Parallaxes

Parallaxes:
Virginia Woolf Meets James Joyce

Edited by

Marco Canani and Sara Sullam

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

SARA SULLAM AND MARCO CANANI

> [O]f the parallax or parallactic drift of socalled fixed stars, in reality evermoving wanderers from immeasurably remote eons to infinitely remote futures in comparison with which the years, threescore and ten, of allotted human life formed a parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity. (*U* 17.1052-56)

This passage from "Ithaca" provides an intriguing key to *Parallaxes: Virginia Woolf Meets James Joyce*. Just substitute the "fixed stars" for Woolf and Joyce, and the (little more than) "threescore and ten" years separating us from their death for "a parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity": it becomes clear that the two authors are "evermoving wanderers" in the literary system of modernity. And that their significance and relevance require that our critical effort follow a constant "parallactic drift" in order to disclose new perspectives in Woolf and Joyce studies—or in both, jointly.

Jointly—given the almost coincidental birth and death of Joyce and Woolf—did copyright expire on their work. Which, since 2011, has rekindled the debate on their legacy: an international conference on translating Virginia Woolf, for example, took place at the Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" in October 2010 (the proceedings have been published under the title *Translating Virginia Woolf*, ed. Oriana Palusci, Peter Lang, Oxford 2012), while Joyce's non-fiction was the theme of a conference organized by James Fraser, Katherine Ebury and Derek Attridge at the University of York in March 2012 (*Out of His Jurisfiction. Interrogating James Joyce's Non-Fiction*), where an entire session was dedicated to the prospects for new critical editions. *Parallaxes: Virginia Woolf Meets James Joyce* comes out of this new wave of research in both Woolf and Joyce studies: the homonymous conference organized by Francesca Orestano and Caroline Patey at the Università degli Studi di Milano in December 2011 aimed to bring together international scholars from both fields. 2011 was also the year in which, as Suzette Henke notices (2011, 270), the International Virginia Woolf Society and the James Joyce Foundation offered a joint panel at the MLA convention in

Los Angeles (*Dirt, desire, recollection: James Joyce and Virginia Woolf*), which—no surprise—was chaired by Bonnie Kime Scott, one of the few scholars who proficiently worked in both fields.[1]

For, indeed, Joyceans and Woolfians quite often look upon each other with a suspicion bordering contempt and such a watertight separation between them is witnessed by the scarcity of scholarly work concerned with the relationship between two authors that nevertheless very often feature together—each in a chapter of their own—in books, journals and anthologies on Modernism. Of course there have been notable exceptions: besides the already quoted Scott, Suzette A. Henke's work was somewhat pioneering in this sense. Almost thirty years ago Henke was the first to shed light on Woolf's response to *Ulysses*, from the initial decision of The Hogarth Press to turn down Joyce's manuscript to her subsequent opinions as a reader of the instalments published in *The Little Review* (see Henke 1986; Henke 1990), thus moving beyond Woolf's derogatory comments in her diary and letters. In the closing part of her first essay on Woolf's "reader's response" to *Ulysses*—which appeared in the proceedings of *The Centennial Symposium* of James Joyce held in Dublin in 1982 and was based on the two holograph manuscripts at New York Public Library – Henke concludes her argument by enlisting a series of questions which seem still worth answering:

> Was Virginia Woolf contemptuous of Joyce, or did she try to imitate his "stream-of-consciousness" style? Did she feel admiration, rivalry, or artistic comradery with the "working class" Irishman who was born the same year as she? At the news of Joyce's premature death, Woolf must have felt the same kind of shock experienced by Clarissa Dalloway at Bradshaw's announcement of Septimus Smith's suicide. […] She had always regarded Joyce as a kind of "artistic" double, a male ally in the modernist battle for psychological realism. In her own life, Joyce played the role of alter-ego that Septimus Smith had played for Clarissa Dalloway (Henke 1986, 41).

Over the last twenty-five years, at times breaking free from the "blindness" (Richter 1989) that affected critics who mechanically opposed Joyce to Woolf on account of a received idea of Joyce's misogyny (see Henke 2011, 270), other scholars have attempted to investigate the relationships between the two authors: both personal (Jenkins 1988; Pearce 1993; Anspaugh 1994) and aesthetic. In this latter sense, for instance, substantial work has been done, of course, on the parallels

[1] Other scholars who did consistent work in both fields are Morris Beja and Christine Froula.

between *Ulysses* and *Mrs Dalloway* (Garvey 1993; Hoff 1999) and on the significance of the reading of *Ulysses* for *Jacob's Room* (Garvey 1992). More intriguingly, critics like Christopher Ames (1991) and Jane de Gay (2006) have worked on both authors' relationship with the English literary tradition, as it is explored in the "Oxen of the Sun" chapter and in *Orlando* and *Between the Acts*.[2] However, much still remains to be done: whether Woolf felt disdain of or admiration for Joyce, it is high time for scholars to abandon the "parallactic displacement" that has long influenced Joyce and Woolf studies, considering the two authors as if their work identified two lines running in parallel in a Euclidean space–sharing the same plane yet never crossing each other (see Henke 2006 and 2011).

