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Virginia Woolf's early novels: Finding a voice

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THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
VIRGINIA WOOLF

EDITED BY
SUSAN SELLERS

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For Julia Briggs

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SUZANNE RAITT

Virginia Woolf's early novels: Finding a voice

On 26 July 1922, shortly after she finished writing her third novel, *Jacob's Room*, Virginia Woolf noted in her diary her feeling that, in writing this novel, she had 'found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in [her] own voice' (*D2*, p. 186). Critics have often followed Woolf's lead in regarding *Jacob's Room* as a starting-point of some kind. Many monographs on Woolf discuss the novels that preceded *Jacob's Room* (*The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919)) only in passing, or not at all, and where they are given more sustained attention they are often dismissed as 'apprentice efforts'.¹ Woolf's comments appear to authorise developmental readings of her *œuvre*, readings which assume that her early novels were attempts to work out who she was as a novelist before, in early middle age, she found her characteristic fictional voice.

But Woolf made something of a habit of announcing new beginnings. About ten years after she made the diary entry on *Jacob's Room*, shortly after the publication of *The Waves*, she wrote excitedly in her diary:

Oh yes, between 50 & 60 I think I shall write out some very singular books, if I live. I mean I think I am about to embody, at last, the exact shapes my brain holds. What a long toil to reach this beginning – if *The Waves* is my first work in my own style! (D4, p. 53)

Comments like these mean that we should treat her (and our) hailing of *Jacob's Room* as the definitive realisation of her fictional voice with a certain degree of reserve. Woolf's statement raises as many questions as it answers: did she, then, misrecognise the voice in *Jacob's Room*? Do we have different voices at different stages of our lives? Or is she writing about two separate phenomena in the two diary entries? Perhaps 'voice', the word she used in 1922, and 'style', the term she preferred in 1931, are not the same thing. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf's most sustained meditation on women's relationship to their own writing, she uses neither term, insisting both that in the nineteenth century 'there was no common sentence

ready for [women's] use' and that language must 'be adapted to the body'.² It seems, then, that in Woolf's aesthetics voice, style, sex and the body come together in crucially shifting ways to determine the different forms which a woman's writing might take.

Woolf's early novels all, in different ways, experiment with the relationship between body, voice and identity. Her first two novels, *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, tell the story of a young woman's courtship and engagement. Both Rachel (in *The Voyage Out*) and Katharine (in *Night and Day*) struggle to find a way to assert themselves in environments in which a young woman's voice is easily drowned out or forgotten. An early wave of feminist criticism of *The Voyage Out* has given way in recent years to critical analyses of the ways in which Woolf used her first novel to explore the ambiguous discourses of imperialism and resistance within which Rachel must shape her selfhood.³ *Night and Day* has received attention as a text that both reproduces and challenges class differences in early twentieth-century London, and explores their effects on the experience of gender.⁴ *Jacob's Room*, written in the aftermath of the Great War, mourns the fragility of both men's and women's voices in a world fragmented by destruction and loss. In all three novels, the protagonist (and, in the case of *Jacob's Room*, those who observe him) struggle to develop a mature, coherent identity, a struggle that some critics have seen as parallel with Woolf's own attempts to define her voice and self at the beginning of her writing career.⁵

Virginia Woolf was fascinated with what it meant to hear oneself say 'I am'. In a 1930 review of a biography of Christina Rossetti, Woolf quotes Rossetti's abrupt assertion of herself at a tea-party:

Suddenly there uprose from a chair and paced forward into the centre of the room a little woman dressed in black, who announced solemnly, 'I am Christina Rossetti!' and having so said, returned to her chair.⁶

Rossetti was a perfect example of a woman forced to perform her own self-enunciation. As Woolf well knew, and as Yopie Prins has beautifully demonstrated, Victorian women lyric poets were centrally concerned with the construction and deconstruction of their own and their heroines' voices, and with the figure of voice itself.⁷ Woolf's early novels show her wrestling with many of the same issues – the relations between voice and identity, between speech and silence – in some of the same terms. In a letter to her Greek teacher, Janet Case, shortly after the publication of Woolf's second novel, *Night and Day*, for example, Woolf wrote of her interest in 'the things one doesn't say; what effect does that have? and how far do our feelings take their colour from the dive underground?' (L2, p. 400). Terence Hewet in *The Voyage Out* wants to write 'a novel about . . . the things people

don't say'; Rachel uses music to say 'all there is to say at once'; Terence's love for Rachel begins with 'the wish to go on talking'.⁸ The difficulty for Terence and Rachel, as for Katharine and Ralph in *Night and Day*, is how to reconcile the world of silence with the world of conversation, in which even between lovers voices seem to distort and falsify the inner worlds they represent. For Rachel and Katharine there is the added difficulty of sex. As Woolf noted over and over again, for women, 'the accent never falls where it does with a man'.⁹ *A Room of One's Own* is an extended meditation on the history of women's literary under-representation, and on the effort of establishing a feminine style when women constantly hear only the voices of men, telling women that they 'can't paint, can't write'.¹⁰ Rachel must struggle to speak for herself when others endlessly seek to educate and speak for her; Katharine's life is 'so hemmed in with the progress of other lives that the sound of its own advance [is] inaudible'.¹¹ *Jacob's Room* abandons the project of developing its protagonist's voice altogether, and instead experiments with the voices of others speaking in his place, even down to the creaking of his empty chair. The early novels themselves all uneasily interrogate the concept of voice itself, suggesting that voices are duplicitous, that we cannot be sure when they are our own, that the assumption of both a personal and a literary 'voice' is precarious and dynamic rather than consoling.

