Virginia Woolf and the French Reader: An Overview[1]

by *Pierre-Eric Villeneuve*

> HOWEVER, as I read your article, I feel that I owe much, in every way, to your own imagination, which has the advantage not only of being French, but of being a painter's. I can't help feeling guilty that you should have spent your time translating words of mine. They read much better in French than in English, and again I feel very grateful to you for trying to convey my words to French readers.
> (Virginia Woolf to Jacques-Emile Blanche, 20 August 1927)

> At last, after much delay my bookseller has discovered that your novel is not written in English. He had been looking for it among English publishers' lists. He has now started afresh and I wait in hope. You can judge by this what a barbarous people we are, and how much I rejoice that my great grandmother was a Frenchwoman.
> (Virginia Woolf to Jacques-Emile Blanche, 5 September 1927)[2]

From the famous "Entretien avec Virginia Woolf" done by Jacques-Emile Blanche for the literary journal *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* in August 1927 to the intertextual character of Edward Dalloway in Julia Kristeva's contemporary Beauvoirian saga *Les Samouraïs*, the work of Virginia Woolf remains a milestone on the French literary scene.[3] The connection between Woolf and France opens a complex epistemological space that shows, in the context of the modern intellectual revolution, one of the most subtle paradoxes of twentieth-century literature. On one hand, there is a subjective tension, almost umbilical, that crystalizes a desire to find a lost archaic memory and an ancient origin; a space of fantasy and literary stimulation. On the other hand emerges a collective appropriation of another literary tradition with which—in juxtaposition—Bloomsbury so often compared itself. Over the years, few critics have expressed interest in the relationship between Woolf and French culture, and there are no serious studies of the critical reception in France to her work[4] despite Woolf's influence as a novelist via translation, her importance to French feminism, and the imprint she made on other aspects of cultural life there.

An examination of Woolf's relationship with French criticism must acknowledge that English studies in France during her lifetime focused on the Joycean revolution. To this day French critics continue to refer (or defer) to Joyce, firm in their opinion that he is the guiding light of literary life across the Channel. This unwavering loyalty to Joyce certainly shaped Woolf's critical reception throughout

the 1920s and 1930s, if not her full literary autonomy. It would be naive to ignore the fact that Woolf's reception is concomitant with Joyce's since he remains, along with Marcel Proust, a measure of comparison in most French reviews, notably (albeit not nobly) Louis Gillet's chronicle section of foreign literature in ***La-Revue-des-deux Mondes***.[5] Gillet, a Joycean, has been the most hostile critic of Woolf's work and employed his bias liberally when he offered a definitive counterbalance to the criticism of Jacques-Emile Blanche, whose reviews were more receptive to Woolf,[6] as would be those of Mayoux, Maurois and Delattre in the 1930s.[7]

It's interesting to note that these French critics foreshadowed their English counterparts. Before England, the Parisian intellectual scene was an important center for the diffusion of Bloomsbury aesthetics and values, discerning in them similarities to *La Nouvelle Revue Francaise*, the intellectual élite surrounding André Gide and Jacques Rivière between the wars and consequently the French intellectuals most involved in London's intellectual scene.[8] Woolf's reception in France was also mediated by the relationship Bloomsbury maintained with Paris starting with the Post-impressionist Exhibit in 1910. Various contacts of Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey and Roger Fry kept the association alive, as did the group's participation at the Entretiens of Pontigny in 1923 and 1925. The French connection culminated with the Woolfs' involvement at the Congrès des Ecrivains in London in 1935 on the invitation of E.M. Forster, where Woolf encountered Clara Malraux, who would later translate *A Room of One's Own*.[9] Out of these contacts would emerge a relationship with Charles Mauron, a close friend of Fry and Woolf's very first translator, in 1926, of the second section of *Time Passes* (*Le temps passe*) before the novel's publication in 1927. A growing interest in Woolf's work anticipated the acknowledgement she would receive in 1928 in the form of one of France's highest literary distinctions, le Prix Fémina-vie-Heureuse-Anglais, for her elegy *To The Lighthouse*.[10]

Naturally, this nascent stage of critical response to Woolf was the result of a much wider access to the works afforded by these first French translations. It should be briefly stipulated that today most of Woolf's texts are available in translation, with the exception of some of the essays and letters.[11] A few of the novels recently received second translation, including *The Waves* by Cecile Wajsbrot and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Marie-Claire Pasquier, the first novel listed in Gallimard's luxurious Pléiade Edition.

