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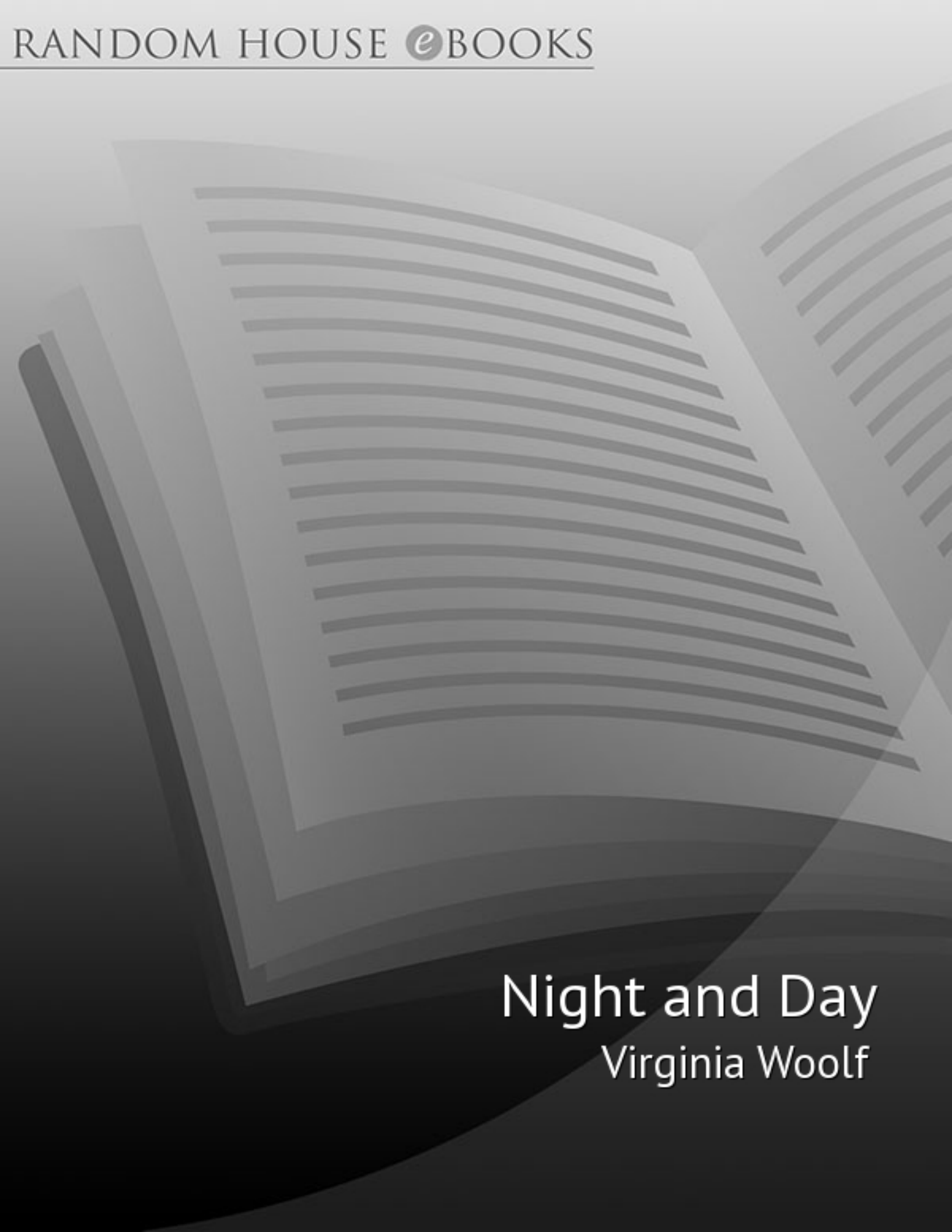

Night and Day

Virginia Woolf

Contents

About the Book

In *Night and Day*, Virginia Woolf portrays her elder sister Vanessa in the person of Katharine Hilbery – the gifted daughter of a distinguished literary family, trapped in an environment which will not allow her to express herself.

Looking at questions raised by love and marriage, *Night and Day* paints an unforgettable picture of the London intelligensia before the First World War, with psychological insight, compassion and humour.

