

INTRODUCTION

*When I was asked if I could edit a special issue of **Ilha do Desterro** on Virginia Woolf, I promptly answered yes, not only because I wrote my doctoral dissertation on her novels but mainly because I appreciate her immensely.*

*Virginia Woolf's work seems to be inexhaustible. One may discuss her craftsmanship and detect its evolution from *The Voyage Out* to *Between the Acts*, for example; one may discuss her rich imagery and style, or one may prefer to pay attention to the ideas conveyed by her characters, or even analyse her pamphlets and articles of criticism. But besides these aspects and many others, one may read her for life. Few people, I guess, have paid enough attention to passages in her novels which may change one's attitude towards one's life. In Mrs. Dalloway, for instance, Clarissa imagines a scene which would probably suit everyone at a certain stage in life and, kept in mind, would make our lives more fertile and beautiful: "For she was a child, throwing bread to the ducks, between her parents, and at the same time a grown woman coming to her parents who stood by the lake, holding her life in her arms which, as she neared them, grew larger and larger in her arms, until it became a whole life, a complete life, which she put down by them and said, 'This is what I have made of it! This.' And what had she made of it? What, indeed?" (p.63-64)*

*In *The Waves* Bernard's wonder at man's paradoxical qualities may help us be more tolerant towards each other: "It is strange that we, who are capable of so much suffering, should inflict so much suffering... Cruel and vindictive as we are, we are not bad to that extent. We have our fundamental goodness surely..." (p.170).*

*In *Jacob's Room* the narrator's assertion about the importance of everyday encounters and moods which constitute so large a part of our lives is also very keen: "It's not catastrophes, murders, deaths, diseases, that age and kill us; it's the way people look, and laugh, and run up the steps of omnibuses" (p.79).*

One could add many other examples from her novels, and they all would show that her message, though subtle and indirect, was not in the main a negative one, as R.L. Chambers inaccurately asserted (*The Novels of Virginia Woolf*, p.101). A careful reading will lead one to detect in her novels the seriousness with which she envisaged life. And, though not didactic, it was life, no doubt, her main concern, and literature was important for her because it is part of one's life, shaping it to a certain extent and making it less chaotic.

In this issue of *Ilha* you will see some facets of Virginia Woolf's work being discussed. Josalba Ramalho Vieira detected some interesting affinities between Virginia Woolf's narrative use of time and Henri Bergson's theory of duration which, fully developed in her Master's dissertation, are summarized in an article. Brunilda Reichmann establishes an unexpected parallel between Mrs. Dalloway and Tess of the d'Urbervilles. Pamela Mills analyses the narrative techniques in Between the Acts making it clear that Virginia Woolf's last novel has undoubtedly been underrated. Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira analyses *To the Lighthouse* as a 'Künstlerroman', "the novel in which a work of art, or its effect, plays an essential role", in her own words, extending her analysis to some interesting considerations on the importance of art as a form of knowledge and learning. Thereza Maria Lustosa de Castro Faria contributes to our issue with a chapter adapted from her doctoral dissertation. With extreme care, almost solemnity, she depicts the genesis and development of *To the Lighthouse* using the writer's diary and lectures as a source of information. As a result, the affinity between our writer's work and painting is firmly established. Rita Terezinha Schmidt deals with Virginia Woolf's 'theory of fiction', tracing some of her views concerning the art of fiction, especially the novel, in the labyrinth of her opinions scattered in several essays and articles. And I present some deductions I arrived at when writing my doctoral dissertation, on the link between Virginia Woolf's ideas and the narrative techniques she adopted in her novels.

Closing the issue a selected bibliography is presented which we hope will be useful for further studies on Virginia Woolf.

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