To understand the implication of early reaction to Woolf, it is necessary to examine the importance of the first monograph, which appeared in France in 1932. This point of departure clarifies the development of ideas within Woolfian criticism since and, by closely inspecting this criticism from the margins inward, concludes why many French intellectuals have shown an uncommon interest in her work, having appreciated its innovation, limitations, political dimensions and, most certainly, craft.

Although a certain amount of criticism came out of France during Woolf's lifetime, only one book—and an important one, too—prophesied the literary monument Woolf would become, Floris Delattre's *Le Roman Psychologique de Virginia Woolf*. And to Virginia Woolf, it seems, this was an unprecedented

occasion for a dialogue to the private self under pressure of public image, as evinced in the writer's diary of 1932: "Two books on Virginia Woolf have just appeared in France and in Germany. This is a danger signal. I must not settle into a figure"(D, IV, p. 85). The passage treats the self with detachment towards the self that forecasting Simone de Beauvoir's radical standpoint some forty years later, when, at the peak of her fame, Beauvoir said: "My life, it is both intimately known and remote: it defines me and yet I stand outside it. Just what precisely, is this curious object?"[12]

We should be grateful for Delattre's regard for the originality of Woolf's romanesque innovation in its myriad figurations. Thematic, centered around what he calls "a typically feminine character," his criticism would be the first to uncover the possibilities of Woolf's sensibility. He also produced one of the first historical treatments of women novelists from the beginning of the nineteen century onward, and started a debatable tradition by constructing a locus for Woolf's "literary personality." Although courageous, Delattre's reading remains circumstantial, on a theoretical level by virtue of its reflection on time in the novel, and more particularly by its Bergsonian methodology.[13] It is faithful to general opinion, perceiving Woolf's individualistic experience as a mode of "psychic ontology" that he believes to be approximate to the Joycean "metaphysic" and Proustian "involuntary memory." Ultimately, he illustrated how Woolf integrates both aesthetics.[14] The connection to Proust could have been generated by the Jacques-Emile Blanche interview wherein Woolf clearly transmits persistent interrogations on the subject.[15] Despite recognizing Woolf's virtues, Delattre is not prevented from stating in his conclusion: "The work of Virginia Woolf has neither the grandeur nor the architectural solidity of certain works by male authors, nor that balance of the creative faculties which assures endurance."[16] As for Delattre's own endurance, his interpretation dominated the body of novel reviews after *The Waves*. In the fifties, Delattre's perspective attained closure in a chapter he wrote on Woolf and the interior monologue, part of an unfinished book about the writer. (A chapter of Delattre's unfinished work was included in *Feux d'automne* published in 1950.) Today, his view might seem quaint.

THE 1950s TO THE 1970s

Almost twenty years separated Delattre's first book and the next major work on Woolf. In between, a series of small articles reviewed each successive novel until *Between the Acts* and the arrival of Maxime Chastaing. Imperatively philosophical in response to the rise of French existentialism and phenomenology, Maxime Chastaing's 1951 *La philosophie de Virginia Woolf* ascribes Woolf's work to an uncommon tradition by drawing a peculiar connection between Hume and Woolf around which the critic elaborates what he calls a "principle of perspective." It is more Woolf the philosopher than Woolf the writer emanating from his attempt to capture her metaphysics of individual experience and its relation to objects, questions at the very core of philosophical debate in France in the 1950s. In a way, he remained closer than most French critics after him to Woolf's examination of the

subject-object relation within formalism, in spite of the contradictions with Woolf inherent to the overpowering Catholic tone of his argument.[17]

Simultaneous to Chastaing's response to Woolf *per se*, another reception of her texts came from within a new intellectual vanguard in France, a perspective perhaps more interesting due to its frame of analysis, especially so considering its emergence in conflict with many ideas. Outside the margins of the "specialists," grounded not in academia but evolving from a different political agenda, that alternative reception focused on the practice of writing and was more concerned about what an intellectual standpoint means. Three of these readers of Woolf's work in particular are sources deserving notice to remind us of how powerfully she symbolized for them the individualist tradition, and for the purpose of assimilating their respect for the actuality of Woolf's voice, which they obviously recognized as new. They are Simone de Beauvoir, Nathalie Sarraute and Maurice Blanchot.