About the Author

Virginia Woolf was born in London in 1882, the daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen, first editor of *The Dictionary of National Biography*. After his death in 1904 Virginia and her sister, the painter Vanessa Bell, moved to Bloomsbury and became the centre of 'The Bloomsbury Group'. This informal collective of artists and writers which included Lytton Strachey and Roger Fry, exerted a powerful influence over early twentieth-century British culture.

In 1912 Virginia married Leonard Woolf, a writer and social reformer. Three years later, her first novel *The Voyage Out* was published, followed by *Night and Day* (1919) and *Jacob's Room* (1922). These first novels show the development of Virginia Woolf's distinctive and innovative narrative style. It was during this time that she and Leonard Woolf founded The Hogarth Press with the publication of the co-authored *Two Stories* in 1917, hand-printed in the dining room of their house in Surrey.

Between 1925 and 1931 Virginia Woolf produced what are now regarded as her finest masterpieces, from *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) to the poetic and highly experimental novel *The Waves* (1931). She also maintained an astonishing output of literary criticism, short fiction, journalism and biography, including the playfully subversive *Orlando* (1928) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929) a passionate feminist essay. This intense creative productivity was often matched by periods of mental illness, from which she had suffered since her mother's death in 1895. On 28 March 1941, a few months before the

publication of her final novel, *Between the Acts,* Virginia Woolf committed suicide.

Also by Virginia Woolf

Novels

The Voyage Out
Jacob's Room
Mrs Dalloway
To the Lighthouse
The Waves
Orlando
The Years
Between the Acts

Shorter Fiction

The Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction

Non-Fiction and Other Works

Flush
Roger Fry
A Room of One's Own and *Three Guineas*
The Common Reader Vols 1 and 2
Selected Diaries (edited by Anne Oliver Bell)
Selected Letters (edited by Joanne Trautmann Banks)

To
VANESSA BELL

But, looking for a phrase,
I found none to stand
beside your name

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Night and Day

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY
Jo Shapcott and Angelica Garnett

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

Foreword

Jeanette Winterson

Virginia Woolf was a great writer. Her voice is distinctive; her style is her own; her work is an active influence on other writers and a subtle influence on what we have come to expect from modern literature.

She was an experimenter who managed to combine the pleasure of narrative with those forceful interruptions that the mind needs to wake itself. Familiar things lull us. We do not notice what we already know. In art newness and boldness is vital, not as a rebuke to the past, but as a way of keeping the past alive. Virginia Woolf was keenly aware of what she had inherited but she knew that her inheritance must be put to work. Every generation needs its own living art that is connected to what has gone before but that is not a copy of it.

Virginia Woolf was not an imitator – she was an innovator who re-defined the novel and pointed the way towards its future possibilities.

Jo Shapcott on *Night and Day*

> ‘D’you know, you’re extraordinarily queer,’ she said. ‘Every one seems to me a little queer. Perhaps it’s the effect of London.’

Anyone who puts into print can be expected to be poked and peered at, jostled and smudged. For one writer to take up pen and apply it to another can feel like betrayal, as bad as publishing private letters. I feel something of this reticence about Virginia Woolf who has become an ally through her books. She herself was pretty sanguine about such matters: ‘I could wish (privately speaking) that the introducer did not think it necessary to drag in my private life. I wish one could keep that out of writing and publishing. But I suppose one cannot complain, and people must make these guesses even, if, as in the present case, the guess is wrong.’ (Letter of 9th October, 1937 to Donald Brace).

Virginia Woolf first came into my reading and writing life when I was twenty-two and devoured *Mrs Dalloway, A Room of One’s Own* and her diaries in quick succession. Who she was and why she was important to me was crystal clear in the way it is utterly obvious why X is one’s friend and Y not; the kind of truth which is both the most important and the most difficult to explain. She is a novelist for poets. Perhaps that’s why she found her way into my young dreams: in them I was the one who walked by rivers with pockets full of stones though I never stepped in the water. Those dreams gave way to a new series full of

transcendental swimming and flying, so vivid that the exhilaration which accompanied them still leaks into my consciousness. These images I think I owed to her extraordinary ambition and especially to the energy with which she pushed experience into form. I loved, too, her acknowledgement of elusiveness of feeling, the impossibility of her task: in her novels, what is real is depicted as concurrently absent and present.

