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“SHE BECAME A SHIP PASSING IN THE NIGHT”:  
CHARTING VIRGINIA WOOLF’S *THE VOYAGE OUT*

The turn of the twentieth century, during which Virginia Woolf crafted her first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915),<sup>1</sup> saw a flood of fiction set on the ocean by such notable authors as Joseph Conrad, Jack London, and Rudyard Kipling—novelists who represent a reemergence in literature of the sea.<sup>2</sup> These writers offered a new perspective on sea travel for they could no longer write about the age of sail exclusively. They described, at times reluctantly and defiantly, the new age of ocean-going steamships and passenger ocean liners. *The Voyage Out* is partly set within this literary context, although Woolf does not seem especially focused on placing hers in the tradition of literary sea stories. The voyage of the title is as much to do with the personal (emotional, intellectual, psychological) voyage of the protagonist, Rachel Vinrace, as it is to do with the physical journey that she makes from England to South America. Despite this, *The Voyage Out* should be considered within the body of maritime literature. The first six of twenty-seven chapters in this novel are set aboard a steamship crossing the Atlantic and provide a description of life at sea for its female protagonist. *The Voyage Out* contains the only such description in Woolf’s fiction, though many of her novels are set on the

coast or describe the ocean in detail, such as *Jacob's Room* (1922), *To The Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931). As David Bradshaw points out:

No modernist writer, with the possible exception of Joseph Conrad and James Joyce, was so deeply inspired by the sea or spent so much of his or her imaginative life beside or beneath its figurative depths, and in the work of no author from the modernist epoch is the sea invested with such rich symbolic value as it is in Woolf's oeuvre. (101)

Surprisingly, Woolf appears to be the first major female novelist in English or American literature to write any extensive scenes depicting life *at sea* through the eyes of female characters. She has been preceded only by one short chapter crossing the English Channel in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), which Woolf had read and considered "the last and greatest of her works" (*Essays* 2 30); she may also have read the few brief scenes set at sea in Aphra Behn's *Oronooko* (1688) and in Amelia Edwards' *Barbara's History* (1864).<sup>3</sup>

Of course, Woolf was also familiar with many male-authored works of fiction and nonfiction concerning the sea and voyages upon it: novels including Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Melville's *Moby-Dick*, and poems such as "Drake's Drum" by Henry Newbolt, which is quoted by the character Ridley Ambrose in early versions of the *The Voyage Out*.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Pepper also studies Homer's *Odyssey* in the novel and The Icelandic Sagas that chart long ocean voyages and the adventures that the heroes encounter.<sup>5</sup> Travel writing was also an early passion for Woolf. Her library contains a wide variety of travel accounts from Hakluyt to Johnson, as well as sixteen Baedeker travel guides.

Several scholars have examined Woolf's metaphoric use of the sea and water in her fiction, such as Carolyn Sword Bain, David Bradshaw and Jean O. Love, but no one as of yet has explored the relevant maritime history, Woolf's source material, and her own experience at sea as a backdrop to more fully understand how Woolf places her first novel along this line of literature of the sea. *The Voyage Out* draws freely and knowledgeably from ancient and modern, fictional and non-fictional sea narratives to offer a specifically female version of a male-dominated genre.

We provide here a new historicist analysis of *The Voyage Out* set within this tradition of sea literature by examining Woolf's choice of the title, her creation of the steamship, her representation of life at sea on an ocean liner, the geography of the passage across the Atlantic and the personal transformation that takes place in Rachel during it. In other words, Woolf's treatment of the sea, the ship, and the passage are integral to understanding *The Voyage Out* as a modern novel that is concerned with social and feminist issues—issues that arise both when she chooses to adhere to traditional sea stories and when she chooses to diverge.

### **The Title**

As a voracious reader, Woolf read numerous works of literature about ocean voyages and seafarers, many of which incorporated the word “voyage” into their titles and thus arguably inspired Woolf to do the same.<sup>6</sup> Though the specifics of her library and her reading before the completion of *The Voyage Out* are not fully known, the following titles, among others, are in Virginia and Leonard Woolf's library held at Washington State University, many of which they inherited from Sir Leslie Stephen and would have been on the shelves of Virginia's childhood home at 22 Hyde Park Gate: R. L. Stevenson's *An Inland Voyage* (1878); Andrew Kippis's *Voyages Round the World*

(1843); Charles Kingsley's *Westward ho! or The Voyages and Adventures of Sir Amysas Leigh* (1855); Henry Fielding's *A Journey from this World to the Next, and, A Voyage to Lisbon* (1893); Chevalier Ramsay's *La nouvelle Cyropédie: Ou, Les voyages de Cyrus, avec un discours sur la mythologie* (1729); John Mandeville's *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville: The Version of the Cotton Manuscript in Modern Spelling, with Three Narratives in Illustration of it from Hakluyt's 'Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries'* (1900).<sup>7</sup> In this library there was also a signed copy of Charles Darwin's *Journal of Researches* (1879), more commonly known as *The Voyage of the Beagle*.<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Lambert points out that Darwin's account also has South America as its setting and that parallels can be made between the two texts, particularly "Rachel's first view of land" which "echoes Darwin's arrival at Valparaiso" and the fact that Rachel's "mind has been on Darwin throughout the voyage" (15-16). Woolf was also likely familiar with Dampier's *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697); Defoe's *A New Voyage Round the World by a Course Never Sailed Before* (1725); and hundreds of other published narratives written in this form, including the popular accounts of Christopher Columbus, Ferdinand Magellan, George Anson, James Cook, and George Vancouver. Woolf purchased "4 well kept volumes of Captain Cook's Voyages [...] as a present for Thoby" in 1899 (*A Passionate Apprentice* 158), and she enjoyed reading Scott's "diary of a voyage to the lighthouses on the Scotch coast," which is in Lockhart's *Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott (Letters 1 49)*.

*Hakluyt's Voyages* in three different editions was also in Virginia and Leonard Woolf's library.<sup>9</sup> Julia Briggs suggests that the tales of ocean voyages and strange lands were one of her "adolescent passions" (122) and on 29 December 1929 Woolf recalled: "It was the Elizabethan prose writers I loved first & most wildly, stirred by Hakluyt, which father lugged home for me [...] & why I don't know, but I became enraptured [...] I used to read it & dream of those obscure adventurers, & no doubt practised their style

in my copy books" (*Diary 3* 271).<sup>10</sup> Her connection of *The Voyage Out* with such early adventure writers is more obvious in the early drafts, in which she likens Helen Ambrose and Cynthia (as Rachel was initially called) to an Elizabethan audience listening to stories of sea monsters. Alice Fox describes the novel as "an Elizabethan Voyage" that might "yield treasure and discovery, or disappointment, or even death." (25).

When Woolf titled her novel *The Voyage Out*, she placed her story not only into a long tradition of male-authored sea narratives, but evoked, as Robert Foulke notes, a sense of adventure and purpose:

We embark on voyages not only to get somewhere but also to accomplish something . . . In this sense voyages are a natural vehicle for the human imagination exploring the unknown, whether it be discovering strange new lands, finding out the truth about ourselves, or searching for those most perfect worlds we call utopias. These purposes and intentions, as well as tension between lure of new experience and the desire to get home, mark every stage of Odysseus's return from the Trojan War; as he recapitulates to Penelope the whole of his extraordinary voyage, he tells the first returning seaman's yarn in the Western world. (10)<sup>11</sup>

Notably Foulke does not comment on Penelope being the first sea-wife in literature bound to stay home and wait, but he does explain usefully the purposefulness of a voyage for men—these journeys are embarked upon to achieve a goal. Foulke also emphasizes the importance of the "returning seaman's yarn" and the "desire to get home." In Woolf's modernist, feminist rewriting of the sea story these crucial aspects of

the voyage are largely absent or unresolved. Part of the reader's initial disorientation with *The Voyage Out* is that in the early chapters, it is unclear as to where the *Euphrosyne* is bound, for how long, and to what purpose. Woolf is even initially unclear in the novel as to whom the protagonist is, thus foiling the reader's expectations of a traditional sea narrative which usually centers on an easily identifiable hero. The teleology of this voyage is arguably to establish Rachel Vinrace's identity which has been stunted by her "hedged-in" life at home in England (87). To Rachel, upon arriving in Santa Marina, "the end of the voyage [out] meant a complete change of perspective" (95). Rachel's "complete change of perspective" is terminated by her death, thus foiling the aim of the voyage, not to mention suspending the trajectory of the expected bildungsroman set at sea.<sup>12</sup> In earlier drafts, Woolf's quotation of Walt Whitman's "Passage to India" reflects the idea of sea voyages as a dangerous undertaking in which travellers "will risk the ship ourselves and all," but which is an idea that leaves Rachel in "rapture" (56). Further imbued in this poem is an emphasis that parallels Rachel's motives, as well as those of even Woolf herself: the desire for direct experience, rather than second-hand adventures read in books or heard at home from returning sailors, and the philosophical musings of the mind. Whitman writes in the concluding stanzas of "Passage to India":

Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins!

Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!

Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!

Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?

Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking like

mere brutes?

Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long enough? (328)

A Whitmanesque voyage to sea for freedom or self-actualization was, of course, nearly impossible for women until the twentieth century.

In maritime parlance the word “voyage” refers to an expedition that goes out *and* returns to the home port, in contrast to a “passage,” which is made between two ports. This is clarified in the typescript draft of 1909 in which Helen reflects that “London was not the place they had left, but the place they would come back to” (*Melymbrosia* 6). In his nautical dictionary of 1908, Paasch defines the word “voyage” this way: “In common practice this term is applied to a journey over sea from one port to another, or others, and returning” (762). “Voyage” had to be defined exactly because of contracts for the crew’s salary, as most merchant sailors signed on for a voyage were not paid until they returned to their home port.<sup>13</sup> Woolf’s addition of “out” to the title serves as an omen for the reader and a foreshadowing of Rachel’s fate.<sup>14</sup> At the end of the novel, the reader expects Rachel to return to England, but her death leaves the voyage unresolved; thus the story feels incomplete in the sense of traditional voyage narrative patterns. Her decision to kill her heroine and to leave the other characters packing for the journey home is arguably one of Woolf’s first modernist experiments—she challenges the expected narrative traditions suggested by the word “voyage.”<sup>15</sup>

### **The Ship and Life at Sea**

Woolf’s description of the fictional *Euphrosyne* and onboard life in *The Voyage Out* crafts an accurate picture of trans-Atlantic travel at the turn of the twentieth century. She uses these details to further her social and feminist themes. Drawing upon her visits to ships at the London docks (explored more fully in her later essay “The

Docks of London" [1931]) and her own ocean voyages, especially her longest trip at sea to Portugal, Woolf subtly portrays an authentic sea-going experience. In the novel, she weaves in accurate period details of the ship's interior and size, its movements and routines.<sup>16</sup> Woolf's fictional *Euphrosyne* is one of ten merchant vessels owned by Rachel's father, Willoughby Vinrace, and is "primarily a cargo boat" that only takes "passengers by special arrangement, her business being to carry dry goods to the Amazons, and rubber home again" (38). In the early drafts of the novel this cargo is livestock, specifically goats, which explains Rachel's obscure comment in the published work about "Poor little goats!" and her father's sharp rejoinder: "If it weren't for the goats there'd be no music, my dear; music depends upon goats" (18-19). Woolf has Rachel, like the helpless livestock, outbound on a cargo vessel that is propelled by social forces larger and more powerful than herself.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the protagonist, the ship in *The Voyage Out* is not on its maiden voyage, a fact that is evidenced by details such as faded curtains and old sheets. It is a steamer with more than one mast, an unspecified number of stacks, and loud boilers powered by coal (8, 17, 25). Although the *Euphrosyne* is a reliable steamer and can weather fierce Atlantic gales, she is not considered one of the grand and famous trans-Atlantic ocean liners so popular in this period.<sup>18</sup> As the passengers observing the *Euphrosyne* from one of these great ocean liners pronounce, the steamer is, "a tramp, a cargo-boat, or one of those wretched little passengers steamers where people rolled about among the cattle on deck" (94). The *Euphrosyne* is not part of the glamorous world that early twentieth-century passengers increasingly expected of ocean travel. A tramp was a vessel that delivered cargo based on supply, demand, and product, not on an exact schedule; but the word "tramp" also conveys a sense of the ship's place in a class system that applied

to objects as well as to humans. The *Euphrosyne* is an “intermediate” ship. A. C. Hardy describes this style of vessel in his book, *Merchant Ship Types* (1924):

The Intermediate vessel usually runs on the routes where speed is not the main requirement, where cargo as well as passenger make her running a paying proposition, or where for a time the number of passengers available does not justify the running of a larger and faster ship. Her accommodation is not usually so luxurious as that of the fast ocean mail liner, but in many cases it is very comfortable, and adapted for those who do not wish to pay the higher fares naturally demanded on the faster vessels. (41)

Matching the intermediate ships of the era, it is reasonable to imagine that Woolf’s fictional *Euphrosyne* is approximately 400 to 500 feet in length. This is a fraction of the tonnage and passenger capacity of the nearly 800-foot-long *Mauretania*, the luxurious, record-winning Cunard ocean liner on which Mr. Dalloway had previously sailed.<sup>19</sup> Mr. Dalloway’s mention of his own passage on the *Mauretania* not only helps to contrast the vessels, but to date the story, as the *Mauretania*’s maiden voyage was in September 1907. It also serves to make his status as a man of means more clear.<sup>20</sup> The smaller scale and slower speed of the passenger vessel, particularly on this voyage, allowed Woolf to control a smaller, more manageable gathering and gave her more time to develop the central characters.

Woolf certainly drew upon her own experience of traveling to Lisbon in 1905 aboard the *Anselm II*, which was 400 feet long and 5,442 gross tons. (See Figure 1.) On Woolf’s passage the ship carried both passengers and “paving stones for Monaco’s

harbour" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 261).<sup>21</sup> The *Anselm II* was operated by the Booth Steamship Company, the owners of which were close friends of the Stephens and Duckworths, who were Kensington neighbours and attended social events together. George Duckworth worked for Charles Booth as his secretary and the Stephen sisters stayed with the Booths at 24 Great Cumberland Place in 1904 during their move to Gordon Square. Woolf found them "for the most part amiable, but dull" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 225). The Booth Line would have therefore been the natural choice for the journey of Virginia and her brother Adrian. The Booths owned, over the course of the years 1900-1915, close to sixty different vessels and operated passenger services from Liverpool and Hamburg to various ports, including Lisbon, on the way to more exotic destinations such as Manaus and Para in Brazil.<sup>22</sup>

Woolf's first impression of the *Anselm II* was positive: "It is all white & clean & luxurious; we each have a cabin to ourself" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 258). She and Adrian were meant to steam from Liverpool to Lisbon after a stop at Le Havre, but the *Anselm II* had engines that, according to Woolf, "slowly ceased beating" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 260) on two separate occasions so that, for a few hours each time, the ship "had to stop and drift with sails" (*Letters 1* 183). At their next stop, Oporto, Virginia and Adrian decided to save some time and take the train to Lisbon.

After their holiday, the Stephen siblings returned aboard another Booth Steamship Company vessel, the *Madeirense*, a smaller ship at 2,760 gross tons, which also made regular voyages across the Atlantic, including to the Amazon for rubber.<sup>23</sup> (See Figure 2.) In a letter to Violet Dickinson, Woolf wrote of the *Madeirense*: "The ship was very small, very sea-smelly, and the moment we got out to sea it began to roll like an inebriate" (*Letters 1* 187). During her passages on both of these vessels she would have presumably met British travelers going to or returning from South America. In her

journals and letters she describes a particular bore, a Professor Lee—perhaps an inspiration for Mr. Pepper—who is “something like Sully & C[live]. B[ell]. mixed, & diluted, & this don is inflicted on me, over & over again til I suffer from acute boredom. Books are no protection; he thinks his conversation must be preferable” (*A Passionate Apprentice* 260-61).