Woolf herself was nearly destroyed by voices. She habitually talked to herself when she was out walking, or alone: the Woolfs' cook, Louie Mayer, remembers overhearing her through the ceiling in the bathroom: 'you would think there was somebody else in the bathroom'.¹² During the breakdowns with which Woolf battled, especially in the years just before and during her work on *The Voyage Out*, she was apparently subject to auditory hallucinations, as she describes in the 1921 memoir 'Old Bloomsbury': 'I had lain in bed at the Dickinsons' house at Welwyn thinking that the birds were singing Greek choruses and that King Edward was using the foulest possible language among Ozzie Dickinson's azaleas.'¹³ Leonard Woolf expands on this scene in his autobiography:

She spoke somewhere about 'the voices that fly ahead', and she followed them . . . when she was at her worst and her mind was completely breaking down again the voices flew ahead of her thoughts: and she actually heard voices which were not her voice; for instance, she thought she heard the sparrows outside the window talking Greek. When that happened to her, in one of her attacks, she became incoherent because what she was hearing and the thoughts flying ahead of her became completely disconnected.¹⁴

Hermione Lee points out that these accounts 'don't quite fit the usual pattern of auditory hallucinations in mania, which are usually either grandiose or

paranoid'.¹⁵ She prefers to read them as part of a strategic representation and interpretation on Woolf's part of her own mental illness, suggesting that 'she may have refashioned the frightening, unintelligible mental language of her hallucinations – a language which was, as it were, all Greek to her – into a more meaningful ensemble, either immediately afterwards or long afterwards'.¹⁶ If this is the case, it urges us to acknowledge the privileged role that voice (and Greek) played in Woolf's epistemology. She chose to recall (or to imagine) aural hallucinations as the prime signifier of mental breakdown in *Mrs Dalloway*, for example (Septimus Smith hears the birds singing in Greek), even though she experienced visual hallucinations at least once, after her mother's death.¹⁷ But it was displaced and invasive voices that most captured her imagination and aroused her fear. To call on the figure of 'voice' to guarantee her early literary identity was, for Woolf, an exciting, but also an extraordinarily risky thing to do. By 1931, in the diary entry on *The Waves*, 'voice' has been displaced by 'style'.

But it was, perhaps, exactly of the risk of voice that Woolf was thinking when she wrote those words in 1922. As Melba Cuddy-Keane points out, Woolf's novels display an unusually 'aural sensitivity' (unusual especially for Bloomsbury, none of whose avatars had much proficiency as musicians, although many – including the Woolfs – listened avidly to classical music).¹⁸ Several times she describes moments of unusual inspiration as speaking in tongues, or hearing voices. Of the composition of *To the Lighthouse* and its exorcism of her obsession with her dead mother, she wrote:

Then one day walking round Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my books, *To the Lighthouse*; in a great, apparently involuntary rush . . . Blowing bubbles out of a pipe gives the feeling of the rapid crowd of ideas and scenes which blew out of my mind, so that my lips seemed syllabbling of their own accord as I walked. What blew the bubbles. Why then? I have no notion.
 ('A Sketch of the Past', *MB*, 1976, p. 94)

Here writing is a form of ventriloquism: someone or something speaks through her. Once it has spoken, she 'ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her' (*MB*, 1976, p. 94). This automatic speech is part of the work of successful mourning: voices from another place exorcise the dead.

This association appears again in her experience of writing *The Waves*. Leonard Woolf's vague memory in the passage quoted above – 'she spoke somewhere about "the voices that fly ahead"' – is of a sentence from Woolf's diary in which she describes writing the final pages of *The Waves*.

I wrote the words O Death fifteen minutes ago, having reeled across the last ten pages with some moments of such intensity & intoxication that I seemed only to stumble after my own voice, or almost, after some sort of speaker (as when I was mad). I was almost afraid, remembering the voices that used to fly ahead. Anyhow it is done; & I have been sitting these 15 minutes in a state of glory, & calm, & some tears, thinking of Thoby & if I could write Julian Thoby Stephen 1881-1906 on the first page. (D4, p. 10)

Here the voice she hears speaks from a world beyond presence. It is not distinctly her own voice, or the voice of the dead, or a voice from the past, but neither does it invoke embodiment or immediacy. Voices like this one finally drove her into her grave. In a suicide note she wrote: 'I feel certain that I am going mad again: I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and can't concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do.'¹⁹

Woolf associated the figure of voice, then, not only with the inception of a literary style (as in the quotation about *Jacob's Room*), but also with an inspirational – sometimes manic – sense of disruption and loss. It is entirely appropriate that she should have chosen as the plot of her first novel the story of a young woman whose struggle to develop an adult identity, and a voice, results in her death. For Rachel Vinrace, learning to be herself – or, as Rachel herself says it in her excitement, to 'be m-m-myself' (VO, p. 90) – is synonymous with learning to die.²⁰ Rachel is accompanying her father Willoughby on a trading voyage to South America when her aunt, Helen Ambrose, also a passenger on the ship, invites Rachel to stay in Santa Marina with her and her husband Ridley for a few months while Rachel's father completes his journey. During her stay Rachel falls in love with a guest at the nearby hotel, Terence Hewet, but after a boat-trip into the jungle, during which the pair become engaged, Rachel falls ill and dies. The 'voyage out' is thus a voyage out of girlhood and out of life as well as out of England.

Woolf struggled horribly with the style of the novel, revising it over and over again. Leonard Woolf says she burned 'five or six' complete drafts; Quentin Bell thinks it was seven.²¹ It certainly took her many years to complete it. Her nephew Quentin Bell suggests that she may already have been thinking about it during a trip to Manorbier in 1904 in the short period between her father's death and the breakdown in which she heard the birds talking in Greek.²² The years during which she was working on it seriously (from 1907 to 1912) were marred by periods of mental instability: she was ill from March to August in 1910, ill again in June 1912 immediately before her marriage in August 1912, increasingly depressed and intermittently suicidal throughout 1913 and ill again from March 1915 until the

end of the year (*The Voyage Out* was published on 26 March 1915). None of her other novels was composed and seen through publication in the midst of such pain. Louise DeSalvo argues that the writing of *The Voyage Out* was implicated in her uncontrollable distress, noting that each time Woolf wrote or tried to revise Rachel's death scene, 'she herself went mad and once tried to commit suicide'.²³ Even as Woolf worked to establish herself as a serious novelist, something in her was working to madden and silence her.

