Letteratura inglese (CdS LETTERE)
Spiriti inquieti alle soglie della modernità
PAOLO BUGLIANI

A. LA GRANDE GUERRA E LA SUA RAPPRESENTAZIONE LETTERARIA

1. L'ABISSO. H. James, Lettera dell'agosto 1914

The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness by the wanton feat of those two infamous autocrats is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the while making for and meaning is too tragic for words. (384)

2. I POETI E LA GUERRA, I POETI DELLA GUERRA. V. Woolf, "Mr Sassoon's Poems" (1918) *Essays* 3. 120.

As it is the poet's gift to give expression to the moments of insight of experience that come to him now and then, so in following him we have to sketch for ourselves a map of those submerged lands which lie between one pinnacle and the next. If he is a true poet, at least we fill up in thought the space between one poem and another with speculations that are half guesses and half anticipations of what is to come next. He offers us a new vision of the world; how is the light about to fall? What ranges, what horizons will it reveal? At least if he is a sincere artist this is so, and to us Mr Sassoon seems undoubtedly sincere. **He is a poet**, we believe, **meaning by that that we cannot fancy him putting down these thoughts in any form save the one that he has chosen**. His vision comes to him directly; he seems almost always, before he began to get his words into order, to have had one of those puzzling shocks of emotion which the world deals by such incongruous methods, to the poet often, to the rest of us too seldom for our souls' good. […]

There are **poems about the war**, to begin with. If you chance to read one of them by itself you may be inclined to think that it is a very clever poem, chiefly designed with its **realism** and its surface **cynicism** to shock the prosperous and sentimental. […] What Mr Sassoon has felt to be the most **sordid** and **horrible** experiences in the world he makes us feel to be so in a measure which no other poet of the war has achieved. As these jaunty matter-of-fact statements succeed each other such loathing, such hatred accumulates behind them that we say to ourselves , "*Yes, this is going on; and we are sitting here watching it*", with a new shock of surprise, with an uneasy desire to leave our place in the audience, which is a tribute to Mr Sassoon's power as a realist. **It is realism of the right, of the poetic kind.**

3. COME OSSERVARE LA GUERRA. V. Woolf, "The War from the Street" (1919) *Essays* 4. 3. Recensione a D. B. Metchim, *Our Own History of the War from a South London View* (1918)

Mr Metchim has discovered the very important truth that the history of the war is not and never will be written from our point of view. The suspicion that this applies to wars in the past also has been much increased by living through four years almost entirely composed of what journalists call 'historic days'. No one who has taken stock of his own impressions since 4 august 1914, can possibly believe that history as it is written closely resembles history as it is lived

4. LA (GRANDE) GUERRA NON È GARANZIA DI (GRANDE) POESIA T.S. Eliot, "T.S. Eliot on Poetry in Wartime"

The greatest war poem of Europe is Homer's Iliad: it was not written during the Trojan War; and, although Homer was a Greek, I think that he makes the Greeks appear rather more unpleasant than the

Trojans. Dante, no doubt was passionately devoted to his native Florence, and he certainly lived through a period of disorder; but I think that his love of Florence is revealed not by recital of her martial glories, but by his vehement lament over her corruption. At the time of the Napoleonic Wars, both Wordsworth and Goethe were living and working: neither of them can be accused of lack of public spirit, but neither is conspicuous for having made poetry out of the wars of his time . . . There is no first-rate poem about the victory over the Armada or the Battle of Trafalgar.

