

*VIRGINIA WOOLF*

THE  
YEARS

*Edited by*

DAVID BRADSHAW AND IAN BLYTH

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*Editorial Offices*

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA  
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK  
The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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The Shakespeare Head Press Edition  
of  
VIRGINIA WOOLF

THE YEARS

The Shakespeare Head Press Edition  
of  
VIRGINIA WOOLF

*To the Lighthouse*  
*The Waves*

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

*Mrs Dalloway*  
*Flush*

*Orlando*  
*Three Guineas*  
*Between the Acts*  
*Jacob's Room*

*The Years*  
*A Room of One's Own*

Susan Dick  
James M. Haule and  
Philip H. Smith, Jr  
J. H. Stape  
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C. Ruth Miller and  
Lawrence Miller  
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J. H. Stape  
Naomi Black  
Susan Dick and Mary S. Millar  
Edward L. Bishop  
David Bradshaw and Ian Blyth  
David Bradshaw and  
Stuart N. Clarke



## Preface to the Edition

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

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

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

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

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

# Acknowledgements

The Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations; Stuart N. Clarke; Karen Kukil, Mortimer Rare Book Room, Neilson Library, Smith College, Northampton, MA; Brigitte Lee Messenger; National Library of Scotland; University of Reading, Department of Special Collections; S. P. Rosenbaum; Anna Snaith. Our thanks to Stephen Barkway for supplying us with the photograph used as the frontispiece for this edition.

*David Bradshaw and Ian Blyth*



# Abbreviations

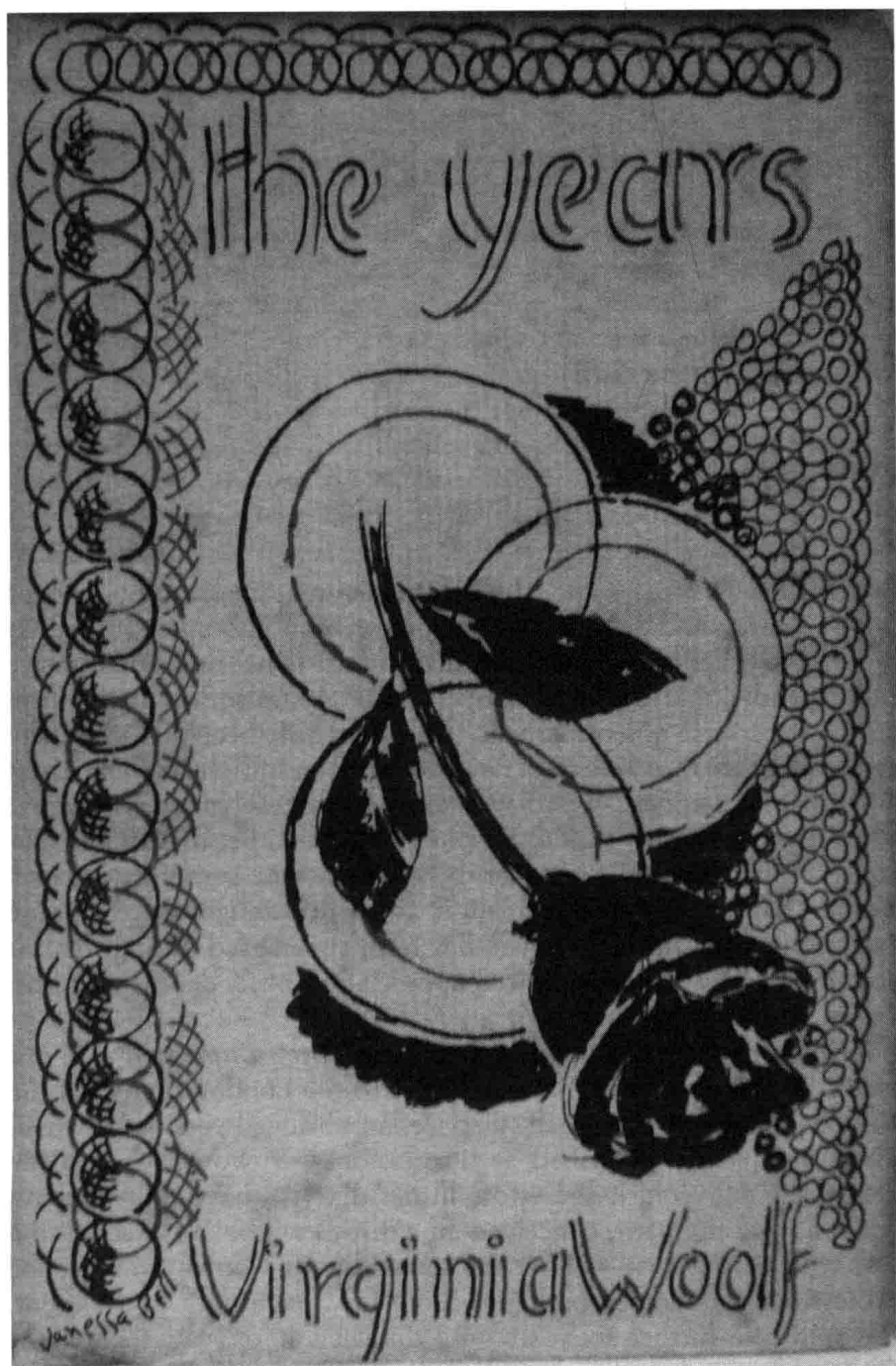
All references to Woolf's novels and other books are keyed to The Shakespeare Head Press Edition or to the first edition of the text in question.