Parallaxes will hopefully contribute to filling this void by tackling the many implications of their difficult—if not failed—encounter and, at the same time, it purports to provide new perspectives on the connections between Joyce and Woolf. The volume is divided into three sections followed by an appendix: the organisation of the collection reflects several lines of critical investigation and their intersection in Joyce's and Woolf's works. In the first section—*Difficult Encounters*—Daniel Ferrer and James A. W. Heffernan both engage with the complex relationship that linked Woolf to Joyce, offering interesting insights into the former's reading of *Ulysses*. Woolf's notes on Joyce's novel, which she jotted down in progress, instalment after instalment as Bloom's epos appeared in *The Little Review*, unveil an almost Paterian impressionistic reading approach: on the one hand, as Daniel Ferrer argues, the notes on Woolf's copybook witness a decisive moment in the formation of her aesthetics, and suggest that her response to *Ulysses* was to some extent mediated through May Sinclair's criticism of Dorothy Richardson. However, as Heffernan demonstrates in his essay on Woolf's (re)reading of Joyce, she also found in *Ulysses* precisely what she thought was lacking in Richardson. The complex relationship between the two writers is further explored by Flora de Giovanni, who extends the scope of her analysis to include Wyndham Lewis: not only is the imagery employed by Lewis in his criticism of *Ulysses* similar to Woolf's, but for "The Enemy," as de Giovanni points out, Woolf and Joyce both exemplified the "orthodox literature" of the time. The section also features an essay on another kind of difficult encounter, the one between Joyce and the Irish public. John McCourt accounts for the possible reasons why the Irish reception of Joyce was so belated in comparison with his reputation "abroad," both in Europe and in the United States, and traces the history of the tardy and ambivalent acceptance of Joyce in his homeland, which seems to have first begun in

[2] To this regard see also Wallace 2003.

the 1950s. McCourt tackles—from a Joycean perspective—the crucial issue of the reception and "iconization" of authors, which is indeed a common thread between Woolf and Joyce more than could be said for other modernist writers (see Kelly 1998 and Silver 1999, in particular pp. 94-96).

The second section of this volume—*Metamorphoses and Revisitations*—looks into Woolf's and Joyce's "afterlives" at critical, textual and extratextual levels. Be it as it may, Woolf's and Joyce's work have by now become established not only as part of the literary canon, but also as part of our cultural heritage. Moving from Jakobson's definition of 'intersemiotic translation', Marco Canani provides an interpretation of what he considers to be a fully Joycean film, that is, John Huston's *The Dead*: Canani focuses on the director's hermeneutic approach to both the single story and *Dubliners* as a whole, showing how Huston captured the symbolic element of Joyce's collection and hinting at possible echoes from Dickens. Laura Pelaschiar blends literary and sociological lines of thought and, by extending MacIntyre's concept of practice to the realm of literature, reflects on the possibility to enable communities of non-experts to benefit from that "encounter with the other" which Derek Attridge and Martha Nussbaum see as one of the functions of literature. Finally Rossana Bonadei places Woolf's trans-historical perspective in the critical framework provided by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Such reading offers insights into the epistemic deconstruction intrinsic in Woolf's writing, in which the animal gaze becomes a queer mirror through which the writer explores "the human" within a larger frame of existence.

The contributions of the third section—*Style Matters*—specifically deal with some of the hallmarks of Joyce's and Woolf's style, both separately and in a comparative perspective. Ann Banfield traces the origins of Naturalism in literature, its proximity to Impressionist painting and its connection with *style indirect libre* in order to argue that Naturalism and Impressionism supplied the humus for "modernist style." Banfield pinpoints both its analogies with and differences from the one of the nineteenth-century novel, which indeed nurtured both Joyce's and Woolf's poetics, Flaubert being a major influence on both. Fritz Senn demonstrates how Joyce's internal translations function as stylistic apparatus in *Ulysses*, thus representing a crucial aspect of Joyce's poetics. Oriana Palusci explores the modes of sex change in modernist texts, carrying out a comparative analysis of gender markers in Joyce's "Circe" and Woolf's *Orlando.* Whilst Woolf's novel has been extensively explored for its playful cancellation of gender roles, Palusci's contribution pinpoints how Joyce's and Woolf's sex-changes are themselves subtly gendered.

Finally, the collection features an appendix dedicated to some aspects and moments of Joyce's reception and translations in Italy. The expiry of copyright on the work of both authors created a sort of "publishing landmark," as the already mentioned conference organized by Oriana Palusci in Naples in 2010 shows. In the Joycean field, something really remarkable happened: in just one year two new translations of *Ulysses* came out: Enrico Terrinoni's and Gianni Celati's. About fifty years after Giulio De Angelis's translation of *Ulysses*—which has long been acknowledged as the "Authorised" one—Enrico Terrinoni has taken on the ambitious task of working on a new translation aimed at both Joyce students and the general reading public, receiving extensive media coverage. In dealing with his interpretation of *Ulysses*, Terrinoni reflects on the cultural nature of translating practices, and hence on the close link between translation and adaptation, in the awareness that a translation is always suspended between rendering and surrendering. Besides, in expounding his hermeneutic choices Terrinoni also sheds light on the extent to which translation is the result of specific critical readings and the way such interpretations imperceptibly but inevitably steer the reception of translated literature in a given context. The section is complemented by Sara Sullam's analysis of the post-war Italian translations of Joyce's poetry, which have been the object of scant critical attention despite being signed by the well-known twentieth-century Italian poet Eugenio Montale. Sullam's contribution raises interesting questions not only in the field of translating studies, but also about publishing strategies and the reception of Joyce in Italy.