Throughout *The Voyage Out* Rachel fights, like Woolf, to develop a voice to which people will listen. Her preferred mode of self-expression is music: she is an exceptional pianist. The most assertive moment in an otherwise hesitant existence comes when she tells the pompous, arrogant St John Hirst at a crowded dance: 'I . . . play the piano very well . . . better, I expect, than anyone in this room' (VO, p. 171). When she finally begins to play, the dancers, previously stiff and inhibited, start to wheel around with 'a complete lack of self-consciousness' (VO, p. 186). As Mark Wollaeger notes, 'the disruptive energies of Rachel's inventive performance' reveal the playful, natural side of her companions.²⁴ However, the three figures most explicitly concerned with Rachel's education, Helen Ambrose, Terence Hewet and her father, all seek to turn her towards books. Willoughby tells Helen that Rachel is 'a nice quiet girl, devoted to her music – a little less of *that* would do no harm' (VO, p. 92); Helen 'desired that Rachel should think, and for this reason offered books and discouraged too entire a dependence upon Bach and Beethoven and Wagner' (VO, p. 137). But Rachel defends her love of music in the teeth of Terence's adamant opposition.

'Novels,' she repeated. 'Why do you write novels? You ought to write music. Music, you see' – she shifted her eyes, and became less desirable as her brain began to work, inflicting a certain change upon her face – 'music goes straight for things. It says all there is to say at once. With writing it seems to me there's so much' – she paused for an expression, and rubbed her fingers in the earth – 'scratching on the match-box. Most of the time when I was reading Gibbon this afternoon I was horribly, oh infernally, damnably bored!' (VO, p. 239)

Rachel's characterisation of music as 'going straight for things' anticipates Woolf's own aesthetic manifesto in *A Room of One's Own* where she advocates writing about 'things in themselves' (ROO, p. 145); and her impatience with novels foreshadows Woolf's own rejection of the realist detail of writers such as John Galsworthy and Arnold Bennett.²⁵ Music allows Rachel to confront and articulate the world without mediation; it allows her to craft and to perform her own voice. As she practises, her face

wears 'a queer remote impersonal expression of complete absorption and anxious satisfaction' (VO, p. 58). She is freed both from her own personality and history – the little biography she gives to Terence of her life with her aunts – and from the personalities and wishes of others. Through music she can perform, rather than express, her self. As John McCombe notes, 'Rachel uses her piano to isolate herself'; in clinging on to music, she defends her own solitude and autonomy.²⁶

The Voyage Out suggests that Rachel's relationship with Terence is somehow in conflict with the voice in which she speaks as she sits at the piano. When, after their engagement, Terence asks her opinion of some reflections he has written on the nature of women, Rachel refuses to answer and simply continues to play. She is irritated by Terence's constant interruptions, and he, for his part, dislikes it when she plays difficult music, like Beethoven, rather than 'nice simple tunes' (VO, p. 340). Rachel's playing is a form of physical exertion (at the beginning of the novel Rachel says her aunt is worried that practising will develop 'the muscles of the forearm – and then one won't marry' (VO, p. 15)):

Rachel said nothing. Up and up the steep spiral of a very late Beethoven sonata she climbed, like a person ascending a ruined staircase, energetically at first, then more laboriously advancing her feet with effort until she could go no higher and returned with a run to begin at the very bottom again.

(VO, pp. 339–40)

With her voice as a musician comes a new, muscular body that strains to master the difficulties of the music ('ruined' and tragic like the deaf Beethoven). It is this body that Terence ridicules: 'I've no objection to nice simple tunes – indeed, I find them very helpful to my literary composition, but that kind of thing is merely like an unfortunate old dog going round on its hind legs in the rain' (VO, p. 340). Terence's remark of course recalls Samuel Johnson's dictum about the woman preacher.²⁷ Rachel's heroic ascent and descent are diminished into the meaningless and repetitive antics of a beast; her muscular body becomes the mangy form of an old dog. The equation that the narrator has already made between the self that Rachel builds as she plays, and a body, is echoed in Terence's cruel teasing. Rachel can find no way to introduce her body into her speech: even in confessing her love she simply repeats Terence's 'we love each other' (VO, p. 316). But at the piano she can say things directly. The muscular grain of her labouring self materialises there, as Terence is uneasily aware.

But selves built on sound cannot last. The hallucinatory world in which Rachel is immersed during the final scenes of the novel exposes the instability of her emerging self, the extent to which it relies on an audience (beyond her

own ear) which it animates and inspires. As Christine Froula has observed, Rachel's battle with accepted paradigms reduces her to silence: 'in [the death scenes], Woolf advances the plot of the female artist-novel, representing not the death of the body but the symbolic death that her heroine undergoes when she finds no language in which to live'.²⁸ Froula's reading beautifully demonstrates the extent to which *The Voyage Out* reverses the usual trajectory of the *Bildungsroman* in tracing the increasing confusion and diminution of its heroine. But if we are to mistrust developmental readings of Woolf's own *œuvre*, perhaps we should also shift the frameworks in which we read the narratives of her novels themselves. Froula suggests that Rachel fights to realise a space for herself in the world, a 'language and culture with which to create and defend her destiny', and that she is overcome by forces beyond herself, 'the power of female initiation structures to overwhelm female desire'.²⁹ But in order to argue that Rachel's desire and selfhood are thwarted, Froula must assume that she is beginning to develop some form of autonomy, that she has some sense, at least in the first chapters of the novel, of a self that she is fighting for.

But Rachel's disintegration reveals the tenuousness of the autonomous voice she seemed to be developing through her music. Terence recognises it, but struggles to silence it. The images and figures which Rachel sees as she descends further and further into nightmare in the final scenes recapitulate images from the life she led before she became ill. For example, after Richard Dalloway kisses her on the boat on the way out, she dreams of a long damp tunnel with 'a little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering, with long nails' (VO, p. 81). During her final illness the little man combines with the figure of her nurse to become 'little deformed women sitting in archways playing cards, while the bricks of which the wall was made oozed with damp, which collected into drops and slid down the wall' (VO, p. 386). Later she sees 'an old woman slicing a man's head off with a knife' (VO, p. 395), an image which recalls the women killing chickens that Rachel saw at the hotel (VO, pp. 293-4). These hallucinatory reminiscences emphasise the incipient hysteria of Rachel's responses from the very beginning of the novel. As Freud noted, 'hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences', and as Rachel is increasingly taken over by memories of her own disintegration, the woman she previously appeared to be is gradually exposed as – or comes to seem – an empty illusion.³⁰ Rachel lives now in the delusional intensity with which she responded to every decisive moment in her life-story: Richard Dalloway's kiss, the talk with Evelyn just before she sees the women killing chickens, her engagement. Music has no meaning for her now, the self it seemed to give her unsustainable in the face of the imminence of sexual initiation.

