

VIRGINIA WOOLF

A  
ROOM  
OF ONE'S  
OWN

*Edited by*

DAVID BRADSHAW AND STUART N. CLARKE



The Shakespeare Head Press Edition  
of  
VIRGINIA WOOLF

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

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of  
VIRGINIA WOOLF

*To the Lighthouse*  
*The Waves*

*Night and Day*  
*Roger Fry*  
*The Voyage Out*

*Mrs Dalloway*  
*Flush*  
*Orlando*  
*Three Guineas*  
*Between the Acts*

*Jacob's Room*  
*The Years*

*A Room of One's Own*

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## Preface to the Edition

All but the first two of the books that Virginia Woolf wrote for publication during her lifetime were originally published by The Hogarth Press which she and Leonard Woolf founded. Why then do we need any more editions of all these works? There are two main reasons. First, the original English and American editions of her books, published in the majority of cases at the same time, often vary from each other because Virginia Woolf made different changes in them before they were printed. Secondly, many of the references or allusions in these works, which were written more than two generations ago now, have become increasingly obscure for contemporary readers.

The purpose of The Shakespeare Head Press Edition is to present reliable texts, complete with alternative readings and explanatory notes, of all the books she herself published or intended to publish, not just her novels. Only her collections of stories and essays have been omitted. These have been included in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, edited by Susan Dick, and *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, edited by Andrew McNeillie and Stuart N. Clarke. Also excluded from The Shakespeare Head Press Edition are Virginia Woolf's letters and diaries, which have already been edited.

In the selection of texts, the edition is the first to take into account variants between the first English and the first American editions of Woolf's works, as well as variants found in surviving proofs. Each text has been chosen after a computer-collation of the first editions. Where relevant, the proofs have also been collated. Parts of works published separately (such as the earlier version of the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse*) have been included in appendices along with other relevant documents (such as Woolf's introduction to *Mrs Dalloway*).

Each text has an introduction giving the circumstances of the work's composition, publication and reception, followed by a note on the text selected. Annotations, variants and emendations are included at the end of each volume. In the interests of pleasure in reading, the texts of the works are free of superscript numbers, asterisks, editorial brackets or other interventions.

'So there are to be new editions of Jane Austen and the Brontës and George Meredith,' Virginia Woolf wrote in her 1922 essay 'On Re-reading Novels'. 'Left on trains, forgotten in lodging-houses, thumbed and tattered to destruction, the old have served their day...'. It is our hope that The Shakespeare Head Press Edition of Virginia Woolf will inspire, as Woolf predicted those earlier editions of the writers she admired and re-read would do, both 'new readings and new friends'.

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WILEY Blackwell

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*David Bradshaw and Stuart N. Clarke*

