eye brighten and fade - soon there'll be a bullet through your head. That's one of the results of war, this trapped cabin'd man (cited in Smith, *Mirsky* 209).

About her second summer at Pontigny (1924), Harrison had written to Gilbert Murray: "It has been enchanting altogether but I have lost my aged heart to a Bear Prince - why did I not meet him 50 years ago when I cld have clamoured to be his Princess [...]" (Smith, *Letters* 63). This Bear Prince is Mirsky, whose presence at Pontigny, only the second Russian to receive an invitation, had been facilitated by Harrison herself (Smith, *Mirsky* 100). And now, in November not long after the completion of *Avvakum*, Harrison writes to Mirsky: "Knowing my totemistic tendencies you will not be surprised that we are writing a small book for children or persons in their dotage - to be called *The Book of the Bear*" (Smith, *Letters* 74).

Harrison's biographers all address at length her practice of using animal nicknames both for herself and when addressing or referring to friends. The use of intimate nicknames was widespread during the nineteenth century. A cursory reading of period memoirs makes clear how widespread was the habit which, today, is more or less confined to relations between adult and young child. The use of pet names among the Stephen children has attracted a fair amount of scholarly attention. Sir Leslie himself may well have set the tone, calling his children "ragamices", illustrating his experiences (even the margins of his reading) with drawings of animals and sketching himself as a bear (Lowe 29). In his biography of Virginia, Quention Bell calls on this family practice of illustrating personal qualities by reference to animals. After mentioning that Virginia called Katherine Cox "Bruin," Bell expatiates on the bear metaphor.²⁷ What is notable about Harrison's habit is the scope of her familiarity with the practice: her combination of seriousness and playfulness when naming and her consciousness of its religious significance.

For Harrison, a nickname is never gratuitous. To assign a nickname involves delving beneath the superficial in search of an underlying unity and

meaning adequate to the person's identity and relationship with Harrison. Animal names were her preference, but not exclusively. In an undated letter to Frances Darwin, Harrison refers to her difficulty in determining the animal name for her.

About names - how strange & wonderful they are. I think one will always - in the New Jerusalem - have official names for public use & one's secret names for those who are near to one [...] One cannot always find a real name - it either comes or doesn't come & it is useless to hunt. I think very often [...] the real names are sudden flashes of sudden intimacy & contact caught in a moment & then kept for always. (cited in Robinson 212-13)

In referring to all Russians as Bears, and to Mirsky as Bear Prince, Harrison consciously employed the conventional association of nations with animals (Russia=Bear, Spain=Bull). It fit well with her associative habit of totemic thought. The totem is ultimately bound up with kinship. The notion of totem developed in *Themis*, crossing the human-animal boundary, facilitated her self-placement in a larger world of relatedness. Adopting the bear as personal totem, Harrison projected her own values onto the animal. And in addressing Mirsky as Bear Prince, she drew him into a complex intimacy.

Writing to Mirsky in December 1924, Harrison announces: "The Bear book is growing slowly". Searching for a story she remembers as "vy charming, [...] about a Bear-Prince (a sad story for the Bear turned into Prince instead of vice-versa)", she requests a copy of Tolstoy's *Novaia Azbuka*, a primer still in publication (Smith, *Letters* 76). Harrison writes from London in January 1925: "At last I have found the Azbuka with the sad & touching story of a bear who was turned into a prince [...]" (Smith, *Letters* 79). This must be the Russian version of the French "Beauty and the Beast" tale featuring a Bear Prince which appears in *The Book of the Bear*.

While Harrison struggles with issues of verse translation for Krylov's fables, Mirrlees has taken on the translation of Remizov: "Hope has translated two bear-stories by Remizov - they are the purest Remizov & lovely beyond words" (Smith, *Letters* 79).²⁸ Not well known outside the Russian-speaking world, Remizov composed an idiosyncratic modernism, incorporating "medieval literary, historical, biblical, apocryphal, and folklore sources". Mirsky's appreciation for Remizov, and the connection with Avvakum, is apparent in Maria Pavlovsky's summary:

The essence of [Remizov's] art is the mingling of modernism with the native literary and non-literary heritage of the past, using a montage technique. [...]

Most of Remizov's works are derived from native sources, especially Old Russian Literature [...]. His Russian language style seeks to restore pre-Petrine usage by exterminating foreign influences. [...] He attempted to save words from 'oblivion' by revitalizing them, assigning them new meanings. His richly ornate style rests upon simple Slavonic syntax and spoken intonation (696-7).

Remizov's stories in *The Book of the Bear* so freely mix dream and waking realities, civilized and natural orders that one begins to suspect Harrison and Mirrlees abandoned their original intention, to collect "stories from all countries", and confined themselves to Russian when they discovered what a treasure they had found in Remizov. Harrison's "lovely beyond words" is a fitting assessment.

Out of the book's 24 stories, four are by Remizov: "Her Star-Bear," "The Bear's Lullaby," and "Hare Ivanich" from his 1907 book *Посолонь* (*Sunwise*), and "The Hare as Nurse to the Bear-Cubs" from a 1921 collection titled, *Ё: Заяшные сказки тибетские* (*Io: Tibetan Hare Tales*) (Rogachevskii 354). *Посолонь* is composed of Remizov's reworking of material drawn from Slavic and non-Slavic rituals, games, riddles, charms and apocrypha. Remizov valued these folk genres for their reflection of pre-logical human thought (Rosenthal 195-6).

The main actors in these pieces are children, pagan Slavs, supernatural creatures, folk-tale characters, and animate nature. Supernatural figures are the presumed sources of toys that come to life. They are frequently the players in a game which may revert to the presumed original ritual (Rosenthal 98).

There is an obvious sympathy between Remizov's and Harrison's apprehension of the world as there is an affinity between the toys populating Remizov's apartment in Paris and the stuffed animals inhabiting Harrison's rooms at Newnham. Rosenthal cites, as example of the analogy Remizov draws between a child's game and ritual, the game *Kostroma*. Remizov saw in the game vestiges of a cult of the dying and reborn god, depicting the figure of Kostroma as an animal harbinger of spring (99-100).

As the "Year-Spirit," the dying and reborn god was central to Harrison's earlier writing on Greek religion and the vestiges of ancient ritual she now sought in contemporary cultural practice. Remizov's syncretic approach to his sources: pagan and Christian, ritual and dramatic, would have appealed greatly to Harrison, who had recently solicited Russian *vertep* plays from Oxford scholar, Paul Vinogradoff to extend her insights into the parallels

between ancient Greek ritual and theater into the still live practice of the Russian peasantry. Remizov as creative artist and Harrison as scholar of the religious impulse both looked to manifestations of earlier human experience in contemporary life. The one recreating; the other, explicating.

In July 1925, Remizov received a notice from Harrison's and Mirrlees' literary agent that the book had been placed with Nonesuch. He annotated the notice with the name, David Garnett (1892-1981), and title, *Lady into Fox* (Remizov Papers). A few days later, Harrison invited Mirsky to tea with Garnett, adding:

I am asking the Remezovs as I know he will like to meet them but they have no common tongue so it wld be very kind if you would come & help as interpreter. David Garnett's mother is the translator of Dostoevsky, Chehov etc. (*Letters* 84).

Garnett's deep roots in Bloomsbury and books are well known; his familiarity with Russia, perhaps less so.²⁹ Writing his memoirs, Garnett dates the introduction of "things Russian" into their family life from the months before his birth when his father "got to know some Russian political exiles in London" (*Golden Echo* 1:10). The introduction of Herzen, Kropotkin, Volkhovsky and, most significantly, Stepniak into life at the Cearne - the Garnett family home near Edenbridge, Kent - was decisive for Constance. "[I]n the enforced idleness of pregnancy she began to learn Russian from Volkhovsky" (11). On the eve of the New Year, of 1894, Constance left her husband and young son and went to Russia, largely on Stepniak's errands (14).

In the letter cited above, Harrison identifies Constance Garnett as the translator of Dostoevsky and Chekhov, the Russian authors whom Mirsky was then interpreting for British readers as Shestov was interpreting Dostoevsky for the French. David recalls that, when she herself had been a student at Newnham, Constance had passionately admired Harrison "whose short curls and freedom from the trammels of her sex aroused as much awe as envy" (*Golden Echo* 1:6). In 1915, David spent two weeks in the Paris hotel where Harrison and Mirrlees were residing. Their mutual friend, Lytton Strachey, wrote to Harrison requesting that she "be kind" to Garnett:

As a result of Lytton's letter, Jane Harrison came up, talked to me about my mother, whom she remembered at Newnham, and about her Russian translations, which were very much in her mind just then. For Hope Mirrlees and she were learning Russian and Jane suggested that I should accompany them to one of M. Boyer's lectures on the Russian language at the school of

Oriental languages. At one of these lectures M. Boyer made his students read aloud a sentence or two of Russian. When my turn came, he complimented me upon my Russian accent, picked up from the peasant boys in Tambov, and I was held up as an example to the class (*Golden Echo* 2: 98).³⁰

The peasant boys in Tambov refers to the 1904 trip to Russia with his mother. David's account is strongly redolent of Turgenev's story, "Bezhin Meadow." Constance had honed her translation skills on Turgenev, the first Russian author to capture the English imagination, and Turgenev remained Edward Garnett's favorite Russian author. David's famously unconventional upbringing - not socialized, close to nature - no doubt facilitated the ease with which he had entered into life among adolescent peasant boys herding horses on the steppe.³¹

In an echo of Harrison's memoirs, Garnett wrote: "These stories of my mother's visit to Russia were among the earliest of my childhood memories" (15). Of particular note is the following story: "In the neighborhood of Nijhni [Novgorod] [...] Constance also visited a gipsy encampment where she saw a tame bear sitting outside one of the huts with one of the gipsy babies in its arms. The baby was fast asleep and the bear swaying rhythmically" (14-15). This childhood memory must have been especially evoked when reading an emotionally charged story included in *The Book of the Bear*, relating a government-ordered destruction by the gypsies of their bears.³²

Now, in 1925, as a founding director of Nonesuch, he may have played a deciding role in the acquisition of *The Book of the Bear*, about which it is curious that Garnett says nothing.³³ He writes: "She took me with her several times to visit various leading intellectuals associated with the summer school at Pontigny. Thus I met M. Charles Dubos and, I think, M. Gide. She also took me to visit the Russian author Remizov, a curious little dried up old man" (2: 98).