But it's no easier for her modern public to say who she is than it is for me. At a conference, held in 1992 and dedicated entirely to her, the titles of the papers describe her variously as: Virginia Woolf: modernist, novelist, and critic. Virginia Woolf: diarist, feminist, sapphist, and socialist. Virginia Woolf: pacifist, incest survivor, and activist. Virginia Woolf: "Invalid Lady of Bloomsbury", 'madwoman', and foremother of women's studies.

Woolf would have been entirely comfortable with the obvious and complete elusiveness of her own self. In *Night and Day*, the heroine, Katherine Hilbery has the task of helping her mother to complete a biography of her grandfather, the eminent poet, Alardyce. It's clear that the straggling notes, references and papers can never be put together sensibly and that he will never be known.

Katherine Hilbery, said to have been modelled on Virginia Woolf's sister, Vanessa Bell, is the focus of the novel. Leonard, clearly fascinated by both sisters, wrote of Vanessa:

> 'To many people she appeared frightening and formidable...I myself never found her formidable, partly because she had the most beautiful speaking voice I have ever heard, and partly because of her tranquillity and quietude. (The tranquillity was to some extent superficial; it did not extend deep down in her mind, for there in the depths there was also an extreme sensitivity, a nervous tension...)'

Words as expressions of truth or feeling are treacherous to Katherine Hilbery. She falls back on silence or gesture. So the other characters revolve around her, waiting for a signal from her reticent intelligence, a trick which often results in everyone else being forced into ill-considered words, spoken too soon.

A literary meeting described early in the novel is just like a thousand and one literary meetings in London in my own time: ‘Katherine looked at Ralph Denham, who was now pounding his way through the metaphysics of metaphor with Rodney,…’ You can imagine yourself at today’s Poetry Society or at a South Bank Centre event: “‘They’re exactly like a flock of sheep, aren’t they?’ she [Mary Datchet] said, referring to the noise that rose from the scattered bodies beneath her.”

The real touchstone in the novel, for me, though – maybe its real heroine – is London: its night time streets, its offices, shop windows, its embankments, taxi cabs, and botanical gardens. And it is, outside, in the corporeal streets of London or in the open air of Kew Gardens that Woolf’s characters undergo their transformations.

Virginia and Leonard Woolf had a good collection of maps in their library including nine of London: they had a Bartholomew’s Town Plan, The London Street Guide, a Stanford’s four inch and even a specialist guide for ‘the Antiquarian Tourist and Sportsman’ as well as the usual bus and underground maps. They are well used and well worn.

But her familiar London was quite small, bounded by Tottenham Court Road, Euston Road, The Inns of Court and the river, always the river flowing and in flux. The addresses where Woolf lived are mostly in this area: Gordon Square, Fitzroy Square, Brunswick Square, Clifford’s Inn, Tavistock Square, Mecklenburgh Square.

> ‘London, in the first days of spring, had buds that open and flowers that suddenly shake their petals – white, purple, or crimson – in competition with the display in the garden beds, although these city flowers are merely so many doors flung wide in Bond Street and the neighbourhood, inviting you to look at a picture, or hear a symphony, or merely crowd and crush yourself among all sorts of vocal, excitable, brightly coloured human beings. ...As Cassandra Otway went about London provided with shillings that opened turnstiles, or more often with large white cards that disregarded turnstiles, the city seemed to her the most lavish and hospitable of hosts. After visiting the National Gallery, or Hertford House, or hearing Brahms or Beethoven at the Bechstein Hall. She would come back to find a new person awaiting her, in whose soul were imbedded some grains of the invaluable substance which she still called reality, and still believed that she could find.’

Night and Day is a love song about London. My London. A place I recognise at almost every turn in the novel. In Mary Datchet’s walk to work across Lincoln’s Inn Fields, up Kingsway, through Southampton Row and to her office in Russell Square, feels familiar. Even her office, at the top of a large house of the sort once occupied by city merchants, chopped up by the time of the novel in to several small offices ‘let out in slices to a number of small societies’ – including the suffrage organisation for which she works – reminds me of numerous little outfits I’ve worked for. Even her task, ‘to organise a series of entertainments, the profits of which were to benefit the society, which drooped for want of funds.’, is one I’ve done plenty of times myself in London. Historical perspective re-emerges, though, with the topics of conversation: “‘I wonder why men always talk

about politics?' Mary speculated. 'I suppose, if we had votes, we should too.'" Most startling to me, as a Londoner, was how easy it was to get a cab on the Embankment at night in those days – one might even follow you around waiting to be hailed: 'Rodney looked back over his shoulder and perceived that they were being followed at a short distance by a taxi-cab, which evidently awaited his summons.'

