

VIRGINIA WOOLF: ROOMS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND WRITING

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Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the effect of the different domestic interiors inhabited by Virginia Woolf during her childhood, adolescence, and adulthood on her personal relationships, on her life as a professional writer, and on her work. I analyze how, in her life and novels, women's lives, work, privacy, and family relationships were negotiated within these domestic spaces and how the interactions between these interiors and her relationships and their constraints and freedoms contributed to her writing. I provide examples of rooms, domestic arrangements and objects from her novels that parallel those of her childhood such as the tea table, looking-glass, drawing room, bedroom, and study, which are used, in part, to portray the inequalities and limitations placed upon women in a patriarchal society. And, I show how, in turn, Woolf's writing and modernist techniques were a means of making sense of her own interior spaces and relationships.

To my dear ones
Mateen, Natasha, and Sophia

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Introduction

Why a Room of One's Own?

When I recently reread *A Room of One's Own*, the title itself sparked my curiosity about *where* Virginia Woolf wrote. Did she have a room of her own? Was it always the same room in which she wrote? Did she read in the same room in which she wrote? Did she follow a schedule for reading and writing? Was she referring to an actual room of one's own or a metaphor for one's inner space, or both? These questions led me to explore the different domestic interiors inhabited by Virginia Woolf and their effect on her personal relationships, on her life as a professional writer, and on her work.¹

Who was this woman who needed her own room? Born in 1882 into an upper middle-class and cultivated Victorian family, Virginia Woolf broke from the English patriarchal traditions and expectations of her time to become a writer. Known today as a leading twentieth-century modernist writer, feminist, and publisher, she experimented with and helped to develop the stream of consciousness narrative that characterizes many of her novels. In addition to novels, her diverse *oeuvre* includes essays, short stories, letters, diaries, biographies, and literary criticism. Published in 1929, *A Room of One's Own* drew attention to women's need for private space and financial independence so that

¹ I refer to Virginia Woolf throughout this paper by her first or last name as a way of distinguishing between her personal and professional life. When I discuss her domestic spaces, personal experiences, and relationships, I use her first name, Virginia. When I refer to, or cite, her work published after 1912, I use her last name, Woolf. I use her maiden name, Virginia Stephen, when I describe her life events and early professional work that occurred prior to her marriage in 1912.

they could live and work freely. This polemical essay grew out of two lectures that Woolf gave in October 1928 at Newnham College and Girton College, which at the time were the only two colleges for women in Cambridge (Rosenman 22). Seeds were also sown in 1920 for *A Room of One's Own* when Desmond MacCarthy wrote a favourable review of Arnold Bennet's book, *Our Women in the New Statesmen* "which concluded that women were naturally inferior to men and in fact they wished to be dominated by them" (Rosenman 32). Irritated by MacCarthy's opinion and arrogance, Woolf immediately countered his review by writing two brief responses to the influential weekly in October 1920 that were published under the heading "The Intellectual Status of Women." Again, eight years later and with greater literary strength, she refuted this common belief that women's abilities were less than that of men in, *A Room of One's Own*.

Women's independence from male dominance and from traditional roles was a constant theme with Woolf, and one that she correlated with economic freedom. In *A Room of One's Own*, a fictitious Mary Seton inherited 500 pounds from her aunt around the time women were enfranchised—"she had left me five hundred pounds a year forever. Of the two--the vote and the money--the money, I own, seemed infinitely the more important" (*Room* 34).² Virginia Stephen herself had been left £2,500 of inherited capital from her Aunt Caroline (Lee 325).³ To Woolf, inherited money is equally as important as earned money because it provides the opportunity to develop one's writing at a professional level. Income from an inheritance not only supplies "food, house and

² Adjusting for UK inflation, present day value is £20,630; conversion to CAD, \$31,421 (Stevens, TD).

³ Adjusting for UK inflation, present day value is £103,151; conversion to CAD, \$157,184 (Stevens, TD).

clothing [. . .] for ever,” but also “a change in temper” and frees one from “always to be doing work that one did not wish to do [. . .] like a slave, flattering and fawning” (*Room* 34). An inheritance offers a woman the ability to pay for her own “room,” to purchase her own food, to observe and experience life, and “to travel and to idle” (*Room* 98). Idleness, in the sense of stillness, is a path to the unconscious mind where “the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top” (*Room* 28). Inherited money and the private space it can provide gives the “novice” time and energy to launch herself fully into such “stillness,” into the writing profession, and onto the path of earned income.

When Virginia began writing as a professional in 1904 in the weekly *Guardian* and even when *A Room of One's Own* was published in 1929, the interior rooms of the family home were arranged, decorated, and managed by women; yet the architecture of domestic space contained no room designated for a woman to call her own. The Victorian home, although occupied by the female, was built and organized for the personal and social advancement of the male—a microcosm of English cultural ideals and traditions. In *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life*, Victoria Rosner explains that:

The Victorian home was ordered above all by its room divisions. These divisions found their fullest expression in the elite environs of the Victorian country houses, with their innumerable rooms, but were represented on a reduced scale in the urban row houses like those where the Stephen and Strachey families lived. [. . .] Rooms were designated by gender, by class, and by function; these designations helped to model relationships between the house's major constituencies, the family and servants. (63)

Because of the patriarchal structure in the Victorian home, the males enjoyed privacy in rooms such as the master study and billiard room, which offered solitude and

entertainment, while the rooms allocated for women were not private, but rather shared social spaces such as the drawing room and breakfast rooms. Woolf uses novels such as *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Years*, and *Between the Acts* to depict in detail these interior spaces, the patriarchal family, and the correlated hierarchical social structures of the Victorian and Edwardian eras.⁴ It is this dynamic between the architecture of private space and literary modernism that Rosner draws upon to analyze “the role of literature in the work of imagining a post-Victorian reorganization of private life to accord with changing social customs. [. . .] it exposes the fundamental role of the built environment in creating the categories we use to organize and understand who we are” (2). In addition, Rosner points out that the “modernist novel draws a conceptual vocabulary from the lexicons of domestic architecture and interior design, elaborating a notion of psychic interiority [. . .]” (2). This point is particularly relevant to Woolf's writing.

Interior thought and space were important to Virginia Woolf, personally and in her art, and they feature prominently in her writing. The interiority of one's thoughts in conjunction with the interior of houses are thus significant components of her novels. Just as the body is the dwelling place for the inner self, the house is the spatial expression of that self. The interior spaces in Woolf's novels direct readers to the social location of her characters in terms of class, gender, role, and duty, while the narrative she fashions

⁴ I have included examples of the domestic spaces from these novels because they employ the stream of consciousness technique that Virginia Woolf first experimented with in 1917 and went on to use and refine in her fiction. *Jacob's Room* was her first novel that contained this inner narrative, thus, I chose to begin with it and not her first two novels, *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*.

through her innovative stream of consciousness technique brings readers close to her characters' inner lives and interconnections.

In the autobiographical essays assembled in *Moments of Being*, and in her diary entries and letters, Woolf presents us with detailed observations of her domestic spaces and family life as a child and an adult and reveals how influential they were to her life and work. These autobiographical writings show that the most consequential “rooms” she occupied and the most important “relationships” she experienced were located at 22 Hyde Park Gate, Talland House, 46 Gordon Square, Hogarth House, and Monk’s House. In her memoirs, Woolf eloquently describes the interior characteristics of these homes, the relationship with her parents, her siblings, her Bloomsbury friends as well as the emotional and mental sensations she experienced in these domestic spaces. She relates how the upper middle-class Victorian world unfolded itself to her in her childhood, and portrays not only English duties and rituals, formalities, inequalities, and limitations but also the advantages offered by the family home and Victorian society at large. However, she uses these mid-Victorian domestic spaces and relationships not to reinforce Victorian conformism but as a backdrop to weave feminist and political issues into her novels and polemical writings. And in turn, her modernist fictional technique became the means for making sense of these interior spaces and relationships, their constraints, and unfolding freedoms.

In *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, Pericles Lewis describes modernism in the broadest sense as a historical period between the middle of the nineteenth-century and continuing until the middle of the twentieth-century. More

specifically, he explains that, “In English the word refers primarily to the tendency of experimental literature of the early twentieth-century to break away from traditional verse forms, narrative techniques, and generic conventions in order to seek new methods of representation appropriate to life in an urban, industrial, mass-orientated age” (xvii). He also points out that modernism in literature was coupled with modern art (xviii). Virginia Woolf’s literary work embodies this definition of modernism. An example of how she broke from traditional verse, mastered the stream of consciousness technique, and painted a scene with words, is taken from *To the Lighthouse*:

But what have I done with my life? thought Mrs. Ramsay, taking her place at the head of the table, and looking at all the plates making white circles on it. “William, sit by me,” she said. “Lilly,” she said, wearily, “over there.” They had that—Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle—she, only this—an infinitely long table and plates and knives. At the far end, was her husband, sitting down, all in a heap, frowning. What at? She did not know. She did not mind. She could not understand how she had ever felt any emotion or affection for him. She had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything, as she helped the soup, as if there was an eddy—there—and one could be in it, or one could be out of it, and she was out of it. It’s all come to an end, she thought, while they came in one after another, Charles Tansley—“Sit there, please,” she said—Augustus Carmichael—and sat down. And meanwhile she waited, passively, for some one to answer her, for something to happen. But this is not a thing, she thought, ladling out soup, that one says.

This passage demonstrates, like others in my paper, how Virginia Woolf used the stream of consciousness technique and domestic space as a way of connecting her reader to the novel’s setting, its characters, and to their inner thoughts and feelings. She draws upon ordinary domestic objects like tables, beds, dishes, looking-glasses, and books to portray traditional gender roles and the socio-economic disparity between the two. She

also draws upon the reflective qualities of these domestic objects as a medium of contemplation for her characters, and thus her reader.

Woolf's writing style wove together apparently disparate and fragmented images and phrases, which she had deliberately strewn about in a novel, into a tightly woven web, in order to capture life's ordinary moments of struggle, pain, purpose, and love. She had developed the ability to sort through and make sense of the "clutter" of her own life. And she speaks of the notion of "clutter" in physical, emotional, and mental terms in her diaries and in *Moments of Being*. However, in spite of her mental illness and the tragic losses in her life, Virginia Woolf had a strong will and the professional discipline to create a sense of order within herself and her writing from the chaos around her.

To commence the journey of visiting the rooms and relationships of Virginia Woolf's past and to see how they contributed to her life as a writer, I begin chapter one with Hyde Gate Park, where she was born and lived until she was twenty-two years old, and the family's vacation home, Talland House. In chapter two, I discuss the home at 46 Gordon Square where the adult Stephen children moved after their father's death in 1904 and where the famous Bloomsbury Group first met. The third chapter examines the domestic spaces of two homes that Virginia shared with husband Leonard Woolf—Hogarth House where they started Hogarth Press, and Monk's House, a much loved

country home and writing location.⁵ These, as I observe in my conclusion, were the spaces where Virginia Woolf could create rooms of her own both materially and imaginatively in her novels.

⁵Tavistock Square, located in the Bloomsbury area of London, was another important home in which the Woolfs lived and worked from between 1924-1939. It is not included in my discussion because I do not view it as a home that was consequential to her as a writer. In contrast, Hogarth House and Monk's House were domestic spaces where events occurred that influenced her as a writer, such as the recovery from her third, most severe mental breakdown, the creation of the Hogarth Press, her experimentation with the stream of consciousness technique in her short story, "The Mark on the Wall" (1917) and her novel, *Jacob's Room* (1922), and where her relationship and intellectual partnership with Leonard Woolf coalesced.

Chapter 1

Childhood Homes

Few spaces are more formative than a childhood home. It is a crucible of identity, a place that teaches both overtly and implicitly who we are, what things mean, and how life is to be lived.—Victoria Rosner, Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life

The interior space and the family interactions of Hyde Park Gate and Talland House held such meaning for Virginia Woolf that she spent a life time writing about them in one form or another in memoirs, essays, and novels. Woolf associated certain memories and sensations with the interior architecture and the physical arrangement of furniture, household items, desks, books, looking-glasses, and beds in these homes. The traditional Victorian décor of dark heavy colours and fabric, limited privacy in conjunction with English traditions of duty and routines, and a staunchly enforced patriarchal authority at home and in society contributed to the development of Woolf's inner being, her thought process, and her writing. I draw upon Woolf's autobiographical writings in *Moments of Being* as Woolf's primary source for describing, analyzing and fictionalizing these interiors. This collection is significant because the childhood and adolescent memories recalled in four of the five pieces are consistent in content and essence with one another. She portrays her parents, sibling relationships, descriptions of Hyde Park Gate and Talland House, sexual advances from her half brothers, and her "moments of being." In her introduction, Jeanne Schulkind, the editor of *Moments of Being*, points out that the purpose and audience vary in the five essays and that they are

written over a span of thirty-three years from 1907-1940. This alerts the reader to differences in tone and focus. Thus, the intense emotion expressed in “Reminiscences,” written in 1907, is less evident in “A Sketch of the Past,” composed between 1939-1940, or in “22 Hyde Park Gate,” “Old Bloomsbury,” and “Am I a Snob?” written for the Memoir Club from 1920-1936. When Woolf started “Reminiscences” in 1907 at the age of twenty-five, she was wrestling with the pain and grief from a series of deaths in her immediate family: Thoby Stephen, brother (1906), Leslie Stephen, father (1904), Stella Hills, half sister (1897), Julia Stephen, mother (1895). She also conveys the strong bond between the Stephen siblings and the important leadership role of their mother, not only in running the household, but in attending to the emotional and social needs of the family. But Virginia also acknowledged that her mother’s busy daily schedule had left little private time for just the two of them:

Can I remember ever being alone with her for more than a few minutes? Someone was always interrupting. When I think of her spontaneously she is always in a room full of people; Stella, George and Gerald are there; my father, sitting reading with one leg curled around the other [. . .]. There are visitors, young men like Jack Hills who is in love with Stella; many young men, Cambridge friends of George’s and Gerald’s; old men, sitting round the tea table talking—father’s friends. (“Sketch” 83)

In “Reminiscences,” Woolf writes with more attentiveness to the gloom that blanketed 22 Hyde Park Gate after Julia’s death and the chaos that followed than in the other autobiographical writings in *Moments of Being*. In “A Sketch of the Past,” she is fifty-eight years old and writing Roger Fry’s biography, and what will be her last novel, *Between the Acts*. Her finely developed writing technique and years of experience and reflection are evident in this piece. She vividly frames her childhood and adolescent

memories with the same depth used to craft scenes and characters in novels. In these autobiographical writings she also refers to a key concept at the core of all her writing, those “moments of being” that embody acute sensations of awareness and connectedness to something larger in the “space of time,” outside of herself, and signify recognition that she is part of a whole. She explains, “Figuratively I could snapshot what I mean by some image; I am a porous vessel afloat on sensation; a sensitive plate exposed to invisible rays; and so on” (“Sketch” 133).