Although Woolf's *Euphrosyne*, like her real-life counterparts, is not one of the grand liners, the ship's interior spaces and onboard social life mirror what was expected on any early twentieth-century vessel carrying wealthy passengers. This transference of the everyday patterns of land to ship was a relatively new invention in sea travel: the passengers dress for dinner, lounge on deck, discuss politics, and play the piano. They conduct life as closely as possible to the way in which it proceeds on land. Though an intermediate vessel, Woolf's *Euphrosyne* has elegant spaces reflecting, on a smaller scale, those of the larger ships. Public spaces on intermediate cargo vessels were usually contained to the top two decks of the ship, with cargo filling the remaining lower levels. With several references to going up and down a ladder, passengers on the *Euphrosyne* enjoyed access to at least two decks (8, 73). The *Euphrosyne* contains a ladies lounge, smoking room, dining room, garden lounge, and a passenger deck promenade, as well as personal cabins to sleep in, all spaces typical of the period and generally aligning with the deck plan of the *Madeirense*.<sup>24</sup> The partitions between these spaces are “thin,” they allow an unusual degree of “intimacy” (16), which Helen does not appreciate. The narrator reflects: “how strangely they had been lifted off the earth to sit next each other in mid-ocean, and see every detail of each other's faces, and hear whatever they chanced to say” (53).

Early twentieth-century ships often contained both class-segregated areas and gender-specific spaces. (See Figure 3.) The most common of the latter were the ladies'

lounge and the gentlemen's smoking room. This smoking room was often furnished with leathers, gilding, and darker woods while the ladies' lounge was usually decorated in lighter fabrics. In the men's smoking room aboard the *Euphrosyne*, Helen Ambrose remarks, while rearranging the furniture: "If one can give men a room to themselves where they will sit, it's all to the good. Arm-chairs are *the* important things" (39). Smoking cigars, either in the dining room after the ladies departed or in the smoking room, was considered the accepted after dinner entertainment for gentlemen, as exemplified by the men in the hotel in South America, a practice which is sustained on board the *Euphrosyne* (13). Passengers and the hotel guests simply transfer their social practices from England to South America and back again, recreating the familiar so that although Woolf robs them of what the narrator calls "the supporting background of organized English life," (255) this imbalance is quickly redressed by the introduction of English habits.

On the *Euphrosyne*, Rachel liberally uses the ladies lounge, thus establishing a room of her own even before she is promised one by Helen:

When the ship was full this apartment bore some magnificent title and was the resort of elderly sea-sick ladies who left the deck to their youngers. By virtue of the piano, and a mess of books on the floor, Rachel considered it her room, and there she would sit for hours playing very difficult music, reading a little German, or a little English when the mood took her, and doing—as at this moment—absolutely nothing. (31)

Such ladies' lounges were usually a social space for reading, writing letters, and conversing. By making the public space her own, Rachel constructs for herself an

unusual amount of privacy for a young Edwardian woman in an area usually meant for socializing and “being seen.” Richard Dalloway’s entrance into this space and his kiss is therefore all the more invasive: it was a room in which Rachel felt herself to be private and safe.

Another important area on passenger ships at this time was a garden lounge, a space that served as a transition from outdoors to indoors. These lounges might include movable walls that could open on sunny days or could be incorporated into semi-enclosed promenades. As a result garden lounges were often filled with furniture that could take the abuses of the outdoors while still providing comfortable seating for passengers. Rachel describes the *Euphrosyne’s* garden lounge as “more like a landing than a room,” and the narrator adds: “Indeed it had nothing of the shut stationary character of a room on shore” (13). The lounge’s faded tapestries, decorative use of shells, faded yellow prints, wicker armchairs, and “light beating through” open windows onto the deck, were all typical features found in these transitional areas (13-14).

Woolf uses other small details in the novel to convey her familiarity with the modern ocean-going experience. Passengers at sea in the early twentieth century enjoyed a constant stream of food, which often included pre-breakfast teas and fruits, a full breakfast, mid-morning bouillon and sandwiches, lunch, afternoon tea, evening hors d’oeuvres, dinner, and late supper even on the smaller vessels that offered a more limited menu. The passengers on the *Euphrosyne* gather for many meals and tea times, a ritual that, as on land, means numerous outfit changes. Helen Ambrose’s frustration with the peculiar aspects of the ship’s “rooted” (13) furniture also reveals Woolf’s first-hand experience of life at sea: “the chairs too high—the tables too low—there’s six inches between the floor and the door” (27).

In *The Voyage Out*, Woolf writes of the “white deck” (50) and the “men in blue jerseys” who “knelt and scrubbed the boards” (30).<sup>25</sup> Significantly, this is one of the few mentions in the novel of the working sailors. Woolf barely writes of the sailors on deck, the oilers shoveling coal below, or even the officers. In traditional maritime literature these men were the focus for male novelists describing life at sea. Consider the sea novels of Melville, Conrad, and Kipling—or Eugene O’Neill’s plays set on ships. Woolf’s dissociation from the working crew is partly due to her interest in, or ability to write about, the upper-middle class passengers. It is also a symptom of the modern era of steam vessels on which, unlike a sailing vessel, the crew worked largely behind the scenes and below decks.

Woolf’s focus on the upper-class aspects of the sea voyage mirrored the growing public interest in such topics. Period newspapers were filled with the comings-and-goings of the social elite on ships, while commentaries by the media, passengers and advertising of the ships themselves likened the voyages to stays in the finest of hotels on land. At least to the modern public’s eye, ships were more like hotels than machines. To Woolf, in an early version of the novel, “the passengers were serene and indolent; but with regard to the crew, such a statement would be rash; for no one could possibly know what those lean housemaids were feeling. No one seemed to speak to them” (*Melymbrosia* 19). In the published version of the text even these hints at the sailors’ daily labors are expunged. In Woolf’s letters and journals from her own travels these working men were equally absent, mainly because the liners wanted to assure their upper and middle class passengers that they would not be exposed to the grubby workings of ocean travel. In advertisements for liners of the time, workers were notably absent from publicity shots.<sup>26</sup> This absence is similar to that of the dock workers in Woolf’s essay “The Docks of London,” noted by Snaith and Whitworth who argue that

“her dehumanized portrayal emulates the erasure of place, labour and individualism created by capitalism” (27).

Another part of any seagoing experience, regardless of the type of ship, was mastering seasickness. This was written about *ad nauseam* in the literature and travel guidebooks of the time. How different characters dealt with seasickness was, for example, the focus of the Channel crossing in Brontë’s *Villette* and used to reveal important aspects of character. Kipling wrote of seasickness to reveal character in the opening scene aboard an ocean liner crossing the Atlantic in *Captains Courageous* (1897). Woolf herself had experienced some rough seas on her return passage from Portugal. She wrote that the “boat rolled, & we were slightly ill!”, then in her next journal entry she described “our now haunting fear of sea sickness” (*A Passionate Apprentice* 266). Thus, her descriptive details during the storm in *The Voyage Out*, such as that of rolling potatoes at dinner, come from firsthand experience:

Even at tea the floor rose beneath their feet and pitched too low again, and at dinner the ship seemed to groan and strain as though a lash were descending. She who had been a broad-backed dray-horse, upon whose hind-quarters pierrots might waltz, became a colt in the field. The plates slanted away from the knives, and Mrs. Dalloway’s face blanched for a second as she helped herself and saw the potatoes roll this way and that. (73)

One particular encounter onboard the *Euphrosyne* reflects Woolf’s knowledge of period seasickness remedies. Helen Ambrose enters Mrs. Dalloway’s cabin and “planting her feet wide, Helen contrived to pour champagne into a tumbler with a tooth-brush in it” (74). While to a twenty-first century reader, this may seem like an indulgent drink or a

dig at the wealthy, champagne was considered a cure for seasickness at the time. A travel guidebook of 1910 explains: “champagne is recommended by many doctors for this ailment” (Hopkins 127). The guidebook goes on to say that brandy, chloroform, and sodium bromide are also good cures. In reality, these “cures” probably exacerbated the situation.