The Book of the Bear is illustrated with color, woodcut prints by Ray Garnett, David's wife. Their son, Richard, speculates that Harrison, "who had known Constance at Cambridge and was a friend of Ray's family," may have suggested her for the work. "[Ray] was the obvious choice as illustrator [...] for she was an experienced and trained illustrator and had travelled in Russia before the War."³⁴ A frequent illustrator for Chatto & Windus, Ray's only work for Nonesuch was *The Book of the Bear*. In "Ray Garnett as Illustrator", J. Lawrence Mitchell states: "[t]here could hardly have been a more appropriate

illustrator than Ray Garnett" (23).³⁵ Mitchell's assertion that Ray's illustrations for David's *Lady into Fox* (1922) had been the deciding factor in Chatto & Windus' decision to publish it (15) suggests that her illustrations may also have played a role in the Nonesuch decision to publish *The Book of the Bear*. Of these illustrations, Mitchell writes:

Comparison of Ray's 'Russian file' at Hilton Hall with the eight coloured drawings in *The Book of the Bear* shows how much she drew upon these sketches in preparing the material for The Nonesuch Press. The peasant costumes, we can be sure, are authentic. And her style in these illustrations is somehow different, as though transformed as she remembered 'days and weeks peopled by Georgian princes, a dancing bear, riders galloping over the mountains on elaborate saddles' (Frances Partridge, *Memories*, p. 21). (Mitchell 24)

Ray too, then, had a youthful connection with Russia. David recalls his first encounter with Ray. At a costume ball given by James and Margery Strachey, attended as well by Adrian and Virginia Stephen, the two had spent an hour discussing Russia. It was another ten years before they met again and married (*Golden Echo* 1:208). Another testament to Ray's abiding interest in Russia is found in a letter from T. H. White:

If it [the Arthurian tetralogy] turns out to be a good book, as I suspect it may, it will be due to Ray. Some things she said at Sheskin made me think in an improved way, and particularly to settle down to read the Russians. It will be through them, but particularly through Ray, that Guenevere has turned out to be a living being. (cited in Mitchell 19)

The classically "naïve" style of Garnett's early and most spectacular success, *Lady into Fox* (1922) in this work may well have appealed strongly to Remizov (recall his annotation). A sophisticated work, *Lady into Fox* yet maintains an objective distance and non-sentimental tone which place it squarely within the tradition of folkloric story-telling. The straightforward translation of young wife (based on Ray herself³⁶) into vixen and her return to the wild parallels the metamorphic transition from bear to star in Remizov's "Her Star-Bear," included in *The Book of the Bear*. The transgression of animal/human boundary or, rather, the total disregard for such a boundary bound together illustrator (Ray Garnett), publisher (David Garnett), author (Remizov) and translator (Harrison).

Harrison and Mirrlees's collaboration with Mirsky and Remizov ends after the publication of *The Book of the Bear*, but their close friendship does not

end. They continue to introduce each other into their respective communities, to visit, correspond, and share books. Harrison and Mirrlees continue to offer financial advice and assistance to their Russian friends. Harrison sends to Mirsky a check for £50, wishing she were wealthy enough to send the whole £200 he thought necessary to underwrite the immensely ambitious journal, *Вёрсты* (*Mileposts*). Harrison makes a number of practical recommendations, suggesting that he "take counsel with Leonard Woolf. Not that they cld give money they are poor as rats but he is so experienced in journalism & has such a good business head [...]." She further recommends that he ask Leonard for an introduction to Maynard Keynes who, together with his wife Lopokova, had just met the Remizovs at her apartment where Lydia "fell instantly in love" with Seraphima Pavlovna, Remizov's wife (Smith, *Letters* 86-7). Mirsky duly wrote Leonard, following Harrison's suggestions.³⁷ And "Keynes did in fact donate £20" (Smith, *Mirsky* 149).

Three issues of *Вёрсты* appeared, 1926, 1927 and 1928. Edited by Mirsky, musicologist Peter Suvchinsky and Sergei Efron, with Remizov, Shestov and the poet Marina Tsvetaeva serving as the advisory board, the journal is unique among the "thick journals" of "Russia Abroad".³⁸ Its principal goal was to publish the best Russian-language works regardless of country of origin. But Mirsky intended this journal, generously subsidized by Bloomsbury-ites, to reach beyond Russian literature and culture. On March 3, 1926, Mirsky had written the following to Leonard Woolf:

We want to have articles on foreign literature in our Review, and want to start with England. [...] [I.A. Richards] suggests E.M. Forster, whom I do not know as a critic at all. Can you give me some advice? What we want is a concise and historical view of the present state of English literature (Rogachevskii 365-6).

The second issue contained an essay by E.M. Forster (1879-1970), "Contemporary English Literature". Smith characterizes the essay as a concise version of Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, a book which Mirsky reviewed for the *London Mercury*. The issue also contained a substantial review by Mirsky of Eliot's *Poems, 1905-1925*. Noting that the review "was the end result of a rather different plan", Smith cites a March 11, 1926 letter from Mirsky: "I've had the idea of doing a verse translation (*vers libre*, like the original) of T.S. Eliot's long poem *The Hollow Men* (4 pages, about 100 lines), a work of genius in terms of the concentration of its feeling for the death and impotence of post-war Europe, and it really is a very important piece in artistic terms" (*Mirsky* 158).

In that same letter of 3 March, Mirsky inquired whether "The Nation and the Athenaeum" might publish notice of poet Marina Tsvetaeva's poetry reading, to be held at the School of Slavonic Studies on March 12 (Rogachevsky 366, 367n5). On February 27, Mirsky had "published the first substantial article ever to appear about Tsvetaeva in English, in the *New Statesman*, which was edited at the time by Leonard Woolf" (Mirsky 146). Mirsky invited Harrison and Mirrlees to the London reading as honored guests, though only Hope was able to attend. They were at the time "hard at work on preface to the Bear's Book" (Letters 89). They had returned to London, eventually setting up house (May 1926) at 11 Mecklenburgh Square. "We chose this neighborhood because it is close to the Nonesuch Press at which we are publishing a work of capital importance - *The Book of the Bear*" (Harrison, cited in Stewart 198).

The two women had met Tsvetaeva in Paris. February 2, 1926 Mirsky wrote to Remizov proposing the meeting: "It would be good to arrange the meeting of our Englishwomen with Marina Tsvetaeva at your place. It was Miss Harrison who gave the first money for the journal".³⁹ Echoing Harrison's comment on the financial situation of the Woolfs ("they are poor as rats"), Mirsky continued: "Though I don't know how she came up with it. She herself has none" (cited in Hughes 375). Mirsky sent Harrison the first issue of *Жерсты* when it appeared in July, to which she responded in an appreciative letter ("it is a great triumph") on July 15, detailing her reading of the issue which included a Russian text of *Avvakum* prepared by Remizov (Letters 93). Harrison regularly exchanged books with the Remizovs, receiving his works and sending to them Hope's novels. Mirsky reviewed Hope's novels in the third and final issue of *Бёрсты* (Hughes 389).

The Remizovs' poverty remained a continuing worry for Harrison. She frequently remarked on her concern for them. When *The Book of the Bear* was published, she forwarded a personal check to Remizov to cover his royalties, knowing that he could not afford to wait until payments from the publisher arrived. At one point, she sent a check for £10 so they could take a vacation at the sea. Her last letter to Seraphima, written shortly before her death, expressed profound grief that her medical expenses had so impoverished her that she cannot send the money Seraphima had evidently requested. As late as 1933, Mirrlees sent along a small royalty check for the use of his bear stories in an *Anthology for Schools* (Remizov Papers).

Harrison's journey into "Russia Abroad" thus produced two remarkable, small books, *Avvakum* and *The Book of the Bear*. It produced as well the less tangible, though significant, human benefit of alleviating

the desperate financial situation of the Remizovs by facilitating access to British publishers and through personal acts of charity. The inclusion of Bloomsbury figures in Бёрсты, a fascinating episode in British-Russian literary relations, may largely be laid on her doorstep. She helped underwrite journal and through her introduction of Mirsky to the Woolfs she helped secure additional funding as well as access to their critical judgements and network of writers. If Harrison and Mirrlees were responsible for Mirsky's acquaintance with T.S. Eliot, we might add the remarkable inclusion of Eliot's predilection for the English Metaphysical poets into Mirsky's analysis of Russian literature in his *History* - that guide to the subject for generations of English speakers. It seems certain that a mutual, Modernist interest in the style and diction of early (17th century) authors in their respective literary traditions guided the relations between Bloomsbury and Harrison's Russian friends. This story remains to be told.