I have yet to examine the intellectual connection between Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir and the influence the former had on the latter in terms of literary imagination and feminist reflection. Even if Beauvoir mentions in her preface to Gisèle Freud's book of photographs, *Joyce in Paris*, that "Joyce made accessible the works of Dos Passos, Hemingway, Virginia Woolf,"[18] she grew more interested in Woolf's singular place as a pioneer in questioning "nature in its nonhuman freedom," as she says in *The Second Sex*.[19] Beauvoir also set a revolutionary example by extolling Woolf as a novelist and feminist at a time when few would mention her name, let alone *A Room of One's Own*. One remembers her fascination and excitement when Monique Nathan's *Virginia Woolf par elle-même* appeared in 1956 in France, offering to the French eye and general public the first recollections of pictures and various texts, and her enthusiasm at the opportunity to find out more about Woolf when she finally met with Charles Mauron.[20] Although Beauvoir said later on, in the seventies, that on the whole she enjoyed the feminist essays more than the novels, she was nonetheless an influential participant in Woolf's canonization.

Nathalie Sarraute's impressions of Woolf are better known and have been the center of attention over the years in France and elsewhere. With the publication of *Tropisme* in 1939, she would have to define her aesthetic concern in juxtaposition with Woolf's narrative. Her brief 1956 essay, *L'ère du soupçon*, would indeed mark the appearance of the first manifesto of the Nouveau Roman school. The text displays Sarraute's paradoxical mind at work as she confronts in her chapter entitled "Conversation et sous-conversation" a need to break the convention of narrative, reiterating Woolf's own goals in *Modern Fiction*, an essay Sarraute improperly contextualizes.[21] Conversely, we know that the Nouveau Roman school would become a true laboratory of writing, pushing to the point of saturation the narrative ambitions already formalized by Proust, Joyce and, particularly in Sarraute, Woolf. Sarraute redefined Dostoevsky's "dark psychology" in narrative, and this point of view would form a bridge between the two women. Nevertheless, Sarraute did Woolf a great favor by rejecting Woolf's principles, since inevitably Sarraute had to acknowledge every step of Woolf's narrative revolution, in the wake of which Sarraute's own could finally take place.

In a very different way, the last of these three moments of intellectual connection came from the enigmatic Maurice Blanchot in his 1959 essay *Le Livre à venir*. His chapter entitled "L'echec du démon: la vocation" remains important to the comprehension of Woolf's powerful belief in writing the self. Often ignored, Blanchot's reading of *The Writer's Diary* captures the universal dimensions springing from Woolf's absorption with meaning in the instant. Strikingly, its immediate connection with Goethe shows how, on the surface, her autobiographical prose elaborates a tension in the actual process of reading. Since for Blanchot the question of writing is the core of Woolf's vision where "il n'est pas permis de tricher," he assimilates Woolf's formalist aspects with her very singular oneiric imagination, conditions of writing that bring him closer to developing his theory regarding Woolf's practice of writing an anonymous truth, even in the diaries.[22]

The movement in 1950s criticism concerning the place of the author-narrator in literature gained momentum in the radical 1960s. Yet other aspects of Woolfian criticism were resistant to change. When one looks at the chapter entitled "Virginia Woolf et l'univers féminin" in Jean-Jacques Mayoux's *Vivant piliers: le roman anglo-saxon et les symboles*, one realizes how an obsession with the "particularity" of the feminine served as a kind of foreclosure on Woolf's style, in comparison to male contemporaries such as Joyce and Proust. All the same, Monique Nathan's biography explored the dimension of Woolf's symbols in a different light.