5. ALTRI CONFLITTI. V. Woolf, "Thoughts of Peace in an Air Raid" (1941)

"I tedeschi sono passati sopra questa casa ieri sera e la sera prima. Eccoli un'altra volta. È una strana esperienza, questa di stare sdraiata nel buio e ascoltare il ronzio di un calabrone che in qualsiasi momento può pungerci mortalmente. È un rumore che non permette di pensare freddamente e coerentemente alla pace. Eppure è un rumore che dovrebbe costringerci – assai più che non gli inni e le preghiere – a pensare alla pace"
[…]
"Il rumore di sega sulle nostre teste aumenta. Tutti i riflettori puntano in alto, verso un punto sito esattamente sopra questo tetto. In qualunque momento può cadere una bomba in questa stanza. Uno due tre quattro cinque sei… passano i secondi. La bomba non è caduta. Ma durante quei secondi di attesa, l'attività del pensiero è cessata. E anche è cessato ogni sentimento, tranne un opaco timore. Un chiodo fissava tutto l'essere a un'asse di legno duro. L'emozione della paura e dell'odio è pertanto sterile, non fertile. Non appena la paura scompare, la mente affiora di nuovo e istintivamente cerca di rivivere creando. Siccome la stanza è al buio, può creare soltanto con la memoria. Si protende verso il ricordo di altri agosti, a Bayreuth, ascoltando Wagner; a Roma, passeggiando per la campagna romana; a Londra."
[…]
"Finalmente tutti i cannoni hanno smesso di sparare. Tutti i riflettori si sono spenti. Il buio naturale della notte d'estate ritorna. Si sentono nuovamente gli innocenti rumori della campagna. Una mela cade per terra. Un gufo grida, spostandosi da un albero all'altro."

B. VIRGINIA WOOLF NÉE VIRGINIA ADELINE STEPHEN

1. UNA FAMIGLIA MOLTO RAMIFICATA. H. Lee, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography* (1997)

Because this is a literary family, its inheritance is of course dominated by books and memoirs and letters. Hundreds of Leslie's books became mixed up with Virginia's and Leonard's, and when they moved house, their floors were awash with the Dictionary of National Biography. Family records – Leslie's grandfather's memoir, Leslie's Mausoleum Book and the 'Calendar of Correspondence' in which he transcribed some of his letters, his mother's diary, his sister's journal, his sister-in-law's memoirs, the correspondence of Leslie and Julia, Leslie and Thoby, Julia's stories – all these were circulated and re-read and handed down. Favourite family stories – usually the most grotesque and gruesome – were regularly exchanged like items of jewellery or furniture

2. MADRE. V. WOOLF, "A Sketch of the Past"*, Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writings*

Until I was in the forties- I could settle the date by seeing when I wrote To the Lighthouse, but am too casual here to bother to do it the presence of my mother obsessed me.* I could hear her voice, see her, imagine what she would do or say as I went about my day's doings. She was one of invisible presences who after all play so important a part in every life. This influence, by which I mean the consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, or repel us the other and make us different from that; has never been analysed in any of those Lives which I so much enjoy reading, or very superficially.

3. PADRE. V. WOOLF, "A Sketch of the Past"*, Moments of Being: Autobiographical Writing*

Through his books I can get at the writer father still; but when Nessa and I inherited the rule of the house, I knew nothing of the sociable father, and the writer father was much more exacting and pressing than he is now that I find him only in books; and it was the tyrant father-the exacting, the violent, the histrionic, the demonstrative, the self-centred, the self-pitying, the deaf, the appealing, the alternately loved and hated father- that dominated me then. It was like being shut up in the same cage with a wild beast. Suppose I, at fifteen, was a nervous, gibbering, little monkey, always spitting or cracking a nut and shying the shells about, and mopping and mowing, and leaping into dark corners· and then swinging in rapture across the cage, he was the pacing, dangerous, morose lion; a lion who was sulky and angry and injured; and suddenly ferocious, and then very humble, and then majestic; and then lying dusty and fly pestered in a corner of the cage.

Now I shall try to describe the cage-22 Hyde Park Gate-as it was in July 1897· Two nights ago I lay awake in Mecklenburgh Square going over each of the rooms. I began at the basement; in the servants' sitting room. It was at the back; very low and very dark; there was an ottoman covered in shiny black American cloth along one wall; and a vast cracked picture of Mr and Mrs Pattle covered the wall above it.