That “vessel’s” voyage began in the late nineteenth-century. Adeline Virginia Stephen was born on January 25, 1882 into the combined upper middle-class Victorian family of Julia Prinsep Stephen and Sir Leslie Stephen at 22 Hyde Park Gate. Describing her background Woolf says, “Who was I then? [. . .] descended from a great many people, some famous, others obscure; born into a large connection, born not of rich parents, but of well-to-do parents, born into a very communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting, articulate, late nineteenth century world [. . .]” (“Sketch” 65). Her parents had both been widowed and had children from their previous marriages. Julia’s children were George, Stella, and Gerald Duckworth and Leslie’s daughter was Laura Stephen, who suffered from a mental disability. Virginia was the third of the four children from the union of Julia and Leslie. When Virginia was born, her half-sibling George was fourteen, Stella thirteen, and Gerald and Laura twelve. Vanessa was three, Thoby two, and her younger brother Adrian was born a year after her (Lee 118). Hermione Lee describes the location of Hyde Park Gate in London as “a narrow cul-de-sac off Kensington Road [. . .] between Palace Gate and Queen’s Gate [. . .]. Kensington in the 1880s and 1890s still had

the last vestiges of a village atmosphere” (35). This neighbourhood was not only a place where Virginia was born, but also the place where both of her parents died and that “embodied darkness, solid objects, interiors, constriction. The tall narrow house, six floors high, with a flight of steps up to the front door and a small back garden...[is] where she lived with up to seventeen other people (family and servants) for twenty-two years” (35). She described it as a ““grandiose Victorian’ area [. . .] near mid-Victorian educational buildings, museums, and beautiful gardens” (35). Woolf’s account of her family home in the “Old Bloomsbury” essay is that:

It was a house of innumerable small oddly shaped rooms built to accommodate not one family but three. [. . .] To house the lot of us, now a storey would be thrown out on top, now a dining room flung out at bottom. My mother, I believe, sketched what she wanted on a sheet of notepaper to save the architect’s fee. These three families had poured all their possessions into this one house. [. . .] Old letters filled dozens of black tin boxes. One opened them and got a terrific whiff of the past. There were chests of heavy family plate. There were hoards of china and glass. Eleven people aged between eight and sixty lived there, and were waited upon by seven servants [. . .].

The house was dark because the street was so narrow that one could see Mrs Redgrave washing her neck in her bedroom across the way [. . .] my mother had covered the furniture in red velvet and painted the woodwork black with thin gold lines upon it. The house was also completely quiet. [. . .] Here then seventeen or eighteen people lived in small bedrooms with one bathroom and three water closets between them. (182-3)

In *Mrs. Woolf and the Servants*, Alison Light presents another view of the cramped atmosphere at 22 Hyde Park Gate which housed so many members of the extended family:

[It] had been adapted over the years to accommodate its ever--growing number of inhabitants, adding on two extra floors at the top and a dining-

room extension on the lower-ground level at the back. Inside the people were arranged, vertically in their groups, as in a doll's house, coming together at designated times of the day, their movements often regulated by the lighting of fires. High up under the roof, where the stair carpet ran out, the servants had their shabby attic bedrooms; below them was Leslie Stephen's book-lined study—no servant would be there in the daytime to disturb the master while he labored on the monumental volumes of the Dictionary of National Biography; the little Stephen children had their day and night nurseries on the third floor with their nurse; on the second floor were bedrooms and sitting rooms for the almost grown-up Duckworth siblings, while the first floor was given over to Leslie and Julia, their double bedroom, and a room where Julia's mother stayed. [. . .] The ground-floor double-length drawing room was partitioned by folding black doors, lined with red: the front half had its piano and writing table, and was where the ladies of the house sat, served tea at the appointed hour and received visitors; the back half was a retreat for other family activities. (31-2)

In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf articulates the importance of the tea table in the dining room at 22 Hyde Park Gate, as in other mid-Victorian homes:

The tea table rather than the dinner table was the centre of the Victorian Family life—in our family at least. Savages I suppose have some tree, or fire place, round which they congregate; the round table marked that focal, that sacred spot in our house. It was the centre to which the sons returned from their work in the evening; the hearth whose fire was tended by the mother, pouring out tea. (118)

The Stephen's tea table was located in the front drawing room along with a piano and near the window there was a writing table which Stella used. A small folding table which accompanied this round table completed the tea serving space. Woolf mentions how the tea table, "followed me, unwelcomed, even to Monk's house" ("Sketch" 118). It is noteworthy that she used this tea table for her writing profession at Monk's House thus transforming its original domestic purpose, which represented female servitude and

limitation, into one that held her writing tools, an ink pot and writing paper—which led to her earning a living and financial independence.

Woolf integrated the domestic centre of Victorian family life, the tea table, into her novels by setting it in various key scenes in: *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Years*, and *Between the Acts*. For example in *The Years*, the tea table in the front drawing-room is where Colonel Pargiter and his children gather every day; and where the children's lives, dominated by patriarchal expectations, unfold (10). Milly and Delia Pargiter are bound by duty and time each day to serve their father, brother, and their visitors' tea. It is the hub of family activity; here Eleanor contemplates her interests in law while her brother Morris studies for the bar (33); Eleanor analyzes the atmosphere of the family (16); Martin is sent out of the room to attend to his studies (11); Delia thinks of freedom (12); Rose tumbles in and out (17). Around the tea table social correspondence is kept up through letters that are opened, read, and written; Milly has sewing in her hand; and Morris a book in his hand; illness and death are felt (43); and Colonel Pargiter questions and orders his children (12-13). These scenes are meant to portray the traditional upper-middle class Victorian roles of women and men. The female's time during each day is marked by household tasks to support the male(s) in the home such as sending her husband off to work, the male children off to school, arranging time for children to study, household organization, sewing, social correspondence, and making and serving tea to the family patriarch and visitors.

Julia Stephen was the intellectual and emotional hub of 22 Hyde Park Gate. She attended to eight children while managing the household finances and servants,

orchestrated social gatherings for family and friends, and gave considerable time and care to the poor and sick in the area. She had a strong sense of morality, order, and philanthropy. This was a patriarchy-centred house, run to support the intellectual, physical and emotional needs of Virginia's father, Leslie Stephen. Mrs. Ramsay in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* reflects Julia Stephen's ability to hold a household and family together while propping up an insecure husband: "there he stood, demanding sympathy" (58). But, there was a terrible cost to being an "angel in the house" for both Julia and Mrs. Ramsay died relatively young.

Hyde Park Gate also followed the mid-Victorian upper-middle class tradition of sending boys to private boarding schools and then to Oxford or Cambridge, whereas the girls received their education at home, in the Stephens' case provided by their mother. Julia insisted upon being the one to provide primary education to her young children as Virginia recalled in "Reminiscences" and "A Sketch of the Past:"

In addition to all her other labours she took it on herself to teach us our lessons, and thus established a very close and rather trying relationship, for she was of a quick temper, and least of all inclined to spare her children. [. . .] It might have been better, as it certainly would have tired her less, had she allowed that some of those duties could be discharged for her. But she was impetuous, and also a little imperious; so conscious of her own burning will that she could scarcely believe that there was not something quicker and more effective in her action than in another's. (38-9)

It was in the dining room, at the long baize covered table, that we did our lessons. My mother's finger with the opal ring I loved pointed its way across French and Latin Grammars.⁶(117)

⁶ Virginia inherited her mother's opal ring and later gave it to Leonard Woolf ("Sketch" 82).

In addition to the household and family duties, Julia managed and buffered Leslie's mental insecurities for as long she was physically capable. Virginia writes in "A Sketch of the Past" that "the presence of my mother obsessed me. I could hear her voice, see her, imagine what she would do or say as I went about my day's doings. She was one of the invisible presences who after all play so important a part in every life" (80). Virginia was in her forties before she felt she was able to put her mother's voice to rest by inventing Mrs. Ramsay who encapsulated Julia's essential character in *To the Lighthouse*. "But I wrote the book very quickly; and when it was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her" (81).

Virginia struggled with her mother's voice, the voice of Victorian duty, of the "angel in the house," on which she reflects in *A Room of One's Own*, noting the difficulty of telling the truth when the "angel" lurked over her and dramatically suggesting the need to kill the phantom in order to write freely. Virginia admired her mother greatly, but she was a constant reminder of the burdens and limitations that a patriarchal society places on women. These were precisely the constraints from which Woolf tries to break free from as a writer, asserting in *Three Guineas* that if women were equally represented in the institutions of education, religion, and politics—society would be more balanced with much less emphasis on war.

Yet Woolf recognized and cherished many of her mother's practices and the wisdom and grace by which she conducted her life. One such practice was the careful attention Julia gave to letter writing. Apart from being a means of communicating with family and friends, her letters were an instrument for counselling those seeking advice on

marriage, health or other life decisions. When Julia died there was a desk full of her letters at St. Ives that needed her attention (“Reminiscences” 38). Virginia carried on with this tradition of letter writing throughout her life, filling six volumes with a total of 3,800 letters (*Letters* 1: xiii). Her letter writing served much the same purpose as her mother’s, a means of staying in contact with family, friends, writers, and in Virginia’s case, her rivals. Letters offered a means of practicing her love of writing. Letter writing also helped Virginia to consolidate important friendships with older women such as Janet Case, Violet Dickinson, Kitty Maxse, Nelly Cecil, Madge Vaughan, and Emma Vaughan, who were “consolatory and educative” throughout her writing career (Lee 158). Violet Dickinson, a stable family friend on the Duckworth side, nurtured Virginia with letters and visits throughout the difficult years immediately following the deaths of Julia and Stella. This regular exchange of letters, along with Dickinson’s encouragement to write freely and imaginatively, allowed Virginia to articulate private and social happenings in her life. She often embellished conversations and people’s personalities in her letter writing and this amplification is reflected in her finely honed technique of character development in her novels.

Virginia’s father, Leslie Stephen was a literary critic and writer. At the time of Virginia’s birth he had taken on the huge task of writing the *Dictionary of National Biography*. He later had to abandon this large project because of his physical deterioration and mental health; however, during Virginia’s childhood he spent a great deal of his time in his private space, the study, writing without interruption (Light 31). Father and daughter shared a life-long passion for reading, writing, and literary criticism.

As a child Virginia loved being caught reading a book from her father's study that was years beyond the comprehension of a child her age. She recalls: "And I remember his pleasure, how he stopped writing and got up and was very gentle and pleased, when I came into the study with a book I had done, and asked him for another" ("Sketch" 111-12). At fifteen, she had created a rigorous reading schedule, moving quickly through Leslie's library, which included Carlyle, Tennyson, Macaulay, Lamb, Pepys, Montaigne, Lockhart, and Hakluyt (Lee 140). She started studying Greek and Latin in 1897, reading Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and Sophocles. (Lee 141). And, like Leslie, Virginia later put her entire mind, body, and soul into writing which often led, as it did for her father, to physical and mental illness. She described Leslie's study at Hyde Park Gate, an addition to the house:

My father's great study—that study had been built on, when the family grew—was a fine big room, very high, three windowed, and entirely booklined. His old rocking chair covered in American cloth was the centre of the room which was the brain of the house. He had written all his books lying sunk in that deep rocking chair [. . .]. ("Sketch" 119)

Private space at Hyde Park Gate was limited and, as a result, the Duckworth and Stephen children grew up in close physical proximity to one another, squeezed together just as the small rooms were crammed into their narrow home, and bound by family events, patriarchal duty, matriarchal order, and social niceties. Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia, and Adrian were the second cluster of children who formed their own group because of the closeness in their ages, childhood and nursery experiences, and parentage. This contributed to a bond of friendship, debate, and connectedness that nurtured Virginia

throughout the years; these bonds and friendships formed the subject of novels like *The Waves*.

However, Virginia was much closer to Vanessa and Thoby than to Adrian. Perhaps this was because of Adrian's personality, or because he was the youngest in the family and pampered by Julia, a relationship Woolf replicated in *To the Lighthouse* between Mrs. Ramsay and James. Nonetheless, there was still a family tie between them that was most noticeably demonstrated after Vanessa's marriage in 1907 when, despite Virginia and Adrian's different personalities, they shared a home after they moved from Gordon Square to Fitzroy Square. The special intimacy Virginia felt toward Vanessa and Thoby is conveyed in "A Sketch of the Past" when she recalls the bond between them before, but even more detectable, after the deaths of their mother and Stella: "mine was from my earliest childhood so close with both Nessa and Thoby that if I describe myself I must describe them" (125). Her attachment to Vanessa developed early in the nursery as she recounts her first memory of their relationship in "Reminiscences," when they rendezvoused underneath a table:

I remember too the great extent and mystery of the dark land under the nursery table, where a continuous romance seemed to go forward, though the time there was really so short. I met your mother (Vanessa), in a gloom happily encircled by the firelight, and peopled with legs and skirts. We drifted together like ships in an immense ocean and she asked me whether black cats had tails. And I answered that they had not, after a pause in which her question seemed to drop echoing down vast abysses, hitherto silent. In future I suppose there was some consciousness between us that the other held possibilities. (28-9)

Lee explains how this early childhood relationship would carry on throughout their lives. “The sisters confirmed each other’s view of life in a secret space below and inside the life of the family. Virginia is characteristically proud of making an impression. There is freedom and space between them as they wander off again” (119). The two bathed and slept together and Vanessa nurtured Virginia in a kind and gentle manner. Virginia was dependent on and jealous of Vanessa and very much wanted to be the centre of her attention (120). Their adult relationship had ebb and flow to it too as they manoeuvred through family deaths, quarrels, servants, travel, letter writing, love affairs, and Virginia’s mental illness. Throughout, Virginia cared a great deal about what Vanessa thought about her writing and sought out her opinion, and Vanessa designed the covers of the novels Virginia published with Hogarth Press.

After her mother died, and shortly before Stella married Jack Hills and moved from 22 Hyde Park Gate, Virginia and Vanessa shared a “side-room,” a space off their back drawing-room, at Hyde Park Gate. Vanessa painted and Virginia read most of the Victorian novels aloud in this small space. Lee quotes Vanessa describing it as, “a cheerful little room, almost entirely made of glass” and “with a skylight, windows looking on to the back garden, and a window cut in the wall between it and the drawing-room” (42). Taking advantage of this modest pocket of privacy allowed enough mental space for the adolescent Stephen girls to recognize and pursue their interests in literature and art. This room, probably a back porch, was bright from the natural light coming in through the windows, a contrast to the other rooms in the dim narrow home with dark

heavy furnishings. The small room possessed both the light and privacy so important for painting, reading and writing.

Virginia's relationship with her brother, Thoby, although different from that she shared with Vanessa, was also very close. From a young age, Virginia and Thoby formed a bond through literature and story-telling. Relating his educational experiences and friendships at Cambridge and Trinity, he would discuss his interests in the Greeks and Shakespeare with Virginia. She fondly recalls in "A Sketch of the Past" when Thoby first went to Cambridge in October 1899 and their relationship "pushed out from the mists of childhood; and each saw the other emerging; and each felt new qualities, he in himself, me in myself; both in each other. They were days of discovery. Exciting days, whether one called them happy or unhappy; or agitating" (140). Virginia always looked forward to her talks with Thoby about literature and philosophy. Her debates with him opened the world beyond the social niceties or "tea talk" that most females were limited to. Although she greatly mourned Thoby when he died suddenly of typhoid fever after their return trip from Greece in 1906, she did not collapse from it as she did after the deaths of her mother and father. She seemed securely sustained throughout her life by the close connection they had shared. For Thoby had opened the door to the patriarchal cultural domain for Virginia (and Vanessa) to participate in the "room" of intellectual discourse; moreover, through Thoby she met many of the men who formed the Bloomsbury Group. She drew upon his personal qualities and physical attributes to shape her fictional characters, for example, Perceval in *The Waves*, Peter Walsh in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Jacob in *Jacob's*

Room. Woolf describes Jacob on his way to Cambridge in 1906.⁷ Jacob shares a carriage ride with an elderly woman, Mrs. Norman, who makes observations about him that are reminiscent of Thoby when he left Hyde Park Gate to attend Trinity College at Cambridge: “All was firm, yet youthful, indifferent, unconscious...his eyes—which were blue—on the landscape. [. . .] handsome, interesting, distinguished, well built” (30).