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

- B*      *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, rev. Adrian Room (London: Cassell, 1999).
- BA*      *Between the Acts*
- CH*      *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975; rep. 1997).
- CSF*      *Virginia Woolf: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, ed. Susan Dick, rev. edn (London: Hogarth Press, 1989).
- DI-V*      *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell, assisted by Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1977–84).
- EI-VI*      *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie and Stuart N. Clarke, 6 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1986–2011).
- F*      *Flush*
- G*      R. H. Gretton, *A Modern History of the English People 1880–1922* (London: Martin Secker, 1930).
- Hyams*      David Bradshaw, 'Hyams Place: *The Years*, the Jews and the British Union of Fascists', in Maroula Joannu (ed.), *Women Writers of the 1930s: Gender, Politics and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 179–91.
- JR*      *Jacob's Room*
- LI-VI*      *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1975–80).

### Abbreviations

LE	Ben Weinreb, Christopher Hibbert, Julia Keay and John Keay (eds), <i>The London Encyclopaedia</i> , 3rd edn (London, Basingstoke and Oxford: Macmillan, 2008).
MB	<i>Moments of Being</i> , ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Pimlico, 2002).
MD	<i>Mrs Dalloway</i>
ND	<i>Night and Day</i>
P	<i>The Pargiters</i>
PA	<i>A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals and 'Carlyle's House and Other Sketches'</i> , ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Pimlico, 2004).
R	Grace Radin, <i>Virginia Woolf's 'The Years': The Evolution of a Novel</i> (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).
TG	<i>Three Guineas</i>
TL	<i>To the Lighthouse</i>
RN	<i>Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks</i> , ed. Brenda Silver (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).
VO	<i>The Voyage Out</i>
W	<i>The Waves</i>
Y	<i>The Years</i>



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

# Introduction

## 1

By the time *The Years* appeared in British and American bookshops (on 15 March and 8 April 1937 respectively) it had taken its toll on Woolf. No other novel had absorbed so much of her time and creative energy and none had involved so much frustration and mutation during the course of its emergence. She must have been all too acutely aware that its title reflected its protracted gestation as well as its portrait of an epoch. Woolf was all the more delighted, therefore, when it was generally well received by critics and became an immediate best seller, especially in America, while the long-standing tendency within the academy to underrate it as an over-long and retrograde exercise in conventional realism has been superseded during the last decade or so by a more nuanced appreciation of its depth, intricacy, ambition and patterning.