Rachel's musical voice, then, cannot ground her in her self or in her body. Indeed it comes to signify the extent to which she will never be able to develop a mature sexual body or identity. Early in the novel she tells Terence that men and women are utterly incompatible: 'it's no good; we should live separate; we cannot understand each other; we only bring out what's worst' (VO, p. 174). Her music, and Terence's dislike of it, emphasise both the fatal differences between them, and the extraordinary fragility of the identity and the body she has even before their engagement. It is not just that, as Louise DeSalvo suggests, women cannot 'return from a journey of initiation unscathed': it is that even at their setting out, they are alienated, feeble, only dimly realised.³¹ Pulling against the carefully delineated social context of the novel – the conversations in the hotel, the feeling of people coming and going – is a nihilistic sense of the inconsequential nature of Rachel's life and being; of her, in Woolf's memorable phrase about herself, 'incomprehensible and quite negligible femininity' (L1, p. 329). Rachel's death barely makes any difference in her world. As Woolf wrote: 'what I wanted to do was to give the feeling of a vast tumult of life, as various and disorderly as possible, which should be cut short for a moment by the death, and go on again' (L2, p. 82). Rachel's identity, even her body, are scarcely formed; and the voice she seems to be developing at the piano remains suspended, provisional, misheard.

As the novel neared publication, Woolf seems to have had a similar sense of her own acute vulnerability and precariousness, of her 'incomprehensible' and 'quite negligible' fictional voice, with its unseen, threatening future audience. The day before *The Voyage Out* was published, in March 1915, Woolf entered a nursing-home, and for two months she was violent, refused to speak to Leonard and periodically refused to eat. As Lee remarks, *The Voyage Out* remained in Woolf's memory as one of the most difficult of her novels: reading the proofs of *The Years* more than twenty years later, she noted: 'I have never suffered, since *The Voyage Out*, such acute despair on re-reading, as this time.'³² When she undertook her next novel, then, it was written almost as protection against a recurrence of this kind of desperation. This time the heroine manages to hold on to her wordless language, mathematics, through courtship and engagement. Woolf was determined that she and her heroine would not disintegrate as her first protagonist had done, and although Katharine Hilbery's voice is still muffled and uncertain throughout much of *Night and Day*, the novel's vision of women's possibilities is less uncompromisingly bleak than it was in *The Voyage Out*. *Night and Day* seeks to rescue some sense of the durability of women's voices but, in order to do so, Woolf made a number of formal choices which cost her dearly in terms of reviews and critical responses.

Woolf knew that *Night and Day* was a defensive (and defended) novel. She wrote to Ethel Smyth in 1930:

When I came to, I was so tremblingly afraid of my own insanity that I wrote *Night and Day* mainly to prove to my own satisfaction that I could keep entirely off that dangerous ground. I wrote it, lying in bed, allowed to write only for one half hour a day. And I made myself copy from plaster casts, partly to tranquillise, partly to learn anatomy. Bad as the book is, it composed my mind, and I think taught me certain elements of composition which I should not have had the patience to learn had I been in full flush of health always. (L4, p. 231)

Woolf draws an analogy between the harmonious proportions of classical art (E. M. Forster called *Night and Day* 'a deliberate exercise in classicism') and the precarious harmony of her own mind.³³ The 'plaster casts' are the earlier forms on which *Night and Day* is so dependent: the comedies of Shakespeare, for example, or, as Jane Marcus has shown, the operas of Mozart.³⁴ The invalid voice that Woolf tried out in *Night and Day* was deliberately not quite her own, as if her own were too tenuous and too dangerous. The careful routines of her everyday life, orchestrated by Leonard, and the cautiously allusive structuring of her novel, were part of the same project to marginalise anarchic and disruptive voices: the voices of her madness, and, as she would later come to believe ('bad as the book is'), the voices of her creativity.

The plot concerns the courtships of Katharine Hilbery, Ralph Denham, William Rodney and Cassandra Otway. Katharine is the upper-middle-class grand-daughter of famous poet Richard Alardyce. She spends her days helping her absent-minded mother write a biography of her poet father: her time is given over to the past, to the dead, and to her family and domestic obligations. When the novel opens, Katharine is being courted by Government clerk William, and she soon agrees to marry him. Her misgivings about her lack of passionate feeling for him are confirmed by her developing friendship with Ralph Denham, who declares his love for her. William gradually comes to realise that he loves not Katharine, but her cousin Cassandra. Katharine is not sure how she feels about Ralph. This deadlock is broken by the arrival of Mrs Hilbery bearing branches from Shakespeare's tomb. She sorts out both couples and enables something of a happy ending.

Katharine differs from Rachel in a number of ways. She is older and more authoritative, and her fears of losing her solitude and her autonomy in love prove in the end to be unfounded. No one seeks to educate Katharine in quite the way that they do Rachel, although like Rachel she has no instinctive

liking for text: “yes, I do hate books,” she continued. “Why do you want to be for ever talking about your feelings?” (ND, p. 149). Once again, Woolf creates a heroine who feels that books are just so much chat, a heroine who is suspicious of exactly the activities that Woolf loved – and feared – the most. Katharine’s preferred language is the language of abstract symbol or of the stars – mathematics and astronomy:

Perhaps the unwomanly nature of the science made her instinctively wish to conceal her love of it. But the more profound reason was that in her mind mathematics were directly opposed to literature. She would not have cared to confess how infinitely she preferred the exactitude, the star-like impersonality, of figures to the confusion, agitation, and vagueness of the finest prose.