Without doubt, Guiguet's synthesis in *Virginia Woolf et son oeuvre* proved to be the study France was waiting for after Woolf criticism was transformed with the publication of *A Writer's Diary*. Guiguet's book realizes with both depth and understanding what previous attempts had only brushed over. He was able to write from a new standpoint, a time and place where Woolf's criticism had seeped into global intellectual consciousness, especially in Europe and America. This rich breeding ground for the evolution of Woolfian criticism allowed Guiguet to establish one of the first valuable syntheses. He offers an analysis that contains most of the significant elements of Woolf's work: structure, lyricism, movement, humor, characterization; feminism, interior life, time and space; problems of the self within the Bloomsbury aesthetics; the biographies—everything missing in previous critics. Even if his synthesis also extended Woolf beyond Bergsonian and general existentialist readings, making the first connections between the different aspects of her writing, it nonetheless shied away from the theoretical issues which became so valuable to the very structuralist 1960s French criticism. Today, one can see how his "global project" is a bit perplexing, somewhat removed from the contemporary mind-sets in France's literary avant-garde; for example, its distance from the context of the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns involving Roland Barthes's recent book, *On Racine*. This new criticism might have encouraged Guiguet to reconsider Woolf's original relation to signs and moved his focus away from the author-narrator identification.

THE 1970S UNTIL TODAY

Moving beyond Guiguet's important yet traditional synthesis, the 1970s provided a profound new dimension to Woolf criticism, punctuated by various landmarks. Chronologically, they were Quentin Bell's biography in French translation; Viviane Forrester's short film for Bernard Pivot's cultural program as well as Forrester's own biography of Woolf drawn from a series of seven-hour programs for the radio, "France Culture"; most importantly, the first International Symposium, which was entitled "Virginia Woolf et Bloomsbury," held at Cerizy-La-Salle; and, later in 1977, the first translation of *Three Guineas* into French, also by Viviane Forrester. From these highlights, especially the Symposium, emerged a criticism where the notion of the "feminine" was assured a less dismissive status. In dealing with the various aspects of Woolf's life and work, the new criticism tried to come to terms with the notion of Bloomsbury by defining its singularities within London literary life, as well as its differences with French culture, and similarities.

The feminine dimension and sexual polarization of Woolf's text corresponded to the new French feminism emerging from several women's presses and intellectual circles. Women became the interpreters of Woolf's experience, and Viviane Forrester was the most important[23] as far as the media were concerned. Although Forrester's analysis penetrated a new "impressionist" sphere of reading, it was still on the periphery of new literary theories, where Woolf remained for the most part absent. One sometimes wishes Woolf would have been included in the company of Julia Kristeva's paragrammatic readings of Lautréamont, Artaud, Mallarmé, Joyce, or the photographic imagination in Roland Barthes's readings of Gide, Proust, Brecht and Robbe Grillet, or, ultimately, next to Clarice Lispector in Hélène Cixous's readings. Yet only Deleuze and Guattari actually propose a more philosophical understanding of Woolf, subtly proffered in their observations on *The Waves* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, which helped in the conceptualization of their notions of "déterioritalisation," "rhizome" and "becoming."[24]

On a semiotic level, only Paul Ricoeur has given Woolf serious attention, in what remains one of the most complex readings of *Mrs. Dalloway*, in the second volume of *Temps et Récit*[25] (*Time and Narrative*). There he discusses in depth the implications of Woolf's complex temporalization, dwelling on the dialogic occurring between what he calls Woolf's mortal time, the subjective, and the more objective time, the law, proposing a diachronic temporality instead of a fixed synchronic layer of time in the narrative.