Each section of *Parallaxes: Virginia Woolf Meets James Joyce* includes essays that engage with various aspects of the two authors, both jointly and singularly. Over the last decades Joyce and Woolf studies have each often stimulated reflections on the very methodology of literary studies: comparing research practices[3] elaborated in both fields over the last decades by providing a common ground for the trajectories of each "everwandering star" may prove extremely fruitful.

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[3] To this regard Henke (2011, 270) observes how Morris Beja (both a Joycean and a Woolfian) "imported" in the Woolfian field the format of the annual conference of the society.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CM	*Chamber Music*
CSF	*Complete Shorter Fiction* (Woolf)
D	*The Diary of Virginia Woolf*
Du	*Dubliners*
E	*The Essays of Virginia Woolf*
F	*Flush: A Biography*
FW	*Finnegans Wake*
L	*The Letters of Virginia Woolf*
MD	*Mrs Dalloway*
O	*Orlando*
P	*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
PE	*Poems and Exiles*
PP	*Pomes Penyeach*
SH	*Stephen Hero*
TL	*To the Lighthouse*
TLS	*Times Literary Supplement*
TW	*The Waves*
U	*Ulysses*

PART I

DIFFICULT ENCOUNTERS

CHAPTER ONE

TRACKING A READER: WHAT DID VIRGINIA WOOLF REALLY THINK OF *ULYSSES*?[1]

JAMES A. W. HEFFERNAN

More than twenty years ago, Suzette Henke challenged what was then the reigning view of Virginia Woolf's response to Joyce's *Ulysses*. To judge this response by Woolf's most damning comments on the book and its author, Henke argued, is to overlook what she said about it in her reading notes on *Ulysses,* which—together with her final comment on Joyce at the time of his death—show that "she had always regarded [him] as a kind of artistic 'double,' a male ally in the modernist battle for psychological realism" (Henke 1986, 41). But some convictions—or prejudices—die hard. Though Henke's transcription of Woolf's reading notes was published in 1990, and though she and several other scholars have marshalled extensive evidence for the influence of *Ulysses* on the composition of *Mrs Dalloway*, Henke herself has recently reported that in conference presentations at least, scholars still cite Woolf's letters and diaries "to prove her animosity toward Joyce" (Henke 2006, 5).[2] Students of modern British fiction clearly owe a debt to Henke for publicizing Woolf's reading notes as well as for her untiring efforts to correct a widespread misunderstanding of Woolf's views about Joyce. But in spite of her efforts, no one—to my knowledge—has yet attempted to tell the full story of Woolf's response to Joyce and his book. That is what I propose to do here.

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[1] This essay was previously published (with some differences) on the website of the Yale Modernist Lab (http://modernism.research.yale.edu/featured_research.php), last accessed December 2013, and is republished here with the permission of Professor Heffernan.

[2] For Woolf's reading notes on *Ulysses* in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library, see Woolf 1990.

Let us start *in medias res*. In early October 1922, more than four years after her first exposure to *Ulysses*, Woolf wrote the following to the art critic and philosopher Roger Fry:

> My great adventure is really Proust. Well—what remains to be written after that? I'm only in the first volume, and there are, I suppose, faults to be found, but I am in a state of amazement; as if a miracle were being done before my eyes. How, at last, has someone solidified what has always escaped—and made it too into this beautiful and perfectly enduring substance? One has to put the book down and gasp. The pleasure becomes physical—like sun and wine and grapes and perfect serenity and intense vitality combined. Far otherwise is it with Ulysses; to which I bind myself like a martyr to a stake, and have thank God, now finished—My martyrdom is over. I hope to sell it for £4.10. (*L* 2, 566)

This passage clearly suggests that Woolf not only read all of *Ulysses* but loathed it quite as much as she adored *À la recherche.* But the truth is much more complicated–and just about as fascinating as any episode of literary history can be. Setting aside *À la recherche*, which unequivocally captivated her, the long trail of references that Woolf made to Joyce and his novel in her letters, diaries, essays, and reading notes—up to 1922 and beyond—leave no doubt that the thought of his novel stalked her for years and made her feel acutely ambivalent. She was probably urged to read it by T.S. Eliot, who admired it as soon as its opening chapters began to appear in the *Little Review* in March 1918 and who by the following November had told her that Joyce was a great genius (*L* 2, 296).[3]

Well before then, on April 14, 1918, Harriet Weaver brought her and Leonard the first four chapters of *Ulysses* in the hope that their Hogarth Press might publish it.[4] But shortly after Miss Weaver gave them the chapters, Woolf balked. It was not only far too long for their small press to manage—an "insuperable difficulty" for them, as she told Miss Weaver (*L* 2, 243); it was also—she told others—indecent and boring. After reading the chapters in about ten days, she told Lytton Strachey, "First there's a dog that p's—then there's man that forths, and one can be monotonous even on that subject" (*L* 2, 234). The next day she sounded just a little less damning in a letter to Roger Fry: "Its interesting as an experiment," she writes; "he leaves out the narrative, and tries to give the thoughts, but I don't know that he's got anything very interesting to say, and after all the

[3] Later on she noted that Eliot called *Ulysses* "extremely brilliant" (September 20, 1920) and "prodigious" (June 5, 1921): see *D*2, 68, 125. She also wrote that he called it "the greatest work of the age" (October 17, 1921, *L*2, 485).