It is Woolf's second novel, seen by critics as transitional, a stepping-stone to the high modernism of her later, more renowned work. In many ways it is more traditional than the first, with more tinges of nineteenth century structure, its realism and its closures. A sort of cross between Henry James and George Eliot. But it interests me because of its inbetweenness. This novel, although imbued with all the power of nineteenth century realism, shows us a shifting world, a London of then and now, an emotional landscape which moves between intense inwardness and social front. The characters appear, at times, to be inventing themselves and their society as they go along. Members of every generation – not just the young – change their minds about what to think, what to do, how to be. None of this is surprising when you consider the novel was finished only days after the end of the First World War. Already the elusive nature of experience and the struggles we go through to capture it – as epitomised by Mrs Hilbery's life's task to write her father's biography – is Woolf's subject.

Jo Shapcott
May, 2000

Angelica Garnett on *Night and Day*

KATHERINE Mansfield, in a letter to her husband, John Middleton Murry, dismisses *Night and Day*, Virginia's second novel, published in 1919, because it is "so tahsome". It is written as though: "The war has never been: that is what its message is", and in her review of the book, she finds it makes her "feel old and chill". It is "unaware of what has been happening". Although such a reaction is easy to understand, particularly from a woman whose brother had been killed, it is irrelevant. No rule compels a novelist to write about the immediate past, however cataclysmic: it does not matter to us if the novel seemed to Katherine Mansfield dated, or not of its time, and it is questionable how far she was right. In any case her reactions were instinctive, and did not constitute a reflected judgement.

As Virginia said much earlier in writing to her cousin, Madge Vaughan: "My only defence is that I write of things as I see them; and I am quite conscious all the time that it is a very narrow, and rather bloodless point of view", but "this vague and dream like world, without love, or heart, or passion, or sex, is the world I really care about, and find interesting". Identifying with the common soldier, Katherine Mansfield was in a state of mind where she was unable to see this as a virtue but, seventy years later, we may be allowed to disagree, and to recognise in Virginia's single-mindedness the wisdom of the artist.

Her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, published three years earlier, in 1915, had been an attempt to exteriorise the

effect of the deaths of her mother, her half-sister and her elder brother, which had overshadowed her adolescence and young womanhood. On several occasions Virginia's mental stability had failed, particularly during the two years prior to, and following, the publication of the book which takes its inspiration, in part, from these experiences. Dreamlike, exalted and mystical, it is, especially for a first novel, strangely pessimistic. As a serious author, Virginia felt she must now strike another note, and show herself capable of dealing with the normal, everyday world, an impulse further stimulated by her own return to health. She wanted, in fact, to vindicate her sanity, and was wise enough to stick to a subject she knew at first hand. It was also one she could see with detachment, closer to the world of George Eliot than to that of England at war. One critic has said: "There is no writer who can give the illusion of reality with more certainty." If this is so, it must be because Virginia herself played her part in changing our view of reality, which was of course just what Katherine Mansfield demanded: "I feel in the *profoundest* sense that nothing can ever be the same—that, as artists, we are traitors if we feel otherwise: we have to take it into account and find new expressions, new moulds for our thoughts and feelings."

There was probably no one at the time who realised that, in both *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, this was what Virginia was beginning to do, and Virginia herself would not have talked in these terms: she was still groping, unsure that she could persuade others that her point of view was valid. Reality, for her, was not the dense physical reality of Tolstoy or D. H. Lawrence, nor was it the heroic reality of Conrad, or the psychological convolutions of Henry James. For Virginia, perhaps because of the war, the whole world had turned turtle, projecting human beings into a different relationship both with it and with each other. No longer solid giants, they had become more like the etiolated figures of Giacometti, almost annihilated in

their struggle with life itself. They are for the most part very ordinary men and women, whose problems and suffering run so parallel that at certain moments we feel that as individuals they are almost interchangeable; they are certainly not people who will win, or even be interested in winning, an ordinary victory. If they conquer, it will be either a momentary triumph or one which puts the emphasis on a notably different set of values.