4. AMICI. V. Rosner, "Introduction", *The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group* (2014)

There can be no doubt that the Bloomsbury Group continues to resonate today and that its legacy is still evolving. It might well be said that no other English-speaking gathering of friends in the past two hundred years has achieved such prominence or exerted such sway. This outsize influence derives in part from the range of the group's endeavors: from paintings to politics, finance to fiction, design to dance. While there is no unified Bloomsbury philosophy, the group was bound together both by lifelong ties of affection and by shared ideas about aesthetics, philosophy, and psychology. In our age of specialization, Bloomsbury's willingness to integrate ideas from outside their individual specializations is a signal reminder of the benefits that can accrue to the omnivorous intellect.

The Bloomsbury Group was an intellectual and social coterie of British writers, painters, critics, and an economist who were at the height of their powers during the interwar period. The boundaries of the group were loose and

fluid, though any membership roster would need to include Clive Bell,Vanessa Bell, E. M. Forster, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant, Maynard Keynes, Desmond MacCarthy, Molly MacCarthy, Saxon Sydney-Turner, Lytton Strachey, Adrian Stephen, Thoby Stephen, Leonard Woolf, and Virginia Woolf. Other key associates were Dora Carrington, David Garnett, Lydia Lopokova, Ottoline Morrell, and Vita Sackville-West. There has been no little amount of conjecture about who precisely should be deemed "Bloomsbury," and perhaps it is best to abide by Leonard Woolf's reference to nothing more than a "group of friends," to wit: "I was . . . one of a small number of persons who did in fact eventually form a kind of group of friends living in or around that district of London legitimately called Bloomsbury." The modesty of Woolf's claim seems deliberately to belie the outsize nature of the group's subsequent achievements.

5. DIVENTARE SCRITTRICI (1). V. Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book", *The Common Reader* II (1932)

But also we can read such books with another aim, not to throw light on literature, not to become familiar with famous people, but to refresh and exercise our own creative powers. Is there not an open window on the right hand of the bookcase? How delightful to stop reading and look out! How stimulating the scene is, in its unconsciousness, its irrelevance, its perpetual movement—the colts galloping round the field, the woman filling her pail at the well, the donkey throwing back his head and emitting his long, acrid moan. The greater part of any library is nothing but the record of such fleeting moments in the lives of men, women, and donkeys. Every literature, as it grows old, has its rubbish-heap, its record of vanished moments and forgotten lives told in faltering and feeble accents that have perished.

6. DIVENTARE SCRITTRICI (2). V. Woolf, "On Not Knowing Greek", *The Common Reader I* (1925)

These are all difficulties, sources of misunderstanding, of distorted and romantic, of servile and snobbish passion. Yet even for the unlearned some certainties remain. Greek is the impersonal literature; it is also the literature of masterpieces. There are no schools; no forerunners; no heirs. We cannot trace a gradual process working in many men imperfectly until it expresses itself adequately at last in one. Again, there is always about Greek literature that air of vigour which permeates an "age", whether it is the age of Aeschylus, or Racine, or Shakespeare. One generation at least in that fortunate time is blown on to be writers to the extreme; to attain that unconsciousness which means that the consciousness is stimulated to the highest extent; to surpass the limits of small triumphs and tentative experiments. Thus we have Sappho with her constellations of adjectives; Plato daring extravagant flights of poetry in the midst of prose; Thucydides, constricted and contracted; Sophocles gliding like a shoal of trout smoothly and quietly, apparently motionless, and then, with a flicker of fins, off and away; while in the Odyssey we have what remains the triumph of narrative, the clearest and at the same time the most romantic story of the fortunes of men and women. The Odyssey is merely a story of adventure, the instinctive story-telling of a sea-faring race. So we may begin it, reading quickly in the spirit of children wanting amusement to find out what happens next. But here is nothing immature; here are full-grown people, crafty, subtle, and passionate.