We also have to overlook Cixous's fear of Woolf and her recollection "that although I recognize the greatness of the writing, Woolf represents the 'woman dead,' 'the woman killed' and therefore it doesn't speak to me because what I want to work on is 'the woman alive and to come'."[26] Cixous's reflection on the feminine unconscious permeated most books and articles that appeared in France in the 1980s. The first, by the novelist Anne Bragance, was in 1984: *Virginia Woolf: La dame sur le Piédestal*. The second was in 1985: *Virginia Woolf: Vers la maison de lumière* by Françoise Defromont. Bragance and Defromont proposed an effective, personal voyage towards the discovery of the woman writer as a space of

apprenticeship, and created an identification with Woolf reminiscent of Cixous's dialogue with Lispector in *Vivre L'Orange*. It shows the path of a writer fascinated by her ancestress, where language becomes a dreamlike body-to-body connection, a desire for osmosis with Woolf. On a more closely personal yet analytical note, they offer a discussion of Woolf's femininity and that connection between the body and the text which inevitably essentializes Woolf's place, making her one of the foremothers of the feminist discourse so popular in France at the time.[27]

Woolf became the example for an exploration of feminine subjectivity, shaping the notions of "specularity" and "fluidity," conducting an essentialism that bears no resemblance to her constructionist views in *Three Guineas*.[28] Vivianne Forrester's preface to her French translation of *Three Guineas*, entitled *L'autre corps*, for example, also attempted to understand the various mutations of Woolf's social body in connection to her essay writing, creating a space of "immanence" far from the transcendental feminine subject that makes Woolf's political views so close to Simone de Beauvoir (despite different aesthetic principles). This seems logical, considering that Beauvoir was under constant attack as a target of feminism in the '70s and '80s in France, namely by the anti-Beauvoirian Cixous school then dominating most of the publications of "Les Editions des Femmes." In retrospect, one realizes how the main French feminist discourses on Woolf in the '70s and '80s stayed within the margins of a non-historical approach, escaping affiliations with other women writers before and after—the core of Woolf's political platform. It shows how Woolf criticism in that period remained faithful to the debate happening within certain schools of French feminism that focused on Woolf's life rather than her texts, even the feminist texts.

Enter the nineties, which began with an outburst. A special issue of *Le Magazine Littéraire* on Virginia Woolf offered a global view of her achievements, with articles on various aspects of her craft. It was followed by Jean Blot's *Bloomsbury: histoire d'une sensibilite artistique et historique anglaise*, another impressionist attempt to seize the Bloomsbury sensibility. Much hope lay in the outcome of that first French historical look at Bloomsbury, yet its mainly biographical method is troubling.[29] It did, however, look at the reception of French culture by Bloomsbury and revealed more realistically the limitations of what is usually taken for granted, their integration of French civilization. Woolf (romanticized because of her tragedy) is acclaimed in a chapter along with Forster, linking the particular element of sexuality to sensibility, and exploring her imagination in a way that is neither untypical nor revolutionary. Blot's account searches to define the individuality of a collective entity in answering the question: what is a Bloomsbury sensibility?

Thirty years lapsed between Guiguet and the most recent work, Françoise Pellan's stronger analysis of the connection between the essayist and novelist, entitled *Virginia Woolf: L'ancrage et le voyage*.[30] More analytical and accurately methodological than Guiguet by virtue of its use of the English text and criticism, Pellan was indeed the first after Guiguet to illuminate Woolf's complex articulation of fiction and essay and to focus on the simultaneous, continual balance between the acts of reading and writing which, for Woolf, were co-dependent.

It seems that the body of French criticism on Woolf over the last seventy years adapted itself to the various mutations of French intellectual substance, formalist and philosophical approaches as well as impressionist and feminist. It is also obvious that Woolf would have been privileged to find herself more extensively criticized by professional writers than academics, not to mention that she was translated and given tone by writers of eminence including the legendary Marguerite Yourcenar, and introduced by various respected intellectuals, for example, André Maurois in the first French edition of *Mrs. Dalloway.* That said, this reception tells us more about the overall French attitude towards foreign literature than about their originality in seeing Woolf as a revolutionary figure in spite of the fact that they were among the first to give her a fair recognition. Looking at the general picture, with the exception of Delattre, Chastaing, Guiguet and Pellan, one learns more about the context of criticism where Woolf's life is concerned than about the texts themselves and their original potential. One eagerly anticipates what will emerge from Forrester's new biography (due for publication in Paris in the fall of 1996), and from the conference scheduled at Nîmes University in January 1997, the first organized by the new "Société des études woolfiennes."