If I speak of Virginia in the same breath with a galaxy of male novelists, it is because it was they who dominated the scene, their world she felt she must challenge. Their greatness was indisputable, but was not in itself a reason to see things the same way. However hard Virginia tried to follow the conventions, she could not quite overcome what was to be one of her most extraordinary contributions to our understanding of the world, which was her perception of the purely visual aspect, and its effect on our sense of reality. True, either Conrad or Lawrence can describe scenes, places, and objects in terms that enable us to see them vividly; but we are never allowed to forget what they are. And their overtones, largely symbolic, are conceived as a demonstration of something. Conrad, for example, has created his world for a purpose; he is God of his reality, and his visual descriptions serve this idea. But Virginia refuses to play this game; she does not orchestrate and conduct her novel, like a Wagner overture, she perceives her reality as it comes to her, capturing it as best she may, without using it as a justification, or forcing it to tell us anything she cannot herself vouch for. It is as though she shifted the glass so that we are only marginally aware that we are looking at a forest, a ship, or a group of chickens by lamplight. From being something we can name, they become a purely visual event, shown as a “circle of soft feathery bodies, upon whom the light fell in wavering discs calling out now a bright spot of yellow, now one of greenish black and scarlet”. The word “chicken” is only mentioned in

the preceding paragraph: as such they are rendered immaterial, but regain a significance that comes from the impact they have on the eye, the kind of eye attributed by Cézanne to Monet. In doing so they play a part in our realisation of what we are, because to others we also can seem at any moment no more than a blob of colour seen against a shifting background. What are we, and what are we looking at? We are amused, even delighted by the strangeness of this visual adventure, while at the same time we realise that we never had the wit to see things in this way for ourselves. It both stimulates our vision, and provokes us into reassessing the sense of our own importance.

Night and Day is hardly a *great* novel, but it is written by an author who, we now know, was to become one of the most important of the century. Reading it is like being given the opportunity to see behind the scenes before the play goes on. To appreciate it we must prime ourselves with patience; it is a book which demands full co-operation from the reader, and in my view it is not until Chapter Fifteen that, in spite of much that is interesting, the novel becomes fully alive. Then we are treated to a passage which is a direct descendant of George Eliot's descriptions of the English scene, and it is possible that, in establishing her ability to do this, Virginia freed herself from a certain ambivalence, and went ahead to write about the world she "really cared about" which, in spite of what she says, is not without love, heart or passion, although it is without the physicality of sex.

It is perhaps a moot point whether the characters in *Night and Day* can lay claim to reality, but in their own way and on their own terms they have a vitality which compels our attention, sometimes even moving us to tears. It is a fact that Katharine Hilbery was a conscious attempt to portray my mother Vanessa, Virginia's elder sister, and although she did not succeed, or even try, to suggest

Vanessa's sexuality, or her naturally sensuous nature, we recognise a subjective view of a sister whose importance in Virginia's life was immeasurable. As a portrait it wavers like a shadow seen by candlelight, now glowing, now imponderable and vague, but its insights are full of the truth that comes from rapt, and sometimes critical contemplation.

The novel describes the complicated and shifting relationships between a quartet of lovers, until in the end a fifth one is introduced to take the place of Mary Datchet, the odd woman out. Mary and Katharine are both friends and rivals, each reacting against their families and life as they find it, and although their personalities are extremely different there are certain qualities in them that are very similar, so that, although we never feel, as we do with the young men, that they are interchangeable, we see them occasionally as two opposing sides of the same person. They are both possessed of a high-minded idealism, expressed in Mary's case by a devotion to the cause of women's suffrage, as well as an unflinching view of herself as a woman whose greatest merit must be to sacrifice herself, silently and without fuss, for the sake of someone she loves. But Katharine is marked out by birth and fortune as an unusual young woman who, being honest and earnest, is aware of her superiority. In secret she works at mathematics and astronomy, an ambition which, when set beside Vanessa's desire to be a painter, is an apt enough parallel. The remoteness of the heavenly bodies and the abstract perfection of mathematics exactly express some of Virginia's feelings about Vanessa, whose rather chilly view of the world sometimes baffled Virginia, and seemed to prevent the closest intimacy.