7. DIVENTARE SCRITTRICI (3). V. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith, let us say. Shakespeare himself went, very probably,—his mother was an heiress—to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin—Ovid, Virgil and Horace—and the elements of grammar and logic. He was, it is well known, a wild boy who poached rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had, rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighbourhood, who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practising his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and

Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter—indeed, more likely than not she was the apple of her father's eye. Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly but was careful to hide them or set do not go to heaven. Women cannot write the plays of fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighbouring woolstapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. He would give her a chain of beads or a fine petticoat, he said; and there were tears in his eyes. How could she disobey him? How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager—a fat, looselipped man—guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting—no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted—you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last—for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows—at last Nick Greene the actormanager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so—who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body?—killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross– roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle.

8. SCRIVERE ROMANZI MODERNI (1). V. Woolf, *Bennet e la signora Brown*

9. SCRIVERE ROMANZI MODERNI (2). V. Woolf, "Modern Fiction", *The Common Reader I* (1925)

Nel fare una rassegna del romanzo moderno, anche la più libera e superficiale, è difficile non dare per scontato che la pratica moderna di questa arte sia in un certo senso un perfezionamento di quella vecchia. Si può affermare che con i loro strumenti primitivi e i loro materiali elementari, Fielding fu abilissimo e Jane Austen ancora di più, ma proviamo a confrontare le loro possibilità con le nostre! I loro capolavori acquistano immediatamente una strana aria di semplicità.

[…]

"Ma la vita è veramente così? È così che devono essere scritti i romanzi?

Guardatevi dentro e la vita sembra molto lontana dall'essere «così». Analizzate per un attimo una mente normale in un giorno normale. La mente riceve una miriade di impressioni – futili, fantastiche, evanescenti, o scolpite con una punta d'acciaio. Esse ci giungono da ogni parte, in uno scroscio incessante di innumerevoli atomi; e mentre ricadono, mentre prendono forma nella vita di un qualsiasi lunedì o martedì, acquistano un accento diverso dal solito; l'attimo importante diventa questo e non quello; quindi, se uno scrittore fosse un uomo libero e non uno schiavo, se potesse scrivere quello che vuole, e non quello che deve, se potesse fondare il suo lavoro sul proprio modo di sentire e non sulle convenzioni, non esisterebbe nessun intreccio, nessuna commedia, nessuna tragedia, nessuna storia d'amore o catastrofe nello stile comunemente accettato, e forse nemmeno un bottone cucito secondo i dettami dei sarti di Bond Street. La vita non è una serie di lampioncini disposti in ordine simmetrico; la vita è un alone luminoso, un involucro semitrasparente che ci racchiude dall'alba della coscienza fino alla fine. Non è forse compito del romanziere esprimere questo spirito mutevole, misterioso e indefinito, per quanto possa

mostrarsi complesso e aberrante, con una miscela possibilmente priva di elementi esterni ed estranei? Non chiediamo solo più coraggio e sincerità; vogliamo suggerire che la materia del romanzo è un po' diversa da quella che l'abitudine vorrebbe farci credere.

10. SCRIVERE ROMANZI MODERNI (3). V. Woolf, "The Narrow Bridge of Art" [1927], *Granite and Rainbow* (ed. L. Woolf, 1958)

For of course poetry has always been overwhelmingly on the side of beauty. She has always insisted on certain rights, such as rhyme, metre, poetic diction. She has never been used for the **common purpose of life**. Prose has taken all the **dirty work** on to her own shoulders; has answered letters, paid bills, written articles, made speeches, served the needs of businessmen, shopkeepers, lawyers, soldiers, peasants. Poetry has remained **aloof** in the possession of her priests. **She has perhaps paid the penalty for this seclusion by becoming a little stiff**.
[…]
If, then, we are daring and risk ridicule and try to see in what direction we who seem to be moving so fast are going, we may guess that we are going in the direction of prose and that in ten or fifteen years' time prose will be used for purposes for which prose has never been used before. That **cannibal**, the **novel**, which has devoured so many forms of art will by then have devoured even more. We shall be forced to **invent new names** for the different books which masquerade under this one heading. And it is possible that there will be among the so-called novels one which we shall scarcely know how to christen. **It will be written in prose, but in prose which has many of the characteristics of poetry.** It will have something of the exaltation of poetry, but much of the ordinariness of prose. It will be dramatic, and yet not a play. It will be read, not acted. By what name we are to call it is not a matter of very great importance.
[…]
For, unfortunately, it seems true that some renunciation is inevitable. **You cannot cross the narrow bridge of art carrying all its tools in your hands**. Some you must leave behind, or you will drop them in midstream or, what is worse, overbalance and be drowned yourself. So, then, this unnamed variety of the novel will be written standing back from life, because in that way a larger view is to be obtained of some important features of it; it will be written in prose, because prose, if you free it from **the beast of burden** work which so many novelists necessarily lay upon it, of carrying loads of details, bushels of fact – prose thus treated will show itself capable of rising high from the ground, not in one dart, but in sweeps and circles, and of keeping at the same time in touch with the amusements and idiosyncrasies of human character in daily life.

