

Virginia Woolf

The major novels

John Batchelor

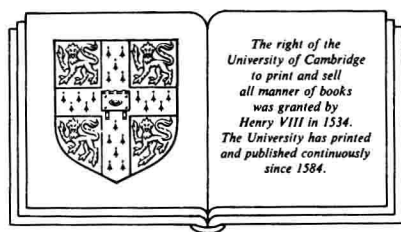


VIRGINIA WOOLF

The Major Novels

JOHN BATCHELOR

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University of Newcastle upon Tyne*



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge

New York Port Chester

Melbourne Sydney

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1991

First published 1991

Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge

British Library cataloguing in publication data

Batchelor, John, 1942-

Virginia Woolf: the major novels. - (British and Irish authors).

I. Fiction in English. Woolf, Virginia, 1882-1941

I. Title II. Series

823.912

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Batchelor, John 1942-

Virginia Woolf: the major novels / John Batchelor.

p. cm.

ISBN 0 521 32273 1. - ISBN 0 521 31135 7 (pbk.)

I. Woolf, Virginia, 1882-1941 - Criticism and interpretation.

I. Title.

PR6045.072Z5425 1991

823'.912 - dc20 90-37987 CIP

ISBN 0 521 32273 1 hardback

ISBN 0 521 31135 7 paperback

BRITISH AND IRISH AUTHORS

Introductory Critical Studies

VIRGINIA WOOLF: The Major Novels

Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) is one of the most interesting writers of our century. In this book, John Batchelor tells the story of her life and writing career, highlighting the important aspects of Woolf's temperament: her passion, her learning, her acute intelligence, her lesbianism, her self-absorption. He discusses the works, devoting separate chapters to the five major novels: *Jacob's Room*, with its highly ironic celebration of masculinity; *Mrs Dalloway*, with its odd time structures and pointed observations of 1920s London society; *To the Lighthouse*, which can be read as an elegy for Woolf's own family as well as a great work of modernism; *The Waves*, extending the narrative methods of its predecessors; and *Between the Acts*, Woolf's complex satire of the Condition of England novel.

Here we find a writer eddying between conventions and traditions, sportively subverting the norms of Victorian and Edwardian fiction upon which she in other ways depends. If Woolf was dissatisfied with the conservative literary modes of her time, she was also ambivalent about her major modernist coeval, James Joyce. Professor Batchelor examines her uneasy relation to modernism, drawing the analogies with painting invited by her work, and addressing her 'feminism' in *A Room of One's Own* and elsewhere. This book, equipped with a chronology and guide to recommended further reading, is an ideal companion for students and new readers of Woolf.

John Batchelor is Joseph Cowen Professor of English, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. His previous publications include *Mervyn Peake: A Biographical and Critical Exploration* (1974), *The Edwardian Novelists* (1982), *H. G. Wells* (1985) and *Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim* (1988).

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for my daughter Clarissa

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Lyndall Gordon, Tony Nuttall and Jon Stallworthy, all of whom have read my typescript and made a large number of helpful comments. The staff of the Bodleian Library, of New College Library and of the English Faculty Library, Oxford, have been consistently patient and willing.

Chronology

The following is a selective chronology of Virginia Woolf's life with the dates of publication of principal works.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1882, 25 January | Birth of Virginia Stephen, third child of Leslie Stephen and Julia Duckworth, at 22 Hyde Park Gate, Kensington. Vanessa Stephen born 1879, Thoby Stephen 1880 and Adrian Stephen 1883. The Stephen family spend each summer until 1894 at Talland House, St Ives, Cornwall |
| 1895 | Death of her mother, Julia. Virginia Stephen has first breakdown |
| 1897 | Death of Stella Duckworth, Virginia Stephen's half-sister by her mother's first marriage |
| 1898 | Meets Kitty Maxse, who becomes the model for Mrs Dalloway |
| 1899 | Thoby enters Trinity College, Cambridge, and befriends Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Clive Bell and Saxon Sydney-Turner |
| 1904, February | Sir Leslie Stephen dies |
| May | Virginia Stephen's second, and much more serious, breakdown begins, in the course of which she attempts suicide |
| October | The Stephen children begin the move from Hyde Park Gate to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury |

- 17 November Leonard Woolf dines at Gordon Square before sailing for Ceylon
- December Virginia Stephen's first publication, a review in the *Manchester Guardian*
- 1905, January Virginia Stephen starts teaching at Morley College (an evening institute for working men and women). From this (until 1907) year she starts reviewing regularly for *The Times Literary Supplement*
- February Thoby starts 'Thursday Evenings' at 46 Gordon Square, inviting his university friends: beginning of the 'Bloomsbury Group'
- 1906, September Stephen children visit Greece. On this expedition Thoby Stephen contracts typhoid fever and dies in London on 20 November
- 22 November Vanessa agrees to marry Clive Bell
- 1907, February Marriage of Vanessa Stephen and Clive Bell
- April Virginia and Adrian Stephen leave Gordon Square for 29 Fitzroy Square. 'Thursday Evenings' are resumed
- October Virginia Stephen starts work on 'Melymbrosia' (eventually *The Voyage Out*)
- 1908, February Julian Bell (nephew) born
- 1909, February Lytton Strachey proposes marriage, is accepted, but then retracts proposal because of his homosexuality
- 1910, February Virginia Stephen participates in the 'Dreadnought Hoax' (she and a group of friends tour the HMS *Dreadnought* disguised as the Emperor of Abyssinia and entourage)
- August Birth of nephew Quentin Bell
- November First Post-Impressionist Exhibition, 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists', organised at the Grafton Galleries by Roger Fry