The twin source of both *The Years* and *Three Guineas* (1938) is a speech Woolf gave on 21 January 1931 to the London branch of the National Society for Women's Service, an abridged version of which was subsequently published as 'Professions for Women'.<sup>1</sup> The day before she delivered it she wrote in her diary: 'I have this moment, while having my bath, conceived an entire new book – a sequel to a Room of One's Own – about the sexual life of women: to be called Professions for Women perhaps – Lord how exciting!'<sup>2</sup> In the event, it would be a further six years until this 'new book' saw the light of day and by that time it bore little resemblance to the daring and uninhibited text Woolf had envisaged in her bath, and not least, we may presume, because she knew that such frankness was then impossible in her prudish literary culture, where inhibition, evasion and

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concealment were enforced by law, though Woolf did go on to speak her mind with considerable forthrightness (while still avoiding explicit discussion of 'the sexual life of women') in *Three Guineas*. Although the eight-volume holograph draft of *The Years* in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library (more than a thousand notebook pages in all), reveals some evidence of the openness about sexual matters to which Woolf aspired at this time, only a few, oblique instances of this spirit found their way into the published text, whereas squeamishness and revulsion of one kind or another are to be found on page after page. But it would be unwise to conclude that the absence of frankness in *The Years* reveals a loss of nerve on Woolf's part, a meek acceptance of what was and was not permissible: the unspeakable and the unspoken; the marginalized, the concealed and the excluded; the malignant, obligatory reticence of the patriarchal system, would become the driving concerns of her ninth novel. The inherent limitations of her women characters in particular, their struggles to leave behind the traits and prejudices of their families, are indicative of how domestic environments and domestic values leave indelible blots in *The Years*.

At the beginning of 1931 Woolf visualized her book as a kind of portal into new fictional territory and she was strongly tempted to make headway with it even as she struggled to finish *The Waves*. 'Too much excited, alas, to get on with *The Waves*', she wrote in her diary on 23 January. 'One goes on making up *The Open Door*,<sup>3</sup> or whatever it is to be called. The didactic demonstrative style conflicts with the dramatic: I find it hard to get back inside Bernard again.'<sup>4</sup> She writes in the same diary entry of the 'Open Door sucking at my brain',<sup>5</sup> recording with almost audible relief three days later: 'Heaven be praised, I can truthfully say on this first day of being 49 that I have shaken off the obsession of Opening the Door, & have returned to the *Waves*'. Nevertheless, she aimed to have a 'rough sketch of the Open Door'<sup>6</sup> by 1 April. But this hope was not fulfilled, and by 28 May 1931 she noted that she was 'much interrupted again by my wish to write *A Knock on the door*. For some weeks I have not thought of it. It suddenly forces itself on me, & I go on making up sentences, arguments, jokes &c.'<sup>7</sup> By the beginning of the following year 'the Tap on the Door'<sup>8</sup> still hovered tantalizingly before her and 16 February 1932 found Woolf 'quivering & itching to write my – what's it to be called? – "Men are like that?" – no that's too patently feminist: the sequel then, for which I have collected enough powder to blow up St Pauls.'<sup>9</sup> By 1 April she mentions in a letter to Ethel Smyth that she has 'invented the skeleton of another novel: but it must wait, buried, at least a year.'<sup>10</sup>

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One of the most significant dates in the evolution of *The Years* is 11 October 1932. It was on this day that Woolf began 'The Pargiters: An Essay Based upon a paper read to the London/National Society for Women's Service'. By 2 November this 'Essay' had morphed into 'an Essay-Novel, called the Pargiters', reflecting Woolf's intention to intercalate 'extracts' from the story of a family from 1880 to 2023<sup>11</sup> with interpretative essays on those extracts and more generally on the condition of women. This ground-breaking 'Essay-Novel' would, she hoped:

take in everything, sex, education, life &c; & come, with the most powerful & agile leaps, like a chamois across precipices from 1880 to here and now – That's the notion anyhow, & I have been in such a haze & dream & intoxication, declaiming phrases, seeing scenes, as I walk up Southampton Row that I can hardly say that I have been alive at all, since the 10th Oct. . . . What has happened of course is that after abstaining from the novel of fact all these years – since 1919 – & N[ight]. & D[ay]. indeed, I find myself infinitely delighting in facts for a change, & in possession of quantities beyond counting; though I feel now & then the tug to vision, but resist it. This is the true line, I am sure, after *The Waves* – *The Pargiters* – this is what leads naturally on to the next stage – the essay-novel.<sup>12</sup>

Woolf's conceit was that both essays and extracts were the work of a woman novelist invited to give a speech to an audience of professional women, the extracts being from *The Pargiters*, her novel in progress, and designed to be illustrative of the points she makes in her talk.