It is thus that Katharine walks through the early chapters of the novel, suggesting reservations and depths of feeling for which she can find no words. She is elusive, evading our efforts to get closer to her, reflecting Virginia's

own feeling of perplexity in front of Vanessa, who always remained something of an enigma. One of the most notable differences between the two sisters was that, whereas Virginia always felt the urge to exteriorise her feelings and impressions, Vanessa was loath to divulge hers, burying them in a place to which even Virginia did not have access. Such is the prerogative—or the last-ditch defence—of the elder sister.

We have marvellous glimpses of Katharine-Vanessa as seen, for example, by Ralph Denham, who is trying to reconcile his dream of her with the reality: “on the threshold of the room he dismissed it, in order to prevent too painful a collision between what he dreamt of her and what she was. And in five minutes she had filled the shell of the old dream with the flesh of life; looked with fire out of phantom eyes.” On the next page she looks at him with “eyes now almost impersonally direct. It would be easy, Ralph thought, to worship one so far removed, and yet of so straight a nature; easy to submit recklessly to her, without thought of future pain.” If we read Roger Fry’s letters to Vanessa,[1] we get the same impression both of her fascination and the pain she could at times inflict.

In contrast to Mary Datchet’s simplicity, strength and goodness, Katharine’s aloofness appears egocentric. “And yet, not in her words, perhaps, but in her voice, in her face, in her attitude, there were signs of a soft, brooding spirit, of a sensibility unblunted and profound, playing over her thoughts and deeds, and investing her manner with an habitual gentleness.” We see Katharine through Mary’s eyes; an extraordinarily potent image, one whose silence, like that of Vanessa, is more expressive than words. For Rodney too, she is “undemonstrative, inconsiderate, silent, and yet so notable that he could never do without her good opinion”. And for Denham, in a moment of profound, if as yet unadmitted intimacy in Kew Gardens, she becomes so remote as to be almost untouchable. In the orchid house,

“he looked at her taking in one strange shape after another with the contemplative, considering gaze of a person who sees not exactly what is before him, but gropes in regions that lie beyond it. Denham doubted whether she remembered his presence. . . . She was happier thus. She needed nothing that he could give her. And for him too, perhaps, it was best to keep aloof, only to know that she existed, to preserve what he already had—perfect, remote and unbroken.” Virginia suggests a quality in her sister that not even love could change, and that, being necessary to her, had perforce to be accepted.

And yet, as the novel continues, Katharine becomes more human, both in her perplexities and her vulnerability. She questions her mother’s sentimental view of marriage, as well as the romantic view of love in general. Katharine’s sometimes bitter revolt against an ineffectual and paralytic attitude is a silent one: she is too intelligent, too well brought up, and also too full of affection to register any direct protest. She suffers in private. She is also too sceptical and too scrupulous to confide much in her friends. But on the personal level there is more in her silence than the perennial revolt of one generation against the preceding one. There is the hidden, but fundamental need for self-expression, something so precious she cannot talk about it, wishing to hide it even from the adoring eyes of Ralph. We may even think that his adoration prevents her from divulging her secret which is of such importance to her that it takes precedence over other loyalties, and demands an understanding that is free from the delusions of sexual attraction.

This was a problem shared by both Vanessa and Virginia. But although, in her confrontation with Ralph, Katharine continues to resemble Vanessa, the stand against romanticism was more characteristic of Virginia. Vanessa found it possible to combine marriage, sex and maternity with her pursuit of art, whereas for Virginia, writing

became her unique obsession. In the creation of Katharine however, she shows her understanding of Vanessa's distrust of words, her clinging to those feelings which related not so much to human beings as to the ineffable and abstract mysteries of art.

It is no surprise to us that Mary is good, magnanimous enough to behave generously and nobly, without either arrogance or false humility. Her thoughts and feelings are predictable. Katharine, however, suggests deeper, less transparent depths. Her silence covers instincts which may lead her to behave implacably and ruthlessly, although at the same time it is a guarantee of inner strength: she is aware of her own fallibility. And she is capable of tenderness and generosity, as in the scene with Cassandra when her tears, unexpected and mute as they are, almost cause our own to flow in inexplicable sympathy.