- 1911, July Leonard Woolf, returned from Ceylon, dines with the Bells and meets Virginia Stephen again
- November Virginia living at 38 Brunswick Square with Adrian Stephen, Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant and (from December) Leonard Woolf
- 1912, January and February Mental illness
- August Marries Leonard Woolf
- 1913 Leonard Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle* published
- October Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries
- April *The Voyage Out* accepted for publication by Gerald Duckworth
- August Virginia Woolf seriously ill
- September Attempts suicide by overdose
- 1914 Virginia's health improving. Leonard Woolf's *The Wise Virgins* published in October
- 1915 The Woolfs take Hogarth House, Richmond
- February and March Virginia Woolf suffers another breakdown
- March *The Voyage Out* published
- November Virginia's health improving
- 1917, March With a hand printing press they start the Hogarth Press
- onwards
- 1919, May *Night and Day* accepted by Gerald Duckworth and published in October. Hogarth Press publish *Kew Gardens* and T. S. Eliot's *Poems*
- July The Woolfs buy Monk's House, Rodmell, Sussex
- 1921, March *Monday or Tuesday* published
- 1922, October *Jacob's Room* published. Death (possibly suicide) of Kitty Maxse.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| December | Virginia Woolf meets Vita Sackville-West |
| 1924, January | Virginia buys lease of 52 Tavistock Square, to which they move in March, with the Hogarth Press |
| 1925, April | Publishes <i>The Common Reader</i> |
| May | Publishes <i>Mrs Dalloway</i> |
| 1927, May | Publishes <i>To the Lighthouse</i> . Developing relationship with Vita Sackville-West |
| October | Starts to write <i>Orlando</i> |
| 1928, April-June | Virginia awarded <i>Femina Vie Heureuse</i> prize |
| September | Virginia holidays in France with Vita Sackville-West |
| October | <i>Orlando</i> published. Virginia gives the papers in Cambridge which later become <i>A Room of One's Own</i> |
| 1929, October | <i>A Room of One's Own</i> published |
| 1930, February | Virginia Woolf first meets Ethel Smyth, who becomes passionately attached to her |
| 1931 | Pattern established of weeks in London, weekends at Monk's House |
| October | <i>The Waves</i> is published. Virginia Woolf suffers from headaches and depression following publication |
| 1932, January | Death of Lytton Strachey |
| April-May | Leonard and Virginia Woolf tour Greece with Roger and Margery Fry |
| October | <i>The Common Reader: Second Series</i> published |
| 1933, October | <i>Flush</i> published |
| 1934, September | Death of Roger Fry |
| 1935, January | Virginia Woolf's play <i>Freshwater</i> is performed by friends. Throughout 1935 and 1936 Virginia Woolf is writing <i>The Years</i> with great strain and difficulty |
| 1937, March | <i>The Years</i> published |
| July | Julian Bell killed in the Spanish civil war |
| 1938, March | John Lehmann becomes a partner in the Hogarth Press (taking over Virginia's share in the partnership) |

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|----------------|--|
| June | <i>Three Guineas</i> published |
| 1939, August | Leonard and Virginia move from 52 Tavistock Square to 37 Mecklenburgh Square, and take the Hogarth Press with them |
| 1940, July | <i>Roger Fry: A Biography</i> published |
| September | 37 Mecklenburgh Square badly damaged by bombs. Hogarth Press moved to the Garden City Press at Letchworth |
| 1941, February | Virginia Woolf finishes writing <i>Pointz Hall (Between the Acts)</i> |
| March | Her mental health is deteriorating again and on 28 March she drowns herself in the River Ouse |
| | <i>Between the Acts</i> published |

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<i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	London: Hogarth, 1980 [1925]
<i>To the Lighthouse</i>	London: Hogarth, 1982 [1927]
<i>Orlando</i>	London: Hogarth, 1960 [1928]
<i>The Waves</i>	London: Hogarth, 1980 [1931]
<i>Flush</i>	London: Hogarth, 1933 [1933]
<i>The Years</i>	London: Hogarth, 1958 [1937]
<i>Three Guineas</i>	London: Hogarth, 1943 [1938]
<i>Roger Fry</i>	London: Hogarth, 1940 [1940]
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