NOTES

- 1 The full title: *The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum by Himself*. Translated by Jane Harrison and Hope Mirrlees, with a Preface by Prince D.S. Mirsky. Avvakum Petrovich (1621-1682). Russian archpriest. Led the opposition to Patriarch Nikon's reforms of the Russian Orthodox Church.
2. Avvakum was the ninth Russian book translated into English for and published by Hogarth, of which Leonard co-translated four and Virginia co-translated three together with their Russian collaborator, S.S. Koteliansky. The Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain has collected all of Woolf's translations into a single volume, titled *Translations From the Russian by Virginia Woolf and S.S. Koteliansky*.
3. The full title: *The Book of the Bear, Being Twenty-one Tales newly translated from the Russian by Jane Harrison and Hope Mirrlees*.
4. Nonesuch's first imprint (1923) was the Love Poems of John Donne, as their primary objective was to publish fine, yet inexpensive editions of classics. In contrast, the Hogarth Press sought out new authors and published the "first translations into English of now acknowledged masterpieces from contemporary foreign literatures" (Gaither 4).
5. *Avvakum* and *The Book of the Bear* were co-translated together with Harrison's student, poet and novelist, Helen Hope Mirrlees (1887-1978). Mirrlees read Classics with Harrison at Newnham, matriculating as a member of the College in 1910. Her first publication, *Paris, Spring 1919: A Prose Poem*, the 5th issue of Hogarth Press (London 1919), was solicited by the Woolfs (D-II 22n8).
6. G. Lowes Dickinson is quoted as saying: "Cambridge has resumed precisely as before the war, only more so; just tradition re-asserting itself" (cited in Stewart 153).
7. Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (London 1589; 1598-1600).
8. See also Smith, M.S. "Woolf's Russia: Out of Bounds."
9. For a full biography, see Richard Garnett, *Constance Garnett: A Heroic Life*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991.
10. See Heilbrun for an account by Frank Swinnerton (of Chatto & Windus) of "the way things happen in the publishing world," detailing a chance encounter which led to both Constance undertaking the translation of Chekhov in 1916 and the consequent Chekhov "craze" (191-2).
11. See esp. "Russians in London" (83-88) and "The Williamses and Others" (88-90), and accompanying notes in Smith, *Mirsky*.
12. For a history of this second-wave of the Russian diaspora, see Raeff, *Russia Abroad*.

13. See also Smith, *Mirsky* 104-5.
14. Jessie Crum Stewart had preceded Hope Mirrlees as Harrison's favored student and continued to collaborate with Harrison after her marriage to Stewart.
15. The preface to the second (1927) edition of *Themis* summarizes its contents as follows:
 "It is in a word a study of herd-suggestion, or, as we now put it, communal psychology. [. . .] That the gods and rituals examined are Greek is incidental to my own specialism" (vii).
16. See Martha C. Carpentier, *Ritual, Myth, and the Modernist Text*.
17. The fullest treatment of Harrison's influence on Woolf remains the essays collected in Jane Marcus' collection, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*. See also Carpentier, *Ritual, Myth and the Modernist Text* and M.S. Smith, "'Could it be J—H—herself.'"
18. Working among the mutually supportive group of scholars now collectively known as the Cambridge Ritualists, Harrison made extensive use of recent sociological theory (Durkheim), philosophy (Bergson) and materials newly collected by anthropologists (most notably by J.G. Frazer).
19. Charles du Bos secured Shestov's invitation to Pontigny. Perhaps by way of inducement, du Bos mentions in his letter of invitation that Lytton Strachey will be present.
20. A.M. Remizov (1877-1957). Author, artist, paleocalligrapher. Emigrated to Berlin in 1921 where he continued to work on his innovative account of revolutionary Petrograd, published in Paris (1927).
21. Aleksei Remizov and Serafima Remizova-Dovgello Papers, Amherst Center for Russian Culture, Amherst College. Citations from this collection are identified as "Remizov Papers". The author expresses her gratitude to the director of the Amherst Center for Russian Culture, Professor Stanley Rabinowitz, for his assistance and the permission to cite from these unpublished "albums".
22. D.P. Sviatopolk-Mirskii (1890-1939). Literary critic and publisher. Adopted the literary name, Mirsky after immigrating to England where he became Lecturer in Russian for the School of Slavonic Studies, King's College, London University in 1922 and frequent contributor to its journal, "The Slavonic Review". Joining the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1931, Mirsky returned to the Soviet Union in 1932, was arrested in 1937 and died in a prison camp.
- 23 "During his time in London, Mirsky consorted not with the snobs of Mayfair, but with the snobs of Bloomsbury" (Smith, *Mirsky* 92). According to Smith, all Mirsky's known addresses were in Bloomsbury; "he remained an insular Bloomsburyite from the beginning to the end of his time in London" (105). Among his Bloomsbury acquaintances were: E.M. Forster, T.S. Eliot, Roger Fry, the Keynes and the Woolfs (99-103).

24. "The *History* put Mirsky incontestably in the position he has never subsequently lost, as the principal intermediary between Russian literature and the English-speaking world" (Smith, *Mirsky* 114). For an overview of the *History*, see 109-114.
25. Harrison's letters to Mirsky are preserved among the Jane Ellen Harrison Papers in the library of Newnham College.
26. Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667).
27. "[I]t is thus that I imagine her — not in the fiercer or gruffer aspects of bearishness — but comfortably furry, slow-moving, warm-hugging, honey-loving, a little clumsy, a little insensitive, but not so insensitive as to be unhunttable — rather, a shade imperceptive, but, unless touched by passion, helpful and dependable" (Bell 173).
28. Mirrlees subsequently published the essay, «Quelques aspects de l'art d'Alexis Mikhailovitch Rémizov» in *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* (15 Jan.-15 Mar. 1926, 148-59).
29. See Heilbrun's *The Garnett Family* for a history of the family's life with books. Garnett's own three volume memoir, collectively titled, *Golden Echo*, chronicles his association with Bloomsbury.
30. Garnett's account of his visit to Boyer's lecture causes one to wonder whether Harrison deliberately misconstrued Garnett's facility with the language to entice Mirsky to join them.
31. See *Golden Echo* 1: 74-93.
32. *The Bears* (Медведи 1883), by Vsevolod Mikhailovich Garshin (1855-1888). First English translation, the collection *The Signal and Other Stories*, (London: Duckworth, 1912).
33. Appraising the success of Nonesuch, A.J.A. Symons writes that Francis Meynell, founding director of the Press, relied "upon the literary judgment of his colleagues, Vera Mendel and David Garnett, to assist his own in the selection of suitable subjects" (10-11). See also, David Garnett, *The Golden Echo* 3: 16-20.
34. Personal correspondence with author (26 July 1995). Ray's sister, Frances Partridge, recalls, in *Memories*, Harrison's presence in their childhood home and being entertained in Harrison's rooms when she herself attended Newnham (Partridge 24, 60-1).
35. On the other hand, Mirrlees wrote to Remizov (October 19, 1926): "THE BOOK OF THE BEAR will appear at the beginning of November. David Garnett's wife did the illustrations for it — she does not understand bears. You, on the other hand, understand bears well — nonetheless, why did you draw the bear to resemble a devil?" (my translation, Remizov Papers). Annabel Robinson notes that Harrison wished Jessie Stewart had done the illustrations (*Life* 298).

36. Garnett gives the following description of his wife: "Ray was a woodland creature. She wanted the protection and shelter that woods gave" (2: 234). David's fullest description of Ray appears in *Golden Echo* 2: 229-235.
37. Mirsky's letter to Woolf (1.2.1926) is cited in full by Rogachevskii (364).
38. Responding to Remizov's role with the journal, Harrison added the following to her list of recommendations, no doubt having in mind his playful and fanciful approach to the world and certainly the precarious state of his personal finances: "I hope Remezov is not chief business manager - you might as well elect a squirrel - tho' I suppose he has a long line of splendid old Moscow merchants behind him" (Smith, *Letters* 87).
39. On February 25, Mirsky wrote to his fellow Вёрсты editor, Peter Suvchinsky, naming Harrison "his first investor [вкладчица]" (cited in Hughes 377n5).

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VIRGINIA WOOLF'S UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE OF LANGUAGE

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At this momentous occasion of the first Virginia Woolf symposium in Portugal, I'd like to explore with you some ideas about Woolf's modernism: how her literary experiments, embedded in a particular cultural context, disrupted traditional ways of looking at the world, and how that context invited her to refashion the novel into something new, something novel. I'll discuss briefly early 20th century advances in physics, which reshaped the way we look at the physical world. I'll then discuss one aspect of Woolf's innovative literary techniques, which carries forth that new world view, a new way of looking at the "nature of reality".

Many tradition shattering discoveries, theories, events marked the earliest part of the 20th century, forming the cultural milieu of Virginia Woolf's intellectual and emotional development and continuing to influence our lives today. Though Woolf may not have known or experienced directly some of these influences, resonances of them were 'in the air' and shaped the developing outlook of the century. In Geneva, Ferdinand de Saussure lectures on linguistics, proposing that the word and its referent in the world are not related by any necessary or causal sequence, by "no natural connexion in reality" (69). Saussure's theory with its "new set of relations" between word and object, loosened artistic attachment to representational fiction and made way for some of the great literary experiments of the new century. In Vienna, Sigmund Freud puts forth theories of the unconscious, of dream life, of the forces that shape and inform personality to show a "new set of relations" between inner and outer life. And the Great War, which raged all over Europe and destroyed a generation, broke what had been an accepted connection of goodness and well-being to worldly reward. There seemed to be no explanation for the havoc that human beings wreaked upon themselves.