(ND, p. 42)

Like Rachel, Katharine seeks a language that says things directly and without the impediment of personality or history. Writing is associated with domesticity and femininity: the words she (or the narrator on her behalf) uses to describe fiction could just as easily be associated with her mother, the writer, who can never stay with one train of thought long enough to finish it.³⁵ Furthermore, the task on which Katharine and her mother are engaged embeds Katharine firmly both in her filial identity, and in the past. Sometimes she feels that ‘the past had completely displaced the present, which, when one resumed life after a morning among the dead, proved to be of an utterly thin and inferior composition’ (ND, p. 40). In writing Katharine is crowded out by other people, by the dead, by her mother’s demands.

Part of Katharine’s desire, indeed, is to escape from her own identity: her family name and, especially, her family house. As Ann Ronchetti notes, *Night and Day* ‘presents a view of family responsibilities as potentially debilitating, inhibiting the expression of one’s “nocturnal” side and the formation of an independent identity’.³⁶ Numbers and the stars inscribe formal relations which have nothing to do with human social interactions, with the annoyance and the distraction of voice: ‘I want to work out something in figures – something that hasn’t got to do with human beings,’ Katharine tells her cousin Henry (ND, p. 201). Katharine, unlike Rachel, is unusually taciturn and mistrustful of speech and, unlike Rachel’s, her personal language is itself silent, demanding no listener. Katharine wants to marry in order to escape the restrictions of her home life, but marriage, she knows, is a compromise, ‘no more than an archway through which it was necessary to pass in order to have her desire’ (ND, p. 224). There is an impossible contradiction, then, in Katharine’s expectations of marriage. As Jane Marcus has commented, ‘the ideal of the female Utopia was to be in paradise alone, to work’, but the only way that Katharine can imagine reaching

that Utopia is by entering into a relationship of exceptional intimacy.³⁷ Her challenge in the novel is to find a relationship in which, paradoxically, her solitude is guaranteed by the nearness of someone else. The cautious optimism of *Night and Day* is apparent in Woolf's decision to give Katharine such a marriage, a solution which Rachel, of course, is denied. In *The Voyage Out* Rachel's inner world is invaded by others, and the music of her own voice is drowned out; in *Night and Day* Katharine is amazed to find that it is possible to love without being silenced by it: 'she had now to get used to the fact that someone shared her loneliness. The bewilderment was half shame and half the prelude to profound rejoicing' (*ND*, p. 518). Her 'loneliness' is not destroyed by being shared. Rather it is enriched and protected: Katharine dwells now in possibility.

It would be easy to assume that Woolf wrote *Night and Day* partly as a response to her own unease about the marriage to which she had committed herself a few years before she began working on the novel. *Night and Day* was the first novel written when she was a wife, the first novel whose writing had to contend with Leonard's anxious and affectionate control of her time and routine. At times she seems certainly to have resented his intrusions, as Lee notes: Woolf wrote to Violet Dickinson in 1912 that she must cancel her visit because 'Leonard made me into a comatose invalid' (*L1*, p. 502).³⁸ At other times, however, she described their marriage as a rich communion of solitudes, 'as if marriage were a completing of the instrument, & the sound of one alone penetrates as if it were a violin robbed of its orchestra or piano' (*D1*, p. 70). Her letter to Ethel Smyth implies that she was as frightened as Leonard was of damaging her fragile mental equilibrium in the first months of writing *Night and Day*, and eagerly co-operated with his attempts to control her activities. Her needs and expectations were, in fact, as contradictory as Katharine's: she wanted both to avoid illness – to silence the voices in her head – and to imagine an alternative world in which characters spoke and moved. In imagining the form and circumstances of Katharine's marriage Woolf may also have been negotiating the conditions in which it would be safe to allow herself to speak again as a novelist. The story she told in *The Voyage Out*, of Rachel's failure to develop a voice that can resist the admonishments of others, was followed in *Night and Day* by the story of a woman who secures the right to express herself in the language she chooses. To put it crudely, Katharine finds a fiancé who wants her to study mathematics; whereas Rachel insists that she stop playing the piano.

But *Night and Day* is hardly triumphant. For one thing, Katharine's silent work with numbers is much less disruptive of domestic peace than Rachel's noisy playing. In some ways, Katharine is *already* a more compliant heroine

even at the beginning of the book. Ann-Marie Priest suggests that 'Katharine's fantasy of another mode of identity is re-appropriated by patriarchy through the discourse of romantic love – a discourse that seems at first to enable her to create the fluid, unconfined, reciprocal self she longs for but which turns out to be simply an expert means of returning that self to the service of patriarchy.'³⁹ There is something resigned in Katharine's eventual acquiescence to marriage. Secondly, *Night and Day* ends in tears. In the last pages Katharine and Ralph pause in the street to look at the light in the room of their friend Mary Datchet. Mary, having lost Ralph, whom she loves, to Katharine, has dedicated her life to social reform. She is an object of envy and awe for Katharine from the beginning of the novel: "I think you're very lucky," [Katharine] observed. "I envy you, living alone and having your own things" – and engaged in this exalted way, which had no recognition or engagement-ring, she added in her own mind' (*ND*, p. 284). The presence of Mary in the novel dulls the triumph of Katharine's successful negotiation of transition. Marriage to Ralph may have been the best that Katharine could have hoped for, since, given her class position and her personality, she could never have left her family and struck out on her own except through marriage. But Mary's burning light at the end of the novel reminds Katharine of how few choices she has. Woolf herself acknowledged the sombre tone of the ending:

L. finds the philosophy very melancholy . . . Yet, if one is to deal with people on a large scale & say what one thinks, how can one avoid melancholy? I don't admit to being hopeless though – only the spectacle is a profoundly strange one; & as the current answers don't do, one has to grope for a new one; & the process of discarding the old, when one is by no means certain what to put in their place, is a sad one. (*D1*, p. 259)

Woolf's comments perfectly capture the hesitancy and confusion of much of *Night and Day*, a novel which, like its protagonists, barely trusts itself to celebrate its own happy ending, is not even sure that it really is happy. The elusiveness of its characterisation – E. M. Forster complained that 'none of the characters in N. & D. is lovable' – works against any notion that the solutions it proposes are reliable or long-lasting (*D1*, p. 310). Indeed for her next novel Woolf turned not to *Night and Day* but to the experimental short stories she had been writing alongside it, as her stylistic model. The caution and the classicism of *Night and Day* were left far behind.