At this point in the novel's development words flowed from her pen and the project's imaginative and documentary elements seemed to meld without difficulty. By 10 November Woolf had finished the 'child scene – the man exposing himself – in the Pargiters.'<sup>13</sup> The following day she began the third essay of *The Pargiters* and she commenced the third chapter a week after that; she was working on the fourth essay and the fourth chapter towards the end of the month and on 30 November she began the fifth essay. 'I've almost written out my first fury', she wrote in her diary on 17 December 1932, '– 234 typewritten pages since Oct. 10th . . . But the fun of the book is to come, with Magdalena & Elvira.'<sup>14</sup> Two days later, on 19 December 1932, she noted that she had 'written 60,320 words since Oct. 11th. I think this must be far the quickest going of any of my books: comes far ahead of *Orlando* or *The Lighthouse*. But then those 60 thousand will have to be sweated & dried into 30 or 40 thousand

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– a great grind to come. Never mind. I have secured the outline & fixed a shape for the rest.’<sup>15</sup> At some point the following month, January 1933, she finished the opening section of her book, comprising six factual essays and five fictional ‘extracts’. (In time, this material, representing the whole of the first volume and 84 pages of the second volume of the eight holograph notebooks in the Berg Collection, would be transformed into the ‘1880’ chapter of *The Years* and published in its own right in 1977 as *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of ‘The Years’*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska.<sup>16</sup>) Woolf now saw the book ahead of her ‘as a curiously uneven time sequence – a series of great balloons, linked by straight narrow passages of narrative.’<sup>17</sup>

However, to extrapolate the *modus operandi* of *The Pargiters* as far forward as 1900, never mind 2023, must have seemed a daunting prospect to Woolf, while in the same month, January 1933, she also confessed that she had become ‘afraid of the didactic’.<sup>18</sup> A week later, on 2 February, she decided to leave out ‘the interchapters – compacting them in the text’,<sup>19</sup> so great was her worry that her book would end up being too polemical, too propagandist, too artless and too long, if she continued with the ‘Essay-Novel’ method. Woolf had long objected to fiction being used for the promotion of personal hobby-horses or the airing of bugbears and the most surprising aspect of her change of attitude is that she had seriously contemplated placing pure fact and pure fiction side by side in the first place, as opposed to subsuming ‘fact’ into fiction with all the imaginative subtlety at her command: few novelists, as she recognized in her near contemporaneous essay on Turgenev, are able to ‘combine the fact and the vision’.<sup>20</sup> In October 1932 she had said of D. H. Lawrence (on reading his *Letters*, published that year), ‘its the preaching that rasps me . . . Art is being rid of all preaching’,<sup>21</sup> just as on many other occasions she had levelled charges of bluntness at the fiction of H. G. Wells. Above all, in the closely related sequence of essays (‘Modern Fiction’ (1919), ‘Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown’ (1923) and ‘Character in Fiction’ (1924)) that were instrumental in helping Woolf see her way forward as a novelist, she repeatedly and ever more assuredly stated her belief ‘that all novels . . . deal with character, and that it is to express character – not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire, that the form of the novel . . . has been evolved’.<sup>22</sup> So it is not really surprising that even as she worked on *The Pargiters* Woolf continued to voice her misgivings about the compatibility of art and propaganda, the advisability of attempting to combine ‘the novel of fact’ and ‘the tug to vision’, just as she would go on to



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express her 'horror of the Aldous [Huxley] novel [of ideas]' in 1935<sup>23</sup> and argue for the need to keep art and politics separate in 'Why Art Today Follows Politics' (1936).<sup>24</sup>

'Oh I'm so tired!', Woolf confided in her diary on 6 April 1933. 'I've written myself out over *The Pargiters* this last lap. I've brought it down to Elvira in bed – the scene I've had in my mind for so many months, but I can't write it now. Its the turn of the book. It needs a great shove to swing it round on its hinges.'<sup>25</sup> By 25 April, with the factual and visionary elements of her project still jostling together productively in her mind, she was envisioning her novel in progress as 'a terrific affair. It must be bold & adventurous. I want to give the whole of the present society – nothing less: facts, as well as the vision. And to combine them both. I mean, *The Waves* going on simultaneously with *Night & Day*. Is this possible? . . . It should aim at immense breadth & immense intensity . . . And there are to be millions of ideas but no preaching – history, politics, feminism, art, literature – in short a summing up of all I know, feel, laugh at, despise, like, admire hate & so on'.<sup>26</sup> 'Is this possible?': a question that would hang over every word of *The Years*'s textual history.