11. SATURARE L'ATOMO. V. Woolf, *Diary* November 28th 1928

The idea has come to me that what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment; this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner: it is false, unreal, merely conventional. Why admit anything to literature that is not poetry—by which I mean saturated? Is that not my grudge against novelists? that they select nothing? The poets succeeding by simplifying: practically everything is left out. I want to put practically everything in: yet to saturate.

C. La festa di Clarissa e la fine di Septimus

12. GENESI. V. Woolf, *Diary* October 14th 1922

I want to be through the splash & swimming in calm water again. I want to be writing unobserved. Mrs Dalloway has branched into a book; & I adumbrate here a study of insanity & suicide: the world seen by the sane & the insane side by side – something like that. Septimus Smith? – is that a good name? - & to be more close to the fact than Jacob: but I think Jacon was a necessary step, for me, in working free. And now I must use this benignant page for making our a scheme of work.

13. V. Woolf, *Diary* June 19th 1923

Am I writing *The Hour*s from deep emotion? Of course the mad part tries me so much, makes my mind squirt so badly that I can hardly face spending the next weeks at it. It's a question though of these characters. People, like Arnold Bennett, say I can't create, or didn't in Jacob's Room, characters that survive. My answer is—but I leave that to the Nation: it's only the old argument that character is dissipated into shreds now; the old post-Dostoievsky argument. I daresay it's true, however, that I haven't that "reality" gift. I insubstantise, wilfully to some extent, distrusting reality—its cheapness. But to get further. Have I the power of conveying the true reality?"

14. TUNNELING PROCESS. V. Woolf, *Diary* October 15th 1923

I am now in the thick of the mad scene in Regent's Park. I find I write it by clinging as tight to fact as I can, and write perhaps 50 words a morning. This I must rewrite some day. I think the design is more remarkable than in any of my books. I daresay I shan't be able to carry it out. I am stuffed with ideas for it. I feel I can use up everything I've ever thought. Certainly, I'm less coerced than I've yet been. The doubtful point is, I think, the character of Mrs. Dalloway. It may be too stiff, too glittering and tinselly. But then I can bring innumerable other characters to her support. I wrote the 100th page today. Of course, I've only been feeling my way into it—up till last August anyhow. It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it. This is my prime discovery so far; and the fact that I've been so long finding it proves, I think, how false Percy Lubbock's doctrine is—that you can do this sort of thing consciously. One feels about in a state of misery—indeed I made up my mind one night to abandon the book—and then one touches the hidden spring.