One of the more influential of the tradition shattering theories of the early twentieth century occurred in physics, changing the way we looked at

the world around us. For two hundred years, Newton's ideas of a mechanistic universe and forces of nature prevailed. Newtonian physics had posited an objective world apart from human consciousness, an obdurate reality ordered on certain principles that could be invoked to observe and measure, plot and predict the machinations of the real. Newton's laws - of motion, of gravity - were constructed from readily observable everyday events, from the visible, verifiable world. The laws implied predictability, for seen objects could be counted on to behave in anticipated ways. But by the beginning of the 20th century, experimentation had shifted to the unseen world of subatomic particles, whose behavior Newton's laws did not begin to explain. Indeed, the single important discovery of particle physics was that the subatomic stuff, if we may call it that, did not function the way the world of ordinarily observable reality did. Whereas Newtonian physics could be counted on to predict results of physical experiments, the developing field of quantum mechanics and the world view it implied could *predict* only the *probability* of results. Since the matter of experiment was millions and millions of invisible, subatomic particles, results would be proposed statistically; one could measure only *tendencies* of groups of particles rather than the behavior of individual photons, for example, or electrons. Such notions of probability, uncertainty, discontinuity soon found their way out from the laboratory into the larger culture. Thus, a new view of reality showed itself in the arts: painting (the broken planes and collaged surfaces of the cubists), music (the symphonies of Stravinsky and Bartok, who eschewed traditional harmonies and rhythm patterns), theatre (the self-conscious, "alienating" works of Artaud, Cocteau, Brecht, and later Ionesco, Beckett), the "ungraceful" contractions and angularity of modern dance, and of course, the language-centered literary works of those we call 'modern' writers. Each of the arts would call attention to its processes of construction, foregrounding paint, notes, theatricality, movement, words. In their new focus on material and creative process the arts reflect the influence of the period's signature theory: Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.¹

Werner Heisenberg formulated his famous principle in 1927, the year Virginia Woolf finishes *To the Lighthouse*, with its central concern of "subject and object and the nature of reality". In this text, as well as in her other novels, Woolf inscribes a worldview that shows conceptual if not actual influence of the scientific discoveries that were part of the cultural matrix of the time. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle posits that an observer cannot be certain about physical reality nor know it completely. Further, his principle questions the separateness of that reality from the processes by which we measure it.

Dealing with subatomic particles, Heisenberg's experiments conclude that one cannot know everything about such particles, for in the very act of measuring one aspect of their being - either their velocity or their location - one interferes with other: if one measures the particle's location, one must necessarily impede its velocity; if one measures velocity, the location of the particle cannot be fixed. Here extrapolation and probability arise. Whereas in the realm of large objects, one can see and test and measure and predict, in the realm of the subatomic, of that which all is comprised, one measures evidence of occurrences which themselves cannot be seen. Thus, the act of observation leaves its mark on the very reality it explores; too, the choice of the method of observation determines in some way the outcome of that observation. Years later, Heisenberg writes:

We can no longer view 'in themselves' the building blocks of matter which were originally thought of as the last objective reality; that they refuse to be fixed in any way in space and time; and that basically we can only make our knowledge of these particles the object of science. The aim of research is thus no longer knowledge of the atoms and their motion 'in themselves', separate from our experimental questioning; rather right from the beginning, we stand in the center of the confrontation between nature and man, of which science, of course, is only a part. The familiar classification of the world into subject and object, inner and outer world, body and soul, somehow no longer quite applies, and indeed leads to difficulties (133).

Heisenberg's formulation sounds remarkably like the worldview of Woolf, who used her own uncertainty principle of language to inscribe her sense of the interconnectedness among all realms of being, the unknowability of that which lies "just on the other side of language", a belief in the constructive powers of language, and the notion that when one locates meaning precisely one kills language's vitality ("Craftsmanship", CE-II 251) - in Heisenbergian terms, as one fixes a specific 'location' of meaning one stops the 'motion' of language. Her uncertainty principle of language - with its disrupted syntax, ambiguous referents, apparent contradictions, destabilizing contingencies, space-creating ellipses, transformational metaphors, reversed causality and sequence, and "fanciful" juxtapositions - speaks to her own reliance on the constructs of readerly imagination to develop a matrix of understanding with the text. It is here in the shared moment of meaning-making between reader and text, and among silences, ambiguities and discontinuities, that Woolf's literary expressions enact the centering thesis evolved from the new physics

as articulated by Heisenberg: that the observer and the observed co-create meaningful, intelligible systems of signification. The worldview implies that we participate in creating our sense of reality and raises questions about subject/object and the nature of that reality.

With the readily detectable relation of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle to Woolf's work, I'd like to spend a moment with Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity, proposed in 1905. With the name 'relativity' one might think that Einstein's was a theory of subjectivity; rather it is a physical theory about the absolute nature of physical reality. The two major principles of the special theory of relativity are (1) the constancy of the speed of light, no matter the motion of the measurer, and (2) the principle of relativity, which says that all laws of nature are identical in all frames of reference that move uniformly in relation to one another (Einstein and Infeld 177). This theory takes into account both the constant and absolute nature of the phenomena of physical reality but as well considers the human observational perspective in creating conclusions about those phenomena. Several conceptual results of the special theory of relativity bear on our reading of Woolf. First, an object in motion contracts in the direction of its motion until at the speed of light the object disappears. The observation that the speed of light in experiments measures always 186000ft/second no matter the speed of the measurer in relation to the light source, flies in the face of common sense, which says that the speed of the measurer is added to or subtracted from the speed of light. This means that the measuring instruments in one frame of reference contract as the measurer's velocity increases. Unlikely as it seems, the effect of such contraction is that moving clocks run more slowly as their velocity increases, that there is no universal measure of time, and that measurement of time changes depending upon the frame of reference and velocity of the measurer (Einstein and Infeld 177-192). Second, the famous $E=MC^2$ equation results from the special theory of relativity. The equation states that energy and mass are versions of one another; that even the tiniest particle of mass has within it exorbitant amounts of energy, the discovery of which made possible the hydrogen bomb. (I've often wondered at what seemed the imperative to actually create the bomb, and why it could not exist forever as possibility.)

But earlier than the explosions in Los Alamos and far less deadly, we have *To The Lighthouse*, and an explosion worth looking at in Lily Briscoe's mind. It is a bit awkward to ask an audience in such a presentation to follow a word by word analysis, but it is here in the moment of the particular word, the literary particle as it were, that Woolf's great creative imagination demonstrates itself.

Too easily can her sentences be read for what we think they mean, and the persistent ambiguity and transformational qualities of her language normalized or read as dreamy meanderings or direct representations of inner states of mind. Indeed, her literary "experiments" (quite a scientific term actually) are read often as esoteric studies disconnected from the realities of the actual world, yet they deeply resonate with the metaphysical implications of the then new century's revolutionary scientific theories. The passage under study today challenges our conventional notions of the way reality works, presenting in language an analogue of the physical reality posited by the hardest of sciences of her day. This passage is not unique in its projection of a worldview but rather is representative of the kind of ideas we find throughout Woolf's work.

The first sentences of *To The Lighthouse* locate the text well within the discourse of early 20th century physics. Mrs. Ramsay, whose language is permeated with contingencies, says to James, who is looking forward to tomorrow's trip to the lighthouse, that they'll go, "yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow" (3). Mr. Ramsay is certain that the weather will not hold up: "But it won't be fine" (4). ("How does he know what tomorrow's weather will be", I wrote many years ago in the margin of the book.) Probability again meets predictability as Mrs. Ramsay adds, "but it may be fine - I expect it will be fine" (4). While this first conversation locates Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's developing worldviews as related to a larger theme of the old and new physics, the book's structure reflects Einstein's specific concept of the contraction and dilation of time. Parts One and Three of *To the Lighthouse* together constitute 9/10 of the text, yet each portion covers a mere several hours of a single day; Part Two, "Time Passes" constitutes less than 1/10 of the text and covers 10 years in the lives of the characters. In the first and third sections, time extends, slows down. In the center portion, time speeds up quickly whisking by 10 years of life, with one of the book's most humanly significant events - Mrs. Ramsay's death - happening midsentence, parenthetically and in the already-past.

But I'd like to focus on a passage that demonstrates Woolf's comfort with the Einsteinian notion that energy and matter are versions of one another. The well-known passage begins with Lily's remembering Andrew Ramsay's comment about his father's philosophic interest: "subject and object and the nature of reality" (23). To Lily's response that she'd no idea of what that meant, Andrew suggested that she "think of a kitchen table then when you're not there" (23). Andrew had defined his father's work in traditionally dualistic terms. Whether expressed as 'subject' and 'object' or 'mind and matter' this dualism posits a Newtonian distinction between consciousness and things. But the example

Andrew gave Lily, which was supposed to have helped her understand this abstract concept, implied that the prime center of reality is the mind, for he said "Think of a kitchen table then when you're not there" and not simply "a kitchen table when you're not there." Such an interpretation tempts us to read the subsequent passage as an excursion of subjectivity, corroborating the general notion that Woolf is a stream of consciousness writer.

Yet Woolf disdained 'realist' writing, whether objectively or subjectively oriented. The psychological writer of her time, shifting focus from outer to inner landscape, gave no respite to the illusion of the representability of the real, as Raymond Williams notes (92). No matter that the meanderings of the stream of consciousness had replaced the meanderings of the River Floss; the object of representation had shifted, the mode of representation had not. Woolf's rejection of stream-of-consciousness technique reflects her impatience with the subject-centered view of reality it implies, no more valid than the objective view as the "coherent, authentic source of the interpretation of the meaning of reality" (Weedon 6). Woolf's literary experiments - her word equations - ask us to question entirely the notion of ontologic or epistemologic hegemony as they acknowledge a more holistic vision of unsignified impersonal nature persisting in relation to the human experience and construction of that 'nature'.

Lily's memory of Andrew begins a section of thought integrated with a scene of occurrences in the actual world. Lily sits on the lawn next to Mr. Banks. She tries to come to some conclusion as to how a person decides if the feeling one has about another is liking or disliking: "How did one judge people, think of them? How did one add up this and that and conclude that it was liking one felt, or disliking? And to those words, what meaning attached, after all?" (24). The ensuing passage is quite complex, multiply located in and outside of Lily, and demonstrates Woolf's vision of reality harmonious with the theories of the new physics.