[4] She did so at the suggestion of Roger Fry. See Ellmann [1959] 1982, 443.

p-ing of a dog isn't very different from the p-ing of a man. Three hundred pages of it might be boring" (*L* 2, 234).

To say the least, this is a startling reaction to the first four chapters of *Ulysses*, where Joyce makes the dog pee in precisely eight words buried deep in chapter three ("lifting again his hindleg, pissed against [a rock]" [*U* 3. 358-59]), and where—in chapter four—he narrates Bloom's defecation (if that is what Woolf means by "a man that forths") without using a single indecent word, representing an act that is perfectly decent and private as well as quintessentially quotidian: reading a newspaper as his bowels move in his own outhouse. It is particularly startling to compare Woolf's sole comment on chapter three with what Margaret Anderson wrote about its opening words when the chapter was submitted to her for publication in the *Little Review*: "This is the most beautiful thing we'll ever have. We'll print it if it's the last effort of our lives" (qtd. in Ellmann [1959] 1982, 421). Was Woolf simply blind to such passages? In the magnificent garden of Joyce's prose, could she see no more than a few noxious weeds?

To be fair, the answer is no. Even in writing to Fry she admits that Joyce is making an "interesting" experiment by replacing narrative with a stream of thoughts. About a year later, when she made notes on the first seven chapters of *Ulysses* in preparation for an essay on "Modern Novels" that appeared in *TLS* (April 10, 1919), she wrote much more about the value of Joyce's work in progress, some of which she was re-reading.[5] Re-reading chapter one, for instance, she notes

> the undoubted occasional beauty of his phrases. It is an attempt to get thinking into literature—hence the jumble. Told in episodes. The repetition of words like rosewood and wetted ashes. (Woolf 1990, 642)

She is beginning to hear the music of Joyce's phrasing, to feel the power of his artful repetitions (the words "rosewood" and "wetted ashes" repeatedly evoke the ghost of Stephen's mother), and to see that he is trying to re-create the unpredictable fluidity of a mind in the act of thinking. She has now much more to say about the virtues of *Ulysses*. Joyce, she sees, is "attempting to do away with the machinery"—the deadening conventions of what she will call in her essay "materialist" fiction housed in a "first-class railway carriage"—and "extract the

[5] By April 1918, when Harriet Weaver brought Woolf the first four chapters of *Ulysses*, Joyce had completed no more than five. By the following April the *Little Review* had published the first eight (Ellmann [1959] 1982, 441-42). Since she comments on each of the first seven chapters, she must have re-read chapters 1-4.

marrow" (Woolf 1990, 642-43).[6] Like Sterne, he is trying "to be more psychological—get more things into fiction" (Woolf 1990, 643). The "Hades" chapter seemed to her "perhaps the best thing" (Woolf 1990, 643), but she was also struck by Joyce's manipulation of sight, sound, and sense in "Aeolus." Comparing the chapter to a slow-motion film of a jumping horse, she says that "all pictures were a little made up before," and also that "here is thought made phonetic—taken to bits" (Woolf 1990, 643), possibly referring to the passage in which Bloom translates the "sllt" of the printing press and the creaking of a door: "Almost human the way it sllt to call attention, asking to be shut. Doing its level best to speak. That door too is creaking, asking to be shut. Everything speaks in its own way" (*U* 7. 177-79).[7]

In re-reading Joyce, Woolf is re-thinking her own first reaction to him, but hardly repudiating it.[8] Caught between dawning admiration and stubborn aversion to his "indecency," which she notes repeatedly, she does not know just what to make of him. "For all I know," she says, "every great book has been an act of revolution" (Woolf 1990, 644). But the brashness of Joyce's revolution vexes her. His "need of dwelling so much on indecency" reveals an egotistical "indifference to public opinion" and "desire to shock" (Woolf 1990, 643). At the same time, when she starts to sketch out her essay and to prescribe the kind of "life" that she thinks modern fiction needs—"Something not necessarily leading to a plot. […] Something perhaps not dramatic nor humorous, not tragic: just the quality of the day"—she seems to suspect, or fear, that Joyce is already filling the prescription. "Here we come to Joyce," she writes. "And here we must make our position clear as bewildered, befogged. We don't pretend to say what he's trying to do" (Woolf 1990, 644).

Like nearly all beginning readers of *Ulysses*, Woolf is befogged. She thinks that Bloom is the "editor of a paper" (Woolf 1990, 645) rather than

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[6] See also *E*3, 32. In the notes she says that Joyce is "at least out of the first-class carriage line" (Woolf 1990, 642), a figure she develops in the essay.

[7] In the printed version of Henke's transcription of Woolf's reading notes, she refers to the film of a "hare," but Henke now says she believes the word is "horse" (Henke 2006, 4-5).