Woolf’s experiences aboard the *Anselm* and *Madeirense* clearly influenced her writing in *The Voyage Out*. Her depiction of the *Euphrosyne*, particularly in terms of the social encounters, rolling seas, and ship interior makes for an authentic literary version of this type of life at sea. However, in an early draft the narrator disclaims her abilities to describe sea travel accurately because of her sex: “But as my pen which is [a] feminine [one], would in recording such matters use an unfamiliar speech awkwardly it shall not be suffered to talk of perfectly true things in such a way as to cast doubt on them” (*Melymbrosia* 268). Perhaps the ship and the seascape through which it steams are not as detailed as that of Melville or Conrad’s works, because her narrator was originally meant to be a woman unused to sea travel, or, as scholar Jan Morris notes, perhaps it is simply because of Woolf’s personal antipathy for detailed descriptive travel narratives or travelogues, like the one written by the Dalloways, regardless of her gender.<sup>27</sup>

Yet Woolf’s interest in the ship is not simply to provide a realistic background. The fact that for some time Woolf considered the ship, when named *Melymbrosia*, to be the novel’s title, suggests that she carefully considered the significance of this ship as a metaphor and a transformative vector for her characters. The name of the ship, *Euphrosyne*, fits in with the fashion of the time for naming ships after historical or mythical figures. Such epithets were generally chosen to evoke strength, stability, safety and power. St. Anselm, for example, was a foundational philosopher of Christian

thought from the eleventh century. The *Mauretania*, as well as its famous sister ships the *Aquitania* and *Lusitania*, were named after ancient affluent Roman colonies in the Mediterranean; similarly, the *Titanic* was named for the mighty, mythical Titans.<sup>28</sup> In the *Euphrosyne's* case, Woolf named her ship after one of the three graces, a Greek goddess of joy, grace and beauty. The contrast between the elaborate name and the fact of the ship itself is ironic.<sup>29</sup> Woolf understood the effect and symbolism of a ship's name. She wavered throughout the drafts of *The Voyage Out*: it was at times *Sarah*, *Sarah Jane*, *Mary Jane*, and *Melymbrosia*.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps she eventually settled on the *Euphrosyne* as a comic contrast between the 'tramp' ship and its name, or to laugh at the unsuccessful book of poetry published under that name by Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, and Saxon Sydney-Turner.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps it was also chosen to contrast Rachel with the goddess, who, as Jeanne Dubino argues, was an attendant of Aphrodite and a patron of social occasions. Dubino also claims that *Euphrosyne* is a name "suggest[ive of] the fate that would have befallen Rachel had she not died" (Dubino 15).

Thus the *Euphrosyne* may also be considered as a symbol of the novel's heroine since Woolf gives the ship the traditional feminine pronoun "she." The author personifies the ship, which is implicitly Rachel, as "a bride going forth to her husband, a virgin unknown of men; in her vigour and purity she might be likened to all beautiful things, for as a ship she had a life of her own" (29-30). The sense that this voyage will end in marriage is made more explicit an earlier version of the novel in which Woolf quotes two lines from Shakespeare's "Epithalamion" directly after this section. In this, Woolf also follows a long line of literary voyages at sea undertaken in order to deliver a bride, notably two works that Woolf would have known: "The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens" (1765) and *The Tempest* (1611).<sup>32</sup> Rachel's symbolic links with the ship are crucial to its ability to float in Woolf's mind. She confesses to Vanessa Bell in 1908:

“[Rachel] will not speak and my ship is like to sink” (*Letters 1* 341). If the ship stands as a cypher for Rachel, an image which she also applied to herself and her sister in “Reminiscences” begun in 1907, Woolf also seems to be responding to the remarkable poetic narration she read of Lucy Snowe in *Villette*.<sup>33</sup> Snowe asks the reader to imagine her as a “bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass” and concludes, “A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?” (42). Of course, Rachel’s voyage to South America, as with Lucy Snowe’s passage to France, is a modern subversion of this expectation of a conventional life symbolised by Lucy Snowe as a slumbering bark. Dubino claims:

In Woolf’s fiction, sea voyages are gendered; they become an educational occasion in which women learn about femininity. Far from undergoing a sea-change into something rich and strange, as one might expect, women characters who undertake sea voyages in Woolf’s novels awaken into the straightjackets of conventional gender roles. (12)<sup>34</sup>

Yet Rachel avoids this eventuality by dying at the close of the novel. She does not become, to use Lucy Snowe’s metaphor, a ship at anchor. Harvena Richter similarly suggests that Rachel is “released through her own death from her coming marriage to Terence Hewet” and that even when in love with him must play “mermaid to evade his embraces” (124).<sup>35</sup>

### **The Passage**

In *The Voyage Out*, the *Euphrosyne* travels from London to Lisbon, on to an unnamed port, then across the Atlantic and the equator to Santa Marina, a fictional

seaside town in South America. (See Figure 4.) Woolf's description of the passage is largely accurate historically and nautically, yet in many ways her emphases are surprising and a departure from traditional sea scenes in literature, notably her disinterest in describing the long ocean passage or any detailed report of the weather or the surface of the ocean. Woolf prefers instead to look inboard at the passenger experience.

When Woolf traveled to Portugal, she left from Liverpool aboard the *Anselm II* on 29 March 1905 (*A Passionate Apprentice* 258). Significantly, it was the *Anselm II*'s maiden voyage.<sup>36</sup> Woolf does not comment on this in her diary, although it seems unlikely the Booth Steamship Company would not celebrate this with all the passengers. After Woolf disembarked in Oporto, the *Anselm II* continued on to Lisbon and then on to Brazil, to the port of Para (Belém) and then on to Manaus up the Amazon river.<sup>37</sup> While London was a more significant entrepôt at the time, Liverpool, where the Booth Steamship Company was based, was the more common British port for trans-Atlantic journeys. According to Navy commander and historian C. R. Vernon Gibbs, the British-Amazon line was for much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century “distinct from other branches of the South American trade and the special domain of the Booth Line which [had] no competitors, British or foreign, as an overseas passenger-carrier” (350). By 1911 the Booth line had “a fortnightly mail service” going from Liverpool across the Atlantic and straight up the Amazon River.<sup>38</sup>

Since Woolf was more familiar with London she may have chosen this as a departure point rather than Liverpool. However, both cities would have provided a stark contrast between the confines of the dirty, busy, poverty-stricken metropolis and the freedom of the open sea. In its London mooring, the *Euphrosyne* flies the Blue Peter, a flag to call all crew. The boatman states that this is flown by “Ships all the world over

[...] the day they sail” (8). For Helen this flag takes on a darkly prophetic nature, perhaps due to her reluctance to leave her children or alternatively presenting “a sinister token” (8) of things to come.