The interior characteristics of Virginia’s home at 22 Hyde Park Gate convey a feeling of a confined, cramped living space that lasted throughout her childhood and that resonated with a tragic series of deaths and unwanted sexual advances. Thus the rooms shrank even more when Julia Stephen died on May 5, 1895. Virginia suffered her first mental breakdown the summer of her mother’s death. Virginia’s dark and emotional volatile childhood home at Hyde Park Gate mirrors the emotional darkness that enveloped her after her mother died, as she recalls in “Old Bloomsbury:”

When I look back upon that house it seems to me so crowded with scenes of family life, grotesque, comic and tragic; with the violent emotions of youth, revolt, despair, intoxication happiness, immense boredom, with parties of the famous and the dull; with rages again, George and Gerald; with love scenes with Jack Hills; with passionate affection for my father alternating with passionate hatred of him, all tingling a vibrating in a atmosphere of youthful bewilderment and curiosity—that I feel suffocated by the recollection. The place seemed tangled and matted with emotion. I could write the history of every mark and scratch in my room, I wrote later. The walls and the rooms had in sober truth been built to our shape. It seemed as if the house and family which had lived in it, thrown together as they were by so many deaths, so many emotions, so many traditions, must endure forever. And then suddenly in one night both vanished. (183)

⁷ This commemorates Thoby’s death on November 20, 1906.

The additional calamity for Virginia after her mother's death was her father's inability to exercise parental care. Leslie Stephen was lost in his own an abyss of sorrow and self-pity. Stella Duckworth was the one who took over, to the best of her ability, the insurmountable task of looking after the household, including her needy, ill step-father and four young adolescent half-brothers and sisters. Although Stella bore the brunt of Leslie's emotional and angry outbursts after Julia's death, Vanessa and Virginia were greatly affected by his mental instability. Tragically, two years later, Stella died in 1897, three months after her marriage to Jack Hills and her move from 22 Hyde Park Gate. Within a span of nine years Virginia suffered the loss of her mother, the unexpected death of Stella, social and sexual pressures from George and Gerald, and the total despondency and tyranny of her father. In July 1940 when Virginia reflected on Leslie Stephen while writing "A Sketch of the Past," her description of him as a father at Hyde Park Gate after her mother's passing conveyed an overbearing and controlling figure:

[W]hen Nessa and I inherited the rule of the house, I knew nothing of the social 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. It was like being shut up in the same cage with a wild beast. (116)

How then did Virginia survive this difficult and dark period? Undeniably, her passion for extensive reading, letter and diary writing, and the on-going literary debates with Thoby served as an escape from the turmoil around her. Virginia was fifteen years old in 1897 when Stella married Jack Hills and moved two houses away to 24 Hyde Gate Park (Light 44). Virginia then moved to the top of the house into Stella's old room that

had previously been the Stephen children's night nursery. She created a sitting room and using Stella's desk as her writing table, she sat ensconced in her "beloved armchair" insulated and protected, "browsing and munching steadily through all kinds of books" (Light 47). She describes her room in "A Sketch of the Past" as:

My room in that very tall house was at the back. [. . .] the old night nursery, was a long narrow room, with two windows; the fireside half was the living half; the washstand half was the sleeping half. It had been 'done up' at George's cost, I rather think; all traces of the night nursery were abolished. In the living half was my wider chair, and Stella's writing table made after her design with crossed legs, and stained green and decorated by her with a pattern of brown leaves [. . .]. On it stood open my Greek lexicon; some Greek play or other; many little bottles of ink, pens innumerable; and probably hidden under blotting paper, sheets of foolscap covered with private writing in a hand so small and twisted as to be a family joke.

The sleeping side was dominated by the long Chippendale (imitation) looking-glass, given me by George in hope that I should look into it and learn to do my hair and take general care of my appearance. Between it and the washstand, under the window, was my bed. (122)

The old night nursery allowed Virginia enough space for a reading desk, a place to keep writing materials, and, "many books, & white walls & blue curtains" (Lee 43), and where she could establish her own routine. This room proved to be pivotal to her as an adolescent writer. The atmosphere created by the furnishings and their arrangement, coupled with the family encounters in the room affected her both positively and negatively. One positive result of this experience was that Virginia began a reading and writing schedule from "ten to one" which she followed throughout her career and carried into Monk's House ("Sketch" 148). She further depicts in "A Sketch of the Past" what her daily schedule entailed in 1900 and how it was a "complete model of Victorian

society” (147). Virginia started the day eating breakfast with her father, Adrian, and Vanessa with George and Gerald joining in later. Vanessa or Virginia would see Adrian off to school at the front door, waving their hand as Stella had done “until he disappeared” (147). This daily routine reappears in the life of Woolf’s character, Eleanor, in *The Years*, who stood at the front door waving good-bye to her brothers until they were out of sight (43-4). They, like Adrian and Thoby, were on their way to receive a formal education outside the home, while the women remained at home in servitude to their fathers and the running of the household. After breakfast, Virginia retreated to her room and “spread my Liddell and Scott upon the table, and settled down to read Plato, or to make out some scene in Euripides or Sophocles for Clara Pater, or Janet Case” (“Sketch” 148). Vanessa went to art class, George and Gerald left for work, the servants attended to their domestic duties, and Leslie was “shut in his study at the top” (147-8). Virginia was “left alone in the great house” until about 4:30 in the afternoon, yet, at fifteen, she possessed the inner discipline to establish a three hour reading and writing time, “standing up at her high desk” similar to Vanessa standing to paint at her easel (Lee 140). During those hours Virginia was free from the Victorian duties of making tea for her father, her brothers, or abiding by the English niceties of visiting with drop-in guests.

Establishing a daily reading and writing schedule allowed Virginia to focus on studying the classics in 1897. In October she began taking Latin and Greek classes at King’s College in Kensington from Dr. George Warr who was one of the founders of the Ladies’ Department (Roe and Sellers 8). In 1898 she continued on with her classes at King’s College with Dr. Warr, and in 1899 she began private Latin and Greek lessons

with Clara Pater, focusing on Homer, Plato's *Apologia*, and Xenophon. She started private lessons with Janet Case in 1902, a "Cambridge-trained classicist," who was her next and most influential teacher and also a life-long confidant (Lee 141). Virginia valued Case's stringent and dynamic teaching method, especially in relationship to the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides, which strengthened her debates with Thoby. Janet Case's thoroughness in teaching the classics and her approach to logic cultivated a precision in writing which Virginia continued to develop throughout her career (Lee 142). Her extensive reading stood her in good stead as a reviewer and essayist.

For Virginia, reading and writing were intertwined, each indispensable to the other. Julia taught all her children at a young age the essentials of reading and writing at their dining room table at Hyde Park Gate. Virginia was six years old when her father helped her "typewrite" her first letter which was to her godfather, James Russell Lowell, the poet, critic, and minister, requesting a visit: "MY DEAR GODPAPA HAVE YOU BEEN TO THE ADIRONDACKS AND HAVE YOU SEEN LOTS OF WILD BEASTS AND A LOT OF BIRDS IN THEIR NESTS YOU ARE A NAUGHTY MAN NOT TO COME HERE GOOD BYE (*Letters* 1: 2). At the age of nine, Virginia Stephen participated with her siblings in putting their family story-telling and happenings in print in a family newsletter, *Hyde Park Gate News*, with the earliest edition comprising material dating from 1891 to 1892 and some from the early months of 1895 (Lee 107). Virginia and her siblings grew up reading the children's stories that Julia had written and Leslie had illustrated for them (Lee 83). The books she read from her father's library at Hyde Park Gate formed the foundation of her education; her letters, her participation in

the family newsletter, and the beginnings of diary writing, were the basis for her love of writing. At fifteen, in addition to “rereading” all the books her father had previously lent her, Virginia began to select her own books from her father’s library such as: Lamb’s *Essays of Elia*, Lockhart’s *Life of Scott*, Macaulay, Pepys, Montaigne, and Richard Hakluyt (Lee 140), Thackeray, Carlyle, Dickens, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Lowell, Trollope, Arnold, and Norris (Bishop 2).

Virginia Stephen had a strong literary start for a young Victorian girl; however, she identified early in life the inequalities in education for boys and girls. She felt it was an injustice that Leslie had paid for her brothers to receive a formal education outside the home, but not for her. She estimated that, “He spent perhaps £100 on my education,” but as Lee points out, conceivably Leslie thought that with Virginia’s “illness and nervousness,” Cambridge might have been too much for her, nor would she have had the freedom to select her readings or develop her writing as freely as she had done at home (146). Nonetheless, the inequality in the level of education that Virginia received in comparison to her brothers was a source of rage, which later became a focal point in her polemical essays, *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*, and her novel, *The Years*.

The reading and writing schedule that Virginia launched when she relocated to the old night nursery reflected a high degree of discipline for a young girl of fifteen. It also served as the much needed break from her father during the day; however, there was a sinister component to this room which stemmed from the lack of privacy Virginia had in the evening hours and into the night. Woolf suggests that if anyone were to go back to the “sleeping-sitting” room she moved into after Stella married “one of them would say what

an odd, what an unwholesome life for a girl of fifteen. [. . .] And I suppose that, if one of them had read *To the Lighthouse*, or *A Room of One's Own*, or *The Common Reader*, he or she might say: "This room explains a great deal" ("Sketch" 123-4). From these comments and the reference below, Woolf, who was nearly sixty in 1939, recalls the divided room she occupied for seven years, from 1897 to 1904, with intense and mixed feelings:

Which should I describe first—the living half of the room, or the sleeping half? They must be described separately; yet they were always running together. How they fought each other; that is, how often I was in a rage in that room; and in despair; and in ecstasy; how I read myself into a trance of perfect bliss; then in came—Adrian, George, Gerald, Jack, my father; how it was there that I retreated when father enraged me; and paced up and down scarlet; and there Madge came one evening; and I could scarcely talk for happiness; and there I droned out those long solitary mornings reading Greek. (123)

Woolf offers a string of examples from her memoirs that confirm how the privacy of this room could be invaded and how this was detrimental to her emotional and mental well being. For it was a room that was *not* entirely her own. Family members, especially George and Gerald, entered when they pleased; the door needed a lock on it as she writes in *A Room of One's Own*. After Stella's death, George primarily took it upon himself to introduce Vanessa and Virginia to England's high society by taking them, one at a time, to parties. Yet, both George and Gerald Duckworth, fourteen and twelve years older, took advantage of Virginia's vulnerable emotional state after the deaths of their mother and sister by imposing their social opinions and physical wishes upon her. Virginia recognized that in addition to his age, she submitted to George, in part, because of the financial power he had over her. "And he had [a] thousand pounds [a] year whereas I had

fifty” (“Sketch” 152). The allowance Virginia and Vanessa received was heavily negotiated with their father who was obsessed about economizing and ranted regularly over the household expenditures. Woolf points out that had Thoby or George presented the “books” to Leslie each week, “the explosion would have been minimized” (“Sketch” 145). This was the financial disparity and display of power the Stephen girls dealt with, not only in terms of the amount of money they could call their own, but the verbal abuse they had to endure simply because Leslie had “no shame in thus indulging his rage before women” (“Sketch 145). Consequently, when George provided gifts of clothing, hats, and jewelry that she and Vanessa could not afford on their own, it created a relationship of indebtedness to him that Virginia resented greatly.

Virginia’s most disturbing memories of that room occurred on the “sleeping side” while lying in bed. “One night I lay awake horrified hearing, as I imagined, an obscene old man gasping and croaking and muttering senile indecencies—it was a cat, I was told afterwards; a cat’s anguished love making” (“Sketch” 123). Woolf later creates a similar image in *The Years* when Rose encounters a man near a pillar-box, “he sucked his lips in and out. He made a mewling noise. But he did not stretch out hands. They were unbuttoning his clothes” (29). Being older, Vanessa was the first to be taken out and introduced to English society by the Duckworth brothers and that left Virginia at home “awake till two or three, waiting for Nessa to come and see me after her party. I would read by the light of candle, and blow it out as I heard her and Gerald approaching. But Gerald pinched the top of the candle, found the soft wax, and so detected me” (“Sketch” 123). Another memory is of George entering her room very quietly after they had

returned from a party and just as Virginia was falling asleep, “‘Don’t be frightened’ he said, ‘And don’t turn on the light, oh beloved. Beloved—’ and he flung himself on my bed, and took me in his arms” (“Hyde” 177). It was the same bed that “Gerald fetched me from when father died. There I first heard those horrible voices...” (“Sketch” 123).

The invasion of her privacy during the evening hours not only shaped her frame of mind at night, but also crept into her sense of solitude during the hours that she had set aside for reading and writing during the day. Previously, when describing the room she points out that “it had been ‘done up’ at George’s cost” and near her bed, a place of rest, there was a “dominant” looking-glass that she not only felt uncomfortable looking into, but which also served as a constant reminder of the value Victorian society (and George) placed on social “appearance” and female “beauty” (“Sketch” 122). Virginia indicates that she was neither able to choose nor denounce the interior content of “her” room or its occupants, ultimately affecting the interior of her mind and influencing how she approached her early writing. From her own account, she hid her private writings in “a hand so small and twisted as to be a family joke” (“Sketch” 122). Woolf’s personal experience of guarding her writing as she did at Hyde Park Gate is communicated through characters in her novels. Lily Briscoe, an aspiring artist, in *To the Lighthouse*, “kept a feeler on her surroundings lest some one should creep up, and suddenly she should find her picture looked at” (30). She quickly placed her painting of Mrs. Ramsay and James face down on the grass when anyone, other than Mr. Banks, approached her on the grassy hill. Lily feared the criticism she might receive not only about her art, but her choice to paint, to develop a craft, over marriage and a family. Similarly, Isabella, in

Between the Acts, hid “her poetry in a book bound like an account book” lest her husband suspect she was writing (50). The mental and emotional complexities that arose for Virginia Stephen from the lack of privacy she experienced as an adolescent girl were not confined only to Hyde Park Gate but extended to her other childhood home, the cherished vacation home, Talland House.

Perhaps the saving grace for Virginia living in such a gloomy and cramped interior space at Hyde Park Gate and its emotional atmosphere was the yearly transition to the family vacation home, Talland House. The blended Duckworth and Stephen family left the busy and noisy streets of England for a serene house in the fishing village in Cornwall at St. Ives. Leslie Stephen purchased a lease on it from the Great Western Railway when Julia was pregnant with Virginia. This was the Stephen’s vacation home from 1882-1894, a place where Virginia spent her first twelve consecutive summers exploring life outside the urban Victorian home. In contrast to the images of restrictiveness, heaviness, and tradition at Hyde Park Gate, Talland House represents freedom of movement, an opening up of the senses, and an awareness of sensual being. Lee describes Talland House as “a substantial mid-nineteenth century house with enough rooms for nurseries and dining-room and guest bedrooms and servants, just outside St. Ives. [. . .] It overlooked the station, the bay and the Godrevy lighthouse, built in 1859. The little fishing town of St. Ives was, then as now, a steep, ‘windy, noisy, fishy, vociferous, narrow-streeted town’ with ‘no architecture’; ‘no arrangement’” (25-6).