Lily continues thinking about Mr. Banks and Mr. Ramsay until her thoughts were dancing "up and down like a company of gnats, each separate, but all marvellously controlled in an invisible elastic net" (25). This description of mind energy could be as well a description of the electron cloud of the atom as understood by quantum physics, where energy is absorbed and emitted in discrete packets of energy - quanta - as electrons move from one atomic level to another all while remaining within the atomic "net". Thoughts that were earlier as solid as things irrevocably fixed for eternity are now barely corporeal, evermoving particles of life connected in some continuous, everchanging relationship. Finally, Lily's thought "which had spun quicker and quicker

exploded of its own intensity; she felt released; a shot went off close at hand and there came from its fragments, frightened, effusive, tumultuous, a flock of starlings" (25). Lily's thought has been gaining speed and momentum until now it explodes from the magnitude of its own energy and force, as she experiences the release of and from intense mental energy. And then she hears "close at hand" the slower moving sound of an explosion. As she was attempting earlier to follow her own thought, she now hears the sound of the explosion of that thought, again undergoing mental activity and experiencing simultaneously awareness of that activity. The single phrase, "a shot went off close at hand" seems to describe the process of the explosion of Lily's thought moving from in her to outside her. The shot seems also to have occurred in the external world, evidenced by the scattering of a flock of birds. Perhaps the birds have heard the explosion of Lily's thought or the explosion of Lily's thought has become metaphorically externalized as an actual shot. Or perhaps the shot created the flock of birds from its fragments, so that the fragments of the shot have become, are the starlings. Woolf supplies the reader with merciful objective corroboration that indeed it's a real shot in the real world that causes real birds to scatter as Lily Briscoe and Mr. Bankes look up and observe "that the flock of starlings, which Jasper had routed with his gun, had settled on the tops of the elm trees" (25). Nevertheless the sequence itself, with its multiple possibilities of meaning, enact Einstein's conversion equation of energy and matter, the creative potential of thought and the multiple manifestations of possibility. The passage effects a transformation of mind energy, thought, to sensorial phenomenon, sound, and finally to objective particle, fragment. Or, more challenging to our conventional construction of reality, the possibility that thought has caused an effect on the objective world.

My analysis suggests that we'd be well advised to read Woolf literally rather than attempt to "normalize" her language of uncertainty, as we think she cannot possibly mean what she seems to be saying. I think here of Poe who said there was a world of difference between an ambiguous presentation and the presentation of ambiguity. It would turn out then that Virginia Woolf, clearly not a realist of the Newtonian kind, was a realist of the new sort. Both visionary and grounded, she constructed in literary language ambiguous, contingent yet meaningful analogues of the way the new physicists understood our world to work.

NOTES

1. Regarding the following discussion, I make no claim of being a trained physicist deeply intimate with the subject about which I speak, but simply a good reader who understands some basic science that Woolf probably knew and understood: " 'I respect you (she addressed silently him [Mr. Bankes] in person) in every atom'" (TTL 24).

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VIRGINIA WOOLF AND GABRIELA LLANSOL– ‘SWEEPING THE THICK LEAVES OF HABIT’

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"I make my phrase and run off with it to some furnished room where it will be lit by dozens of candles" (*The Waves*: 95)

"Eu divago por entre o sentido" (I wander amongst meaning) (*O Jogo da Liberdade da Alma*: 15)

I.

What immediately makes possible a comparison between V. Woolf and G. Llansol is a total opposition to the limits imposed by the literary tradition of realism,¹ a strong will to overcome orthodox thinking, placing themselves in the margins of a representational logic to privilege signifiers with multiple meanings, which are provoked by the affects and perceptions and a disquiet about beings and life. This comparison is even more pertinent if we consider, as Perry Anderson suggests, that almost all the aesthetic characteristics of post-modernism, such as reflexivity, hybridity, pastiche, figuration and the dissolution of identity were already present in modernism.² But, while in V. Woolf the dissolution of identity involves a negative feeling of the loss of the Self and is a consequence of an obsession with the fugacity of things and its consequent instability, with G. Llansol the dissolution is synonymous with liberation and affirmation of difference.

In one of her many essays, Virginia Woolf considers words an "impure medium",³ because being "faithful" to the real, they are incapable of transmitting the many facets of Being, the flux of reality, or of capturing the movement of life in its different singularities. According to G. Llansol, the words which submit to the laws of reason or to objectifying forces, following

a logic of identity, are an "imposture" and cannot destroy the oppression, the ideological falsity of the language in order to open onto new and unlimited landscapes. In opposition to a platonic concept of the Good in itself and of the Beautiful, which are absolutely pure, not only V. Woolf, but also G. Llansol, reclaim hybridity or the impurity of literary genres which is fundamental for an understanding of aesthetics, where the beautiful and the pure appear in the encounter with the unknown, that is, the sudden encounter with alterity. Between pure and impure, the two works under analysis in this paper, Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (TW, 1931) and Gabriela Llansol's *O Jogo da Liberdade da Alma* (JLA, 2003) (*The Game of the Freedom of the Soul*), while self-reflexive works, develop around an encounter in that unknown territory, which may be Elvedon or Herbais, but these are the places of writing, where the figures are transfigured, perception is shattered into a million fragments and the meaning of words falls headlong.

In this article, I will read that encounter with the other and its implications not only at the level of subjectivity, but also at the level of language and writing implicit in the works.

2.

Imagine the source-image of a writer _____

He draws me. While drawing, he desires me and writes. He

Has a drama, which turned grey in the dry ends of his hair. What?

He draws a cascade, water that rustles in the lines and in the

Sketch. I hear at a distance a sound of pain, of someone hungry

And persecuted. I don't want it to be me. I can't, but shudders.

Doesn't love what he/she writes nor what desires, isolated in the comfort

Of his/her gift. If he/she thought about me!....

This is, I think, the image of Virginia Woolf _____

She applied it to the *metanight* and it resulted in a *dispersal* of water⁴

This fragment was written by Gabriela Llansol. Her reference to V. Woolf, working as an inter-text, allows an approximation between the two works and its relation with a concept of a self-reflexive, anti-mimetic and rhizomatic form of writing, which is inseparable from an effect of the dissolution of identity.

"The dispersal of water" is linked to the recurrent image which appears in *The Waves* – "a waste of water", where the word waste is a synonym of dispersion, wandering and excess "unattached to any line of reason" (TW 157), in opposition to a contained and realist writing, chained to a compulsion to reproduce and perpetuate "neat designs of life that are drawn upon half-sheets

of note-paper" (TW 199). One could, perhaps, characterize *O Jogo da Liberdade da Alma* as that dispersal of water, where the *textuality* or the "melancholic confirmation of the night" (JLA 9) is also a synonym of excess, wandering and subversion to any literary convention, and presents itself in the very title as a game, in contrast to a totalitarian and reductive conceptual knowledge, to become chance, liberation of new pulsations, instant of an affirmative saying to the future. *The Waves* was defined by V. Woolf as a "Play-poem",⁵ a game of language, of experimental fiction, or a Dionysian game of the world, where only the imagination coupled with the freedom of the soul allow the permanent destruction and reconstruction of beings and the world according to the rhythm of the waves. It is, thus, only a sketch, where six chalk figures (TW 16), vague and with no substance or "figures without features robed in beauty" (TW 226), are drawn, and where they self-reveal themselves in juxtaposed sequences.

According to Jankélévitch "[...] la pureté est, comme le verre de la vitre, *l'invisible qui laisse voir*, la transparence elle-même n'est pas faite pour être vue, mais pour qu'on voie des corps opaques et massifs au travers" (Jankélévitch 14), since the function of the pure transparency is to reveal a landscape full of contrasts, of shadows, where "all is somewhat obscured by steam from a tea-urn" (TW 74). In *The Waves*, writing, while only a sketch, appears as pure and crystalline like the water of the cascade, because only such a "pure" writing, compared to the white tablecloth on the table around which the six friends gather, may allow for the shadows, the ghosts, the multiple interior voices that in *The Waves* follow the dialectic rhythm between the violence of the Same and the ethical epiphany of the Other.

The *source-image* of writing is represented by a line, because it is triggered by an unforeseen encounter, it is the "vision of the invisible",⁶ or the moment of the encounter with the Other, that unattainable figure that only Love, in the margin of any form of power, may allow and that enraptures the writer in a desire impossible to quench. It is the encounter with what remains forever other, what escapes possession, domination and is prompted by perceptions and sensations which provoke an assemblage between interior and exterior, stirring forces and overcoming, not without pain or sacrifice, the limits of an interiorized world. It escapes, therefore, from the webs of the world to become a river, a fountain, water, life itself sprouting. In this sense, the two texts are unfinished, because they are infinite, they are not a book, but "just the flow of writing" (JLA 8), as the calling of the Other, to which they respond, breaks with the logic of sameness opening it up to a polyphony of meanings. In both texts, clock time is suspended, a different time

is invented, that of the encounter with alterity or the diachronic solicitation of the Other. This opening to the Other is, according to Levinas, the gift, which corresponds to the abandoning of the imperialism of the Same or the dis-interest comparable to what Silvina Rodrigues Lopes called "des-possession",⁷ as the one who writes sees him or herself with no centre - "Let solidity be destroyed. Let us have no possessions" (TW 177). Bernard, who is "a natural coiner of words, a blower of bubbles through one thing and another" (TW 94) maintains that: "I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am - Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis; or how to distinguish my life from theirs" (TW 230).