Woolf’s interest in the London waterfront continued throughout her life and in “The Docks of London,” where she describes in terms similar to those used in *The Voyage Out* that ships, “However romantic and free and fitful they may seem,” when docked along the Thames appear to “lie captive, like soaring and winged creatures who have got themselves caught by the leg and lie tethered on dry land” in comparison to a London that is “dismal [...] dingy, decrepit-looking [...] forlorn and joyless [...] a sinister dwarf city” (*The London Scene* 6, 7). This sense of the romance of the ship and the grubbiness of the docks is prefigured in *The Voyage Out* for, as the *Euphrosyne* steams into the Thames, Woolf’s imagery and vocabulary revolves around liberty and the abandonment of the seamy underbelly of London. They leave “London sitting on its mud” and suddenly find themselves “free of roads, free of mankind” with a sense of “exhilaration at their freedom” which runs “through them all” (23). From the industrial smog of London and the Thames with its “certain amount of troubled yellow light” (8), they are soon “out in a wide space of sea very fresh and clear” (23). The ship takes them from urban yellow and brown to shades of natural greens and blues which echo the short poetic prose piece “Green and Blue,” published in 1921 in *Monday or Tuesday* and was, according to Jonathan R. Quick and Panthea Reid Broughton, one of Woolf’s early responses to the work of the Post-Impressionists with which she became familiar during the writing of *The Voyage Out*.<sup>39</sup>

In *Melymbrosia*, blue is the symbol for eternity when Rachel reflects that it is this one color, which will last after her death. She finds herself “tempted to think of the bottom of the sea. ‘Why should I go bothering about my feelings, and other people’s

feelings,' her mediations ran, "while the gulls are squawking above, the sea is running round the world, and the plants are opening on the earth? I live; I die; the sea comes over me; it's the blue that lasts" (*Melymbrosia* 24). Blue and particularly *sea* blue is the color that stretches beyond Rachel's life; the eternity of the sea, like music, is what Rachel is attracted to: "I love the sea and music because they don't die" (*Melymbrosia* 152). It is a point with which the conservative, linear, masculine mind of Terence Hewet cannot concur.<sup>40</sup> In drafts dating from 1908-09, Woolf has the departing ship followed by ominous sea gulls that "cleave the air as with the flashes of silver scimitars in some tumultuous conflict" (*Melymbrosia* 264). In the published version these birds are absent and instead there is a sense of release and freedom, rather than of battle and tumult. The seagulls are the remnants of the docks that have been left behind; they are not part of the sovereignty of the ship.

Rachel and Helen feel as though they have space to breathe as they walk out on the decks into the exhilarating wind, but there is more than a physical freedom at play here. As the *Euphrosyne* steams closely along the coast of Britain, past the "roofs of the great towns [that] glittered," past "innumerable parties of picnickers" and the "thousands of small gardens," the passengers aboard the ship almost forget life on land (28). To them, Britain becomes a "shrinking island in which people were imprisoned," and which eventually disappears from sight, becoming slowly "mute" (29). Later in the journey, the steward Mr. Grice declares that there is more life in the sea than on land and criticizes landlubbers for their ignorance: "What does any man or woman brought up in England know about the sea? They profess to know; but they don't" (54). For Grice the solution to the problems on land is sea literature, as Woolf wrote in an early draft: "still his confidence was firm that if only someone could be found to popularise the sea

as Kipling and other authors had done the land, it would take its place as the great wonder and blessing of the world" (*Melymbrosia* 38).

At the start of *The Voyage Out*, following faithfully after traditional ocean-bound narratives, the sea offers independence, self-discovery, and freedom from societal restraints. However, the daily routines of the passengers who transport England with them undermine the freedom that a sea voyage symbolizes. Instead of abandoning the principles that govern their lives in London, the passengers aboard the *Euphrosyne* bring them along. *The Voyage Out* becomes, in many ways, a social satire, which, according to Louise DeSalvo, was inspired by Woolf's reading of E. M. Forster whose work, such as *A Room With A View* (1908), explores "the mores and morals of the English in a foreign country [or situation], because that is where those peculiarities of English behavior could be seen most sharply, and therefore satirized [...] after reading Forster, Woolf's emphasis in *Melymbrosia* shifted somewhat" away from "the mythic, epic element" and towards "social criticism" ("Introduction" xxxiv). Though the *Euphrosyne* may have left London behind, London does not leave the *Euphrosyne*. Rachel begins by seeing the ship, the sea and its passage across the sea as a means to free herself from the cloying upbringing of her aunts, yet towards the end of the novel she begins to want solid English ground and society. Rachel resents the way that the ship has: "cut ourselves off entirely from the rest of the world. I want to see England there—London there—all sorts of people." (352). By then the *Euphrosyne*, instead of being a symbol of freedom riding on the eternal sea, in some ways becomes the agency of Rachel's isolation and barrier to her becoming an adult.

After the initial departure from London, the *Euphrosyne* steams westbound in the Channel in October, on a day clear enough to see the coast of France. The passage from the mouth of the Thames through the English Channel and out to Land's End—

“from the bald moors to the Cornish rocks” (28)—is approximately 350 nautical miles. If the *Euphrosyne* traveled at what was considered average for an intermediate steamer of that era—twelve knots—the first leg of the journey would have taken only about a day and a half.<sup>41</sup> However, Woolf discusses the “first days” and then the “succeeding days” (28) of the journey along the southern edge of Britain. If they had in fact been steaming for so long in the conditions described, the *Euphrosyne* would have been well past Land’s End and almost to Lisbon. According to the 1901 Baedeker guidebook to Spain and Portugal that Woolf owned and brought with her, the journey to Lisbon took approximately fourteen days in total, with port stops along the way included (*A Passionate Apprentice* 257).<sup>42</sup> Perhaps Woolf expands this leg of the journey to give more time to the development of Rachel and Helen’s relationship and to the dynamics between the passengers. After passing Land’s End, the *Euphrosyne* steams through the Bay of Biscay, an elbow of the North Atlantic known for rough weather. Woolf does not specifically mention this body of water in the novel, but she knew that was how to reach Portugal. In her diary entry of 4 April 1905 during her voyage on the *Anselm II*, she notes that the Bay of Biscay “was a little rough, but nothing to keep up its reputation” (*A Passionate Apprentice* 261). She was traveling at the end of March, a time when the Bay of Biscay is generally less chaotic. A few years later, however, one passenger wrote on the back of an *Anselm* postcard dated 13 March 1910 with the header “In the Bay of Biscay”:

Send me some post cards from the place [Maceis?] if you don’t mind. My address will be care of ‘London & River Plata Bank, City of Para. it is pretty pretty rough and very cold and has been raining for days. [sic]<sup>43</sup>

In *The Voyage Out* the characters travel in October, a time when the Bay is notoriously gale-ridden, but they are “blessed in their weather” (30). If going slightly west around the Bay of Biscay, the passage from Land’s End to the Tagus River in Lisbon, known today in Portugal as the Rio Tejo, is about 850 nautical miles. The crew of the *Euphrosyne* casts anchor in visual distance of, perhaps, the Castelo de Sao Jorge, described as “a stationary castle upon a stationary hill” (36), only a few miles from downtown Lisbon, which was a common stop for steamships at this time.<sup>44</sup> It is at this point that the Dalloways arrive on board.

A short time after departing Portugal the *Euphrosyne* runs into rough weather, which: “by one of those accidents which are liable to happen at sea, the whole course of their lives was now put out of order” (73). Storms are one of the most basic of narrative tools in any fiction set at sea and featured in much of Woolf’s reading of sea stories, plays, and poems.<sup>45</sup> Storms put the passengers in a situation of crisis when “the mind of man [. . .] ha[s] been unmoored” (75). Sea novelists often use storms to transform the relationships on board ship, but Woolf is not especially concerned with the conditions of the surface of the water, the weather, the struggles of the crew, or even in any real way the struggles of the vessel itself. She reduces the conditions to a brief sentence: “The world outside was merely a violent grey tumult” (74).<sup>46</sup> Woolf is almost entirely within the rails, inside the hull of the *Euphrosyne* and with the passengers. She hones in on the psychological effects of the storm, noting that it is not until it is over that “human feelings began to peep again, as they do when daylight shows at the end of a tunnel” (75). In *The Voyage Out* the storm primarily serves to catalyze Rachel’s sexual awakening. When the weather and seas throw her into the arms of Mr. Dalloway, she realizes that women are not the equals of men. The storm and Dalloway’s kiss transport

her into a different world in which prostitutes exist in Piccadilly and one in which she is not allowed to walk down Oxford Street alone.