According to Light, the Stephen family often vacationed at St. Ives from June to mid-October: “Hyde Park Gate was shut up, the dust sheets were thrown over the

furniture, ornaments were washed, and the opportunity was taken to give each room a thorough going-over [. . .]. Like other middle-class Victorian families [. . .] the Stephens took much of their own household with them—books, clothes, pets and servants” (35).

Talland House represented a happy and significant period in Virginia’s life, “the best beginning to life conceivable” (“Sketch” 128). Woolf’s childhood experiences at St. Ives, both indoor and outdoor, served as foundations for writing *Jacob’s Room*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*. The Stephen children spent their summers mainly outdoors on walks, by the water, tracking boats as they came into bay, and making up stories to retell each other (“Sketch” 134). And here she describes her first memories of the awareness of self, of nature’s beauty and the rapture she felt. Her specific recollections of domestic objects and moments became touchstones for exploring and expressing her memories in *Moments of Being* through the recall of everyday life and the laying out of sensations so characteristic of her writing technique. For example, the memory of the blind in her Talland House nursery captured a signal moment, a “moment of being,” when all of her senses opened up to the present, with an experience of interconnectedness to nature and others, generating a sensation of wholeness:

It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St. Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one, two, behind a yellow blind. It is of hearing the blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing this splash and seeing this light, and feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be here; of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive. (“Sketch” 64-6)

The yellow blind from her Talland House nursery is similar to the “white blind” in the opening scene of *The Waves*, which describes the sun rising while the “blind stirred slightly, but all within was dim and unsubstantial” (*Waves* 252). The imagery of the sun’s location in the sky and of waves breaking on the shore introduces each chapter in *The Waves*, marking the time of day, change of seasons, and the life experiences of the six main characters.

Similarly, the looking-glass at Talland House offers another such moment of being. In “A Sketch of the Past,” Virginia recalls when she was six or seven she enjoyed looking into the looking-glass, only if she were alone. She experiences a deep feeling of shame that she relates to three ideas suggested by the looking-glass. The first idea is that she and Vanessa were thought of as tomboys and she thought looking into the mirror might go “against our tomboy code.” Secondly, she aligns the shame to “a streak of the puritan” inherited from her father’s side, recalling her “grandfather—Sir James, who once smoked a cigar, liked it, and so threw away his cigar and never smoked another.” Therefore, linking the enjoyment of doing something, such as looking at oneself in the looking-glass, should be stopped—thrown away forever: “At any rate, the looking-glass shame has lasted all my life, long after the tomboy phase was over. I cannot now powder my nose in public. Everything to do with dress—to be fitted, to come into a room wearing a new dress—still frightens me; at least makes me shy, self-conscious, uncomfortable” (68).

Virginia linked the third explanation of her lifetime of aversion to seeing herself in the looking-glass to her half-brother Gerald Duckworth and his invasion of her

physical privacy while they were at Talland House. She explains in “A Sketch of the Past,” that “once when I was very small” Gerald sat her on a slab outside the dining room door used for standing dishes on and opposite to the looking-glass:

and as I sat there he began to explore my body. I can remember the feel of his hand going under my clothes; going firmly and steadily lower and lower. I remember how I hoped that he would stop; how I stiffened and wriggled as his hand approached my private parts. But it did not stop. His hand explored my private parts too. I remember resenting, disliking it—what is the word for so dumb and mixed a feeling? (69)

In the same passage Virginia attempts to understand the “disconnect” with her body and thinks that her “natural love for beauty was checked by some ancestral dread.” She goes on to admit that from an early age she has felt “ecstasies and raptures spontaneously and intensely and without any shame or the least sense of guilt, so long as they were disconnected with my own body” (“Sketch” 68). Virginia does not go into detail about the frequency or the severity of the sexual abuse she suffered from her half brothers George and Gerald Duckworth. However, the looking-glass scene at Talland House and the advances made to her years later in her bedroom at 22 Hyde Park Gate are significant memories which are mentioned in her autobiographical essays and diaries and convey a life-long fracture between mind and body. Woolf drew upon the reflective qualities of the looking-glass, which not only held disturbing childhood memories and sensations for her, but also served as an important recurring and symbolic object of domestic décor in her fiction.

The looking-glass reflects a person’s outward physical appearance. However, standing before a mirror often initiates a deeper question about self, such as: “Who am

I?” and “Where am I?” Furthermore, depending upon the position of the looking-glass in a room, one can even see the reflection of others, the outdoor landscape, people passing by, or the weather. In broader terms, Woolf uses her novels and polemical essays as a mirror for society to reflect upon itself. The written word coalescing as a book serves as an object for people to hold in front of themselves and to “see” bits and pieces of “self” and others in the midst of her plots, scenes, and characters. In her writing, the looking-glass serves as a metaphor to shed light on the long-term effects patriarchal constraints have on women. Referring to the well-connected Victorian and Edwardian upper middle-class, she argues that the inequality in the access to education, to inheritance, to earnings, and to privacy were elements of the status quo that kept women in the perpetual role of supporting their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. Woolf suggests in *A Room of One's Own* that the “earth” would have had different outcomes if men and women had the invaluable quality of “confidence in oneself” instead of using superiority to rule over those deemed inferior. “Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” and if women did begin “to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished” (32-3). Thus, Mrs. Dalloway comments on her role as the supporting wife: “With twice his wits, she had to see things through his eyes—one of the tragedies of married life. With a mind of her own, she must always be quoting Richard” (77).

In *Between the Acts*, villagers gather for the annual pageant in the garden at Pointz Hall. Miss La Trobe orchestrates the final act to promote a deeper and more truthful look into their lives:

from the bushes—the riffraff. Children? Imps—elves—demons. Holding what? Tin cans? Bedroom candlesticks? Old Jars? My dear, that’s the cheval glass from the Rectory! And the mirror—that I lent her. My mother’s. Cracked. What’s the notion? Anything that’s bright enough to reflect, presumably, ourselves? [. . .] Ourselves? But that’s cruel. To snap us as we are, before we’ve had time to assume [. . .] And only, too, in parts [. . .] That’s what’s so distorting and upsetting and utterly unfair [. . .] the looking-glasses darted, flashed, exposed. (183-4)

Woolf, similar to Miss La Trobe in *Between the Acts*, strove to create an art form that required her audience to “reflect” upon its content, meaning, and implication despite its discomfort and challenge. And, society, like Miss La Trobe’s audience, is often hesitant to embrace a message that confronts the status quo.

Inspired by the new and unusual domestic arrangements that Woolf encountered when she moved with her siblings to the Bloomsbury area of London in 1904, she began to reflect upon her childhood at Hyde Park Gate and Talland House. As described above, the domestic spaces and interior arrangements of her childhood homes forged their traces upon her psychic development and, as we shall see in the following chapters, featured prominently in *Jacob’s Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, *The Years*, and *Between the Acts*. Woolf wrote about the rooms and relationships she experienced in Hyde Park Gate and Talland House throughout her life—in her memoirs, novels, letters, and diaries.

Chapter 2

Bloomsbury Homes

Every house is, in reality, and outer embodiment of the inner life of its occupant.—Diana Fuss, The Sense of an Interior

Virginia Stephen lived consecutively in three homes located in the Bloomsbury area of London, from 1904 to 1912, with one or more of her siblings after the death of their father in February of 1904. The houses were in Gordon Square, Fitzroy Square, and Brunswick Square and became the domestic spaces central to the early formation of the Bloomsbury Group, an informal gathering, composed largely of Cambridge graduates and Vanessa and Virginia Stephen, who were interested in art, philosophy, literature, and friendships. This loosely formed group played a role in London's cultural shift in the early twentieth-century affecting art, home décor, literature, and politics. For Virginia Stephen, the change in domestic interiors and the intellectual friendships she developed during these years were pivotal to becoming a professional writer. Her "Bloomsbury" homes represented a transitional time between her childhood homes and what would later become her adult, professional homes where she would write the majority of her works. During this span of time, she experienced a radical break from the patriarchally run home at Hyde Park Gate and from traditional Victorian interactions between men and women. In contrast to her dark, narrow childhood home, the architectural layout of 46 Gordon Square possessed a more open floor plan with all white walls and larger windows which allowed sunlight to flood the interior living areas. The Stephen siblings also departed

from the standard Victorian gendered division of rooms to set up more open and flexible spatial arrangements, thus giving them greater freedom in their daily activities and in their socializing. In this chapter, I describe how the shift from domestic rigidity of Hyde Park Gate to the domestic flexibility of Bloomsbury created a relaxed atmosphere for new male friendships and lively conversation, and a physically and psychologically enabling space in which Virginia's writing career was launched.

This shift in the use of domestic space was of great significance to Virginia because it challenged the social ideals invested in the Victorian home and household. During the mid-nineteenth century the industrial revolution altered the way men and women thought about and treated the home interior as men left to work outside it. In *Inside the Victorian Home*, Judith Flanders focuses on the middle-class home, describing the importance of the division between public work life and the private home life: "The Victorians found it useful to separate their world into a public sphere, of work and trade, and a private sphere, of home life and domesticity" (5). Rooms once shared by the entire family for multi-purposes had been divided according to gender, age, class, and the family's private and public use for each room. Flanders explains:

Feminine spaces were the drawing room, the morning room, the nursery, and the bedroom—places of socialization and children where women were acknowledged to be in charge [. . .]. Masculine spaces were the study [. . .] and the dining room [. . .] The dining room was the most public room in the house [. . .] where formal displays of hospitality were made [. . .] where status of the family was judged. (253-5)

As the English public sphere encountered "dynamic" years of change from various causes including industrialization and improved mortality rates, the women at

home became, “as John Ruskin was later to describe the home, the focus of existence, the source of refuge and retreat, but also of the strength and renewal” (Flanders 5). There was a heightened sense of the religious and moral duty for women to marry, have children, and organize a home to support the public success and private interests of their husbands, a duty that Julia Stephen took very seriously and one that Virginia Woolf embodied in the character of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*.

Although these ideas of home upheld the ideal of privacy and separation from the public sphere, the domestic interior nevertheless operated as both public and private spheres. The rooms used for entertaining guests, such as the dining room and drawing room, were carefully decorated to reflect appropriately the householder’s socio-economic status. Having good judgment and taste in decorating “public” rooms, with neither too much nor too little, signalled social acumen, “the greatest good was knowing one’s place and living up to it precisely” (Flanders 170).

In the Victorian era, England’s patriarchal hierarchy influenced how male and female shared and divided their domestic space, what constituted proper activities in those spaces, and the degree of privacy within those spaces. Rosner examines gender inequality in the upper middle-class Victorian home created from these spatial divisions. She states, “The gendered divisions in the home operated on every level, from the broad “zoning” of male and female regions of the home, to the gendered designation of individual rooms, to the contents of the rooms. Although the house itself was considered a feminized space, the masculine regions of the home were generally larger than the feminine regions” (96). For example, the study was a private room, often with a single

and private entrance, for the husband and “often served as a center for the governance of the household [. . .]. The study has an air of masculine ritual, secrecy, and sensuality, all of which tend to exclude women” (97). Thus, a firm custom was established that kept other members of the household from crossing this boundary and that offered an atmosphere for quiet study, reading, writing and long periods of solitude, as Leslie Stephens did during Virginia’s childhood. Women, however, who managed the household affairs, spent most of their time in the drawing room, a central room where family and friends gathered for tea, children went to when they returned from school, and where guests, women in particular, were taken before or after meals. Flanders describes the significance of the drawing room and its furniture in the Victorian home:

The Drawing Room was the center of the house, literally and spiritually. It was the status indicator, the mark of gentility, the room from where the woman governed her domain. (168)

At the beginning of the Victorian period, sofas, ottomans, upright chairs and easy chairs, stools, ladies’ writing desks, console tables, work tables, sewing tables, occasional tables and screens, and, indispensably, a round table for the centre of the room were all part of an ordinary drawing room. (171)

Writing tables and tea tables were used by women to carry out their domestic duties, which were central to the Victorian home. These pieces of furniture were unlike the large desks that men had in their private studies. Rosner asserts: “that the spaces of private life are a generative site for literary modernism. These spaces compose a kind of grid of social relations that shifts and slips, often upending the individuals who transverse it” (2). This statement aptly describes the action Vanessa Stephen took in 1904 when she

located and arranged the house at 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsbury, setting in motion a permanent break from their Victorian upbringing. This shift in living space fractured—especially for Vanessa and Virginia—the oppressive power of patriarchy and the hierarchy associated with the interior rooms of their childhood home.

Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia, and Adrian Stephen had agreed to move from Hyde Park Gate once their father passed away. Following his death, the Stephen siblings took a trip to Italy and France and upon their return, Virginia, twenty-two years old, suffered her second mental breakdown *and* scarlet fever. Vanessa and Dr. George Savage, Virginia's physician, decided that it would be best if she were sent away on a "rest cure" to be looked after by three nurses at Violet Dickinson's home in Welwyn from May until August 1904 (Lee 195). Virginia had difficulty eating (a life-long struggle for her) and was violent toward her nurses; she attempted suicide by jumping out of a window (a scene revisited through her character Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway*), and was unable to write letters until September of 1904 (Lee 195). She vacationed briefly in September with her siblings in Nottinghamshire, and then continued, with resistance, her rest cure at the home of Caroline Emilia, her aunt, in Cambridge and then with the Vaughan family in Yorkshire until December 1904 (Lee 195). It was a difficult ten month period for Virginia who mourned the loss of her father whom she greatly admired and loved, yet at the same time deeply resented for his uncontrolled emotions and his authoritarian treatment of Stella, Vanessa, and Virginia herself following their mother's death. When Virginia was able to write, she complained to Vanessa that "she had no room of her own to do her reading and writing" and that she was "sick... of this eternal resting and

fussing, and being told not to do this and that””(Lee 200). She missed London and wanted to return to it as quickly as possible. However, it was toward the end of her rest cure that she began to develop as a writer, expanding from personal diary and letter writing to writing book reviews and short essays; she began earning her own money from pen and paper.

When Vanessa set up their new home at Gordon Square in the fall of 1904, Virginia took over Thoby’s job of sorting through and selecting their father’s letters for a book, “Life and Letters,” about his life that Fred Maitland wished to compile. She was also working on the biographical “Note” for this book. Lee suggests that she “resented the job: ‘I am doing what I dislike, against my will at Fred’s wish,’” but points out that Virginia was at the same time “doing her own writing—copying out the old Warboys punting adventure for Emma, writing “comic lives” of “the Quaker” (Aunt Caroline Emelia) and Aunt Mary, and starting her first pieces of journalism” (200). Working through Leslie’s letters and writing about his life proved to be her first encounter with censorship while writing biography, raising the “question of who owned a person’s posthumous life” (Lee 201). Vanessa and Jack Hills strongly advised her to leave out “the more intimate bits” of his life (Lee 200-1). Woolf struggled again with this particular question later in life when she wrote a biography of her close friend Roger Fry (1940).