Though occasionally perplexed as to how she could 'give ordinary waking Arnold Bennett life the form of art?',<sup>27</sup> Woolf nevertheless found herself 'in full flood'<sup>28</sup> with her novel for the remainder of 1933. She would eventually produce around 200,000 words between February that year and 30 September 1934, even though she also wrote (and published) *Flush* (1933) during this period. This is the mass of writing, to date unpublished but currently being transcribed and edited for publication by Stuart N. Clarke, that follows after page 84 of notebook two of the Berg holograph and fills the remaining six notebooks. By August 1934, however, Woolf was beset with further anxieties about what she had written: 'Is it all too shrill & voluble? And then the immense length, & the perpetual ebbs and flows of invention. So divinely happy one day; so jaded the next.'<sup>29</sup> Yet only a few days later she writes that she is 'almost within sight of the end. racing along: becoming more & more dramatic.'<sup>30</sup> For the past year she had been referring to her work in progress as 'Here and Now',<sup>31</sup> but she began to have doubts about this title. 'I think I see the end of *Here & Now* (or *Music*, or *Dawn* or whatever I shall call it)', she writes on 17 August 1934.<sup>32</sup> Other possible titles that would come into play at one point or another are: *Sons and Daughters*; *Daughters and Sons*; *Ordinary People*; *The Caravan*; *Other People's Houses* and, of course, *The Years*.<sup>33</sup> Woolf finished her first draft of the novel on 30 September 1934: 'The last words of the nameless

book were written 10 minutes ago; quite calmly too. 900 pages . . . Lord God what an amount of re-writing that means! But also, how heavenly to have brought the pen to a stop at the last line, even if most of the lines have now to be rubbed out.’<sup>34</sup>

Having reached this stage, Woolf experienced a feeling of dejection similar to the moods that had enveloped her on completing *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*,<sup>35</sup> but on 15 November she nevertheless began the task of ‘compacting the vast mass’ of *The Pargiters*.<sup>36</sup> Hardly had she begun this process of revision, however, when a second, closely connected project firmed itself up in her mind. On 1 January 1935 she expresses a desire to write a book called ‘On being despised’,<sup>37</sup> a prototype of *Three Guineas* and a project clearly related to her January 1931 concept of writing a more explicit and robust sequel to *A Room of One’s Own*. ‘I shall reduce *The Caravan* (so called suddenly) to 150,000: & shall finish retyping in May.’<sup>38</sup> Her steepest challenge at this point in the novel’s evolution concerned Sara and the scenes she appears in – ‘Sara is the real difficulty: I cant get her into the main stream, yet she is essential’<sup>39</sup> – and Woolf was also very much aware that if she were not careful ‘On being despised’ could easily become a serious distraction as she struggled to reduce her novel. As she put it on 14 April 1935:

Let me make a note that it would be much wiser not to attempt to sketch a draft of *On Being Despised*, or whatever it is to be called, unless the P.s is done with. I was vagrant this morning & made a rash attempt, with the interesting discovery that one cant propagate at the same time as write fiction. And as this fiction is dangerously near propaganda, I must keep my hands clear.<sup>40</sup>

Slowly, painfully, her novel continued to materialize from its baggy cocoon, but by the time she had completed her ‘first wild retyping’<sup>41</sup> of it in mid-July 1935 she was still confronted with 740 pages and the need to excise a great many more words. She wished to ‘bring in interludes – I mean spaces of silence, & poetry & contrast’, but felt too exhausted to do so.<sup>42</sup> On 16 August she referred to her novel in progress as ‘this impossible eternal book’, but she still set herself the task of typing up one hundred pages per week;<sup>43</sup> in October 1935 she complained to Victoria Ocampo about her ‘corpulent and most obstinate novel’,<sup>44</sup> and on 26 November she called it ‘this incredibly tough old serpent – a serpent without any of the charm of the Nile, only with all the toughness of what is evil and perennial . . . my book decays upon me like the body of the albatross.’ In the same letter to Ethel Smyth Woolf vowed to finish the book ‘by Christmas’<sup>45</sup> and by