Her project in *Jacob's Room*, at least as she describes it in her diary, was primarily formal and stylistic. Her aim was twofold: to write a novel about a character to whose inner life we rarely have access; and to experiment with gendering the narrative voice as feminine. The two goals were related,

of course; the narrator herself describes her difference from Jacob as one determined largely by gender: 'whether we know what was in his mind is another question. Granted ten years' seniority and a difference of sex, fear of him comes first; this is swallowed up by a desire to help.'⁴⁰ *Jacob's Room* gives up, as if in despair, on the project of imagining the forms which female autonomy might take: this narrator serves Jacob even as she observes him. It is in *Jacob's Room* that Woolf tries to reflect on the conditions of the narrative voice itself: what it means to speak for a silent other; and whether that speech is inevitably a form of displacement and destruction (hence, perhaps, the nihilistically satirical tone of much of *Jacob's Room*). The novel is also, of course, a reflection on the speech of the bereaved. Sara Ruddick has persuasively argued that, like *The Waves*, *Jacob's Room* is a 'tribute' to Woolf's brother Toby, who died in 1906 from a fever contracted, like Rachel Vinrace's, during a trip abroad.⁴¹ As Kathleen Wall has argued, *Jacob's Room* is 'an attempt to create a significant aesthetic form that will embody the postwar experience of grief', an experiment in modernist elegy.⁴² Who can speak in memory and on behalf of the generation of young men decimated in the Great War? In many ways, *Jacob's Room* is about the survival of women in a world that has lost millions of its men.

Woolf had already tried structuring a story around the thoughts of an observing and uncomprehending mind in the stories 'An Unwritten Novel' and 'The Mark on the Wall', and she saw these as the seeds of *Jacob's Room*: 'conceive mark on the wall, K[ew]. G[ardens]. & unwritten novel taking hands & dancing in unity. What the unity shall be I have yet to discover: the theme is a blank to me; but I see immense possibilities in the form I hit upon more or less by chance 2 weeks ago' (*D2*, p. 14). One of the frustrations of the novel, indeed, is that its theme is its form. It tells the story of the short life of Jacob Flanders, his childhood in Scarborough, his university years in Cambridge, his friendship with Bonamy and dalliances with women, a trip to Greece, during which he falls in love, and finally his death in the First World War. But most of the main events of the novel occur obliquely, just outside our range of vision, and the narrative sequence is choppy, fragmented, discontinuous. Leonard Woolf found it disconcerting (although remarkable): 'he says that the people are ghosts', wrote Woolf in her diary: 'he says it is very strange: I have no philosophy of life he says; my people are puppets, moved hither & thither by fate' (*D2*, p. 186). Jacob has no identifiable voice, and the narrative voice is undercut all the time by its own uncertainties. *Jacob's Room* takes as its formal and philosophical grounding the idea that voice marks absence as well as presence, and experiments with the kind of novel that can be built on that assumption – an

assumption which, as Woolf constantly remarked, was directly at odds with the aesthetics of her Edwardian predecessors. As Woolf said defensively over and over again in her letters, 'it has *some* merit, but its [*sic*] too much of an experiment' (*L2*, p. 573).⁴³ Such comments are a far cry from the excitement of the diary entry with which I opened: 'I have found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice' (*D2*, p. 186). If this *was* her 'own voice', it was, on her own admission, preliminary and tentative.

The novel opens with Betty Flanders, Jacob's mother, writing a letter on the beach, and pausing to look through tear-filled eyes at the bay and the lighthouse: 'the entire bay quivered; the lighthouse wobbled; and she had the illusion that the mast of Mr Connor's little yacht was bending like a wax candle in the sun' (*JR*, p. 3). At its outset the world of the novel threatens to dissolve into the tears of women (Betty is writing about the death of her husband). Betty's point of view is followed by a series of sections written from the perspective of one woman after another: Mrs Jarvis, Mrs Norman, Mrs Plumer, Mrs Pascoe. Even when the women cede to an apparently impersonal narrator, after Jacob moves to the masculine environs of Trinity College, the narrator eventually reveals herself, as we have seen, to be a woman. In Sara Ruddick's words, the narrator's vision is 'the natural extension of that of Betty Flanders'.⁴⁴ Of course, none of the women who want Jacob – his mother, Clara, Florinda, even married Sandra with whom he is in love – ever succeed in possessing him, so that the voices in the novel are always unsatisfied and unanswered.

The book then is focused through a specifically female yearning: through women's tears. Rachel Bowlby sees this as a comment on the exile of women from the realities and the authority of masculine worlds. 'The novel of a young man's development is told from the point of view of the woman as outsider: outsider both to the institutionalised stages through which the youth passes, and to the conventions according to which they are presented as natural.'⁴⁵ But, as I suggested above, *Jacob's Room* also has broader concerns with the language of mourning and with the hopelessness of voice, and especially of apostrophe, that figure so beloved of the Victorian women poets from whom Woolf took some of her inspiration. From the beginning the novel is full of unanswered calls: "'Ja – cob! Ja – cob!" Archer shouted' (*JR*, p. 4). 'The voice had an extraordinary sadness. Pure from all body, pure from all passion, going out into the world, solitary, unanswered, breaking against rocks – so it sounded' (*JR*, p. 5). Right away the novel announces the failure of voices to animate either their interlocutors or their speakers. Woolf wanted to know what would happen if she deliberately imagined voices free of the bodily contexts with which we are so used to identify them. Hence, as Rachel Bowlby has commented, the book's obsession with

letters.⁴⁶ Even Betty's words at the opening of the novel are not spoken but written. Voices stray wildly from the bodies that might have secured them.