Katherine Mansfield also accused the novel of "intellectual snobbery—her book reeks of it". The almost abnormal self-control of the central characters may have appeared to her unnatural—almost repellent. When Katharine Hilbery is angry with her aunt (and I find her anger very convincing), she speaks in a voice "so low and with such restraint that Mrs. Milvain had to strain to catch her words". In moments of strong emotion, Katharine tends to become statuesque, to "freeze" in the strength of her feeling rather than allow it direct expression; and this is true of the others also. It was a habit inculcated not only in Vanessa, but in most of Virginia's friends, and was composed partly of the dislike of violence, and partly of a desire to see things with detachment and understanding, a hope which may have seemed pretentious and hypocritical to Katherine Mansfield.

But in the novel, Virginia uses this perspective to replace one sort of drama with another. In Chapter Thirty, when in the evening, Rodney takes Katharine into the dining room and, drawing the curtain, shows her other

lover, Ralph Denham, staring at the house from the other side of the street, another author might have demanded our sympathy for Ralph, waiting, excluded and paralysed with cold, perhaps also with envy and hopelessness. But Rodney fetches Denham into the house and, after informing him that he and Katharine are no longer engaged, leaves them purposefully alone. If we are moved, it is by Rodney's determination to make the other two see they are in love. But we are also touched by Ralph and Katharine's inability to say in so many words what they feel. They express more by negative statement than by any positive declaration, and we are made to realise the unromantic truth that, although they are attracted to each other, they do not know each other and perhaps—because that is part of the human condition—never will. We smile at their desperate honesty and we respect their effort not to manipulate each other, while at the same time we are conscious of their fragility, brought to our notice by the distant grumble of London, and the gusts of wind blowing in through the window. Paradox lies in the fact that, if Rodney, Katharine or Ralph ranted, raged or flung themselves into each other's arms, they would be less, not more heroic because, in Virginia's eyes, heroism is a false concept. It is life that gets the better of us, not we of life. To be worthy of it we must recognise its power; and it is because Virginia sees Katharine and her lovers as predestined victims that they lack three dimensionality.

But because they are human, they are also sensitive and intelligent. Life's treachery can be cheated only by the finer qualities that lead to or stem from awareness of our predicament. In direct confrontation we have no chance of winning, and no complaint or blame has any relevance, even though the stupidity of one of life's lesser agents, such as Aunt Celia, can provoke anger. But such anger is noble, all the more because it is controlled; it merely indicates the depths of emotion on which we all float, but into which we

must not sink, at the risk of our sanity. We respect Katharine, because she has the strength to be true to herself. In the same way we feel that Virginia also, in spite of probable misgivings, is true to her own conception, both of the novel, and of her sister's character.

Angelica Garnett, 1989

[1] Particularly in Volume Two *Letters of Roger Fry*, edited and with an introduction by Denys Sutton, Chatto & Windus, 1972.

NIGHT AND DAY

Chapter 1

IT WAS A Sunday evening in October, and in common with many other young ladies of her class, Katharine Hilbery was pouring out tea. Perhaps a fifth part of her mind was thus occupied, and the remaining parts leapt over the little barrier of day which interposed between Monday morning and this rather subdued moment, and played with the things one does voluntarily and normally in the daylight. But although she was silent, she was evidently mistress of a situation which was familiar enough to her, and inclined to let it take its way for the six hundredth time, perhaps, without bringing into play any of her unoccupied faculties. A single glance was enough to show that Mrs. Hilbery was so rich in the gifts which make tea-parties of elderly distinguished people successful, that she scarcely needed any help from her daughter, provided that the tiresome business of teacups and bread and butter was discharged for her.

Considering that the little party had been seated round the tea-table for less than twenty minutes, the animation observable on their faces, and the amount of sound they were producing collectively, were very creditable to the hostess. It suddenly came into Katharine's mind that if some one opened the door at this moment he would think that they were enjoying themselves; he would think, "What an extremely nice house to come into!" and instinctively she laughed, and said something to increase the noise, for the credit of the house presumably, since she herself had not been feeling exhilarated. At the very same moment,

rather to her amusement, the door was flung open, and a young man entered the room. Katharine, as she shook hands with him, asked him, in her own mind, “Now, do you think we’re enjoying ourselves enormously?” . . . “Mr. Denham, mother,” she said aloud, for she saw that her mother had forgotten his name.