Bernard's self, which is compared to a boat (TW 176), is constantly being threatened by the loss of a centre, metaphorically symbolised by the death of Percival, that is, by the shadow of alterity or those "mocking...observant spirits" (TW 72), which, nevertheless, enrich him "with their comments, and cloud" his "fine simplicity" (TW 72). His self is constituted as a paradoxical identity, absent from himself, because he was called by an Other, it does not even allow for the succession between the moment of presence and the moment of absence, but rather for the juxtaposition of the two moments in the same diachronic time "in bursts of sound and silence" (TW 73).

Bernard and the other characters are not unified substances, but they form a "collective assemblage",⁸ that is, through these characters there are desires, affects and percepts (the invisible form of the forces) flowing, conveyed by the different points of view, without a definite subject of enunciation or the traditional omniscient narrator. That is why we cannot talk about a character that perceives or feels, but in places of perception or "blocks of becoming"⁹ which only vaguely can be identified with names to the point that each of them dissolves in the flux of language: "we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory" (TW 11). We may even consider that Bernard works as the main or the foundational character and all the others are mere proliferations or "connective cogs of an assemblage"¹⁰ which correspond to a position of desire, not desire for power, but desire for language and the flowing of writing.

Susan is in strict relationship with nature, with maternal fertility, with fermented bread, but she is also related to writing, because the interminably vagrant swarm of bees (TW 69), a metaphor of Bernard while a creator, is also associated with Susan and with a lover she is waiting for. Rhoda, in her world of games and imagination, ponders about the things that lie beneath the semblance of things (TW 134) and her gift will be to give back beauty to the world, lying,

dissimulating, because she, having no definite goal, is "to be cast up and down among these men and women,...with their lying tongues, like a cork on a rough sea" (TW 86). Rhoda, who has no face and does not possess anything, feels impotent in relation to reality and she can only escape the aggressiveness of the world by escaping from that same reality, that is, by letting herself dissolve into the waves (TW 171), where the real and the imaginary worlds merge. With Jinny, in opposition to the Cartesian concept, body and mind are inseparable and her body flowing "forming even at the touch of a finger" (TW 184) implies the impossibility of a corporeal fixed state, because it is a body "in-becoming", a place of mutation, confluence of unified bodies, which transform themselves into pure intensities, because as she concludes: "The body is stronger than I thought" (TW 83). All the encounters she has with men and women, as well as her body always dancing, always in movement, correspond to an infinity of possible states, which do not refer to the biological body, but are mainly a function of her "corporeal imagination"¹¹. As Jinny affirms: "My imagination is the body's. Its visions are not fine-spun and white with purity like Louis's" (TW 184). Her corporeal imagination compels her to an "impure", disorganised and not objective perception, because each act of perception is a consequence of her body always "in-becoming" Other, implying an infinite of possibilities. Jinny is also associated with love, which urges her to go out of herself into the warmth of another being (TW 84), but she is also related to wine in a Dionysian dance, which follows the rhythm of an Other when: "[W]ords crowd and cluster and push forth one on top of another" (TW 84) in the moment of ecstasy, where there is no limit for the body or for thought. At that moment, of opening and encounter with the Other, she may sing her song of Love: "Come, come, come" (TW 146) during the night "traversed by wandering moths; night hiding lovers roaming to adventure" (TW 146). Neville, the poet, who loves life and inhabits a room lighted up by the fire, where the tick-tack of the clock of time is abolished (TW 150), looks for order and exactitude in the poetic word and, refusing illusion, he does not let himself involve "with rosy clouds or yellow" (TW 70). While Louis, also presented as a poet, in the same way seeks to impose an order through the precision of sentences built with concentrated and everlasting words, Bernard searches for the perfect phrase suited to the passing moment, as an unfinished letter of love, where the sentences, built with spontaneous and unpredicted words, compared to the *moths*, may flow like lava (TW 63) in that insatiable curiosity about the human being. Being conscious of the need of language, but simultaneously aware that sentences are made of "evasions and old lies" (TW 109), Bernard wishes an other language,

more suitable to the alterity of beings and things, away from imposed schemes, or "some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words, like the shuffling of feet on the pavement" (TW 199). A "minor language" in a Deleuzian sense, closer to sound and rhythm, a non-pragmatic language, which continuously produces meaning, as the constant references to gold with its alchemic connotations indicate: "something sulphurous and sinister, bowled up, helter-skelter; towering, trailing, broken off, lost and I forgotten, minute, in a ditch. Of story, of design, I do not see a trace then" (TW 200).

There is no story or plot in this kind of writing, which is a space of tension between transparency and opacity, therefore Bernard wants to invent a language for his writing made of sentences "dabbling always in warm soluble words" (TW 54). Words that are following their line of escape in order to reactivate desire and make its connections proliferate as an intense experimentation that reveals the limits of our language-habits. Therefore, Bernard wants a different language from that of Percival, who is a hero, the symbol of imperialism, also characterised as a "God" or the omnipotent egocentric and totalitarian subject with his "violent language" which only serves to reproduce and maintain "the thick leaves of habit" (TW 236).

3.

In "The Task of the Translator", Walter Benjamin, reflecting upon the role of the translator and his/her relationship with language, supports the need of a *pure language* as the one where the original remains hidden and fragmentary, because the purity comes from the infinite and pure movement of signification. The *pure language*, in a Benjaminian sense, seems to illuminate the concept of language present in Woolf and Llansol, as it is a language that may be defined as creative *Word*, lacking any information or ultimate signification¹².

In *O Jogo da Liberdade da Alma*, we also observe the need for a non-pragmatic language, a language conceived in the margins of what Llansol calls "imposture", because "the use of words went on sticking identifiable images" (JLA 43), that is, words are used only to reproduce what exists and this is what Llansol rejects in her text. If "the text insists in the dream" (JLA 79) and creates a *reality* beyond the reality of the world, the word of the text has to be pure, that is, deprived of its habitual meaning, to impregnate itself with its semantic potential in an encounter with what is not recognizable. Only this way can the text, "saying life" (JLA 91), open up its "way in the matter" (JLA 90), contradicting a closed and totalising said. Therefore, lines are the raw material of the text (JLA 35), lines of flight with their deterritorializing force and which produce

a *reality* in a mode of "writing pure and rapid" (JLA 54, 55). Likewise, Virginia Woolf, while writing *The Waves*, wrote in her diary: "[W]hat I want now to do is to saturate every atom",¹³ meaning that she wanted to make the language vibrate, to disturb the equilibrium or to activate, from inside language itself, the lines of continuous variation to unsettle syntactic and semantic patterns.

And, it is in this context, in which words become sonorous vibrations, that we may understand that the textual author is a "dreamer without memory" (JLA 50), because losing memory, in a Nietzschean sense, is an active mode of continuously recreating the present, opening it up to the new and the unknown, and where all things "are created from pure purity" (JLA 45). *O Jogo da Liberdade da Alma* is not only a reflection about writing itself, but also about art in general, posing the fundamental question about the *source image* of the aesthetic experience or the principle which presides to that unpredictable encounter made of sensations, perceptions, actual images and also "images snatched from the past" (JLA 7).

At a certain point in the text there is the question: "[W]here is the principle of our encounter?" (JLA 73), to which the text itself answers and, besides, all the other texts written by G. Llansol are continuously answering, as there is no answer that may define or describe the encounter with the Other or where "the real gestation of a vision starts" (JLA 70). Therefore, *O Jogo da Liberdade da Alma* emerges as an answer to a *there is*, being the performance itself of that *there is*, or of that incessant rumour, that excess of Being or disquiet shadow, from which we cannot liberate ourselves and that, as Levinas suggests, impels the Self to decentre and to open to alterity¹⁴. The aesthetic experience in G. Llansol is the experience of alterity itself, where everything is free from the conceptual possession of the subject, to be returned to the materiality of existence, through the transmutation which allows the writer or the artist to think *the different* from what is established. The non-definition of the enunciative subject, and, it is important to emphasise that the text itself enters into a dialogue with the other voices, affirms the plurality of points of view, because the subject, when placing him/herself in the place of an other looking, becomes him/herself other, suffering a process of dissolution: "*I* is the other I see in me. A non-fragmented, unite, vast place, creating ever more and larger amplitude" (JLA 17).

In *O Jogo da Liberdade da Alma* the I-other writer (*escrevente*) is simultaneously a musician (*musicante*), because there is an intrinsic relationship between text and music; but G. Llansol chooses a pianist, because to play the piano implies numerous tactile contacts between the pianist's body and the

piano. Abandoning himself to the creative power of his body, the pianist lets himself be guided by his spontaneity, letting himself also be invaded by the unexpected, in a kind of affective commotion, because in music the sound has no thickness, no materiality and its essence, being of a fugacious and fluid nature, is a pure intensity that traverses the body. Therefore, G. Llansol writes: "[I]f you keep the sound, the image will be indestructible, and your body corruptible. If you only listen, you have already started dying" (JLA 63).

Like the pianist's wandering hand, the writer (*escrivente*) lets herself be led by the rhythm, the melody and by the *power of the touch* to affect and be affected in a mode of writing where "the images run towards the inside of strong waters" (JLA 84) with the intent to "devastate the souls" (JLA 8). In contrast to Woolf, where death is seen negatively as the losing of the subject's centre, in G. Llansol, death has to be understood as the impossibility of dying or of an end, because death is only the possibility of beginning again "where a free word is born" (JLA 91) in opposition to those words which "are not of the body but of the inadequately punitive libidinal Moonlight" (JLA 91).