But in spite of its concentration on the sexual politics of narration – a female voice speaking for a young and virile man – *Jacob's Room* is much less certain than the earlier novels about the sexual politics of voice. At times it suggests that no voice – male or female – is stable or reliably interlocutory:

It seems then that men and women are equally at fault. It seems that a profound, impartial, and absolutely just opinion of our fellow-creatures is utterly unknown. Either we are men, or we are women. Either we are cold, or we are sentimental. Either we are young, or growing old. In any case life is but a procession of shadows, and God knows why it is that we embrace them so eagerly, and see them depart with such anguish, being shadows. (*JR*, pp. 95–6)

Men's and women's voices alike drift in a world of phantoms, their own specificity rendered irrelevant by the spectral nature of their world. But at other times it is specifically women's voices – and the voice of the mother in particular – which are seen as displaced and ignored. One of Betty's letters lies on the table unopened while Jacob makes love to Florinda in the room next door. 'If the pale blue envelope lying by the biscuit-box had the feelings of a mother, the heart was torn by the little creak, the sudden stir . . . My son, my son – such would be her cry' (*JR*, p. 124).⁴⁷ The cry of the letter echoes her little son Archer's cry on the beach at the opening. The empty apostrophe expresses simultaneously a general, and a specifically feminine, predicament.

Sexual difference itself then, one of the bodily differences that voices mark, is compromised by the novel's exploration of apostrophe. Sex, as Jacob first encounters it, is both obscene and uncannily silent. He stumbles on 'an enormous man and woman' lying on the beach, 'stretched motionless', their 'large red faces lying on the bandanna handkerchiefs [staring] up at Jacob' (*JR*, p. 7). This proto-Oedipal scene serves only to confuse Jacob's perceptions of bodies and of substance: he runs away in horror and mistakes a rock for his nurse (*JR*, p. 7). Seeing male and female anatomies at such close quarters throws Jacob's world into crisis: far from helping him to understand the organisation of the world, the sight of the huge bodies upsets him so much that immediately afterwards he cannot even distinguish between the animate and inanimate. Indeed in this novel it is often objects, not bodies, that speak most eloquently: in Jacob's room after his death: 'listless is the air in an empty room, just swelling the curtain; the flowers in the jar shift. One fibre in the wicker armchair creaks, though no one sits there' (*JR*, p. 247). Sex tells one nothing that one needs to know about the world.

Jacob's Room, then, continues the preoccupation of the two earlier novels with the difficult negotiation of voice. But what had been, in *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, a proto-feminist concern becomes, in *Jacob's Room*, a concern about the ontology of voice itself, an exploration of the unreliability of voice as a figure for identity. It is important that we recognise that Woolf's early fiction, far from being 'apprentice work', addresses one of the foundations of fiction-writing and of subjectivity itself: the assumption and elaboration of voice. It has been hard to recognise because the conclusions these novels come to are so uncomfortable and run so counter to all the assumptions with which we continue to approach the figure of literary and other 'voices'. In these early novels Woolf shows us what an unstable, seductive metaphor – and phenomenon – 'voice' is.

Notes

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1 Janis M. Paul, *The Victorian Heritage of Virginia Woolf: The External World in her Novels* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim, 1987), p. 51. Sue Roe, in *Writing and Gender: Virginia Woolf's Writing Practice* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), discusses all the early novels together in one chapter called 'Virginia Woolf's Writing Practice'; and such major works as Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987) and Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) do not have separate chapters on *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*.

2 Virginia Woolf, *ROO*, 1929, repr. in *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: World's Classics, 1992), pp. 99, 101. All further references will be to this edition.

3 See, for example, Mark Wollaeger, 'Woolf, Postcards, and the Elision of Race: Colonizing Women in *The Voyage Out*', *Modernism/modernity*, 8:1 (2001), 43–75; Nick Montgomery, 'Colonial Rhetoric and the Maternal Voice: Deconstruction and Disengagement in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*', *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, 46:1 (Spring 2000), 34–55; Jed Esty, 'Virginia Woolf's Colony and the Adolescence of Modernist Fiction', in *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature, 1899–1939*, ed. Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 70–90.

4 See Mary C. Madden, 'Woolf's Interrogation of Class in *Night and Day*', in *Woolf in the Real World: Selected Papers from the Thirteenth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Karen V. Kukil (Northampton, MA: Clemson University Digital Press, 2005), pp. 56–63; and Andrea P. Zemgulys, "'Night and Day Is Dead": Virginia Woolf in London "Literary and Historic"', *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, 46:1 (Spring 2000), 56–77.