# Abbreviations

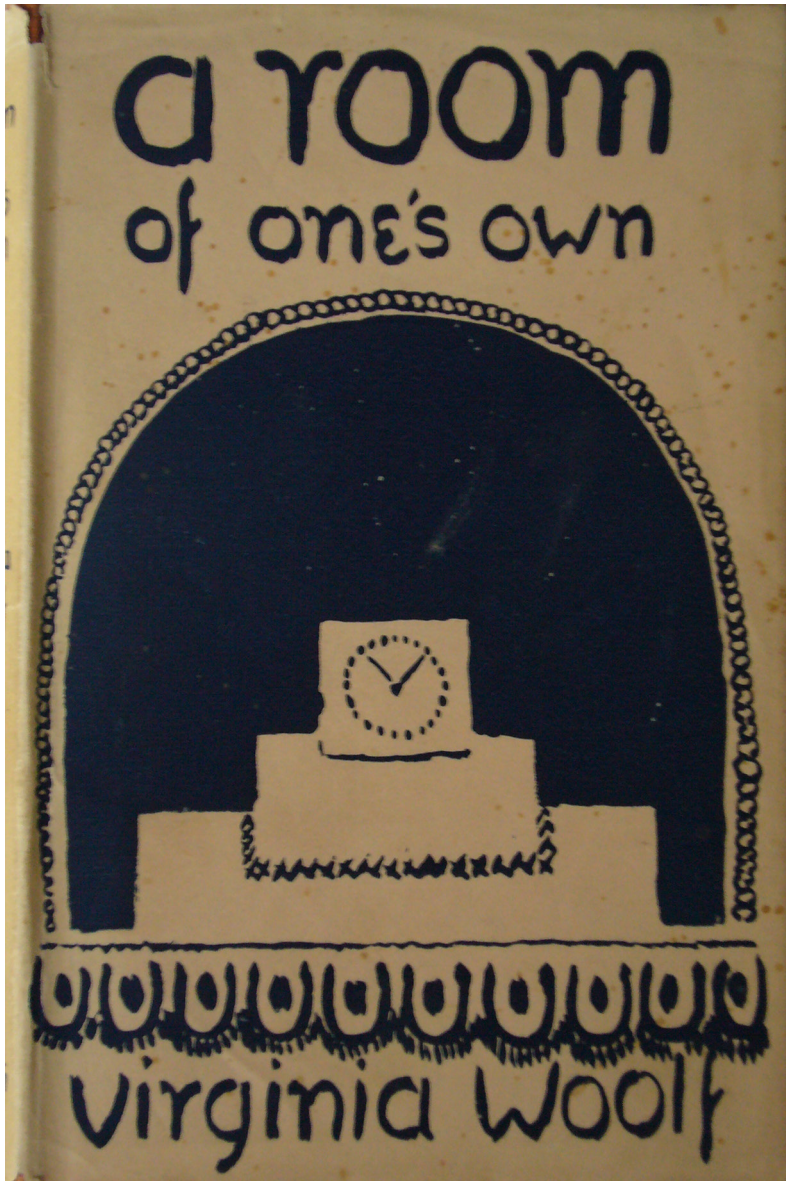
All references to Woolf's novels and other books are keyed to The Shakespeare Head Press Edition or to the first edition of the text in question.

The following abbreviations have been used in the Introduction and Notes:

- CH *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975; rep. 1997).
- DI-V *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell, assisted by Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1977–84).
- EI-VI *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie and Stuart N. Clarke, 6 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1986–2011).
- LI-VI *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1975–80).
- JR *Jacob's Room*
- LE Ben Weinreb, Christopher Hibbert, Julia Keay and John Keay, *The London Encyclopedia*, 3rd edn (London, Basingstoke and Oxford: Macmillan, 2008).
- MB *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Pimlico, 2002).
- MD *Mrs. Dalloway*

## Abbreviations

- O *Orlando: A Biography*
- OBEV *The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250–1900*, chosen and edited by Arthur Quiller-Couch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900).
- PA *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals and ‘Carlyle’s House and Other Sketches’*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Pimlico, 2004).
- Stephen Barbara Stephen, *Emily Davies and Girton College* (London: Constable, 1927).
- TG *Three Guineas*
- TL *To the Lighthouse*
- VO *The Voyage Out*
- W *The Waves*
- W&F Virginia Woolf, *Women & Fiction: The Manuscript Versions of ‘A Room of One’s Own’*, transcribed and edited by S. P. Rosenbaum (Oxford: Blackwell, for The Shakespeare Head Press, 1992).
- Y *The Years*



*The dust-jacket for the first English edition, designed by Vanessa Bell.*

# Introduction

## 1

*A Room of One's Own* is Virginia Woolf's riposte to those who took the intellectual and artistic inferiority of women for granted. Her frustration with such entrenched prejudice had been gathering steam for a number of years. Following the publication of Arnold Bennett's *Our Women* in September 1920, for example, Woolf noted in her diary that she had been 'making up a paper upon Women, as a counterblast to Mr Bennett's adverse views reported in the papers'.<sup>1</sup> If Woolf's 1920 'paper' ever reached the page it has not survived, but it is worth quoting at length from Bennett's fourth chapter, rhetorically entitled 'Are Men Superior to Women?', which argues points – and above all represents the kind of patriarchal mindset – that *A Room* would eventually challenge:

the truth is that intellectually and creatively man is the superior of woman, and that in the region of creative intellect there are things which men almost habitually do but which women have not done and give practically no sign of ever being able to do.