Whether and how to open intimate elements of a life, one’s own as well as of others, to public view presented a constant challenge to Woolf. In her 1931 essay, “Professions for Women,” Woolf discusses the detrimental influence of the “phantom” within one’s mind when trying to write a truthful opinion, noting especially how “the

extreme conventionality of the other sex” can be an obstacle when exploring one’s own sexuality (1387). The phantom is the angelic female voice of duty, purity, self-sacrifice, and social niceties, which haunts one’s mind, advising one to “flatter” instead of stating the truth. Woolf also struggled with this dilemma in her essays, reviews, and fiction. She “carefully” wrote her early reviews, keeping the authors and editors in mind. “But the Victorian manner is perhaps—I am not sure—a disadvantage in writing. When I read my old *Literary Supplement* articles, I lay the blame for their suavity, their politeness, their sidelong approach, to my tea-table training” (“Sketch” 150). On the other hand, in “Professions for Women,” and in life, Woolf received an inheritance “so that it was not necessary for me to depend solely on charm for my living” (1385); she could afford to face this “phantom” and ignore it. “I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. [. . .] Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing” (1385). Moreover, as Woolf became established in her profession and after 1917 when she and Leonard Woolf founded their own publishing company, Hogarth Press, she was less encumbered by concerns about censorship.

Violet Dickinson had arranged for Virginia’s first job—writing reviews for the *Guardian*. Virginia worked with Kathleen Lyttelton who was the editor of the Anglo-Catholic clerical paper. As Lee points out, it was an “unlikely venue” for Virginia, but it did pay and in December 1904 she had her first two book reviews and one essay published in the *Guardian*. This led to other review work through her emerging network of literary friends: in Kitty Maxse’s husband Leo’s political paper, *The National Review*;

regularly in *Times Literary Supplement* through Bruce Richmond; and in the *Cornhill* through Reginald Smith, “the editor of her father’s old magazine the *Cornhill*” (Lee 211).

While Virginia regained her health and started writing again, Vanessa finalized their move, a task that involved sorting through the blended family belongings at Hyde Park Gate. The large house Vanessa found to rent was at 46 Gordon Square “one of the big tall five-storey terraced houses on the Bedford estate squares, in a district which had been prosperously bourgeois in the nineteenth century but was by 1905 rather shabby and unfashionable” (Lee 201). It was “in a district as far away in spirit from Kensington as she could find” (Lee 199). The household move took place in October and Virginia arrived in December of 1904. Vanessa sold much of the old furniture to Harrods and Virginia recounts in “Old Bloomsbury” that:

Vanessa had wound up Hyde Park Gate once and for all. She had sold; she had burnt; she had sorted; she had torn up. Sometimes I believe she had actually to get men with hammers to batter down—so wedged into each other had the walls and cabinets become. But now all the rooms stood empty. Furniture vans had carted off all the different belongings. (184)

Vanessa, at twenty-six years of age, showed great determination to not only move from their childhood home, but to permanently break-up and discard the furniture the family had accumulated and used for thirty years, items that had blended the Duckworth and Stephen family together. By dismantling the physical items that embodied their structured daily lives steeped in patriarchal rule and Victorian conventions, she was discarding the past. With their parents deceased and George Duckworth married, the Stephen siblings were free from male authority. Vanessa initiated and facilitated the

closing of one door (tradition), and the opening of another (modernism) in how she set up their new domestic space. This bold action held greater significance for Vanessa and Virginia than it did for Thoby and Adrian who had already lived away from home while attending Cambridge. Moreover, Thoby and Adrian were men, and it was expected that they gain independence from the family unlike, their sisters who were expected to be socially supportive and financially dependent upon their fathers and then on their husbands. The social inequalities between men and women within the Victorian home mirrored the social inequalities outside it and shaped the central themes in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. In her novels, Woolf drew upon the domestic interior of Hyde Gate Park and Talland House to create Victorian settings and plots which portray this social disparity.

In *The Years*, Woolf uses the traditional drawing room to introduce the upper-middle class Pargiter family as they come and go from their daily activities. From within this central room, the reader learns the disparity in education between Victorian sons and daughters. As Mr. Malone, fifth generation Oxford graduate, explained to his daughter Kitty, "Nature did not intend you to be a scholar, my dear" (81). The Pargiter sons, Edward (professor), Martin (civil servant), and Morris (barrister) are also Oxford educated like their father and grandfather; while the daughters, Eleanor, Milly, Delia, and Rose are not. Eleanor, the oldest daughter, inherits her mother's writing table and her domestic duties while Mrs. Pargiter lies on her deathbed (34). Similar to Stella Duckworth, Eleanor takes charge of running the household, looking after her father's "account books," writing social correspondence, and doing charity work. Eleanor remains

single to care for her father in their home until his death at which time she is fifty-five (198). Although interested in law herself, she persuaded their father to allow Morris to study it (110). As “the angel in the house,” Eleanor represents the emotional hub of the family “the soother, the maker-up of quarrels, the buffer [. . .] between intensities and strifes of family life” (14). Eleanor lacks privacy to carry out her domestic duties, which she has to perform in the public space of the drawing room; whereas, she ponders what her father does in his personalized study: “Would he sit there all the morning reading the financial papers and considering his investments” (92)? The Pargiter daughters, like many Victorian girls, and like Virginia and Vanessa, were not given a formal education, which limited their intellectual and personal development, resulting in few choices beyond marriage, children, home, and charity work. In contrast, the Pargiter sons received a formal education outside the home and followed public paths established by previous generations, which included mentorship in education, public service, and law. Rose rejected the patriarchal establishment and the traditional role it imposed on women, of marriage, children, and domestic duties in exchange for social activism. Like her brother Morris, Rose found the drawing room too confining, yearning for something beyond its walls, “The scratching of Eleanor’s pen [. . .] Milly’s stitching [. . .] and Delia lying back in her chair doing nothing as usual” irritated Morris as they sat in the drawing room. He eagerly left the room to post Eleanor’s letter as he felt “cooped up with all these women in an atmosphere of unreal emotion” (44). Rose went onto to “live in more places than one [. . .] for she had lived in many places, felt many passions, and done many things” (166). One of her homes was a deliberately chosen, small, poverty-stricken flat

across the river on the south side of London in Hyams Place, located on a very “shabby” and “noisy” street, the very opposite in geographic location and socio-economic surroundings of the traditional Victorian home in which she grew up.

In “Old Bloomsbury,” Woolf communicates the vast difference in atmosphere and emotional state between Hyde Park Gate and Gordon Square: “But it is the house that I would ask you to imagine for a moment for, though Hyde Park Gate seems now so distant from Bloomsbury, its shadow falls across it. 46 Gordon Square could never have meant what it did had not 22 Hyde Park Gate preceded it” (182). She goes on to describe in the same essay her initial impression of Gordon Square when she visited it briefly in October during her rest cure:

But I can assure you that in October 1904 it was the most beautiful, the most exciting, the most romantic place in the world. To begin with it was astonishing to stand at the drawing room window and look into all those trees; the tree which shoots its branches up into the air [. . .]. The light and the air after the rich red gloom of Hyde Park Gate were a revelation. Things one had never seen in the darkness there—Watts pictures, Dutch cabinets, blue china—shone out for the first time in the drawing room at Gordon Square. After the muffled silence of Hyde Park Gate the roar of traffic was positively alarming. [. . .] But what was even more exhilarating was the extraordinary increase of space. [. . .] Here Vanessa and I each had a sitting room; there was the large double drawing room; and a study on the ground floor. [. . .] the house had been completely done up. [...] white and green chintzes were everywhere [. . .] we decorated with our walls with washes of plain distemper. We were full of experiments and reforms. (184-5)

Lee gives further details about the Gordon Square layout that the Stephens shared with their dedicated cook, Sophie Farrell:

There was more light and space for them all [. . .]. On the ground floor there was a dining-room, a living-room, and Thoby’s library-study, which

they all used as a sitting-room all with fine ceiling-roses and dados. On the first floor was a double L-shaped drawing-room, and on the three floors above, four bedrooms with their own sitting-rooms—smaller rooms than downstairs with lower ceilings. The high front windows let in the afternoon sun; Virginia’s room at the top of the house looked out on the tops of the huge plane trees in the square gardens [. . .]. All the main rooms had fireplaces, and the house was heated by coal fires— [. . .] it had electric lighting. [. . .] She[Vanessa] bought a red carpet for the drawing-room, a dinner table seating eight, a big mirror, a new table for Virginia [. . .]. She hung up Watts’ portraits of their parents, and in the entrance hall, Julia Margaret Cameron’s photographs of the great Victorians [. . .] and of Julia Stephen [. . .] She unpacked the books—it took her days. (201)

Thoby Stephen *shared* his study, unlike the secluded study with firm boundaries that their father and other Victorian men had occupied. Opening up the masculine library or study to women and merging its function as a private room with that of a public multi-use room conveyed an eagerness to live life differently at 46 Gordon Square. The domestic boundaries between public and private, male and female became less sharp and more malleable, creating an egalitarian space for the Stephen siblings. It led to a relaxed atmosphere, one free from binding meal and tea-time schedules, and from the need to “dress” for dinner. Rejecting the Victorian idea that the inside of their home needed to adhere to gender division and particular room usage generated a sense of freedom in what else they *could* do in their home. They could think and act how they wanted to without fear of paternal condemnation; they could even question and disagree with current societal norms.

In addition to having larger rooms and more natural light, the interior space at 46 Gordon Square was equally divided between male and female, meaning that Vanessa and Virginia had space to set up and pursue their professional interests in art and literature.

They each had sitting-rooms and fireplaces within their bedrooms and electricity which had not been installed at Hyde Park Gate (Lee 201). The availability of electric lights extended Virginia's daily reading and writing times as she reports in her diary on January 18, 1905: "wrote & read after tea till dinner at 7.30" (*Passionate* 224). Vanessa had selected and arranged the large bright room at the top of the stairs for Virginia, prior to her return. When Virginia arrived in December, "She shifted the furniture around to please herself [. . .]. She bought a little bookshelf and brass coalscuttle, fender and fire irons. She had her books, her typewriter, her pens and papers, her tall desk, her own space for entertaining in" (Lee 201). Arranging the space to "please herself" helped to create a room, *entirely* her own, in contrast to the old night nursery at Hyde Park Gate that had been "done up" by George Duckworth along with items Stella Duckworth had left behind.

Vanessa decorated the interior of 46 Gordon Square with bright, bold colours which stood out against the plain white distempered walls, a revolutionary step toward modernism and an abrupt change from the gloom and tradition of dark, heavy material and furniture found throughout Hyde Park Gate. Their white walls were fresh, like a blank canvas or page, welcoming the first stroke of a brush or pen, extending an invitation for self-expression that Vanessa continued to explore in her art and that Virginia developed in her writing. Christopher Reed's article, "A Room of One's Own," suggests that the photos of the family and prominent friends that Vanessa hung in the entrance of 46 Gordon Square were "entered between the literally patriarchal legacy of this "procession of educated men" (to take a phrase from Woolf's *Three Guineas*) and an

alternative matriarchal heritage of artistry and beauty represented by the pioneering photographer Julia Margaret Cameron” (148). They were symbolic of the “liminal positions between traditions” that Virginia and her siblings were emerging from and that “would become the hallmark of Bloomsbury’s domestic spaces” (Reed 148).

The modern interior decorating and room arrangement challenged the status quo of current English domesticity and altered the social formalities the Stephen siblings had grown up with at Hyde Park Gate, generating a sense of joy and optimism in Virginia. She was free, for the first time, from the daily burden of scheduling her time around the needs and wants of her father and brothers. In this new and liberal space, her social life blossomed and she attained early success as a literary journalist, publishing 35, 21, 19, and 16 articles during 1905, 1906, 1908, and 1909, respectively (Gualtieri 24). Nearly twenty-four years after her move to Gordon Square, on November 28, 1928, she articulates in her diary the liberating effect of her father’s death: “He would have been 96, yes, today; & could have been 96, like other people one has known; but mercifully was not. His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books;--inconceivable” (3: 208).

These domestic changes led to an open, progressive, and often non-conventional way of living and interacting with others. In “Old Bloomsbury,” Virginia Woolf fondly recalls this early period at Gordon Square: “we were for ever lunching and dining out and loitering about the book shops.”

We were full of experiments and reforms. We were going to do without table napkins, we were to have [large supplies of] Bromo instead; 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. (185)

As her social and intellectual life opened up in an entirely new way, it affected how she experienced and thought about art, literature, male and female friendships, traditional marriage roles, and sexuality. The formalities of calling cards, afternoon tea, and chaperoned dinner parties and dances that Virginia had dutifully participated in with George Duckworth were quickly replaced with spontaneous outings in London and informal gatherings at Gordon Square. In March 1905, Thoby invited his friends from Cambridge on Thursday evenings and by that October Vanessa had assembled a group of her friends on Friday mornings to discuss the fine arts. The friends who attended these two gatherings at Gordon Square often overlapped (*Passionate* 300). Thursday evenings first included: Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia, and Adrian Stephen, Clive Bell, Desmond MacCarthy, Lytton Strachey, and Saxon Sydney-Turner. The Cambridge men were part of a group that had formed at Trinity College (Lehmann 16). Some were familiar with each other through family connections before meeting Thoby at Trinity College. They became close friends between 1899 and 1904, “some through their membership of Cambridge’s most talked about secret society, the Apostles, some through G.E. Moore’s Easter reading parties [. . .], and some through the non-Apostolic Clive Bell’s ‘Midnight Society’” (Lee 204). The gatherings at 46 Gordon Square became the basis for the famous Bloomsbury Group and although the frequency of their meetings and its membership would change over the years and its true nature debated, the core group and their initial get-togethers from 1905-1910 shaped Virginia’s intellectual discourse and

engagement with the literary world. Vanessa and Virginia had met Bell, Desmond, Strachey, Turner, and Woolf when they visited Thoby at Cambridge during “May Week.” Thoby had described their personalities and characteristics to Virginia, so they were “familiar” by name to her, yet, it was her face-to-face interaction with them at 46 Gordon Square that forever altered the way in which she communicated with men and women within her social circle. They continually challenged her intellectually, and while some of her friends championed her writing, others severely criticized it. These friendships expanded and sharpened her writing skills, as she moved from journaling, letter writing, and book reviews to starting her first novel in 1907, which would later be published as *The Voyage Out* (1915).

In her autobiographical essay, “Old Bloomsbury,” Woolf describes two important periods or “chapters” that opened the door to self-expression. The first chapter opened with her observation and interaction with Thoby’s Cambridge friends, gatherings that were unlike any other social event that had occurred at Hyde Park. “It was late at night; the room was full of smoke; buns, coffee and whisky were strewn about; we were not wearing white satin or seed-pearls; we were not dressed at all. Thoby went to open the door; in came Sydney-Turner; in came Bell; in came Strachey”(189). Virginia recalls how informally they all came in and “folded themselves up quietly [in] the corners of sofas” and how they avoided the usual back and forth of conventional social chatter. There was silence, simple responses to questions, such as: “No” or “No, I don’t know.” Then, Vanessa introduced the word “beauty” and “one of the young men would lift his head slowly and say, “It depends what you mean by beauty” (189). Virginia states that,

“The bull might be ‘beauty’, might be ‘good’, might be ‘reality’. Whatever it was it was some abstract question that now drew out all our forces” (189).

Thursday evenings differed greatly from the social gatherings Vanessa and Virginia had witnessed in their childhood home or attended with George Duckworth. They did not “dress” formally for these evenings, nor did they “serve” the men tea; on the contrary, they were included in the intellectual conversations. Virginia notes the contrast between George berating them over how they “looked” or “behaved,” and their new friends criticizing “our arguments as severely as their own” (“Bloomsbury” 191). Virginia Stephen, self-educated in the classics, was an intellectual match for the Cambridge men whom she met on Thursday evenings. When Thursday evenings began, in March of 1905, she was once again reading Aristotle, Sophocles, and writing an article about “Magic Greek.” Her work as a book reviewer had increased and she had also started teaching evening classes to working women at Morley College (*Passionate* 245-54).