[8] According to Suzette Henke, Woolf's reading notes on *Ulysses* show that she "felt tremendous admiration for Joyce's experimental style and that *Ulysses* proved inspirational in the composition of *Mrs Dalloway*" (Henke 2006, 4). This seems to me a little overstated. Though I fully agree with the second point, Woolf's reading notes on *Ulysses*—like everything else she wrote about it—show that her admiration was distinctly qualified.

an advertising canvasser repeatedly insulted by the editor,[9] and she is still so revolted by Joyce's indecency—especially by what she takes to be his implied claim that "indecency is more real than anything else"—that she asks herself, "Why not in fact leave out bodies?" (Woolf 1990, 644). But she dimly perceives that what she calls indecency is precisely where the road of complete psychological realism leads. "So much seems to depend," she writes, "on the *emotional* fibre of the mind it may be true that the subconscious mind dwells on indecency" (Woolf 1990, 643).[10] She also asks just the right question about two of Joyce's three main characters: "what is the connection between Bloom and [Stephen] Dedalus?" (Woolf 1990, 645).[11] Finally, though she thinks it "unfair to approach Joyce by way of his 'method'," which she calls "on the surface startling," she thinks he is quite right to focus on the "big things" that must "perpetually" be seen and felt again: "love, death, jealousy and so on" (Woolf 1990, 645).

To compare Woolf's reading notes on *Ulysses* with her account of it in "Modern Novels" (*TLS* April 10, 1919) is to see her still struggling with her ambivalence—but doing so more artfully. After deploring the "materialist" bent of H.G. Wells, John Galsworthy, and especially of Arnold Bennett, whose characters live too comfortably "in some first-class railway carriage" and whose plots chug far too mechanically from one emotional station to the next, she asks:

> Is it not possible that the accent falls a little differently, that the moment of importance came before or after, that, if one were free and could set down

[9] Henke notes this point also (1986, 40). But Woolf comes nowhere near the gaffe made by one reviewer of *Ulysses,* who completely confused Stephen with Bloom. See Shane Leslie's account of the novel in the *Dublin Review* (September 1922) in Deming 1970.1, 201.

[10] Though she did not read Freud extensively until many years later, in the late thirties, it is hardly surprising to find that she "was at once extremely interested in his idea of conscience as censor" (Lee 1996, 722). In 1924 the Hogarth Press became Freud's authorised publisher in England, and in January 1939 Woolf met the dying Freud himself (Lee 1996, 725).

[11] Harvena Richter observes: "It would appear that Woolf's puzzlement over the separate stories of Bloom and Dedalus would spur her to design [in *Mrs Dalloway*] a series of connecting links between her own characters that would make her feel she had outdistanced Joyce" (308). But this makes sense only if we assume that instead of simply trying to figure out the connection after reading less than a third of the book, Woolf is faulting Joyce for his failure to make the connection clear. For much of *Mrs Dalloway,* first time readers must likewise wonder about the connection between Clarissa and Septimus Smith, who—unlike Stephen and Bloom—never meet at all.

> what one chose, there would be no plot, the moment of importance came before or after, that, if one were free and could set down what one chose, there would be no plot, little probability, and a vague general confusion in which the clear-cut features of the tragic, the comic, the passionate, and the lyrical were dissolved beyond the possibility of separate recognition? The mind, exposed to the ordinary course of life, receives upon its surface a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms, composing in their sum what we might venture to call life itself; and to figure further as the semi-transparent envelope, or luminous halo, surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not perhaps the chief task of the novelist to convey this incessantly varying spirit with whatever stress or sudden deviation it may display, and as little admixture of the alien and external as possible? (*E* 3, 33)

In the revised version of "Modern Novels" that appeared as "Modern Fiction" in *The Common Reader* (1925), Woolf defines Joyce's project more precisely. "Examine for a moment," she writes, "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day" to see how the myriad impressions that fall upon it "shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday" with "no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style" (*E* 4, 160). But years before writing these words, when *Ulysses* was still a work in progress, Woolf had already divined its essence. Joyce's new novel, she says (in the original "Modern Novels" of April 1919), discards

> most of the conventions which are commonly observed by other novelists. Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small. (*E* 3, 33-34)

In this light, we should also beware of taking for granted that Woolf's turn to stream of consciousness in her fiction was chiefly prompted by her reading of Dorothy Richardson, whose novel *Pointed Roofs. Pilgrimage* (1915) introduced to English fiction what was first called "stream of consciousness."[12] In reviewing Richardson's *The Tunnel* (1919), Woolf herself noted that it cuts away all the traditional architecture of narration to reveal "the consciousness of Miriam Henderson […] which endlessly reflects and distorts the variegated process" (*E* 3, 10-11). But while

[12] May Sinclair used the phrase in reviewing Richardson's novel in 1918; see Fernihough 2007, 68-69.

admitting that Miriam's "senses of touch, sight and hearing are excessively acute," Woolf finds little beneath them. "Sensations, impressions, ideas and emotions glance off her, unrelated and unquestioned, without shedding quite as much light as we had hoped into the hidden depths" (*E* 3, 11-12). This critique of Richardson's novel appeared in the *TLS* on February 13, 1919. Less than two months later, again in the pages of *TLS,* Woolf's salute to Joyce's way of tracking consciousness shows that she had already found in his work precisely what she missed in Richardson's—as well as in that of the materialists. Unlike the materialists, she writes, "Joyce is spiritual"—by which she evidently means a realist of human psychology rather than of the material world. "At all costs," she says,

> he aims to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its myriad messages through the brain, he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious, though it be probability or coherence or any other of the handrails to which we cling for support when we set our imaginations free. Faced, as in the Cemetery scene, by so much that, in its restless scintillations, in its irrelevance, in flashes of deep significance succeeded by incoherent inanities, seems to be life itself, we have to fumble rather awkwardly if want to say what else we wish; and for what reason a work of such originality yet fails to compare […] with [Conrad's] "Youth" or [Hardy's] *Jude the Obscure.* It fails, one might say, because of the comparative poverty of the writer's mind. (*E* 3, 34)