Some platitudes must now be uttered. The literature of the world can show at least fifty male poets greater than any woman poet. Indeed, the women poets who have reached even second rank are exceedingly few – perhaps not more than half a dozen. With the possible exception of Emily Brontë no woman novelist has yet produced a novel to equal the great novels of men. (One may be enthusiastic for Jane Austen without putting *Pride and Prejudice* in the same category with *Anna Karenina* or *The Woodlanders*.) No woman at all has achieved either painting or sculpture that is better than second-rate, or music that is better than second-rate. Nor has any woman come anywhere near the top in criticism. Can anybody name a celebrated woman philosopher;

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or a woman who has made a first-rate scientific discovery; or a woman who has arrived at a first-rate generalisation of any sort?

The stereotyped reply to these regrettable platitudes is that only lately have women 'had a chance,' and that when the fruits of education and liberty have ripened women will rival men in all branches of creative and intellectual activity. Such a reply – I say it with trembling – is the reply of a partisan. For ages women have had every opportunity that education can furnish to shine creatively in painting and in music. Thousands of women give half their lives to painting in conditions exactly similar to the conditions for males. The musical institutes are packed with women who study exactly as men study. What result in creation is visible? As for fiction, women have long specialised in it. Probably there are more women novelists than men to-day. But no modern woman-novelist has yet cut a world-figure. Innumerable women have had the leisure and the liberty and the apparatus to become philosophers, but the world has not discovered a woman-philosopher whom it could honestly place hundredth after the first ninety-nine philosophers of the other sex.

I admit that in scientific discovery, which is comparatively a new field, women ought not yet to be judged, but since the same qualities of creative imagination and intellectual power are needed here as in the other fields cited, I do not anticipate in science a greater measure of distinction for women.

In creation, in synthesis, in criticism, in pure intellect women, even the most exceptional and the most favoured, have never approached the accomplishment of men. It is not a question of a slight difference, as for example the difference between the relative proportionate sizes of the male and the female brain – it is a question of an overwhelming and constitutional difference, a difference which stupendously remains after every allowance has been made for inequality of opportunity. Therefore I am inclined to think that no amount of education and liberty of action will sensibly alter it.<sup>2</sup>

A number of Bennett's observations were quoted with approval by 'Affable Hawk' (Woolf's friend Desmond MacCarthy) in his 'Books in General' column in the *New Statesman* at the beginning of October 1920,<sup>3</sup> and Woolf wrote to the *New Statesman* on two occasions in response.<sup>4</sup> 'It seems to me', she comments in her second letter, following MacCarthy's attempted rebuttal of her argument, 'that the conditions which make it possible for a Shakespeare to exist are that he shall have had predecessors in his art, shall make one of a group where art is freely discussed and practised, and shall himself have the utmost of freedom and action and experience'.<sup>5</sup> Woolf points out that such conditions have not existed for women and concludes that 'the degradation of being a slave is only equalled by the degradation of being a master'.<sup>6</sup>

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Woolf's relationship with MacCarthy was often fraught and it is far from clear that her arguments made any impression on him. In his review of *A Room* (*Sunday Times*, 26 January 1930), for example, MacCarthy declared, somewhat enigmatically, that Woolf's restrained polemic 'is feminist propaganda, yet it resembles an almond-tree in blossom'.<sup>7</sup> 'It was a great delight to read your article', Woolf told him in an equally poised letter of the following day. 'I never thought you would like that book – and perhaps you didn't: but anyway you managed to write a most charming article, which gave me a great and unexpected pleasure.'<sup>8</sup>