The radicalization of domestic space recurs as a constant element of Woolf’s sensibility. In the essay “Old Bloomsbury,” Woolf recalls, “The conversation languished in a way that would have been impossible in the drawing room at Hyde Park Gate. Yet the silence was difficult, not dull. It seemed as if the standard of what was worth saying had risen so high that it was better not to break it unworthily” (189). Thursday evening conversations were meaningful, as Woolf tells us when she describes them as, “the germ from which sprang all that has since come to be called—[. . .] by the name of Bloomsbury [. . .]. Talk—even the talk which had such tremendous results upon the lives

and characters of the two Miss Stephens—even talk of this interest and importance is as elusive as smoke” (186-7). She went on to write about “reality” and the significance that friendship, conversation, individual perception, and self-reflection have in one’s life over time in her novel, *The Waves* (1931). Similar to Woolf, Bernard, the aspiring novelist, states, “The truth is that I need the stimulus of other people” (230). In describing his struggle with forming the “final statement,” he explains, “To be myself (I note) I need the illumination of other people’s eyes, and therefore cannot be entirely sure what is my self” (255). In *The Waves*, perhaps more than in her other novels, Woolf explores the nature of the friendship and conversation that she experienced as a member of the Bloomsbury Group.

When Clive Bell proposed to Vanessa and she accepted two days later, Virginia lamented, “With that, the first chapter of Old Bloomsbury came to an end” (“Bloomsbury” 192). The second chapter came into being after Virginia and Adrian moved to Fitzroy Square following the marriage of Vanessa and Clive on February 7, 1907 and after Thoby’s death. Virginia began to think about “buggers” in Plato’s Greece and how most likely there were also “buggers” at Cambridge, and how given the lack of sexual tension at the Thursday night gatherings, “buggers” might even exist in the sitting room at Gordon Square (194). In “Old Bloomsbury,” Woolf describes the opening up of “Chapter Two” in this way:

Another scene has always lived in my memory. I do not know if I invented it or not—as the best illustration of Bloomsbury Chapter Two. It was a spring evening. Vanessa and I were sitting in the drawing room. The drawing room had greatly changed its character since 1904. [. . .] The Watts portraits of my father and my mother were hung downstairs if they

were hung at all. [. . .] At any moment Clive might come in and he and I should begin to argue—amicably, impersonally at first; soon we should be hurling abuse at each other and pacing up and down the room. Vanessa sat silent [. . .]. I talked, egotistically, excitedly, about my own affairs no doubt. Suddenly the door opened and the long and sinister figure of Mr. Lytton Strachey stood on the threshold. He pointed his finger at a stain on Vanessa's white dress.

“Semen?” he said.

Can one really say it? I thought and we burst out laughing. With that one word all barriers of reticence and reserve went down. A flood of the sacred fluid seemed to overwhelm us. Sex permeated our conversation. The word bugger was never far from our lips. We discussed copulation with the same excitement and openness that we had discussed the nature of good. (195)

Sexual relationships and experiences were taboo social subjects during the Victorian era, and even more so for the Victorian woman. Sexual freedom was one signature component of this avant-garde group, reflected in their art, writing, politics, and personal relationships. Woolf challenged the norms of her day by writing about female sexuality in fiction and non-fiction, and tackling sexuality, inside and outside of marriage, the complexities of monogamy, infidelity, homosexuality, physical separation, and platonic and intellectual companionship. For example, *The Years* opens with Mr. Pargiter, the family patriarch, meeting his mistress while his wife is on her death bed (6-9); *To the Lighthouse* explores the emotional gap between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay (184-5); *Mrs. Dalloway* reveals Mrs. Dalloway who slept alone on a narrow bed in the attic, separate from her husband, expressing lesbian desires (31-2), as well as the close friendship and sexual tension between Clarissa Dalloway and Peter Walsh, a former suitor (40-1). In *Between the Acts*, Woolf subtly shows the cyclical marital fighting, love-

making, and infidelity of Isa and Giles Oliver (110, 219), and the troubled homosexuality of William Dodge and Miss La Trobe (106).

Over the years, these “Bloomsbury” friendships and conversations taking place in the liberating space of her altered home benefited Woolf’s writing by providing her with diverse peer reviews as the group shared and critiqued each other’s work. Their modern and influential ideas varied as much as their careers did in the literary art of biography (Lytton Strachey), post-impressionist art (Vanessa Bell and Roger Fry), pacifist and liberal socio-political views (Leonard Woolf), and interventionist economics (Maynard Keynes). The clash of opinions and the on-going review of each other’s work further stimulated Woolf’s keen interest and understanding of modernity. Having an introverted personality and often writing from the perspective of an outsider, she was, nonetheless, right in the midst of the cultural rumblings and shifts occurring in England during the years between the wars. Virginia Stephen benefited from these open and non-traditional friendships, based on intellect, not gender. Connecting on an intellectual level helped Virginia to overcome her trepidation, in general, in social situations. These relationships challenged her thinking, expanded her reading lists, and inspired a modernist, self-expressive, writing style. Among this influential group, Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, Roger Fry, Maynard Keynes, and Morgan Forster were some of her most cherished and influential friends and critics.

During the early years of her professional writing, 1905-1910, Virginia found Bell, Strachey, and Fry to be especially supportive readers. Clive Bell was the first friend whom she felt comfortable letting read a book in “draft,” he commented on *Melymbrosia*,

later published as *The Voyage Out* (Nicolson 29). In *Virginia Woolf and her world*, John Lehmann states, “she turned to Clive Bell for advice in the course of her work, and found in him an acutely intelligent critic” (24). Lee concurs that Clive Bell was important to Virginia Stephen because he was her *first* critical male reader. With him, she also worked through the awkwardness of speaking directly to a male, asking him, “Isn’t there a kind of talk which we could all talk, without these mystic reservations” (249).

Their opinions mattered to her as the letters between Lytton and Virginia reflect. For example, Virginia wrote a note on November 26, 1919 to Lytton when an American Company was interested in publishing *Night and Day* and the *Voyage Out*: “be so angelic as to tell me if any special misprints obscurities or vulgarities in either occur to you” (Woolf and Strachey, *Letters* 85). And, again Lytton wrote to her, on October 9, 1922, praising *Jacob’s Room*, “a most wonderful achievement—more like poetry [. . .] the technique of the narrative is astonishing” (Woolf and Strachey, *Letters* 103-4). Immediately, she replied, “I breathe more freely now that I have your letter, though I think your praise extravagant. [. . .] There are millions of things I want to get your opinion on—This is merely to heave a sigh of relief that you don’t cast me off, for nobody else’s praise ever gives me quite as much pleasure as yours” (Woolf and Strachey, *Letters* 104-5).

Virginia Stephen met Lytton Strachey, as she met Clive Bell, while visiting Thoby at Cambridge. The Stephen and Strachey families had known each other and were both from London’s upper-middle class. Virginia and Lytton shared a bond in the way their childhood homes, patriarchal upbringing, and family secrets emerged in their

writings. An individual's perception of an experience within a specific spatial location is a key connecting thread throughout Woolf's novels, beginning with *Jacob's Room*. For example, Jacob has a "moment of being" in his Cambridge college room that exemplifies the tradition of male camaraderie, intimacy, and intellectual discourse. "Simeon said nothing. Jacob remained standing. But intimacy—the room was full of it, still, deep, like a pool. Without need of movement or speech it rose softly and washed over everything, mollifying, kindling, and coating the mind with the luster of pearl, so that if you talk of a light, of Cambridge burning, it's not languages only" (46). Woolf contrasts with the intimacy of friendship and tradition within Jacob's room at Cambridge, against the aloneness and finality of his death in the war with his empty room at the end of the novel: "Listless is the air in an empty room" (134).

The "element" of dirt Woolf and Strachey describe in their patriarchal, hierarchical Victorian homes goes beyond the dark and dingy, dust-filled rooms and moves into the psychological secret compartments of incest, censorships, and aloneness. The act of openly writing about these "secrets" and everyday moments was central to the modernist movement to which they contributed. Woolf relates this point in her novel, *The Years*, through Martin Pargiter as he reminisces about his childhood home. "Everybody lies, he thought. His father had lied [. . .]. And he had lied himself [. . .]. It was an abominable system, he thought; family life; Abercorn Terrace. No wonder the house would not let. It had one bathroom, and a basement; and there all those different people had lived, boxed up together, telling lies" (222-3).

As a biographer, Lytton Strachey challenged the conventions of biography by using humour and artistic liberty, along with fact, to describe the blank spaces of a life. In her essay, “The Art of Biography” (1939), Woolf notes the importance of Strachey as a “figure in the history of biography” (*Essays* 4: 222) and explains how the biographer had been tied to writing sterile “facts” about the deceased based on friends’ letters and information provided by the widow or other family members and how “The novelist is free: the biographer is tied” (221). Woolf outlines the shift biography began to make from the eighteenth-century to the end of the nineteenth-century when “widows became broader-minded, the public keener-sighted; the effigy no longer carried conviction or satisfied curiosity. The biographer certainly won a measure of freedom” (*Essays* 4: 222). Lytton Strachey followed the tradition of sticking to the facts when writing his biography, *Queen Victoria* (1921), whereas, he used artistic liberties and wit when writing *Eminent Victorians* (1918), and *Elizabeth and Essex* (1928); this approach subsequently changed the nature of the genre of biography. Woolf’s conversations with Strachey about this genre and the example of his biographies undoubtedly influenced her three biographical works: *Orlando* (1928), *Flush* (1938), and *Roger Fry* (1940).

Like Strachey, Roger Fry was a close friend, a correspondent, and an art critic whose new aesthetics affected her writing. Fry is said to have changed the “texture” of emotion and culture when he arrived on the Bloomsbury scene in 1910 and his eye for the visual influenced Virginia’s ideas on the composition and structure of fiction. Roger Fry met Vanessa and Clive Bell in January of 1910 on the train; and, by that November, he, Desmond MacCarthy, and Clive Bell had arranged “the first large-scale exhibition in

England of paintings by a number of European artists, featuring most prominently Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso, Gauguin, and Van Gogh” (Rosner 161). At first, only a minority of artists in England welcomed this Impressionist style of art, but by 1912 when Roger Fry (with the help of Leonard Woolf) organized a second “Post-Impressionist” exhibit, an increasing number of British artists were experimenting with it.⁸ Rosner states that “Representation itself took on a new meaning in Post-Impressionism: color, form, perspective, line—all were rethought (162). This Post-Impressionist movement was controversial and many from the art community and British press suggested that it was an indication of social and sexual decline. However, for Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf, “The show seemed to communicate a permission to undo tradition that must have seemed especially meaningful to the sisters who had just left behind the stifling atmosphere of Hyde Park Gate and set out to break with convention in their personal lives” (162).

Virginia “dined” with Roger and Clive on November 22, 1917 and they discussed “literature and aesthetics.” Roger asked if she “founded her writing upon texture or upon structure?” She responded, “I connected structure with plot, & therefore said “texture. Then we discussed the meaning of structure & texture in painting and in writing” (*Diary* 1: 80). When writing Fry’s biography, Woolf realized, looking back, that December 1910 was “the point when she, as well as the painters, began to think about new forms” (Lee 286). Indeed, Lee suggests Fry had an important influence upon Woolf’s imagery in *To the Lighthouse*, in which she drew upon painting, not writing, to describe the “transition from Victorian to post-war England” (Lee 283). Woolf writes to Fry to thank him for his

⁸ “Post Impressionism” is a term that was first coined by Roger Fry (Rosner 161).

letter to her on *To the Lighthouse*, in which he compliments her on “the best thing you’ve done, actually better than *Mrs. Dalloway*” (*Letters* 3: 38). Woolf comments that she almost dedicated the book to Fry because of his influence, but didn’t; instead she offered to write in his private copy, “if you’ll accept it, [. . .] that besides all your surpassing private virtues, you have I think kept me on the right path, so far as writing goes, more than anyone—if the right path it is” (*Letters* 3: 385).

Virginia and Adrian Stephen moved from 46 Gordon Square to 29 Fitzroy Square, within walking distance, in the spring of 1907. They were incompatible housemates, but lived together for three years with Sophia Farrell and Maud Chart, their long-time servants. The Bloomsbury Group continued to meet at 46 Gordon Square and in the fall Virginia and Adrian organized their own Thursday evenings at Fitzroy Square. The circle widened as Leonard Woolf, Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant, Roger Fry, and E.M. Forster joined their discussions. When the lease was up at the end of 1911, Virginia and Adrian decided to move to 38 Brunswick Square and to sub-lease space to Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant and Leonard Woolf. “Adrian Stephen had the first and Virginia the second floor; the ground floor went to Maynard Keynes and [Duncan Grant], and the top to Leonard Woolf. [. . .] Sophie and Maud were installed as usual in the basement and attic, but the collective household was to be otherwise as independent as possible” (Light 66). Lee states that “Virginia looked back on this communal living arrangement as one of her pioneering achievements [. . .] The house was the site of a rich social life [. . .] and of some of the dramatic events of her life” (301).

In 1911, Virginia Stephen became acquainted with Leonard Woolf who had been working for the Colonial Civil Service in Ceylon and who became one of the boarders at 38 Brunswick Square upon his return to London (L. Woolf, *Beginning* 50-1). Leonard had developed an interest in Virginia through his correspondence with Lytton Strachey while in Ceylon. Lytton and Leonard were good friends from Cambridge days, and Leonard had been equally close to Thoby. It proved to be a new chapter in both their lives. For Virginia, it meant that she would find new places to live and write in and that she would begin a life-long literary and intellectual partnership with a faithful and supportive friend.

Chapter 3

Professional Homes

But this freedom is only a beginning; the room is your own, but it is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms? These, I think are questions of the utmost importance and interest.—Virginia Woolf, “Professions for Women”

Since Virginia wrote at home, the domestic spaces she and Leonard Woolf shared from 1915-1941 proved to be interiors that fostered and sustained her creativity. Leonard understood Virginia’s need to write and recognized her unique gift, and her writing career benefited greatly from his unwavering support. The atmosphere of their homes mirrored their non-traditional marriage arrangement and their progressive social and political ideas. They did not bind themselves to the traditional idea of an English gentleman’s home with carefully decorated and gender divided rooms. Instead, their interiors were casual and comfortable, without formality and rigidity.

Through their twenty-nine year marriage, they lived in five homes: Asheham (East Sussex) 1912-1919, Hogarth House (Richmond) 1915-1924, Monk’s House (Rodmell) 1919-1941, Tavistock Square (Bloomsbury, London) 1924-1939, and Mecklenburgh Square (Bloomsbury, London) 1939-1940. Asheham and Monk’s House were country homes they visited on weekends and holidays to retreat from city living, to enjoy long walks and cycling, and to socialize with friends and family. Virginia particularly liked writing at Monk’s House and wrote all but her first two novels while

living there and at Tavistock Square (Nicolson 72). Within these interiors the Woolfs navigated their way through the havoc of Virginia's mental illness, two wars, an open marriage, family, friends, deaths, a publishing company, and their writing careers. In the following paragraphs, I focus on two homes central to Virginia Woolf's writing, Hogarth House and Monk's House. I suggest that the dynamics of her marital relationship coupled with the modern and comfortable domestic spaces formed a stable atmosphere in which she could develop her own voice and flourish as a feminist critic, novelist, and political essayist. First, I explore how the successful components of their marriage enabled her writing and then move on to discuss the aspects of the interior living space at Hogarth House and Monk's House that were most consequential to Woolf's writing.