What she missed in the work of Richardson—searching light on Miriam's "hidden depths"—is precisely what she finds in the work of Joyce, who "aims to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its myriad messages through the brain" and who offers us "flashes of deep significance."[13] In the "Modern Fiction" version of this passage, Woolf

[13] She might also have noted what Anne Fernihough has lately observed: that in *Ulysses* Joyce democratizes the stream of consciousness, which in Richardson's novel, as in his own *Portrait*, "had been confined to a single consciousness." *Ulysses*, writes Fernihough, "seems indeed to offer a rare example of a democratically motivated stream-of-consciousness novel," and "Woolf's stream-of-consciousness writing, like *Ulysses*, is dispersed among a range of consciousnesses, though her claims to being democratic are more open to question" (Fernihough 2007, 77). But it remains difficult to say just how much Woolf's way of representing consciousness owes to the example set by *Ulysses*. According to Fernihough, she might well have been influenced by what she read about consciousness in William James's *Principles of Psychology* (1890) and especially in the work of Henri Bergson, whose "notion of *dureé* ('duration') was a

amplifies her praise for what she calls the "brilliancy" of the "Hades" chapter: "on a first reading at any rate," she says, "it is difficult not to acclaim it a masterpiece. If we want life itself, here surely we have it" (*E* 4, 161). But—and there is always a but—Woolf never praises Joyce without faulting him at the same time, even if she has to "fumble awkwardly" to do so. In the original version of her essay, her high praise for "Hades" makes a very strange prelude to what follows. In claiming to find "comparative" poverty in the mind of Joyce, Woolf invites the suspicion that she is awkwardly straining to rationalize an aversion that she cannot justify by logical means. All she can do is return to her *bête noire*—indecency—by way of Joyce's would-be solipsism. Perhaps, she asks, our sense of being "strictly confined" in reading *Ulysses* is due to a method that makes us feel "centred in a self which in spite of its tremor of susceptibility never reaches out or embraces or comprehends what is outside and beyond?" (*E* 3, 34). If we wonder how such a question could be asked about a novel that deeply plumbs the inner lives of two distinctly different characters who are each exceptionally observant of the world around them, the answer lies again with indecency. "Does the emphasis laid perhaps didactically upon indecency," Woolf asks, "contribute to this effect of the angular and isolated?" (*E* 3, 34). Here we can only guess what Woolf means: that Joyce is teaching other novelists to be at once indecent and solipsistic, leading them into an outhouse of navel-gazing? At best, Woolf's comment tells us far more about herself than about Joyce.

But she cannot stop thinking or writing about him. Starting to draft *Jacob's Room* in late January 1920, she tells her diary that she must strive to avoid the danger of "the damned egotistical self, which ruins Joyce" (*D* 2, 14). The following September, just after recording that Eliot called *Ulysses* "extremely brilliant" and also that "Ulysses, according to Joyce, is the greatest character in history," she gratuitously adds: "Joyce himself is an insignificant man, wearing very thick eyeglasses, a little like Shaw to look at, dull, self-centred, & perfectly self-assured" (*D* 2, 68). This dismissive caricature sounds as if it sprang from Woolf's own observation. But she knew nothing of him personally, so it can only be her version—possibly distorted—of what she was told about Joyce by Eliot. And she could not even trust her own version of him for long. In February of 1922, just after *Ulysses* appeared, she wrote to her sister Vanessa, who was then

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major influence on the cultural climate from which the stream-of-consciousness novel emerged" (Fernihough 2007, 68).

in Paris: "for Gods sake make friends with Joyce. I particularly want to know what he's like" (*L* 2, 507).[14]

The startling diversity of Woolf's comments on Joyce makes one thing clear. None of them—not even the relatively complex assessment in "Modern Novels"—tells the whole truth about her response to his work. But a major clue can be found in her diary for September 26, 1920, where she writes again of the visit paid by T.S. Eliot a week before. Coming just after she had run aground in the middle of the party chapter about halfway through *Jacob's Room* (on which she had been working for two months without a break), his visit—she writes—"made [her] listless" and "cast shade" upon her. Since she has already noted that Eliot praised the brilliance of *Ulysses* for its rendering of "internals," of the inner lives of its characters (*D* 2, 68), we might well guess the reason for her listlessness. She herself recalls: "He said nothing—but I reflected how *what I'm doing is probably being better done by Mr Joyce*" (*D* 2, 68-69, emphasis added). This strikes me as a revelation. By "he said nothing," she presumably means that he said nothing about her own work in progress to accompany his extraordinary praise of *Ulysses.* What then could she conclude? That her own efforts to liberate the novel from the material solidity of the railway carriage and to focus its energies on the irrepressible life of the mind were probably being surpassed by Joyce, who was almost her exact contemporary?[15] Praise him or damn him, she knew only too well that she had to reckon with him. The following April, when a "thin-shredded" cabinet minister asked her over lunch "who are our promising litterateurs?" she answered simply, "Joyce" (*D* 2, 113-14).