The storm also confirms Rachel's spiritual links with the sea, which give her the ability to cope, an ability that is prepared for by the watery imagery that surrounds her character from the beginning of the novel.<sup>47</sup> The heavy weather also exposes qualities, both positive and negative, in the other characters. For example, Helen has a level-headed resourcefulness when she helps the stricken Mrs. Dalloway, while the Dalloways crumble in the face of a natural experience that neither of them can control—even the dedicated scholar Ridley Ambrose must leave his studies. In contrast, Rachel and Helen are largely untouched by the storm. These two women are more sympathetic to the sea, and perhaps they escape partly because they do not belong to or believe in the old patriarchal order that tries to control and command the waves or “to get things out of the sea” (*Melymbrosia* 253). Mr. and Mrs. Dalloway view the sea as their servant, something that the British Empire uses to further its aims on land (see, for example, the pride with which they watch the British battleships).<sup>48</sup>

Authors of sea literature often use the storm to provide not just a trial for the characters, but an entrance into a strange and potentially life-changing environment. Consider the use of storms in *The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), all of which Woolf was likely to have read before completing *The Voyage Out*.<sup>49</sup> These works all describe storms that provide entrance to strange worlds and new beginnings, often via a shipwreck or stranding—the maritime equivalent to Dorothy's tornado. Rachel Vinrace's life alters after the storm, as she is literally thrown by the movement of the ship on a wave towards the arms of Richard Dalloway. He seizes the opportunity to kiss her.

Halfway through the passage, the Dalloways disembark at a “little bay, where they could now see the separate trees with moving branches” (83). The country or island where this is situated is unspecified. The most likely places for steamships at the time to stop on a trans-Atlantic journey were Madeira or one of the Cape Verde Islands, which were both coaling stations where ships like *Anselm II* and *Madeirense* refueled and loaded supplies.<sup>50</sup> If the Dalloways disembarked in Madeira, the *Euphrosyne* would have roughly 3,000 nautical miles to reach a port such as Belem; if they left from the Cape Verde Islands it would only be about 2,000 miles. Assuming an average rate of twelve knots, it could theoretically take the *Euphrosyne* an additional seven to eleven days to reach the mouth of the Amazon River, depending on the strength and the use of trade winds and ocean currents. Commonly it took a vessel like the *Anselm II*, for example, two to three weeks to cross the Atlantic to South America. The larger Blue Riband winning ocean liners would be able to make the trans-Atlantic voyage in as little as four or five days if sailing to North America, a few more if travelling to South America, and trips to European ports and to the islands of the eastern Atlantic in a day or two. The *Euphrosyne* took upwards of six weeks to complete its entire itinerary, with nearly four weeks spent traversing the Atlantic, a journey that is glossed over by “four weeks of silence” (95) perhaps because, as Jan Morris claims, “[Woolf] tended to get bored at sea” (“Introduction,” vi).

Unlike nearly all sea writers before her, Woolf describes these long deep ocean weeks in but a paragraph, with no mention of the extensive passage of time or the characters’ reactions to it beyond “on and on she went, by day and by night” (94). Instead, Woolf pans out cinematically, writing from the perspective of another vessel, from the binoculars on the “decks of great liners” (94). The *Euphrosyne*, and the characters’ lives, are seen as small, judged as insignificant by those on the grand ships

who are getting some fresh air from a dance. These passengers see the *Europhosyne* steaming away, visible only by the dim running lights at night. Woolf writes of the *Euphrosyne*, which again may be implicitly read as Rachel: “She became a ship passing in the night—an emblem of the loneliness of human life, an occasion for queer confidences and sudden appeals for sympathy” (46). It seems that for Woolf the storm and the kiss complete the necessary transposition, the entrance, thus rendering the telling of the long ocean passage redundant. Almost directly after the storm, the ship arrives—her father leaves her in a distant tropical port where she falls in love and then meets her death.

Upon anchoring in Santa Marina,<sup>51</sup> Woolf alludes to *Gulliver’s Travels* and this arrival in a new, fantastic world: “Immediately, as if [the *Euphrosyne*] were a recumbent giant requiring examination, small boats came swarming about her” (94). The characters, although impressed by the change in stimuli—colors, light, smells—upon seeing land, have no feelings for the ship and barely notice its departure, engrossed in the new place and letters from home. The reader’s last impression of the *Euphrosyne*, which has delivered the characters safely across the Atlantic—a scene that would be nostalgic, even sorrowful in most traditional maritime literature, such as in Melville’s *Redburn* (1849) or Richard Henry Dana, Jr.’s *Two Years before the Mast* (1840)—is ignored here by the characters, and only briefly mourned by the ship itself. The *Euphrosyne* sounds three blasts from the horn, indicating that it is getting underway: “Absorbed in her letters [Helen] did not notice that she had left the *Euphrosyne*, and felt no sadness when the ship lifted up her voice and bellowed thrice like a cow separated from its calf” (95). As a mother that has transported Rachel safely across the Atlantic, the ship bellows mournfully perhaps aware that the separation between them will be permanent.

## Conclusion

In *The Voyage Out*, Woolf offers the reader a female, modernist version of the sea genre traditionally dominated by men as both authors and characters. Familiar with the long, deep line of sea literature through her own reading, Woolf also had first-hand experience with ships having taken various voyages and passages before and during the writing of the novel. She responded to the public interest in ocean-going voyages at the time, and her novel now teaches us much about this period of passenger travel. The novel's title and the fact that the opening and almost a quarter of the narrative is set at sea justifies consideration of this novel through the lens of maritime literature.

This paper aims to situate Woolf, through reference to literary and historical material and her own experiences at sea, in this longest of literary traditions, going back to the *Odyssey* and "Jonah," as well as putting *The Voyage Out* in its contemporary maritime context. Woolf incorporates many of the staples of literature of the sea: beginning the novel by going immediately out to sea; using the ocean as an agent of freedom; and staging a storm as catalyst for personal change. The voyage to South America, as well as the Conradian river trip up the Amazon (which we do not explore here because of space and its inland setting) are also vital to Rachel's development from a naive girl into a questioning young woman—a device akin to the watery journeys which are crucial to the self-development of so many protagonists in bildungsroman stories set at sea.<sup>52</sup>

What makes Woolf's ocean narrative modern and feminist is that these experiences are written by and seen through the eyes of a woman. Woolf is perhaps the first major female writer to set her novel at sea and to use a young woman as the locus

of the sea story. It is extraordinary that it takes until the early twentieth century for this to be delivered. Woolf leaves behind the male bildungsroman and replaces it with a female one that stops short of the protagonist's full development when her young heroine dies of fever. Woolf's voyage does not yield personal independence or self-actualization—her protagonist does not return home as a better or changed person. Woolf chooses to set Rachel on a lesser-known, grittier intermediate steamer—not a sailing ship, not a storm ship, and not even one of the well-known celebrity ocean liners. Her selection of this vessel, which at times seems to represent Rachel herself, and the physical space all of the characters occupy, reveal the author's concerns. Departing from the tradition of sea literature, Woolf does not spend any significant time describing the ocean itself, its creatures at sea, or the men who work the ship. In *The Voyage Out*, she instead chooses to look carefully within the rails of the *Euphrosyne* at the upper class passenger experience. In so doing she satirizes English high society and makes a distinctly feminist statement about the upbringing and education of young women while simultaneously placing herself in the tradition of sea literature.

[end]

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## Images

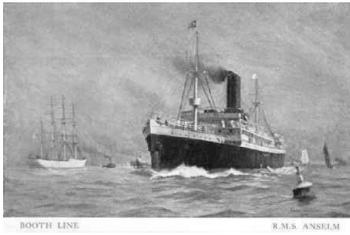


Figure 1. Postcard of the *Anselm*, courtesy collection of co-author  
Caption text: A 1910 postcard of the *Anselm (II)*, the ship Virginia Woolf took to Lisbon in 1905. Note the Brazilian flag at the masthead.

Att'd as: "WoolfEssayNautilusPostcard-1.jpg"

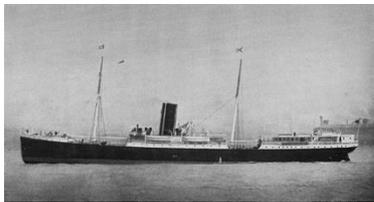


Figure 2. Photograph of *Madeirense*

Caption text: "Woolf and her brother took this Booth Line ship the *Madeirense* home to England from Lisbon in 1905. Photo c.1903, courtesy D. Fraser Darrah."