To sum up, in a short, rarely mentioned essay of 1929 entitled *On Not Knowing French*, Woolf, in her usual layered way, offers more than a criticism of the Charles Mauron novel "Climats." In one or two paragraphs, she elaborates an attitude that radically deals with the various contaminations and cultural inferences defining the activity of reading another language and culture, bluntly admitting that some levels of understanding cannot be elucidated:

> One scarcely dare say it, but it is true— nobody knows French but the French themselves. . . . Thus, though the number of French books read every year by English people is probably very large, their version of them, if submitted to French critics, would often seem strangely out. In the same way, it is always amusing to see what takes the French taste in contemporary English literature, or to receive back from their critics some queer, a little lopsided version of English reputations, some brilliant but fantastic vision of English character. (*On Not Knowing French,* 348.)

Similarly, I am convinced that the French reader, even completely bilingual or (should I say) colonized, enters first into Woolf's textual economy by a cognitive mode of identification that wants to make sense and coherence in its own linguistic unconscious, imposed by something at the periphery of the reading process. Isn't it what every reader faces when diving into the undercurrent at the core of *The Waves,* disturbed by its elastic syntax? Isn't it part of the book's subversive aesthetic agenda, breaking our logical habits of reading? It is, I think, what Woolf understood and tried to theorize as a critic while entering Mauron's novel when she declared: "In reading a language that is not one's own, consciousness is awake, and keeps us aware of the surface glitter of the words; but it never suffers them to sink into that region of the mind where old habits and instincts roll them round and shape them into a body rather different from their faces"(*On Not Knowing French*).

In conclusion, when this profound sense of deep understanding is freed by Woolf's elastic surface of words, a quality that made Proust so "titillating"[31] to her, or when she formulates the fact that only the tortured Flaubert could understand her attitude towards writing,[32] she may as well become to any French reader, a French writer.

NOTES

1. Many thanks to Guy Babineau for his help on the translation of this paper.
2. These two letters, chosen among the eight letters send to Jacques-Emile Blanche, appear in the supplement section of Volume 6 of *The Letters of Virginia Woolf,* edited by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. They are one of the few accounts by Woolf on her reception in France.
3. See also Cécile Wajsbrot's novel entitled *Une vie à soi* (*A Life of One's Own*) published in 1989.
4. Certainly nothing comparable to the reception of James Joyce, documented especially in a volume of "Les Cahiers de l'herne" published in 1985.
5. Francine Lenne's analysis of Joyce's reception, entitled *James Joyce and Louis Gillet,* is most convincing. Her study shows the implications by which Woolf's originality was sacrificed to the Joycean revolution in the twenties and thirties in France. See *Cahiers de l'herne*, Paris, 1985, p. 151-175. We can mention here Gillet's criticism of *Orlando* in *La-Revue-Des-Deux-Mondes* published 1 September 1929 (the same year *Ulysses* was published in French). Lenne mentions how much that criticism will cost Woolf's reputation in France: "That's what Mrs Woolf succeeded in: she incorporates in some ways Mr Joyce, she educated, cleaned, perfumed, in fact, she perfected him so much that the formidable animal came out of her hands curled like a puddle and soft as a lamb.(...) It is easy to see that the books of Mrs Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* are under the mark of Mr James Joyce's genius. Mrs Virginia Woolf would never have written this small masterpiece of the Lighthouse had Ulysses not been constantly in her thoughts. The novelist in her preface is right in mentioning many authors, the great humorist tradition, Defoe, Swift, Sterne, De Quincey: her book descends from them. Why the omission of Mr Joyce, the last and greatest of this powerful race? This omission is unfair. Maybe all Orlando's fantasy proceeds from the divagations of Mr Joyce's heros and the night's vision where he takes its dream for life" (my translation).
6. I can mention to this effect that Georges-Paul Collet's article "Jacques-Emile Blanche and Virginia Woolf" had already noted in 1965: "French intelligentsia have been reading Woolf's novels for nearly forty years. . . Among them, the painter and writer Jacques-Emile Blanche (1861-1942) played an important role, since he had the privilege to introduce her to France." In *Comparative Literature*, vol 27, winter 1965, no. 1, p. 73.
7. We can mention here that although Woolf didn't have a patron such as Valery-Larbaud or Louis Gillet in Joyce's case, critics like Maurois, Delattre and Blanche were from the very first supportive in acknowledging her singular innovation. We can trace it by looking at the reception of her novels in the various reviews.
8. To this effect, we can mention David Steel's excellent synthesis entitled "Les Strachey, Bloomsbury, Gide et le groupe de la Nouvelle Revue Française." This article insists on the similarities and dissonances between each intellectual community.
9. In a round-table discussion on Woolf and the political scene, Clara Malraux recalls: "I met Virginia Woolf personally in 1936 [1935] at the Congrès des Ecrivains where I represented the Association des écrivains Révolutionnaires. As far as I can remember Virginia Woolf was seriously involved in that congress and over the three days she participated at least in two entire meetings. I don't recall if other Bloomsbury writers were present at that meeting." See "Colloque de Cerizy-La-Salle," coordinated by Jean Guiguet, Paris, 10-18, 1977, p. 22-23 (my translation).
10. It is important to understand the nature of that prize—elected by women exclusively—founded in 1904. Woolf won the prize for the English novel.
11. I can here can mention most of the important dates relating to translations: *Time Passes* (Le temps passe, 1926) by Charles Mauron before the actual publication of *To the Lighthouse* in England; fragments of *Jacob's Room* (1927); the first novel being *Mrs Dalloway* in 1929 including André Maurois' introduction; *To the Lighthouse* (*La promenade au phare*, 1929); *Orlando* (1931); *Night*