So it is not surprising to learn that by mid-April of 1922, ten weeks after the publication of *Ulysses* in Paris, she had bought her own blue-bound copy for the (then) hefty sum of £4 even while working on a long story—"Mrs Dalloway on Bond Street"—that would eventually become part of her next novel.[16] Her writing plans thus intersect with her reading agenda. On April 14, in the same letter to Eliot that reports the purchase of *Ulysses*, she tells him that she hopes to finish her story in three to six

[14] Vanessa's husband Clive had met Joyce in the fall of 1921, and—according to Joyce's letter to Harriet Weaver of November 6, 1921—did not like him (*L* 1, 176).

[15] Born on February 2, 1882, Joyce was precisely eight days younger than Woolf. Two days after his death on January 13, 1941, she herself noted in her diary that he was "about a fortnight younger" (*D* 5, 352-53), and she outlived him by just a little over ten weeks.

[16] She had finished *Jacob's Room* in the previous November (*D 2,* 141), and the Hogarth Press published it in October 1922.

weeks, that she wants him to edit it mercilessly when it is done, that Leonard has started reading *Ulysses*, and that as soon as she herself does likewise, "your critical reputation will be at stake" (*L* 2, 521). With all its archness, this statement has telling implications. While eager to trust Eliot's judgement of her own work, she will now test his judgment of *Ulysses*. Furthermore, though she had already read its first four chapters twice and its next four chapters once and briefly assessed all eight of them in print, she sounds like someone plunging into *Ulysses* for the first time. At some level, one suspects, she seems to be asking Eliot to stop rhapsodizing about Joyce and start paying more attention to her. But in any case, her statement about Eliot's "critical reputation" plainly reveals the mindset that she now brings to the novel as a whole. She is predisposed to find it undeserving of Eliot's praise. On the same day of her letter to Eliot about it, she writes more candidly to her brother-in-law Clive Bell: "Leonard is already 30 pages deep. I look, and sip, and shudder" (*L* 2, 522).

Later in this same April, *Ulysses* was reviewed by two literary figures whom Woolf knew well: John Middleton Murry and Arnold Bennett. Whether or not she saw these reviews, each judged the novel an amalgam of lead and gold.[17] Murry thought Joyce's intention "completely anarchic" but also hailed "the intensity of life" to be found in the book and Joyce's "very great achievement" in rendering "all the thoughts" of his characters with the comic force of "transcendental buffoonery" (Deming 1970.1, 196-97). Bennett found the novel pervasively dull and "more indecent […] than the majority of professedly pornographic books" but also "dazzlingly original," and for all its indecency, Molly's monologue struck him as "immortal" and "magical" in its "utterly convincing realism" (Deming 1970.1, 220-21). Meanwhile, Woolf saw Joyce as nothing but an irksome distraction from her reading of Proust. On June 5, having started reading the second volume of *À la recherche*, she chafes at the thought of *Ulysses*: "Oh what a bore about Joyce!" she writes,

> just as I was devoting myself to Proust—Now I must put aside Proust—and what I suspect is that Joyce is one of those undelivered geniuses,

[17] Interestingly, both of them question the claims for *Ulysses* made by Valery Larbaud, who—in the first public lecture on it (at a pre-publication book launch in Paris on December 7, 1921)—had called it a "masterpiece" (qtd. Bennett qtd. in Deming 1970.1, 219). Given the history of French support for Ireland's long struggle to gain independence, I suspect that English critics (though not Woolf) were predisposed to reject or at best disparage French praise of any book written by an Irishman.

> whom one can't neglect, or silence their groans, but must help them out, at considerable pains to oneself. (*L* 2, 533)

The task of reading *Ulysses* has now become an obstetrical ordeal, with Woolf herself as midwife for a book that—she seems to think—cannot be born without her help. Perhaps she is thinking of what she has already written about its early chapters in "Modern Novels." But for now, the only further help she can offer is simply to read the book. "Thank God," she tells her diary in late August, "I need not write about it" (*D* 2, 195-96). But shortly before, on August 16, when she was "laboriously dredging [her] mind" for her story about Mrs Dalloway, she confided to her diary her own withering assessment of the two hundred pages she had read so far:

> I […] have been amused, stimulated, charmed interested by the first 2 or 3 chapters—to the end of the Cemetery scene; & then puzzled, bored, irritated, & disillusioned as by a queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples. And Tom, great Tom, thinks this on a par with War & Peace! An illiterate, underbred book it seems to me: the book of a self-taught working man, & we all know how distressing they are, how egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, & ultimately nauseating. When one can have cooked flesh, why have the raw? But I think if you are anaemic, as Tom is, there is glory in blood. Being fairly normal myself I am soon ready for the classics again. I may revise this later. I do not compromise my critical sagacity. I plant a stick in the ground to mark page 200. (*D* 2, 188-89)

Thus the critic plants her stick. Since page 200 of the first edition of *Ulysses* ends a few pages short of the end of Chapter 9 (precisely at line 906 in Gabler's edition), not even Stephen's impassioned vivisection of *Hamlet* led her to read further, much less to Chapter 13 and the wooden stick with which a glum Leopold Bloom starts to write in the sand a message about himself for Gerty McDowell; when he stops after "I AM A" and throws the stick away, it falls in the sand, "stuck" (*U* 13. 1270), a grim sign of the psychic paralysis that threatens him as he thinks: "Better not stick here all night like a limpet" (*U* 13. 1211). Woolf is no Bloom, but her late-August letters show that she herself remained stuck at page 200 until at least the 26th (ten days after writing the above), when she told Lytton Strachey what she thought of "the first 200 pages":