Att'd as: "WoolfEssayNautilusMadeirense-2.jpg"



Figure 3. Photograph of 'Music Room'

Caption text: A c.1903 photograph of the Music Room on board the *Madeirense*, a model for the ladies lounge aboard Woolf's fictional *Euphrosyne* (courtesy D. Fraser Darrah).

Att'd as: "WoolfEssayNautilusMusicRoom-3.jpg"



Figure 4. Map, made specifically for this article, paid by Williams College

Caption text: Virginia's Woolf's actual voyages to Portugal in 1905 and the approximate fictional passage in her novel *The Voyage Out* (Erin Grebe Cartography)

Att'd as: "WoolfEssayNautilusMap-4.jpg"

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### Images

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*, Oxford University Press, 2009. All quotations from the novel cited parenthetically are taken from this edition.

<sup>2</sup> The most notable of Conrad's early sea stories include: *Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), *Youth* (1898), *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Typhoon* (1902). Woolf read and reviewed his work several times and was likely to have first encountered him as a teenager for many of his short stories and pre-20<sup>th</sup>-century novels were serialized in the magazines of the time, including *The Cornhill* which Sir Leslie Stephen edited. It seems probable that Woolf may also have been familiar with Rudyard Kipling's *Captains Courageous* (1897), and perhaps even Jack London's *The Sea-Wolf* (1904). Marianne DeKoven likens *The Voyage Out* to *Heart of Darkness* in *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism*.

<sup>3</sup> In *A Room of One's Own* (1929) Woolf attributed the advances in women's ability to speak and write openly to Behn: "All women together, ought to let flowers fall upon the grave of Aphra Behn [...] for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds." (66).

<sup>4</sup> Of the writers who use the sea as a backdrop, she was likely to have read Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* prior to writing *The Voyage Out* for it formed part of her father's library, and she later wrote articles about both Defoe and Melville for both British and American journals. "The Novels of Daniel Defoe" for the *Times Literary Supplement* appeared on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1919 (revised for *The First Common Reader* as "Defoe"), while the essay "Robinson Crusoe" did not appear until 6 February 1926 in the *Nation & Athenaeum* (revised for the *Common Reader: Second Series* (1932)). She discussed Melville in "Phases of Fiction," which appeared in *The Bookman* in April, May and June 1929. There are also notes on Melville, as well as *South Sea Bubbles* by George C. Herbert and G. H. Kingsley, in Brenda Silver's published notebooks which date from July and August 1919 (XLIV in the Monk's House Papers/ B.21.1). And after the publication of *The Voyage Out*, the Woolfs collected for their library Melville's *Mardi and a Voyage Thither* (1849), and *Redburn: His First Voyage* (1849).

<sup>5</sup> Iceland was initially the Woolf's honeymoon destination in 1912, but the plan was "knocked on the head" because "too late in the year" (*Letters 1* 507). It is therefore quite likely that Woolf read or made herself familiar with these sagas in preparation for such a trip as she did whenever she went abroad.

<sup>6</sup> For further analysis on the use of the word 'voyage' see Edwards 2.

<sup>7</sup> See King and Miletic-Vejzovic.

<sup>8</sup> Woolf's edition, inscribed by Darwin himself and given to her by her father, had an additional title of *A Naturalist's Voyage*.

<sup>9</sup> Virginia and Leonard Woolf owned three versions of *Hakluyt*; the first was in five volumes in an edition published from 1809-12 entitled *Hakluyt's Collection of the Early Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries of the English Nation, Made by Sea or Overland to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters at Anytime within the Compasse of these 1600 Yeares*; the second *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nations, Made by Sea or Overland to the Remote & Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at*

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Any Time within the Compasse of these 1600 Yeares (1907 edition); and the third was a 'greatest hits' of the longer edition, titled *Voyages of Hawkins, Frobisher and Drake: Select Narratives from the 'Principal Navigations' of Hakluyt* (1907 edition).

<sup>10</sup> As Ian Blyth points out in his article "Orlando and the Tudor Voyages," Hakluyt played a central role in Woolf's imaginings about the sea. Reading Notebook XXXVIII contains notes on Hakluyt's *Voyages* and Froude's *English Seamen of the Sixteenth Century* made in December 1918 for her article "Trafficks and Discoveries," published in the *TLS*, 12 December 1918. In October 1924 she read and made notes for another article 'Richard Hakluyt' for which she read Foster Watson's *Richard Hakluyt*, Sheldon Press, 1924 (see Notebook XLVII). In Notebook XLIX, one of a list of essays for *The First Common Reader* was "Haklyt & Elizas".

<sup>11</sup> Woolf learned Greek and Latin with various teachers, Dr Warr of King's College, London, Clara Pater and Janet Case; she read and translated Homer and discussed the ancient Greek writers in her later essay "On Not Knowing Greek" (1925). She owned both Greek and English copies of both *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*. Notes on Homer's *Odyssey* from 1906-08 and 1922 can be found in her reading notebooks (Notebook XXV, I, B.23 (Berg) and Notebook XXXIV, B.4-5 (Monk's House Papers, Sussex)). In June 1931 an idea for a similarly fantastical voyage surfaced in Woolf's mind possibly inspired by her reading of sea adventurers like Odysseus: "I had an idea for a book last night, a voyage around the world, imaginary, hunting, climbing, adventurous people, shooting tigers, flying & so on. Fantastic" (*Diary 4 32*). But the adventure never materialized.

<sup>12</sup> Phyllis Rose argues that Rachel's marriage, as Woolf feared for her own character after accepting Leonard, would have ended her self-development anyway (see 72-74).

<sup>13</sup> See Kemp 921.

<sup>14</sup> The other ending in Woolf's oeuvre with a sea passage is the journey to the lighthouse which closes *To the Lighthouse*. However, this journey, a passage rather than a voyage, has the potential for the teleological conclusion described by Foulke, the journey will be completed in both directions.

<sup>15</sup> Other critics suggest different inspirations for the title, most of which are also plausible and nonexclusive to Woolf's thinking. Julia Briggs considers it to have been inspired by Leonard Woolf's *The Wise Virgins* (1914) in which Leonard's protagonist Camilla, who was inspired by Virginia, claims: "It's the romantic part of life that I want; it's the voyage out that seems to me to matter, the new and wonderful things. I can't, I won't look beyond that." (231) (see Briggs 22). This book was completed just months before Virginia changed the title of her manuscript from *Melymbrosia* to *The Voyage Out*. Lorna Sage in her introduction to the Oxford World's Classics Edition on the other hand attributes the title to a letter from Woolf to her close friend Violet Dickinson while bound to Spain in which she mentions 'the voyage out' (*Letters 1 186*) (see Sage xii).

<sup>16</sup> In *Melymbrosia*, for example, Captain Cobbett gives the passengers "tours into refrigerators, and engines" and communicates 'several facts about ports and life at sea' (35). Woolf crossed the English Channel several times over the course of her life for visits to France (1928, 1935), Spain (1904), Portugal (1905), Germany, Greece (1906), Italy (1908 and 1909), Turkey (1910), Ireland (1934). Her trip to Greece in 1906 ended in tragedy when her beloved brother died of typhoid. His fever and death, as Harvena Richter suggests, may have been the inspiration for the death of Rachel in *The Voyage Out*.

<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note here that Woolf's nickname as a child was The Goat. Perhaps the choice of goats for the Euphrosyne's cargo and their fate, which runs parallel to Rachel's, allows us to make a link between the goats, Rachel and Woolf herself who was a helpless victim of the Victorian and Edwardian social system during her adolescence under the rule of her father and half-brothers at 22 Hyde Park Gate.

<sup>18</sup> In the recent BBC documentary, *Time Shift: The Golden Age of Liners*, Paul Atterbury explores how the great ocean liners (British, American, French, Italian and German) made a significant mark on the popular imagination and influenced numerous other art forms which saw this form of travel as glamorous and the preserve of the wealthy.