## 2

There are some unresolved mysteries about the immediate origins of *A Room of One's Own*. Probably early in January 1928, Woolf received a letter from Irene Biss asking her to talk to the ODTAA (standing for One Damn Thing After Another) club at Girton College, Cambridge. Yet at Thomas Hardy's funeral on 16 January, Woolf was thinking about 'a lecture to the Newnhamites about women's writing'.<sup>9</sup> So it could be that representatives from both colleges had 'asked [her] to speak about women and fiction' (p. 3). Woolf replied to Biss on 29 January that she would come in October. However, she wrote again on 12 February to say that she had agreed to speak at Newnham College on 12 May, and asked whether she could come on 19 May.<sup>10</sup> On 18 February she recorded that her mind was 'woolgathering away about Women & Fiction'.<sup>11</sup> In the event, she had to postpone her visits until October after all.

On Saturday 20 October, a little over a week after the publication of *Orlando*, Woolf drove to Cambridge with her husband Leonard, her sister Vanessa Bell and her niece Angelica to deliver her paper to the Arts Society at Newnham.<sup>12</sup> They stayed with Pernel Strachey, Principal of Newnham. Elsie Elizabeth Phare (later Duncan-Jones), the secretary of the Society, recalled that:

The visit of Miss Strachey's close friend, Virginia Woolf, in 1929 [i.e. 1928] to read us a paper was a rather alarming occasion. As I remember it she was nearly an hour late; and dinner in Clough Hall, never a repast for gourmets, suffered considerably. Mrs Woolf also disconcerted us by bringing a husband and so upsetting our seating plan.<sup>13</sup>

Clough Hall, with windows 'curved like ships' windows among generous waves of red brick' (p. 13), was then cleared of the remnants of the meal and set up for Woolf's talk; no doubt some of the students,



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who were not members of the Arts Society, disappeared at this point. Perhaps Woolf retired to the Principal's room for coffee while this was going on, for, while Phare remembered that 'After the paper there was coffee with Mrs Woolf in the Principal's rooms',<sup>14</sup> U. K. N. Carter (later Stevenson) felt sure that 'the post-address coffee and biscuits were distributed in my room, because it was a fairly large one'.<sup>15</sup> Woolf had an audience of about two hundred, but the acoustics were poor and at least one student fell asleep.<sup>16</sup>

While the Woolfs were guests of Pernel Strachey overnight, the Bells stayed in a hotel. The following day, Woolf and her party had lunch in the rooms of George Rylands in King's College with him, Lytton Strachey and John Maynard Keynes.<sup>17</sup>

The following week, Woolf travelled to Cambridge again, this time by train accompanied by Vita Sackville-West, to speak to the ODTAA at Girton on the evening of 26 October 1928. She visited her nephew, Julian Bell, in the afternoon, writing in her diary the following day: 'Why should all the splendour, all the luxury of life be lavished on the Julians & the Francises, & none on the Phares & the Thomases? There's Julian not much relishing it, perhaps.'<sup>18</sup>

Since the talks Woolf gave at Cambridge have not survived, it is not clear whether they were the same, as stated in the manuscript,<sup>19</sup> or two different papers, as printed in the published editions of *A Room*. In either case, two questions are raised: what was the content of the paper or papers and were Woolf's talks suitable for her audiences? There are various reports by those who heard Woolf speak, but very few are contemporaneous. Woolf herself only wrote: 'I blandly told them [at Girton] to drink wine & have a room of their own.'<sup>20</sup> Elsie Phare reported on Woolf's talk in the Michaelmas Term number of *Thersites*, a Newnham College magazine:

Mrs Virginia Woolf visited us on Saturday, Oct. 20th, and spoke in College Hall on 'Women and Fiction'. The reasons why women novelists were for so long so few were largely a question of domestic architecture: it was not, and it is not easy to compose in a parlour. Now that women are writing (and Mrs Woolf exhorted her audience to write novels and send them to be considered by the Hogarth Press) they should not try to adapt themselves to the prevailing literary standards, which are likely to be masculine, but make others of their own; they should remake the language, so that it becomes a more fluid thing and capable of delicate usage.