I must conclude, now, and so I wish to emphasize that in spite of the proximity between the two texts, it is impossible not to refer that, unlike G. Llansol, in Woolf's text, the renewal of the poetic language, understood as erasure of reason, is related to the flow of consciousness, to self-analysis or to a search for the inner state of the characters, through their visions, intuitions, and the unveiling of their opacities. In spite of the time, space and distance which separate both writers, in these two texts V. Woolf and G. Llansol are both searching for a way to express the immanent possibilities of life in that infinite encounter which is the text, where "we feel happy for dying and dying again and again" (JLA 24). For both V. Woolf and G. Llansol, writing, which is weaved with any kind of filamentous matter (JLA 48 and TW 144), means their respective searches for the invention of space and time where the pre-individual and pre-social singularities, or the world of pure intensities, may reveal themselves and live in community like "shoals of wandering fish" (TW 58) or as G. Llansol calls them "fish of affect" (JLA 84). In Elvedon or Herbaïs what remains is the feeling of the impossibility to know and grasp the mystery of life and the will to continuously say it, through a non-submission to rules and codes and through the "infinite power of language" (JLA 79). Therefore, and taking the recurrent image in *The Waves*, I would say, that it is not one lady, but two ladies who sit "between the two long windows, writing. The gardeners sweep the lawn with giant brooms" (TW 12; 224), stirring up the huge *leaves* of sameness, habit and tradition.

NOTES

- ¹ All translations from Gabriela Llansol's works are my own responsibility. See Virginia Woolf "Modern Fiction" in *The Common Reader*, Vol.1.
- ² See Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernism*, p.80.
- ³ Virginia Woolf, "Walter Sickert: A Conversation" in L. Woolf (ed.), *Collected Essays*, Vol. II, p.237.
- ⁴ *O Começo de um Livro é Precioso (The Beginning of a Book is Precious)*, p.240.
- ⁵ Virginia Woolf, "The Narrow Bridge of Art", in *Collected Essays*, Vol. II, p.219.
- ⁶ José Gil, *A Imagem-Nua e as Pequenas Percepções: Estética e Metafenomenologia*, p.23.
- ⁷ See *Teoria da Des-posseção. Ensaio sobre textos de Maria Gabriela Llansol*, pp.83-84. See also Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et Infini: Essai sur l'Exteriorité*, p.86.
- ⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, p.65.
- ⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, p.277.
- ¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, p.55.
- ¹¹ José Gil, *A Imagem-Nua e as Pequenas Percepções: Estética e Metafenomenologia*, p.294.
- ¹² See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", in *Illuminations*, pp.70-82.
- ¹³ *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol.3, 28 November 1928, p.209.
- ¹⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Le Temps et l'Autre*, pp.26-27. It is interesting to note that in *O Senhor de Herbais*, Gabriela Llansol affirms: "[...] nobody has ever managed to wipe out the unknown which follows us like a shadow ", p.250.

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A faint, grayscale illustration of a woman's profile, facing left. Her hair is dark and styled in a bun or updo. The image is very light and serves as a background for the text.

Twilight

'THE DESOLATE RUINS OF MY OLD SQUARES' – WOOLF OUT OF BLOOMSBURY AND INTO THE FUTURE

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We were in London on Monday. I went to London Bridge. I looked at the river; very misty; some tufts of smoke, perhaps from burning houses. There was another fire on Saturday. Then I saw a cliff of wall, eaten out, at one corner; a great corner all smashed; a Bank; the Monument erect; tried to get a Bus; but such a block I dismounted; & the second bus advised me to walk. A complete jam of traffic; for streets were being blown up. So by tube to the Temple; & there wandered in the desolate ruins of my old squares: gashed; dismantled; the old red bricks all white powder, something like a builder's yard. Grey dirt & broken windows. sightseers; all that completeness ravished and demolished (D-V 353).

While it is indisputable that this January 1941 passage of Virginia Woolf's Diary conveys "the deepest sense of loss" (Dick and Millar, xviii) ¹, in the present essay I propose to expand its meaning to include not only the elegiac dimension of a goodbye to "all that completeness" but also Woolf's awareness of the new beginning underlying any builder's yard. In fact, the writer was by then concluding her final typescript of *Between the Acts*, which she had considered as recently as November "an interesting attempt in a new method" (D-V 340).

If the search for significant form had been central to Bloomsbury's aesthetic and ethical quest and to most of Virginia's own novels, we should always bear in mind the advice given in 2000 by Andrew McNeillie, "discriminate and hesitate, at any given point of the group's history, before referring to a 'Bloomsbury' aesthetic" (McNeillie, 17, 19).² With the advance of fascism, the indulgence of a Moorean contemplation of "beautiful objects" could no longer be justified and, McNeillie notes, "Woolf's work had already begun, from quite early in the [1930s], to show signs of fracturing" (McNeillie, 19). To be sure those

signs could be read at least as far back as *Orlando* (1928) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929) with their feminist stance and their playful defiance of biography, history and essay genre conventions. Woolf's awareness of the gendered formation of political power and literary influence had been ingeniously expressed.³ She had sustained a tolerant attitude towards patriarchy and regularly declined any form of preaching in art. However,

the impression of Woolf as an apolitical, lyrical, modern novelist so carefully cultivated by generations of New Critics and fuelled by Woolf's own nephew's assessment of her [...] is necessarily exploded by the weight of evidence to the contrary (Pawlowski, 3-4).

Neither the writer's long-lasting public attitude nor the prolonged (and largely male) critical prejudice resist the scrutiny of more recent years. The political significance of her entire work can no longer be underestimated. Novels, such as *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) or *To the Lighthouse* (1927), routinely addressed as standard examples of high modernist pursuit of aesthetic autonomy, have also exposed Woolf's "dissatisfaction with the modernism of her contemporaries and its dangerous potential to blur real political issues" (Whitworth, 156).

But Virginia's unequivocal denunciations of patriarchal power certainly originate in the second half of the 1930s. Even if we are willing to concede that she may have approved early Bloomsbury's rigid formalism, all the way through the writing of *The Years* (1937), *Three Guineas* (1938), and *Between the Acts* (ab 1938), or of essays such as "The Leaning Tower" (1940), Virginia Woolf was intent on exploring a different Path.⁴ Nazism and the Spanish Civil War exposed her own and her friends' impotence to avoid yet another carnage and brought Woolf consciously nearer than she had ever been to political fiction. It is not a coincidence that her severe condemnation of power politics during the 30s often shares common ground with her more vehemently expressed feminist positions. And it is surely also not a coincidence that the reaction of some very close friends (Maynard Keynes, E. M. Forster, Leonard himself) to *Three Guineas* evaded her radical association of gender politics, masculine aggression and the international situation.⁵

As Richard Pearce observes in *The Politics of Narration*:

Woolf become [sic] more self-consciously political, or aware of her relationship to traditional author-ity, as she became more aware of women's historical repression (Pearce, 19).

Pearce analyses some of Virginia's novels as her own struggle against "author-ity" and, conceding that *Between the Acts* was "breaking new ground" (Pearce 169), he chooses to dismiss it as incomplete. In a former essay I addressed the erosion of the dominant masculine stereotype as depicted in *Between the Acts*.⁶ I will now focus on some of her last novel's innovative techniques, suggesting how much Woolf was deliberately contributing to dismantle "all that completeness".

"Making use of all the liberties and licenses of a novelist" (AROO 6), in *Between the Acts* Virginia Woolf builds a new text which revisits English culture and history by bringing together, both in the pageant and in the framing narrative that encloses it, a medley of diverse literary strategies and discourses. A very superficial consideration of the text would present, on the surface, a short mimetic novel, with a reasonably linear chronological development both in the outer frame and throughout the historical pageant. The whole "thing" takes place within a day and the village pageant is over in a few hours. So what is it that makes Woolf's last novel so strange and unexpected a literary object in 1941?

From the beginning till the end of the text, there is, in Rachel Bowlby's precise words, "no plot and no conclusion, no triumph of love or of hate, no resolution; and the terms of these oppositions themselves fall apart in the break-up of the syntax" (Bowlby, 127).

This fracture is disseminated in many different ways throughout the entire text: broken words and broken sentences, parenthetical phrases, thoughts left suspended, sentences left unfinished, bits and pieces of tunes and songs, poems barely murmured and wordlessly understood or misunderstood, frequent literary allusions and quotations, onomatopoeias, the cries of vendors, returning silences and the sounds of nature (the humming of birds, the bellowing of cows, the splashing of rain), the horns of cars, the noise of the gramophone, the din of the aeroplanes. The fracture is further emphasized by frequent typographic interruptions (blank spaces, ellipses), by the use of italics to distinguish the outer frame from the words of the pageant (though in this case Leonard may have interfered with the typescript).⁷ The demolishing of a more conventional modernist narrative building is also underlined by numerous references to current everyday events and reinforced by "quotations from the media - newspapers, magazines, radio, movies, even the local reporter's rough notes – [which] interject into the polyphony of fictional narrator and characters actual voices" (BTA xxvi).

While some of these devices, the use of broken sentences, of parenthetical phrases or of grammatical and typographical gaps, were already familiar to readers of *Mrs. Dalloway*, in *Between the Acts* the peculiar combination of **all of them** constitutes the fundamental **texture** of the novel.

Let us briefly consider a few examples. In the narrative frame, Isa, also known as Mrs. Giles Oliver, combs her hair and watches her children down on the lawn. On the surface, the scene might have been idyllic and the syntax is quite appropriate.

She tapped on the window with her embossed hairbrush. They were too far off to hear. The drone of the trees was in their ears; the chirp of the birds; other incidents of garden life, inaudible, invisible to her in the bedroom, absorbed them (BTA 9).

There is no possibility of communication. Isolated and lonely, Isa, "the age of the century, thirty-nine", (BTA 11) goes back to her daydreams and murmurs what might have been part of a poem. Her daily routine mimics the difficulty to connect that will demoralize most of the characters.