Leonard Woolf proposed to Virginia Stephen on January 11, 1912 and they married on August 10, 1912. During their courtship they discussed concerns and feelings they had toward each other. Their honesty helped to shape an unusual and open but successful marriage. On May 1, 1912, Virginia responded to Leonard's marriage proposal in a letter, expressing her reservations about him, her deep feelings for him, and the conditions upon which she would marry him:

Then, of course, I feel angry sometimes at the strength of your desire. Possibly, your being a Jew comes in also at this point. You seem so foreign. [. . .] All I can say is that in spite of these feelings which go chasing each other all day long when I am with you, there is some feeling which is permanent, and growing [. . .] I feel no physical attraction in you [. . .] And yet your caring for me as you do almost overwhelms me. It is so real, and so strange [. . .] If you can still go on, as before, letting me find my own way, as that is what would please me best; and then we must both take the risks. But you have made me very happy too. (1: 496)

Leonard *did* let Virginia find her own way, as did she, his. And, as this passage indicates, Virginia Stephen did not marry for the traditional reasons customary among her female English contemporaries in the early twentieth-century. She did not marry to secure wealth or social status like her characters Delia Pargiter and Kitty Malone in *The Years*, or Lady Bradshaw and Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Rather, her passions were reading, writing, critiquing patriarchal rule and its detrimental effects upon women and society, and observing the delicate threads that connect lives. Traditional marriage was a questionable idea for Virginia and many Englishmen would have considered marrying her problematic for similar reasons: a highly intelligent, well read and unconventional thinker, a quick and challenging wit critical of the masculine status quo, a history of mental illness, and rumors of frigidity. Nonetheless, Leonard Woolf, an astute and liberal thinker, activist, conscientious worker, and skilled writer, was an exceptional match for her. He had a great respect for her intelligence and accepted her mental illness and the restrictions it would place upon their marriage, such as physical intimacy and child bearing. Like most, their marriage had annoyances and conflicts; however, Virginia conveyed in her suicide note to Leonard, March 28, 1941, how much he had meant to her and to her well-being: “I want to tell you that you have given me complete happiness. No one could have done more than you have done. [. . .] until this disease came on we were perfectly happy. It was all due to you. No one could have been so good as you have been. From the very first day till now” (*Letters* 6: 486-7). As independent as she was in her thinking and writing, she recognized the supportive role he played in her life and career. According to Vanessa, Virginia told her in 1935 that, “she found Leonard absolutely

dependable & like a rock which was what she badly wanted. She said she could never make up her own mind & must have someone to do it for her—which L no doubt does— & that he was also very unselfish--& always ready to plunge into any enterprise she suggested” (Lee 332).

Financial independence was another factor in their successful union and it enabled Woolf to write. She had inherited money but she supplemented their income by writing. Nicolson states that by 1914 she had inherited about £9,000 from “her share of her father’s, Stella’s, Thoby’s and Aunt Emelia’s legacies” (54).⁹ When they first married, Leonard invested their capital which yielded about £400 from 1912 to 1924, then increased to £802 by 1939. In the early years this amount was half of what “they needed to live on and to pay doctors’ bills” (Lee 549). They earned the rest from their literary criticism, journalism, published books, and Hogarth Press (L. Woolf, *Downhill* 17). Leonard meticulously tracked their investment income, earned income, and household and personal expenditures, comparing each year to the next. He often irritated Virginia with his precision. Yet, like her father, Virginia worried about money and was a frugal spender. Leonard earned more than Virginia for the first fourteen years of marriage, but from 1926 onward her income surpassed his. During that same year, from publications of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Common Reader* in 1925, she exceeded the notorious £500 figure she had asserted in *A Room of One’s Own* to be a fair annual salary for women (Lee 545-50). In her diary, *A Passionate Apprentice*, an early example of her awareness of the relationship between writing and money is revealed in her careful calculation of expected

⁹ Adjust for UK inflation, present day value is £674,045; conversion to CAD, \$1,026,650 (Stevens, TD).

income based on the number of words written in a review in 1905 (277); again, in 1906 when the Stephen siblings traveled to Greece and Turkey she itemized their expenditures, and calculated her portion separately from Vanessa's (358-62).

Another component of their successful working and domestic relationship was that they shared similar beliefs about staying connected to family and joint friends. Close friendships, such as those with Lytton Strachey, Roger Fry, Janet Case, T. S. Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, and Vita Sackville-West were important to Virginia Woolf, for these friends challenged and inspired her as a writer. The marital dynamics between Leonard and Virginia—their openness and honesty, their financial independence from one another, and their acute awareness and mutual respect for each other as individuals who had professional aspirations—formed the foundation of their marriage. It was on this foundation that they arranged their domestic environments and their working lives.

Like the other homes the Woolfs shared, the interior arrangements within Hogarth House and Monks House were set up to support Virginia's writing career and health. Perhaps the greatest support came from Leonard monitoring her mental and physical well-being. For if she was not well, she could not write. He sought out "expert" advice from a range of specialists, but he was often left with conflicting opinions and strange diagnoses. By 1915 when they moved into Hogarth House, Leonard had observed Virginia's vulnerability to depression and mental breakdowns, taking note of what events and emotions were her greatest triggers: not getting enough food or rest, over-socializing, household moves, completion of her novels, and the deaths of close friends and family members. Leonard states that "It was a perpetual struggle to find the precarious balance

of health for her among the strains and stresses of writing and society. The routine of everyday life had to be regular and rather rigid. Everything had to be rationed, from work and walking to people and parties” (L. Woolf, *Downhill* 49). Having servants to cook, do basic cleaning, and look after Virginia when she fell ill was another support system that aided her writing.¹⁰ This was an unusual domestic arrangement because it countered the current status quo of patriarchal English society. For a man to be supportive of a woman’s intellectual and professional pursuits was unusual, but for him to take extra measures to look after her health to ensure that she *could* pursue a profession was extraordinary. For a woman’s private interests and professional work to have priority over her husband’s was atypical in 1915, especially since women over thirty were not granted the right to vote nationally until 1918 when the House of Lords passed the Suffrage Bill, reducing the age to 21 in 1928. Unlike her mother, Julia Stephen, or Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia did not perform the angelic duty of devoting herself to the emotional, professional and social needs of her husband. Nor did Leonard expect it. Rather, both looked at their society and country critically and were not afraid to break away to participate in progressive social movements, such as their involvement with the Fabian Society. As she notes in her diary on January 23, 1915, “the idea that these frail webspinners can affect the destiny of nations seems to me fantastic. But it was well worth going,--& I have now declared myself a Fabian” (1: 26). On October 17, 1916 Virginia gave a lecture at the Richmond branch of the Women’s Co-operative Guild, and

¹⁰ In *Mrs Woolf and the Servants*, Light provides a personal history of the domestic servants who worked for Virginia Woolf and the complex and tumultuous relationships she had with them, shedding light on how their domestic work supported her creativity.

then organized speakers and held monthly meetings at their Hogarth home over the next four years (Bishop 35). Their socialist and feminist ideas set them apart from conventional domestic arrangements, inside and outside their homes.

Despite Virginia's strong connection to central London, Leonard thought living outside of London in a suburb, such as Richmond, would be less hectic and more beneficial to her health. Virginia agreed, knowing that she could ride the tube or train into central London to visit friends, family, and doctors (Wilson 90). In December 1914, Leonard and Virginia began their search for a more permanent residence in Richmond. Virginia liked Hogarth House immediately. Before moving in, she and Leonard made plans to purchase a printing press. On Virginia's thirty-third birthday, January 25, 1915, she wrote in her diary that Leonard had brought her breakfast in bed "with a little parcel, which was a beautiful green purse. [. . .] In fact I don't know when I have enjoyed a birthday so much—not since I was a child anyhow. Sitting at tea we decided three things: in the first place to take Hogarth, if we can get it; in the second, to buy a Printing press; in the third to buy a Bull dog" (1: 28). And, all came to pass: Hogarth House, the Press, and beloved pets. In her diary, on January 30, 1915, Virginia restates her desire for Hogarth, "I have a nose for a house, & that was a perfect house, if ever there was one" (1: 31). She was correct. Within two years of moving into Hogarth House she recovered from her third and most severe breakdown, she began writing regularly in a diary, returned to her letter writing, resumed her review work for the *Times Literary Supplement*, and started her second novel, *Night and Day*.

Woolf had started a diary on January 1, 1915, although she stopped writing in it soon after when she fell ill after her February 15, 1915 entry, just shortly before their move to Hogarth House. She resumed it in August 1917 at Asheham, and by October she was writing more fully and regularly at Hogarth House (*Diary* 1: 39). Keeping a diary and writing letters were important elements of Virginia's writing, including jotting down conversations and astute observations about people. In addition to recording what she was doing and whom she was seeing, she wrote impressionistic notes on nature, the seasons, insects, and the animals she came across while walking. She writes on August 31, 1917, "Wind soft, & steadily grew finer & hotter [. . .] L. cut grass again, & I went in the water meadows [. . .] I saw a herd of cows [. . .] the mushroom seems to be extinct" (*Letters* 2: 47). Detailing her impressions of daily living undoubtedly strengthened her imaginative ability to describe a character or an event from the perspective of another character. She writes in her diary on January 20, 1919, close to her thirty-seventh birthday, how useful her "rapid haphazard gallop" of diary writing is, "if it were not written rather faster than the fastest typewriting, if I stopped and took thought, it would never be written at all; and the advantage of the method in that it sweeps up accidentally several stray matters which I should exclude if I hesitate, but which are the diamonds of the dustheap" (*Writer's Diary* 18). It is conceivable that this method of diary writing stimulated her use of the stream of consciousness technique that she further refined in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, *The Years*, and *Between the Acts*. One characteristic aspect of this writing style is that its fluidity and associations often

demonstrate what one thinks, not what one says. In *Between the Acts*, Isa's thoughts, presented by association, reveal the entrapment within her marriage:

Isabella felt prisoned. Through the bars of the prison, through the sleep haze that deflected them, blunt arrows bruised her; of love, then of hate. Through other people's bodies she felt neither love nor hate distinctly. Most consciously she felt—she had drunk sweet wine at luncheon—a desire for water. “A beaker of cold water, a beaker of cold water,” she repeated, and saw water surrounded by walls of shining glass. (66)

Hogarth House offered an atmosphere of repose that benefitted Virginia's health and writing. Her diary writing alone, an integral part of her fictional work, became regular at Hogarth; whereas, it had only been intermittent before, from 1897 to 1909. She felt comfortable writing in both homes, Hogarth and Monks House. In *Downhill all the Way*, Leonard Woolf describes Hogarth House as “part of a large eighteenth-century mansion which [. . .] had been very ingeniously divided into two houses, one called Suffield House and the other Hogarth House:”

Occasionally one comes across a house upon which those who built it or lived in it have imposed a character and form markedly and specifically its own, as though it were a person or a work of art. Hogarth House was one of these. All the rooms, even when we first saw them in the dirty dusty desolation of an empty house, had beauty, repose, peace, and yet life. One felt at once that each of them only needed a table and a chair, a bed or a bookcase to become the perfect cell in which a human being might eat and sleep, talk, read, or work. Perhaps the people who for 200 years had been doing just that in these rooms had left the aura of their lives in them, but more prosaically it was matter—bricks and mortar and wood—and the way in which they had been used 200 years before which gave to Hogarth House its extraordinary character of being the perfect envelope for everyday life. It was partly its combination of immense solidity with grace, lightness, and beauty. The electrician who had to take a wire through the inside wall of the drawing-room, told us that in all his experience he had never seen as thick an inside wall in a house. In the room itself one felt the security from anything like a hostile world, the

peace and quiet, in the tremendous solidity of walls, doors, and windows, and yet nothing could have been more light and graceful, more delicately and beautifully proportioned than the room itself, its fireplace and great windows, its paneling and carved woodwork. (10-11)

They moved into Hogarth House on March 25, 1915 and it was their primary residence until 1924 at which time they moved to Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury. Lee describes Hogarth House as “half a house, the right-hand side of a grand, solid, redbrick Georgian building, with a tiled roof and fine rows of windows, which when it was built in 1748, would have been ‘a medium sized aristocratic country house’ [. . .]. Hogarth House had a 100-foot garden with apple trees and a long brick wall” (346). It was close to the train station and a walk in the opposite direction up Richmond Hill brought one to a view of the river and Windsor Castle. Inside:

the house was spacious and well-proportioned, with a fine main staircase. The basement (where they were going to spend an unexpected amount of time) had very thick walls and a barrel-vaulted ceiling, and was divided into a kitchen, a scullery with a copper and a stone sink, a larder, wine and coal cellars, a lavatory, and the door to the yard. On the ground floor were a light, large drawing-room and dining-room with high ceilings, splendid panellings, and door and window carvings. On the first floor were their two bedrooms and a bathroom with a cast-iron bath and lavatory. The top floor, where the servants would live (and where the panelling ran out) had four smaller bedrooms. From the rear windows there was a view of Richmond chimneys and of the pagoda and the trees in Kew Gardens. (346)

Most likely, this “medium-sized, aristocratic country house” built in 1720 had been a place of orderly domesticity for its previous inhabitants. However, this tradition changed once the Woolfs moved in. When Virginia’s mental health stabilized, their idea of purchasing a simple printing press came to fruition on April 24, 1917 and they started

a small publishing company, Hogarth Press. They each took on different tedious tasks of getting the press up and running and ready to publish articles, stories, and poems of their own and of their friends. They placed the hand-printing press in the larder which was next to the scullery and to reach it Virginia and Leonard had to go in and out of the kitchen area. As Hogarth Press received more orders, more people went in and out of their home to help with the printing and distribution. This made their servants' life more difficult as they had to manoeuvre in the kitchen around her while "type, forms, ink, mounds of paper and manuscript eventually took over the dining room too" (Light 135). The basement area was traditionally the servant's domain and generally, the scullery "was dirty, and damp, and dark. It was the repository of all the dirt of the house—where pots and pans were left for scrubbing; where, if there was no pantry, the plates were left to be washed after each meal; where the residue of the fireplaces [. . .] was sorted; where the laundry was done" (Flanders 130). Now this space became the repository of the Woolfs' creative work. Lee states that neither had "imagined then how this would develop into the publishing of Pamphlets and Letters and Lectures, into a Psychoanalytical Library and Folios of New Writing, into books on economics and empire and disarmament, as well as poetry, fiction, novels and memoirs" (357). Traditional domestic boundaries were blurred in Hogarth House: domestic space for living *and* earning a living, servants and home owners sharing the same work area, and husband and wife contributing equally toward the operation of a business and to household expenditures.

Although each had imagined the printing press as a fun hobby for the other, Leonard thought more in terms of Virginia's mental health: "a manual occupation of this kind which, in say the afternoons, would take her mind completely off her work" (L. Woolf, *Beginning* 233). In her diary August 2, 1924, she confirms his wisdom while feeling depressed from writing Septimus' suicide scene in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "and I begin to count myself a failure. Now the point of the Press is that it entirely prevents brooding; and gives me something solid to fall back on. Anyhow, if I can't write, I can make other people write; I can build up a business" (*Writer's Diary* 68).