It was a characteristic and delightful lecture and we are most grateful to Mrs Woolf for coming to us, as well as to Miss Strachey for consenting to preside over the meeting.<sup>21</sup>

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Woolf's comment suggests an early draft of Chapter I, while Phare's 'summary . . . anticipat[es] the arguments Woolf develops in chapter four'.<sup>22</sup> Over fifty years later, Phare wrote: 'All I remember now of her talk is that she praised very highly a poem of Stella Gibbons's, "The Hippogriff"'.<sup>23</sup> This seems likely, for the poem had appeared in the *Criterion* in September 1927,<sup>24</sup> and Woolf later wrote: 'I remember Stella Gibbons writing a poem we liked, and so asked her to send us some to print'.<sup>25</sup>

The ODTAA at Girton was a select, closed society with restricted membership. While Woolf's talk at Newnham was delivered in a large hall, at Girton it was held in the small Reception Room (with wall panels embroidered between 1900 and 1920 by Julia, Lady Carew) near the Stanley Library. Having returned to London from speaking at Girton, Woolf described her audience as 'Starved but valiant young women . . . Intelligent, eager, poor; & destined to become schoolmistresses in shoals'.<sup>26</sup> If she was actually thinking of the Girton students, then she misjudged her audience. Kathleen Raine, Muriel Bradbrook and Queenie Roth (Q. D. Leavis), who were in the audience that evening, went on to distinguished academic careers. Later, all three recorded their somewhat disparaging responses to Woolf's talk, though it is possible they may have conflated their recollections of the talk with their attitudes to her book.

Woolf noted in her diary on 7 November 1928 that 'Orlando was the outcome of a perfectly definite, indeed overmastering impulse. I want fun. I want fantasy. I want (& this was serious) to give things their caricature value. And still this mood hangs about me. I want to write a history, say of Newnham or the womans movement, in the same vein. The vein is deep in me – at least sparkling, urgent'.<sup>27</sup> On 28 November she merely noted that she was writing about women, and in March 1929 the New York *Forum* published her essay 'Women and Fiction'.<sup>28</sup> According to S. P. Rosenbaum, this essay 'is probably as close as we can now come to what Virginia Woolf said at Cambridge',<sup>29</sup> but he also notes that it does not have many of the features found in *A Room* or in contemporary accounts of Woolf's visits to the women's colleges. While 'probably as close as we can now come' may be literally correct, the lecture or lectures are likely to have been quite different. It is worth comparing the different versions of her essay 'How Should One Read a Book?' – which began life as a talk to a girls' school, became an essay in the *Yale Review*, re-surfaced as a preface to a booklist, and was finally published as the concluding essay of *The Common Reader: Second Series*<sup>30</sup> – to see how Woolf tried to adjust and reconfigure her material with her different audiences in mind. Indeed, we may wish to adapt Beth Rigel Daugherty's

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remark about the essay in the *Yale Review* to ‘Women and Fiction’ in the *Forum*: the ‘audience ... was distant – new ... American, unknown, academic – and the resulting essay seems cold, vague, and abstract’.<sup>31</sup>

In 1992, Rosenbaum published the manuscript draft of *A Room of One’s Own* that he discovered in the library of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, together with a section held in the Monks House Papers, University of Sussex.<sup>32</sup> This draft Woolf called ‘Women & Fiction’ and she wrote it in about a month, probably from late February until 2 April 1929, after a six-week ‘creative illness’ earlier in the year.<sup>33</sup> She revised the draft, publishing it as *A Room of One’s Own*.