- 5 See, for example, Mark A. Wollaeger, 'The Woolfs in the Jungle: Intertextuality, Sexuality, and the Emergence of Female Modernism in *The Voyage Out*, *The Village in the Jungle* and *Heart of Darkness*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 64:1 (March 2003), 33–69; 37.
- 6 Virginia Woolf, 'I Am Christina Rossetti', 1930, repr. in *Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing*, ed. Michèle Barrett (London: Women's Press, 1979), pp. 161–8; p. 164. The quote is from Mary F. Sandars, *Life of Christina Rossetti* (London: Hutchinson, 1930).
- 7 For further discussion of this issue, see Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho: Declining a Name* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- 8 Virginia Woolf, *VO*, 1915, ed. Lorna Sage (Oxford: World's Classics, 1992), pp. 249, 239, 207. All further references will be to this edition.
- 9 Virginia Woolf, *O*, 1928, ed. Rachel Bowlby (Oxford: World's Classics, 1992), p. 298.
- 10 See, for example, Virginia Woolf, *TL*, 1927, ed. Margaret Drabble (Oxford: World's Classics, 1992), p. 123; and *ROO*, p. 70: 'there would always have been that assertion – you cannot do this, you are incapable of doing that – to protest against, to overcome'.
- 11 Virginia Woolf, *ND*, 1919, ed. Suzanne Raitt (Oxford: World's Classics, 1992), p. 106. All further references will be to this edition.
- 12 Louie Mayer, 1970, in *Virginia Woolf: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. J.H. Stape (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 171.
- 13 Virginia Woolf, 'Old Bloomsbury', 1922 [?], in *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind, 1976 (repr. London: Triad/Granada, 1978), p. 186. All further references will be to this edition.
- 14 Leonard Woolf, 'Virginia Woolf: Writer and Personality', in Stape, *Virginia Woolf: Interviews and Recollections*, p. 6. Quentin Bell also refers to this episode in *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, 1972 (repr. London: Hogarth, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 89–90.
- 15 Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), p. 196.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 196–7.
- 17 See *MB*, p. 107.
- 18 See Melba Cuddy-Keane, 'Virginia Woolf, Sound Technologies, and the New Aurality', in *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. Pamela L. Caughie (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 69–96; p. 71; and Peter Jacobs, '“The Second Violin Tuning in the Ante-room”: Virginia Woolf and Music', in *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Diane F. Gillespie (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1993), pp. 227–60; p. 238.
- 19 Virginia Woolf to Leonard Woolf, 18 March 1941, quoted in Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf*, II, p. 226.
- 20 Susan Stanford Friedman argues that, like Rachel, Woolf was trying in *VO* to make her own transition into an identity and a life as a writer. 'The story of Rachel's failed *Bildung* relates to Woolf's efforts to make her own development a success. Her numerous revisions engaged Woolf in a "writing cure" in which the transference scene of writing gradually constitutes a new subjectivity.' See Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Spatialisation, Narrative Theory, and Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*', in *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers*, ed. Kathy Mezei (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996),

pp. 109–36; p. 127. Friedman ignores the fact that as she was working on the novel Woolf was also undergoing another *Bildung* much like Rachel's own: her courtship and engagement to Leonard Woolf.

- 21 Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf*, vol. 1, p. 126; and Leonard Woolf, 'Virginia Woolf: Writer and Personality', p. 150. See also Louise A. DeSalvo, *Virginia Woolf's First Voyage: A Novel in the Making* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), p. 9. DeSalvo describes her work on all the manuscript versions of VO in the introduction to her edition of the earliest complete extant version, composed 1909–10. See Virginia Woolf, *Melymbrosia: An Early Version of 'The Voyage Out'*, ed. Louise A. DeSalvo (New York: New York Public Library, 1982).
- 22 See Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf*, vol. 1, p. 125.
- 23 DeSalvo, *Virginia Woolf's First Voyage*, p. x.
- 24 Wollaeger, 'Woolfs in the Jungle', p. 39.
- 25 See 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown', 1923, 2nd edn 1924, in Virginia Woolf, *WE*, ed. Rachel Bowlby (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), pp. 69–87.
- 26 John P. McCombe, 'The Voyage Out: No Tempest in a Teapot: Woolf's Revision of Shakespeare and Critique of Female Education', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 31:1–2 (January–April 2000), 275–306; 280. The piano becomes a privileged means of self-expression in a number of Edwardian novels. In E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View*, for example, which Woolf reviewed while she was working on VO, Lucy Honeychurch uses the piano to excite and play out her own passions: 'like every true performer, she was intoxicated by the mere feel of the notes: they were fingers caressing her own; and by touch, not by sound alone, did she come to her desire' (1908; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 51. Gwenda in May Sinclair's *The Three Sisters* (1914) also plays the piano both to challenge her father and to release her own frustrations.
- 27 'Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.' See *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 1787 (repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), vol. 1, p. 309.
- 28 Christine Froula, 'Out of the Chrysalis: Female Initiation and Female Authority in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 5:1 (Spring 1986), 63–90; 85.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 68, 63.
- 30 Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, 'On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Commentary', 1893, in *Studies on Hysteria*, 1893–5, trans. James and Alix Strachey, ed. Angela Richards (Penguin Freud Library, 3) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 58.
- 31 Louise A. DeSalvo, 'Virginia, Virginius, Virginité', in *Faith of a (Woman) Writer*, ed. Alice Kessler-Harris and William McBrien (New York: Greenwood, 1988), pp. 179–89; p. 188.
- 32 Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 327; *D5*, p. 17.
- 33 E. M. Forster, 'The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf, 1925', in *Abinger Harvest* (London: Edward Arnold, 1936), pp. 106–15, p. 108.
- 34 See Jane Marcus, 'Enchanted Organ, Magic Bells: *Night and Day* as a Comic Opera', in *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987), pp. 18–35.
- 35 Virginia Woolf based Mrs Hilbery on the novelist Anny Thackeray Ritchie, sister of her father Leslie Stephen's first wife. Anny Ritchie seems to have had

- all of Mrs Hilbery's inconsequentiality and love of the random. See Joanne P. Zuckerman, 'Anne Thackeray Ritchie as the Model for Mrs Hilbery in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day*', *Virginia Woolf Quarterly*, 1 (1973), 32-46.
- 36 Ann Ronchetti, *The Artist, Society and Sexuality in Virginia Woolf's Novels* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 31.
- 37 Marcus, 'Enchanted Organ', p. 27.
- 38 See Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 336, for further discussion of this issue.
- 39 Ann-Marie Priest, 'Between Being and Nothingness: The "Astonishing Precipice" of Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 26:2 (Winter 2003), 66-80; 66.
- 40 Virginia Woolf, *JR*, 1922, ed. Lorna Sage (Oxford: World's Classics, 1992), p. 128. All further references will be to this edition.
- 41 Sara Ruddick, 'Private Brother, Public World', in *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jane Marcus (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 185-215; p. 186.
- 42 Kathleen Wall, 'Significant Form in *Jacob's Room*: Ekphrasis and the Elegy', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 44:3 (Fall 2002), 302-23; 303.
- 43 See also *L2*, pp. 546 and 591.
- 44 Ruddick, 'Private Brother, Public World', p. 198.
- 45 Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations*, p. 112.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 116.
- 47 Betty's words are an echo of David's lament at the death of his mutinous son Absalom in the Bible: 'O Absalom, my son, my son' (2 Sam. 18: 33). Here Woolf reimagines it as a maternal, rather than a paternal, expression of grief.