'Where we know not, where we go not, neither know nor care', she hummed. 'Flying, rushing through the ambient, incandescent, summer silent...'
The rhyme was 'air'. She put down her brush. She took up the telephone.
'Three, four, eight, Pyecombe', she said.
'Mrs. Oliver speaking... What fish have you this morning? Cod? Halibut? Sole? Plaice?'
'There to lose what binds us here', she murmured. 'Soles. Filleted. In time for lunch please', she said aloud. 'With a feather, a blue feather... flying mounting through the air... there to lose what binds us here...' The words weren't worth writing down in the book bound like an account book lest Giles suspected. 'Abortive', was the word that expressed her (BTA 9).

As the reader follows her reverie, the frustration of Isa's life becomes apparent. The narrative effect relies on the combination of poetry and prose within the free indirect discourse with bits of a dialogue only hinted at (neither the narrator nor the reader hear the telephone operator or the fishmonger). Yet the technique here subtly suggested will gain a much larger dimension further on.

Let us now turn to the pageant, the excuse for bringing together as an audience the community of characters in the framing narrative. The pageant's

shaky performance of a sequence of pastiche literary and historical vignettes results in frequent interruptions. These interruptions, often not planned by the playwright Miss La Trobe, in turn produce the audience's (and the reader's) awareness of the fake quality of the whole. This is the beginning of the pageant:

'What luck!' Mrs. Carter was saying. 'Last year...' Then the play began. Was it, or was it not, the play? Chuff, chuff, chuff sounded from the bushes. It was the noise a machine makes when something has gone wrong. Some sat down hastily; others stopped talking guiltily. All looked at the bushes. For the stage was empty. Chuff, chuff, chuff the machine buzzed in the bushes. While they looked apprehensively and some finished their sentences, a small girl, like a rosebud in pink, advanced; took her stand on a mat, behind a conch hung with leaves, and piped:

Gentles and simples, I address you all...

So it was the play then. Or was it the prologue?

Come hither for our festival (she continued)

This is a pageant, all may see

Drawn from our island history.

England am I...

'She's England', they whispered. 'It's begun'. 'The prologue', they added, looking down at the programme.

England am I, she piped again; and stopped.

She had forgotten her lines.

[...]

'Blast'em!' cursed Miss La Trobe, hidden behind the tree. She looked along the front row. They glared as if they were exposed to a frost that nipped and fixed them all at the same level. Only Bond the cowman looked fluid and natural.

'Music!' she signalled. 'Music!' But the machine continued: Chuff, chuff, chuff (BTA 42).

The suspension of disbelief, even when kindly granted, is momentary. With authorial license, Miss La Trobe juggles with fragments of the island's past. When one of her tricks fails and is exposed, she somehow manages to regain some measure of control. The montage of diverse literary discourses, from different ages and genres, present each and all of them as virtually interchangeable. The actors dress up and just as easily change their identities. One after the other each narrative, dramatic, poetic convention is being denounced as cliché.⁸ Virginia Woolf liberally borrows literary genres and styles of language from different epochs, typical period pieces (the medieval song and pilgrimage, the farcical Restoration episode) or stereotyped characters

(the Victorian Miss Hardcastle). Sometimes, as with the Elizabethan medley, the satirical dimension is somewhat softened by the emotion of Shakespearean allusions and the merrymaking the epoch suggests.

*A maying, a maying, they bawled.
In and out and round about, a maying,
a maying...*

It didn't matter what the words were; or who sung them. Round and round they whirled, intoxicated by the music. Then, at a sign from Miss La Trobe behind the tree, the dance stopped. A procession formed. Great Eliza descended from her soap box. Taking her skirts in her hand, striding with long strides, surrounded by Dukes and Princes, followed by the lovers arm in arm, with Albert the idiot playing in and out and the corpse on its bier concluding the procession, the Elizabethan age passed from the scene (BTA 51).

The pageant is simultaneously inadequate to honour the richness of English literature in such a short span of time and ample enough to condense it in a few hours as a sort of historical continuum. This continuum is an illusion and it is recognized as an illusion as much as the pageant is known to be a figment of the artist's imagination. To be able to evoke this historical continuity while caught in the very act of parodying it,⁹ as Miss La Trobe eventually is, may reasonably lead the audience to suspect its final irrelevance. "The apparent stability of the English village at the centre of *Between the Acts* belies a war-torn history. [...] the civilised surfaces of the fiction" conceal "the disintegration of a collective English tradition" (Eagleton 313, 318-9). The unity and completeness of the long-established masculine traditions of English history and literature are thus denounced by Virginia Woolf as artificially constructed although not valueless. And the artist momentarily rejoices in her magic.

Glory possessed her [Miss La Trobe]. Ah, but she was not merely a twitcher of individual strings; she was one who seethes wandering bodies and floating voices in a cauldron, and makes rise up from its amorphous mass a re-created world. Her moment was on her- her glory (BTA 82).

Of course the illusion does not last. It is **not** meant to last. In 1941 the luxury of "the soothing unity of aesthetic closure" (Reed, 33) belongs to a different era. As Christopher Reed so distinctly reminds us,

[I]n defiance of the formalist insistence on formal unity as a prerequisite of

art's separation from other realms of experience - the formal structure of *Between the Acts* is left radically incomplete, an abruptly truncated triptych with a first "act" of one hundred pages set in the family, then a second (even longer) that is the pageant, followed by an abbreviated return to the situation of the first, which ends almost before it begins.[...]

The formal and authorial disunity is emphasized by Woolf's drastic displacement of the narrative voice in the last paragraphs. [...] Suddenly the pageant [...] has become a play within a larger play, initiating an infinite progression where what seems to be life is always revealed as the art of a larger text. In one move, Woolf [...] violates the assumption of authorial individuality, and shatters all semblance of formal closure (Reed, 31-2).

Under the threat of complete destruction caused by the Second World War, Woolf uses literature to re-present the past and to anticipate the future. In 1996, surveying the period between 1950 and 1995 in *The English Novel in History*, Steven Connor wrote:

The conditions of extreme cultural interfusion [...] have combined with the growth of an ever-more interdependent global economy to create a splintering of history in the postwar world, a loss of the vision of history as one and continuous. [...] when the authority of history is exploded, the result is an explosion of histories and authorities (Connor, 135-6).

In 1941, while still emotionally connected to old Bloomsbury, Virginia Woolf wanders through the fragments of a liberal humanist paradigm she once subscribed to. Her gradual estrangement from a consideration of politics as outside the realm of aesthetic experiment is part of her fight against any totalitarian narrative.

The ruins are desolate and the old squares echo with the debris of a civilisation Woolf considered doomed by its aggressive repetition of gender, class and national divisiveness. Wandering in the rumble the artist strives to imagine the work, the world to come. One last time, she follows her own advice to the younger generation of poets:

Whenever you see a board up with 'Trespassers will be prosecuted', trespass at once (WE 178).¹⁰

NOTES

This essay is dedicated to the memory of my dear colleague and friend Hélio Osvaldo Alves.

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- ¹ I am much indebted to Susan Dick and Mary S. Millar's Introduction to *Between the Acts*. The novel will henceforth be referred to as BTA; all quotations will be parenthetically indicated. Ellipses within square brackets are my own.
- ² See also, among others, S. P. Rosenbaum, "Virginia Woolf and the Intellectual Origins of Bloomsbury".
- ³ Cf. among others my "'So Men Said': Virginia Woolf and a history of women's creativity".
- ⁴ For one outstanding interpretation of Woolf and Bloomsbury's formalism see Christopher Reed, "Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf's Relation to Bloomsbury's Aesthetic".
- ⁵ See Naomi Black, Introduction to *Three Guineas*, particularly xxix-xxx and xlv-l.
- ⁶ "'Manacled to a rock he was': Exhausted Patriarchy in *Between the Acts*".
- ⁷ For Leonard Woolf's intervention cf. Dick and Millar, Introduction to BTA, xlviii.
- ⁸ "[H]istorically, the cliché began in the nineteenth century as an image reproduced in a magazine; it then migrated from the visual to the verbal register to take on its modern meaning of a fixed formula of words" (Bowlby 190).
- ⁹ For parody cf. Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-modern*.
- ¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, "The Leaning Tower". Woolf was echoing her father.

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This collection of essays focuses mainly on the early days of the Bloomsbury Group and on its long-lasting significance to the work of Virginia Woolf. It has grown out of a Conference held on 16th March 2005 at the Faculty of Letters, University of Porto, Portugal. The Conference was the first Woolfian event ever to be organised within the scope of the University's Institute of English Studies and it aimed to commemorate the centenary of the first Thursday Meeting at nr. 46, Gordon Square. It also celebrated the centenary of Virginia Woolf's literary career and that of her only visit to Porto.

The presence of a considerable diversity of researchers and academics, from the United States of America, from Russia and from Portugal, had promised from the very beginning a fine compass of voices and the event turned out to do full justice to its initial inspiration. The present selection embraces the whole scope of Woolf's life, from her first reminiscences to the closing words of her posthumously published novel, which, prophetically, opened up the way to the longevity of her work, giving the word to readers and critics.

(The Editors)

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VIRGINIA WOOLF: THREE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS collects the proceedings of the 16th March 2005 Porto Conference which celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the first Thursday Evening at 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, as well as the first wages earned by Virginia Woolf (then Stephen) with her pen and her visit to Porto.

While the central themes of the Conference emerge more or less explicitly from the bulk of the essays now collected, each one has its own specificity, each helps build a whole that may be seen as covering a life's span within the hours of a full day going from dawn to twilight. Following a pattern that evokes *Mrs Dalloway's* one-day sequence interspersed with enlightening flashbacks, it also makes the bridge to the eclectic, eternal one-day-long *Between the Acts* with its medley of literary, social and human conflicts and situations, brought to a close at the threshold of the future.