## 3

## Reception

*A Room* was published in England by the Hogarth Press on 24 October 1929 in a pale pink dust-jacket printed in blue, designed by Vanessa Bell and incorporating a clock whose hands show ten to two, forming a ‘V’. Woolf had written to her sister on about 20 August: ‘I thought your cover most attractive – but what a stir you’ll cause by the hands of the clock at that precise hour! People will say – but there’s no room’.<sup>34</sup> Harcourt, Brace & Co. published the book in the United States on the same day. A signed, limited edition of 492 copies was published simultaneously in England by the Hogarth Press and in the United States by the Fountain Press. The blurb on the Hogarth Press dust-jacket is likely to have been written by Woolf:

This essay, which is largely fictitious, is based upon the visit of an outsider to a university and expresses the thoughts suggested by a comparison between the different standards of luxury at a man’s college and at a woman’s. This leads to a sketch of women’s circumstances in the past, and the effect of those circumstances upon their writing. The conditions that are favourable to imaginative work are discussed, including the right relation of the sexes. Finally an attempt is made to outline the present state of affairs and to forecast what effect comparative freedom and independence will have upon women’s artistic work in the future.<sup>35</sup>

Woolf wrote in her diary on the eve of publication:

It is a little ominous that Morgan [E. M. Forster] won’t review it. It makes me suspect that there is a shrill feminine tone in it which my

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intimate friends will dislike. I forecast, then, that I shall get no criticism, except of the evasive jocular kind, from Lytton [Strachey], Roger [Fry] & Morgan; that the press will be kind & talk of its charm, & spright[li]ness; also I shall be attacked for a feminist & hinted at for a sapphist; Sibyl [Colefax] will ask me to luncheon; I shall get a good many letters from young women. I am afraid it will not be taken seriously. Mrs Woolf is so accomplished a writer that all she says makes easy reading . . . this very feminine logic . . . a book to be put in the hands of girls.<sup>36</sup>

The reviews, in fact, were almost universally favourable. No reviewer 'hinted at [her] for a sapphist', but Woolf's other predictions were fairly accurate.<sup>37</sup> The *Times Literary Supplement* referred to this 'delightfully peripatetic essay' that 'glances in a spirited and good-tempered way over conflicts old and new',<sup>38</sup> while Vita Sackville-West reassured her listeners on the radio and her readers in the *Listener* that 'Mrs Woolf is too sensible to be a thorough-going feminist'.<sup>39</sup> 'I'm delighted you read my little book, as you call it, dear Mrs Nick:', Woolf had written to Sackville-West a fortnight earlier, 'but although you don't perceive it, there is much reflection and some erudition in it: the butterfly begins by being a loathsome legless grub. Or don't you find it convincing?'<sup>40</sup> The day after Sackville-West's radio broadcast, however, Woolf wrote to her: 'I thought your voice, saying Virginia Woolf, was a trumpet call, moving me to tears; but I daresay you were suppressing laughter. It's an odd feeling, hearing oneself praised to 50 million old ladies in Surbiton by one with whom one has watched the dawn and heard the nightingale.'<sup>41</sup> 'I'm so glad you thought it good tempered,' she told another close friend, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, '– my blood is apt to boil on this one subject as yours does about natives, or war; and I didn't want it to. I wanted to encourage the young women – they seem to get fearfully depressed – and also to induce discussion.'<sup>42</sup>

Arnold Bennett's tepid review gave with the one hand and took with the other. He asserted that 'she can write', and then criticised her grammar; he disputed her thesis ('it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry', p. 76) and complained that 'she talks about everything but the thesis. If her mind was not what it is I should accuse her of wholesale padding. She is not consciously guilty of padding. She is merely the victim of her extraordinary gift of fancy (not imagination).'<sup>43</sup> J. C. Squire's long review in the *Observer*, by contrast, described *A Room* as 'full of incidental wisdom . . . written with great grace and an unobtrusive imagery and its prime merit is its utterly candid statement of an intellectual woman's point of