and Day (*Nuit et jour*, 1933); *Flush* (1935); *The Waves* (*Les Vagues*, 1937) by Marguerite Yourcenar; *The Years* (*Années*, 1938); *Jacob's Room* (*La chambre de Jacob*, 1942); *Between the Acts*; (*Entre les actes*, 1945); *The Voyage Out* (*La traversée des apparences*, 1948); *A Room of One's Own* (*Une chambre à soi*, 1951)by Clara Malraux; *Writer's Diary* (*Le journal d'un écrivain*, 1958) by Germaine Beaumont; *Three Guineas* (*Trois Guinées*, 1977) by Viviane Forrester; *Moments of Being* (*Instants de vie*, 1977) and the *Diaries* and *Letters* (*Journal* et *Lettres*, the 80s and 90s). For more details, see B. J. Kirkpatrick, *A Bibliography of Virginia Woolf*, 3rd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 189-97.

12. Simone de Beauvoir, *All Said and Done* (New York, Putman, 1974), 9-10.
13. It is necessary to mention the fact that Delattre also published books on Henri Bergson, the main focus of his analysis of Woolf's work.
14. That first work by Delattre offers an understanding of Woolf's imagination, which might still be addressed today. I think particularly of its connection to Proust still neglected by general criticism. Proust, being largely influenced by English writers, namely Pater and Ruskin, experienced a literary polarization similar to Woolf's.
15. In "L'Entretien avec Jacques-Emile Blanche," Blanche insists: "She interrogates me on Marcel Proust, talks about French literature; she enjoys nothing more than reading our writers, makes a very flattering image of us. How was Proust in his youth? Tell me, tell me? How did he begin in the world? Did the people understand what he was writing?" (*Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 13 Août 1927, my translation). From the perspicacious reading done by Delattre emerged a reflection on the artistic and novelistic techniques delimiting the psychological aspects of Woolf's prose and showing the principles she so radically rejected in the novels of Bennet and Galsworthy that he identifies. In doing so, he assimilated Woolf's style to the novelistic French aesthetic, the Proustian sentence and its visionary aspects.
16. I quote here from the recently translated version of Delattre's book. See *The Psychological Novel of Virginia Woolf* translated by Constance Hunting (Orono: Puckerbrush Press, 1994[1932]), 125.
17. A catholic tone that persists in some translations, namely Marguerite Yourcenar's translation of *The Waves*, published in 1937 as *Les Vagues*.
18. Gisèle Freund, *James Joyce in Paris: His Final Years*, preface by Simone de Beauvoir (London: Cassell, 1965), viii.
19. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Knopf, 1953[1949]), 711. In an interview with Deirdre Bair, Beauvoir recalls: "Yes, Woolf is among the writers whose work I admire and sometimes reread, but only her feminist writings, because I don't agree with her novels. They don't have any center. There isn't any thesis." Deirdre Bair, *Simone de Beauvoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 655.
20. On many occasions Beauvoir mentions Woolf in her autobiography. Although with different narrative means, we can mention two of Beauvoir's novels that mediate something similar to Woolf. On the one hand is the closing scene of *L'Invité* (*She Came to Stay*) and more appropriately *Tous les hommes sont mortels* (*All Men are Mortals*) for its philosophical reflections on immortality remindingus of *Orlando's* philosophical concerns by also having a character, Fosca, who crosses numerous centuries.