15. LA CONFIGURAZIONE DEL TEMPO. P. Ricoeur, *Tempo e Racconto II* (1984)

La tecnica narrativa di *Mrs. Dalloway* è assai sottile.
Il primo procedimento, il più facile da scoprire, consiste nello scandire la progressione della giornata con avvenimenti di poco conto; con l'eccezione del suicidio di Septimus, certo, questi avvenimenti talora assolutamente irrilevanti conducono il racconto verso la sua attesa conclusione: la festa data da Mrs. Dalloway; lunga sarebbe la lista degli andirivieni, degli incontri, degli accadimenti: sulla strada del mattino, il principe di Galles, o un'altra figura principesca, passa in vettura; un velivolo dispiega uno striscione pubblicitario a lettere maiuscole che la folla scandisce; Clarissa rientra per mettere a punto il suo abito da sera; Peter Walsh, improvvisamente rientrato dalle Indie, la sorprende nel suo lavoro di cucito; dopo aver smosso le ceneri del passato, Clarissa lo bacia; Peter si allontana in lacrime; attraversa gli stessi luoghi di Clarissa e s'imbatte nella coppia di Septimus e di Rezia, la piccola modista di Milano diventata sua moglie; Rezia conduce suo marito da un primo psichiatra, il dottor Holmes; Richard è incerto se acquistare un collier di perle per sua moglie e sceglie delle rose (ah, queste rose che percorrono da un capo all'altro l'intero racconto e si fissano anche un momento sulla tappezzeria della camera di Septimus condannato dai medici al riposo): Richard, troppo pudico, non potrà pronunciare il messaggio d'amore che queste rose significano; Miss Kilman, la pia e laida istitutrice di Elizabeth, la quale la abbandona nel bel mezzo delle sue paste al cioccolato: Septimus, spinto dal dottor Bradshaw a lasciare sua moglie per entrare in una clinica in

campagna, si getta dalla finestra; Peter si decide ad andare alla festa di Clarissa; viene la grande scena della serata di Mrs. Dalloway, l'annuncio del suicidio di Septimus da parte del dottor Bradshaw; il modo in cui Mrs. Dalloway riceve la notizia del suicidio di questo giovanotto che ella non conosce, decide del tono che la stessa Clarissa darà al compimento della serata, che segna anche la morte del giorno. **Questi avvenimenti, infimi o rilevanti, sono scanditi dall'eco dei colpi possenti del Big Ben e di altre campane di Londra. […] i colpi del Big Ben hanno il loro posto autentico nell'esperienza viva che i diversi personaggi fanno del tempo.**
Su questo primo procedimento di accumulo progressivo, si innesta il procedimento ben più noto della tecnica narrativa di *Mrs. Dalloway*. E mentre il racconto è portato avanti grazie a tutto ciò che avviene, per quanto poco significativo sia, nel tempo raccontato, è al tempo stesso come portato indietro, in un certo senso ritardato, mediante ampie **escursioni nel passato**, che costituiscono altrettanti avvenimenti di pensiero, interpolati in lunghe sequenze tra brevi slanci di azione.

16. LA CONFIGURAZIONE DELLO SPAZIO V. Woolf, *Diary* May 26th 1924

London is enchanting. I step out upon a tawny coloured magic carpet, it seems, and get carried into beauty without raising a finger. The nights are amazing, with all the white porticos and broad silent avenues. And people pop in and out, lightly, divertingly like rabbits; and I look down Southampton Row, wet as a seal's back or red and yellow with sunshine, and watch the omnibuses going and coming and hear the old crazy organs. One of these days I will write about London, and how it takes up the private life and carries it on, without any effort. Faces passing lift up my mind; prevent it from settling, as it does in the stillness at Rodmell.

But my mind is full of The Hours. I am now saying that I will write at it for 4 months, June, July, August and September, and then it will be done, and I shall put it away for three months, during which I shall finish my essays; and then that will be—October, November, December—January; and I shall revise it January February March April; and in April my essays will come out, and in May my novel. Such is my programme. It is reeling off my mind fast, and free now; as ever since the crisis of August last, which I count the beginning of it, it has gone quick, being much interrupted though. It is becoming more analytical and human I think; less lyrical; but I feel as if I had loosed the bonds pretty completely and could pour everything in. If so—good. Reading it remains. I aim at 80,000 words this time. And I like London for writing it, partly because, as I say, life upholds one; and with my squirrel cage mind it's a great thing to be stopped circling. Then to see human beings freely and quickly is an infinite gain to me. And I can dart in and out and refresh my stagnancy.