Hogarth Press quickly went from a "hobby" in their home to a profitable business and this changed the atmosphere of their domestic space.¹¹ Hogarth Press ran its first publication, *Two Stories*, in May 1917. The two short stories written by Virginia and Leonard Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall" and "Three Jews," sold 134 printed copies to 91 buyers (Lee 360). This was a pivotal point in Woolf's career because now she could publish her own work and not be at the mercy of an editor or publisher as she was when she waited for her half brother, Gerald Duckworth, to publish her first two novels, *A Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*. It freed her from censorship. Woolf's ability to publish her own writing meant more freedom in what she wrote about and less worry about what

¹¹ While at Hogarth House, Hogarth Press published 32 books (1917-1924). The first four books were printed and bound by the Woolfs while subsequent ones were printed by commercial printers. One objective was to produce and publish works that other publishing companies could or would not, such as, Katherine Mansfield, *Prelude* (1918); Virginia Woolf, *Kew Gardens* (1919); T.S. Eliot, *Poems* (1919); E.M Forster, *Story of the Siren* (1919); and Gorky, *Reminiscences of Tolstoy* (1920). Hogarth Press went onto publish many prominent works, for example, T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1923); Maynard Keynes, *The End of Laissez-Faire* (1926) and *The Economic Consequence of Mr Churchill* (1925); and Sigmund Freud, *Collected Papers of the International Psycho-Analytical Library* (1924) (L. Woolf, *Downhill* 64-66, 163).

an editor or publisher might ask her to omit or change. For example, on January 3, 1922 she was irritated for being “coerced” by Bruce Richmond to change a word in the *Times Literary Supplement* article she had written, and wrote in her diary, “No more reviewing for me, now that Richmond re-writes my sentences to suit the mealy mouths of Belgravia (an exaggeration, I admit) & it is odd how stiffly one sets pen to paper when one is uncertain of editorial approval” (2: 155). Virginia continued to write reviews, but they were bolder and no longer anonymous. Freed from the censorship of publishers, Virginia declared, “I’m the only woman in London who can write what she likes” (Light 169).

During this productive time her writing took a stylistic and liberating turn, as evident in her first experiments with stream of consciousness in the short story, “The Mark on the Wall” (1917), and the novel, *Jacob’s Room* (1922). Some suggest that Virginia Woolf “derived” this writing technique from Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Dorothy Richardson’s *The Tunnel* or Katherine Mansfield’s short stories. However, Leonard clarifies “that ‘The Mark on the Wall’ had been written at latest in the first part of 1917 while it was not until April 1918 that Virginia read *Ulysses* in manuscript and January 1919 that she read *The Tunnel*” (L. Woolf, *Downhill* 59).

Leonard describes Virginia’s work-room, a work space of her choosing, kept in the fashion she liked:

She was an untidy writer, indeed an untidy liver, an accumulator of what Lytton Strachey used to call ‘filth packets’, those pockets of old nibs, bits of string, used matches, rusty paper-clips, crumpled envelopes, broken cigarette-holders, etc., which accumulate malignantly on some people’s tables and mantelpieces. In Virginia’s work-room there was always a very large, solid, plain wooden table covered with filth packets, papers, letters,

manuscripts, and large bottles of ink. She very rarely sat at this table, certainly never when she was writing a novel in the morning. To write her novel of a morning she sat in a very low armchair, which always appeared to be suffering from prolapsus uteri; on her knees was a large board made of plywood which had an inkstand glued to it, and on the board was a large quarto notebook of plain paper which she had bound up for her and covered herself in (usually) some gaily-coloured paper. The first draft of all her novels was written in one of these notebooks with pen and ink in the mornings. Later in the morning or in the afternoon, or sometimes at the beginning of the next of the next morning, she typed out what she had written in the notebook, revising it as she typed, and all subsequent revisions were made on the typewriter [. . .] Her room tended to become not merely untidy but squalid. (*Downhill* 52-3)

The organization of her work-room, strewn with books, papers, note pads, ashtrays, signals her ability to process and filter a high degree of external chaos. Virginia was able to close the door and lock out the external world around her, while she created an inner order in her fiction.

Two aspects of the Woolfs' domestic arrangement at Hogarth House thus affected Virginia Woolf's writing significantly: the Hogarth Press and the relaxed, cluttered interior space. These aspects of their domestic space characterized each of their homes; however, Hogarth House and Monk's House were the homes in which these arrangements first emerged and the domestic spaces in which her mental health stabilized. Here, as an adult woman of thirty-three years, she began to inhabit her dwelling space in her own unique way. They lived, worked, and ran their publishing company in Hogarth House until 1924 at which time they moved back to the Bloomsbury area of London (with the Press). But prior to this move they had found for themselves yet another location that they could mould to their own needs. This was Monk's House in

East Sussex which was to be their country home from 1919 until Virginia's death in 1941, serving as a place of respite from the Hogarth Press and city living.

Monk's House is located in Rodmell on the other side of the Ouse Valley across from their first country home, Asheham. On July 1, 1919 Virginia and Leonard purchased this small "primitive cottage" that Virginia had fallen in love with despite its dilapidated condition. They moved in September 1, 1919 (*Diary* 1: 295). They spent weekends, holidays, and summer months living there. However, in 1939 during World War II they lived more at Monk's House than in London at their Mecklenburgh Square home and it became their primary residence in 1940 after their London home was hit by severe bombing. Monk's House was the last home Virginia lived in and Leonard buried her ashes there under the two tall elm trees in their beloved garden (Lee 765). Lee describes Monk's House, an old country home that:

had been neglected and portioned into little rooms. Not only were there no facilities, but the kitchen was very damp. But it was solid, with weatherboarding and a steep slate roof, good windows and chimneys and oak floorboards. The garden door round the back (they didn't use the front door on to the street) led into a small entrance hall, with an oak-beamed dining-room and drawing-room on the left. There was a large fireplace [. . .] in the dining-room. On the right of the entrance was a small room to be used at first for guests, later as a dining-room, and next to it the unsatisfactory kitchen, with a small larder. Up the stairs, above the drawing-and dining-room, was a large bedroom, also with oak beams and a fireplace, and a view up the village street. A small box-room opened off it and there was an attic above. For a short time they shared this bedroom in separate beds, then Leonard slept either in the box-room, or in one of the two small bedrooms on the other side of the landing. (417)

The Woolfs gradually bought “some furniture, some cutlery, a lot of gardening things” and mixed them together with their existing goods to furnish and decorate their country home, such as:

dark blue Omega plates on a green kitchen dresser, paintings by Duncan and Vanessa, and strong-coloured wall paints (pomegranate, green, yellow, blue) applied by Virginia. Later they added carpets and china and screens, armchairs and cushions, all designed at Charleston. [. . .] The style of the furnishings was very similar, in places identical, to the sister house at Charleston. But the walls of Rodmell were left barer, and the effect was starker and plainer, less intense. And where Charleston had the mess of painting and children everywhere, Rodmell had dogs, and piles of books and papers. It was never a tidy or a luxurious house. (418)

Again, the Woolfs created an interior environment that was cluttered yet furnished with items that were meaningful to them and that reflected the modernism of the Omega Workshop productions (its aim was to merge decorative arts with fine arts). The Woolf’s carefree attitude about housekeeping meant Virginia had more physical and mental energy to focus on writing, rather than ensuring that the house was meticulously tidy, orderly, and ready for afternoon tea. By the time they purchased Monk’s House in 1919, Virginia’s approach to her writing was methodical. She followed, as long as her health permitted, the habitual daily reading and writing routine she had begun at Hyde Park Gate, from ten to one. In “A Sketch of the Past,” Virginia reminisces that “For three hours we lived in the world which we still inhabit. For at this moment (November 1940) she [Vanessa] is painting at Charleston; and I am writing here in the garden room at Monks House” (“Sketch” 148). Leonard comments on the cumulative effect this daily schedule had on her writing:

Virginia was a slow writer. [. . .] Yet she was comparatively a prolific writer. She wrote nine full-length novels, two biographies, and there are seven volumes of literary criticism; in addition to this there must be at least 500,000 words of her unpublished diaries. As a novelist her output was greater than that of Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, the Brontës, George Eliot, Thackeray, or in modern times Joyce and E.M. Forster. This is a remarkable fact when one thinks of the psychological handicaps and difficulties [. . .]. It was to a great extent due to her professional, dedicated, industriousness. [. . .] We should have felt it to be not merely wrong but unpleasant not to work every morning for seven days a week and for about eleven months a year. Every morning, therefore, at about 9.30 after breakfast each of us, as if moved by a law of unquestioned nature, went off and ‘worked’ until lunch at 1. It is surprising how much one can produce in a year [. . .] if one works hard and professionally for three and a half hours every day for 330 days. That was why, despite her disabilities, Virginia was able to produce so much. (*Downhill* 156-7)

Notably, while their exterior space was in apparent disarray, they both possessed extraordinary inner discipline and organizational abilities. Although Monk’s House served as a retreat from their primary residence, they both worked while there. They treasured Monk’s House and wanted to modernize its interior space and beautify the landscape around them. Gradually, in the 1920s, as the Woolfs earned more money, they enlarged their garden, expanded the house, purchased a kitchen stove, a hot water range, a bath, a sink and a lavatory. They renovated by knocking down walls and building new ones to increase their living and working spaces (Lee 418-9). Virginia’s “writing- room” was located in a building in the midst of their garden, conceivably the most private “room” in her writing career, one where she could experience deep solitude (Lee 561). Like the gardens and seashore of her childhood at St. Ives, the garden at Rodmell was a source of joy and serenity. Leonard also found great pleasure in tending and organizing the garden area. “Leonard, as she had foreseen, fell immediately and fanatically in love

with the garden. [. . .] She joined in [. . .]. She liked their plums and apples, their bees, and their two ponds [. . .]. She often used them as images of contemplation” (Lee 420).

Virginia walked regularly throughout the Sussex countryside and along the Ouse River and conveyed in her diary on August 22, 1922 what an essential part this activity played in her writing: “The way to rock oneself back into writing is this. First gentle exercise in the air. Second the reading of good literature. It is a mistake to think that literature can be produced from the raw” (3: 193). Gardens, an extension of domestic space and part of a landscape, are mentioned throughout her diaries, letters, and novels. And, in *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* gardens serve as a key backdrop for conversations, passions, and pageants and for the unfolding of the conflict between tradition and modernity. For example, in *To the Lighthouse*, Lily Briscoe, a young artist, starts out painting Mrs. Ramsay and James in a traditional pose but ends with a more abstract composition marked by her own stylistic line down the middle of the canvas. In *Between the Acts*, Miss La Trobe, a passionate playwright and outsider, orchestrates a country pageant between the garden bushes of Pointz Hall which, by emphasizing women’s roles, the working class, and everyday incidents, re-examines the role that English history and tradition play upon the country’s future, in this case, the looming war.

In 1929 the Woolfs had extensive work done at Monk’s House to the main rooms. Lee details the work and explains that there was an extension off the kitchen which was to be another work-room for Virginia:

Underneath it there was a simple garden room (16x16) entered by an outside door. The fireplace had tiles decorated by Vanessa in 1930 with a sailing ship and a lighthouse. It had bookshelves on either side, a sink-basin, and a window with ‘vast sweeping views’ over the fields. Virginia had intended this to be her work room, with a bedroom above, but it became her bedroom, and she went out of the house to it every night, and very often watched the night sky from it when she could not sleep. [. . .] In winter, when it was too cold to work in the garden-lodge, she wrote there [. . .]. (420)

Although she did not always require it to write, this access to privacy was important to Virginia Woolf. In *A Room of One’s Own*, she had commented on the solitude that is the benefit of privacy and which the garden-lodge and her bedroom provided, “Yet it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top” (28). At the same time, the Woolfs’ domestic spaces “remained messy, dusty, and smelly—their marmoset, Mitzi, had erratic bladder control; there were platters on the floor for the cats and dogs, piles of books, ashtrays and general clutter” (Light 232). Clutter is a word strewn throughout Virginia’s diaries and her biographies to describe her writing spaces, and it also in a way aptly symbolizes her writing method. At times, she expresses frustration about her cluttered space while at other times, she simply mentions it without judgment. Lee notes how others were often amazed at Virginia’s level of concentration, given the “surroundings” (561). Perhaps she found the domestic clutter and messiness around her more representative of life itself.

Moreover, the messiness and clutter in her domestic space flowed over into the notebooks she kept for her reading and writing at Monk’s House. Lee points out that she would often record events unrelated to her particular reading or writing subjects into her notebooks, such as a sketch of a new bathroom and study addition, listing the rooms that

need to be painted, or putting in animal paw prints on various pages (406). Lee goes on to assert that “the blurring of compartments in her notebooks doesn’t just suggest that she was messy and absent-minded. She wanted boundaries to overlap: it was a form of cross-fertilisation. Above all, she wanted reading and writing to infiltrate each other” (406-7). This “cross-fertilisation” characterizes her fiction as it slips and shifts among characters’ consciousness and lives in a seemingly haphazard but in fact deliberately associative manner. For example, Clarissa Dalloway’s complex character slips and shifts between the past and present, desire and reality, through her inner narrative and exterior social life. Clarissa’s inner life is reflected in memories and sensations connected to her childhood home, at Bourton, where she fell in love with Peter Walsh and Sally Seton. Clarissa’s exterior life is revealed in her elegant upper-class home as she prepares to host a party for London’s social elite. The boundary between her inner and outer life is continually blurred by patriarchal expectation and limitation, private desire, and pure loneliness: “There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room” (*Dalloway* 31).

Throughout the above discussion we have seen how the writer, Virginia Woolf, in Diana Fuss’s words, inhabits domestic space and conversely how her domestic space inhabits her writing (2). We have seen how Virginia needed to live and work within a domestic space that had supple boundaries between its rooms and relationships, free of patriarchal duty and limitations. From the time she was fifteen at Hyde Park Gate, she had a room of her own to read and write in. However, at Hogarth House and Monk’s House, she often wrote in different places depending upon the weather, the publishing

schedule of Hogarth Press, or her health.¹² Most importantly, Virginia Woolf had the personal power to choose *where* she wrote and *what* she wrote. As she asserts in *A Room of One's Own*, “Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom” (97). The merging of boundaries of imagination was a necessary part of Woolf’s reconciliation of the apparent contradictions within reality. Her novels and polemic writings reflect her ability to examine the “wholeness” in human nature and the “cross-fertilisation” or “interconnectedness” of one aspect of living to another. We have seen how she used the domestic spaces of the late Victorian world and the relationships they imposed upon her as a backdrop to weave feminist and political issues into her novels and polemical writings. Specific rooms and domestic objects, for example, Jacob’s empty Cambridge room, the drawing-room tea table, and the looking-glass, repeatedly served as metaphors for Jacob’s abruptly ended life, oppressive Victorian social routines, and the revelation of inner being.

Inevitably, in turn, Woolf’s modernist writing brought about a blurring of compartments and achieved the interconnectedness of interior spaces, personal relationships, and “moments of being.” There were no “clean” boundaries in the rooms she wrote in or the rooms she wrote about. They led into each other; they merged; they separated: rooms and people, the private and the public, the self and the world.

¹² Periodically, Woolf needed to spend time in bed resting. If she was well enough, she would write or “print” with the aid of a sloping table as she did on October 25, 1917 (*Diary* 1: 66).

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