21. Sarraute links the writing of *Modern Fiction* with the writing of *Mrs Dalloway*, which was written in fact six years later.
22. Blanchot accurately remarks: "This is to experience the present; and what, we may ask, could be easier? Easy, maybe, yet requiring such self-effacement, such deep humility, so complete a faith in the unlimiting powers of dispersion (the essence of infidelity) that the risks it involves are obvious." See "Outwitting the demon—a vocation" in *The Sirens' Song, Selected Essays* by Maurice Blanchot, edited with an introduction by Gabriel Josipovici (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982 [1959]), 88.
23. Viviane Forrester was also responsible for the first staging of *Freshwater* in Paris in 1982, including a cast of famous French intellectuals such as Nathalie Sarraute, Eugène and Rodica Ionesco, Jean-Paul Aron and herself.
24. I think more specifically of *Dialogues* and *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, where Woolf's theory of becoming between ages, sexes and bodies is examined.
25. See Paul Ricoeur, "Between Mortal Time and Monumental Time: *Mrs. Dalloway*, in *Time and Narrative* (*Temps et Récit*), translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pallaver (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), 101-112.

26. See "Rethinking Differences" in *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts and Critical Texts*, edited by George Stambolian and Elaine Marks, translation by Isabelle de Courtivron (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 83.
27. Daniel Ferrer's analysis (148) offers a more accurate understanding of Woolf's singular battles with the margins of representation inside and outside "madness." He says, "Virginia Woolf's play with the borders of madness echoes back through the whole history of the novel — but the very possibility of a modernity (or of some kind of historicity of the novel form) rests symmetrically on the ordinary presence of this potential."
28. That can also explain why Defromont valorises *A Room of One's Own* more than *Three Guineas*. It seems also strange that Forrester in her preface nevers mentions *Three Guineas* as a text, anticipating Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*.
29. See also Frances Partridge's review of the book and her general comments focussing on the inaccuracy of various small details. In *The Charleston Magazine*, Winter-Spring, 1993-1994, p. 38-39.
30. Francoise Pellan was also present at the round tables in the meetings of Cerizy-La-Salle in 1974.
31. In a letter to Roger Fry on 6 May 1922, Woolf is explicit: "But Proust so titillates my own desire for expression that I can hardly set out the sentence. Oh if I could write like that! I cry. And at the moment such is the astonishing vibration and saturation and intensification that he procures —there is something sexual in it—that I feel I *can* write like that, and seize my pen and then I *can't* write like that. Scarcely anyone so stimulates the nerves of language in me: it becomes an obsession." Virginia Woolf, *The Letters*, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth Press), 525.
32. In a diary entry of the mid-thirties Woolf insists: "A good day—a bad day—so it goes on. Few people can be so tortured by writing as I am. Only Flaubert I think." Virginia Woolf, *The Diary*, vol. 5 (New York: Penguin), 25.

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