That fact was perceptible to Mr. Denham also, and increased the awkwardness which inevitably attends the entrance of a stranger into a room full of people much at their ease, and all launched upon sentences. At the same time, it seemed to Mr. Denham as if a thousand softly padded doors had closed between him and the street outside. A fine mist, the etherealized essence of the fog, hung visibly in the wide and rather empty space of the drawing-room, all silver where the candles were grouped on the tea-table, and ruddy again in the firelight. With the omnibuses and cabs still running in his head, and his body still tingling with his quick walk along the streets and in and out of traffic and foot-passengers, this drawing-room seemed very remote and still; and the faces of the elderly people were mellowed, at some distance from each other, and had a bloom on them owing to the fact that the air in the drawing-room was thickened by blue grains of mist. Mr. Denham had come in as Mr. Fortescue, the eminent novelist, reached the middle of a very long sentence. He kept this suspended while the newcomer sat down, and Mrs. Hilbery deftly joined the severed parts by leaning towards him and remarking:

“Now, what would you do if you were married to an engineer, and had to live in Manchester, Mr. Denham?”

“Surely she could learn Persian,” broke in a thin, elderly gentleman. “Is there no retired schoolmaster, or man of letters in Manchester with whom she could read Persian?”

“A cousin of ours has married and gone to live in Manchester,” Katharine explained. Mr. Denham muttered something, which was indeed all that was required of him,

and the novelist went on where he had left off. Privately, Mr. Denham cursed himself very sharply for having exchanged the freedom of the street for this sophisticated drawing-room, where, among other disagreeables, he certainly would not appear at his best. He glanced round him, and saw that, save for Katharine, they were all over forty, the only consolation being that Mr. Fortescue was a considerable celebrity, so that tomorrow one might be glad to have met him.

“Have you ever been to Manchester?” he asked Katharine.

“Never,” she replied.

“Why do you object to it, then?”

Katharine stirred her tea, and seemed to speculate, so Denham thought, upon the duty of filling somebody else’s cup, but she was really wondering how she was going to keep this strange young man in harmony with the rest. She observed that he was compressing his teacup, so that there was danger lest the thin china might cave inwards. She could see that he was nervous; one would expect a bony young man with his face slightly reddened by the wind, and his hair not altogether smooth, to be nervous in such a party. Further, he probably disliked this kind of thing, and had come out of curiosity, or because her father had invited him—anyhow, he would not be easily combined with the rest.

“I should think there would be no one to talk to in Manchester,” she replied at random. Mr. Fortescue had been observing her for a moment or two, as novelists are inclined to observe, and at this remark he smiled, and made it the text for a little further speculation.

“In spite of a slight tendency to exaggeration, Katharine decidedly hits the mark,” he said, and lying back in his chair, with his opaque contemplative eyes fixed on the ceiling, and the tips of his fingers pressed together, he depicted, first the horrors of the streets of Manchester, and

then the bare, immense moors on the outskirts of the town, and then the scrubby little house in which the girl would live, and then the professors and the miserable young students devoted to the more strenuous works of our younger dramatists, who would visit her, and how her appearance would change by degrees, and how she would fly to London, and how Katharine would have to lead her about, as one leads an eager dog on a chain, past rows of clamorous butchers' shops, poor dear creature.

"Oh, Mr. Fortescue," exclaimed Mrs. Hilbery, as he finished, "I had just written to say how I envied her! I was thinking of the big gardens and the dear old ladies in mittens, who read nothing but the *Spectator*, and snuff the candles. Have they *all* disappeared? I told her she would find the nice things of London without the horrid streets that depress one so."

"There is the University," said the thin gentleman, who had previously insisted upon the existence of people knowing Persian.

"I know there are moors there, because I read about them in a book the other day," said Katharine.

"I am grieved and amazed at the ignorance of my family," Mr. Hilbery remarked. He was an elderly man, with a pair of oval, hazel eyes which were rather bright for his time of life, and relieved the heaviness of his face. He played constantly with a little green stone attached to his watch-chain, thus displaying long and very sensitive fingers, and had a habit of moving his head hither and thither very quickly without altering the position of his large and rather corpulent body, so that he seemed to be providing himself incessantly with food for amusement and reflection with the least possible expenditure of energy. One might suppose that he had passed the time of life when his ambitions were personal, or that he had gratified them as far as he was likely to do, and now employed his