> Never did I read such tosh. As for the first 2 chapters we will let them pass, but the 3rd 4th 5th 6th—merely the scratching of pimples on the body of the bootboy at Claridges. Of course genius may blaze out on page 652 but I have my doubts. And this is what Eliot worships […]. (*L* 2, 551)

Ten days stuck on page 200 of *Ulysses* have sharpened not her critical sagacity but her animus against its author. Having snobbishly fabricated a picture of Joyce (who held a university degree in modern languages) as a raw, egotistical, self-taught, underbred workingman, she now sees him as a pimply-faced bootboy oozing tosh. Forgetting or discarding her public praise of *Ulysses* and particularly of Chapter 6, she treats it with nothing but scorn—or at best pity. A few days before writing the above, she had told Lady Ottoline Morrell that "the poor young man" (precisely eight days younger than she, as already noted) "has only got the dregs of a mind compared with George Meredith" and that beside Henry James he is an intellectual featherweight. "They say," she went on, "it gets a little heavier. It is true that I prepared myself, owing to Tom [Eliot], for a gigantic effort; and behold, the bucket is almost empty" (*L* 2, 548).

She had already used this trope of her own work. A few days earlier, she had told her diary that in her "laborious dredging […] for *Mrs Dalloway*" [her story, that is] she was "bringing up light buckets" (*D* 2, 189). Having begun to suspect—as noted above—that Joyce was probably beating her at her own game, how could she avoid measuring herself against him or, more precisely, wanting to find his buckets just as light as hers? And could she finish her story or turn it into another novel of her own so long as this strange new giant of literature cast his shadow before her? The answer, I think, is no. To go on writing, she had to stop reading *Ulysses*. I believe that she stopped at page 200 and then did all she could to drive it from her mind. On August 26 she tells her diary: "I dislike Ulysses more & more—that is think it more & more unimportant; & dont even trouble conscientiously to make out its meanings. Thank God, I need not write about it" (*D 2,* 195-96). By this she clearly meant that she would write no more about it for publication, since she did indeed have a few more things to say in private. On September 3, eight days after last reporting that she had read just 200 pages, she tells her diary, "I should be reading the last immortal chapter of Ulysses: but I'm hot with Badmington [sic] in the orchard […] we dine in 35 minutes; & I must change" (*D* 2, 197).[18] And three days later she tells her diary, "I finished Ulysses" (*D* 2, 199).

Just what does this mean? I believe it can only mean that she had finished *with* it—not that she had read it all, let alone tried "conscientiously to make out its meanings." In the more than four months from mid-April to August 24, she had read just two hundred pages of *Ulysses* even though she had already read many of them once or twice

[18] Since she speaks of the last chapter as "immortal," she may be echoing what Bennett wrote of it in his review of the previous April (see above).

before. Could she have read the remaining 532 pages in the eleven days from August 26 to September 6, when she claims to have finished the novel? The answer is both yes and no. On one hand, she could have read those pages in one long day, for the whole of *Ulysses* has been many times read aloud—typically by a team of readers—in twenty-four hours. On the other hand, given the rate at which *she* had been reading *Ulysses*, she could not possibly have read it all by September 6, especially since she was already overloaded with other tasks.

Consider her diary for Monday, August 28. There she notes that she must finish writing "Mrs Dalloway" (still a story) by the following Saturday and (for *The Common Reader*) "start [the] chapter on Chaucer" by Friday, September 8. Then she asks herself, "Shall I write the next chapter of Mrs D."—thus nudging it toward a novel— "& shall it be The Prime Minister?" (*D* 2, 196).[19] Besides these writing projects, she sets herself a daunting syllabus of reading for the next few weeks, including Homer, Plato, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Marlowe, Racine, and Ibsen. But Joyce appears neither here nor in her next diary entry of September 3, where she reports that company is coming, that she is "fretful with people," that "every day will now be occupied [with visitors] till Tuesday week," that she "cant endure interruptions," that she's "always in a fizz & a stew, either to get my views on Chaucer clear, or on the Odyssey, or to sketch my next chapter" (*D* 2, 197-98). Where on earth could she find two minutes for Joyce? On Wednesday, September 6, the day she claims to have "finished Ulysses," she reports that she has just seen off three sets of visitors, who "leave one in tatters," and also that proofs of *Jacob's Room* have been coming "every other day" (*D* 2, 198-99). Even if she had not dreaded reading *Ulysses*, she could hardly have found the time to skim—let alone read—532 pages of it by September 6.

So she thrusts it aside. Pressed with far too many other obligations and feeling depressed about the thinness of *Jacob's Room* (*D* 2, 199), she can no longer bear to think about *Ulysses*, and in the face of all the claims that

[19] The story called "Mrs Dalloway on Bond Street" appeared in *Dial* in July 1923, and can be found in *CSF*, 146-63. But on October 6, 1922, long before the story was published, she outlined a book to be called "At Home: or The Party," with the Dalloway story as its first chapter (*CSF* 295). On October 14, she noted that "Mrs Dalloway has branched into a book" for which she was soon planning to finish the second chapter, to be called "the *Prime Minister*" (*D 2,* 207-208). Though she never wrote more than a fragment of this episode, she used sections of the fragment in the opening scenes of the novel, and it can be found as an appendix in *CSF* 317-23.