<sup>19</sup> The *Mauretania* held the Blue Riband (the award for the fastest trans-Atlantic crossing) for over 20 years following its launch in September 1907.

<sup>20</sup> See also Clarke, "Dating the Action of *The Voyage Out*" 17-21.

<sup>21</sup> Stuart N. Clarke gives a short tour with photographs of the Lisbon that Virginia and Adrian Stephen encountered see "Virginia Stephen's Visit to Lisbon in 1905".

<sup>22</sup> See for example Haws especially 109-170.

<sup>23</sup> See Haws especially 127. In Woolf's journals she misspells the vessel's name as "Madeirensa."

<sup>24</sup> See "Passenger Cabin Plan of the *Madeirense*".

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<sup>25</sup> These men would have been holystoning the wood decks, a common, often daily chore of sailors for centuries. Holystoning was the process of deck scrubbing using sandstone blocks which, combined with seawater and sun, would make the deck white.

<sup>26</sup> See Atterbury.

<sup>27</sup> See Morris i-iii.

<sup>28</sup> See Broadley 26.

<sup>29</sup> See Sage Note 8 438.

<sup>30</sup> See Briggs 6 and 15.

<sup>31</sup> For an exploration of the publication of *Euphrosyne* see Rosenbaum 388-403.

<sup>32</sup> Woolf owned *The Works of William Shakespeare*, H. Arthur Doubleday, T. Gregory Foster, and Robert Elson (eds), Westminster: Constable, 1893-98. 12 vols and her quotation from the play in *The Voyage Out* suggests that she had read it prior to completing the novel. Woolf may also have come across "The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens", which is among the ballads compiled by her father's favourite poet Sir Walter Scott in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, Volume 1*.

<sup>33</sup> In her memoir of Vanessa, entitled "Reminiscences" (1907), Woolf writes that the sisters "drifted together like ships on an immense ocean" (*Moments of Being* 29).

<sup>34</sup> Jeanne Dubino also points out that Narmore, Newman, Froula and Phillips have all commented on Rachel's voyage as one of sexual self-discovery and marriage (17).

<sup>35</sup> The mermaid image may have presented itself because of the review of *The Little Mermaid* by Alexandra von Herder and Elkin Matthews that Woolf wrote for *The Guardian* (18 April 1906).

<sup>36</sup> See Haws especially 132.

<sup>37</sup> See Fraser Darrach, "Booth Line's S.S. *Anselm 2*", 3 February 2012, Blue Star on the Web.

<sup>38</sup> The route specifically serviced "Liverpool—Plymouth—Cherbourg—Leixoes—Lisbon—Madeira—Belem—Manaus" (Gibbs 352).

<sup>39</sup> See Broughton 36-57 and Quick 547-70. See also Jack F. Stewart's discussion of color and the symbolism of blue (438-58).

<sup>40</sup> In *A Room of One's Own* and *To the Lighthouse* Woolf explains the conventional masculine mind as one that is logical and egotistical. It moves from A to Z like Mr Ramsay's philosophical thinking and builds sentences into "arcades or domes" (*A Room* 100).

<sup>41</sup> See Hardy 44.

<sup>42</sup> The 1901 Baedeker states that it took 9 days to Oporto costing 6l, and 14 days to Lisbon costing 6l with the Booth Line from Liverpool, going "via Havre on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of each month, and to Lisbon (20 days; 8l., ret. 12l.) via Havre on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of each month; returning from Lisbon direct to Liverpool on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, and via Havre on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of each month" (xix).

<sup>43</sup> Postcard, 13 March 1910, collection of Richard King.

<sup>44</sup> See Gibbs in which he lists "Liverpool—Plymouth—Cherbourg—Leixoes—Lisbon—Madeira—Belem—Manaus" (352) as a common steamship route, and though some stops were not always made, Lisbon was the most usual stop. The Castelo de Sao Jorge is decried in Baedeker as "an old Moorish citadel [...] the castle affords splendid views of the town and Tagus" (521). Woolf's castle, if intended to be an actual one, could also be argued to be the Forte de Sao Juliao de Barra, since it is also on a hill and more properly at, as Woolf writes, "the mouth of the Tagus", more than ten miles to the west of Lisbon. The Torre de Belem also would make sense as a good place to anchor, and was so historically, but it is not on a hill.

<sup>45</sup> Woolf regularly described storms in her diaries, which may have inspired her descriptions in *The Voyage Out*, such as "The Beginning of the Storm" and "The Storm" both descriptions written in 1903 (*A Passionate Apprentice* 205, 206-208). Mariners are careful with the use of the word "storm" and "gale," which Woolf uses interchangeably. In 1906 the modern Beaufort Scale was published to categorize weather conditions at sea, assigning numbers to different strengths of wind and the behavior of the water. This scale is still in use today. The number 1 represents flat calm and 11 is a hurricane. Though Woolf does not give enough details to be certain, the general order of things other than big seas, seems likely that the rough weather the *Euphrosyne* experienced ranked between a "fresh gale" or even a "strong gale," not really a "storm" per se; we surmise the weather that Woolf describes would be from a wind of fifty knots at most. For further information see Huler.

<sup>46</sup> See Raban for a discussion on the historical trend of British writers describing the sea itself.

<sup>47</sup> Rachel's character is surrounded by watery imagery throughout, she is a pool of water to Helen who thinks that "when you said something to her it would make no more lasting impression than the stroke of a stick upon water" (16) at the beginning of the novel; her experience of falling in love with Terence in the jungle is as though they are "walking at the bottom of the sea" (315) and her death is shown as a slow, but pleasant drowning: "she was not dead, but curled up at the bottom of the sea. There she lay, sometimes

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seeing darkness, sometimes light, while every now and then someone turned her over at the bottom of the sea" (398).

<sup>48</sup> Adrian and Virginia Stephen along with Duncan Grant, Horace Cole, Anthony Buxton and Guy Ridley famously undermined the dignity of the Royal Navy in the Dreadnought Hoax of February 1910. See Woolf's account of it published in Rosenbaum (182-203). The reminder that Britain is at the centre of an empire is slight and touched upon, but not central to the novel. Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth argue that the critical sense of empire really surfaces in Woolf's work in the 1930s with her essay "The Docks of London" (1931) ("a case study in capitalist imperialism" (27)) and with *The Waves*.

<sup>49</sup> Mr Grice, the ship's steward, recites from *The Tempest*, while Helen recommends Defoe to Rachel, which suggests that Woolf read them both before the publication of the novel. She was also likely to have read Swift because of her father's interest in the author. After all, Woolf was born the year that Leslie Stephen published his biography of Swift and both of her sisters were named after Swift's women, Stella and Vanessa. Alice Fox also likens Rachel to Miranda: "Like Miranda, Rachel has lost her mother; like Miranda, Rachel remembers women about her; like Miranda, Rachel fears and loathes the bestial; like Miranda, Rachel is fond of her father; and like Miranda, Rachel transfers her affections from her father to a young man." (25).

<sup>50</sup> See Sage especially xiv. A common steamship route for the *Braziliera* was "Liverpool—Lisbon—Madeira—Sao Vicente—Recife" (Gibbs 348).

<sup>51</sup> Several scholars have taken on the question of which town inspired Santa Marina—with ideas as far-reaching as South Africa, or that it was an island—as well as the provenance of Woolf's digression regarding the maritime history of the port. Due to Willoughby Vinrace's interest in rubber from the Amazon River and the normal path of Booth Line ships, it is likely that if Santa Marina were based on an actual port, it would be Belém, known then as Para, a city situated in the Amazon Delta. Though the narrator states early in the novel that Vinrace's ships "regularly ply between London and Buenos Aires" (18), it seems that Belém would be the more logical destination for the *Euphrosyne*. This port is closer to the Amazon than Buenos Aires and was also a common steamship port, since it was the last coaling station before traveling up the Amazon River.

<sup>52</sup> For a thorough discussion of the Conradian river journey see Mark A. Wollaeger and Christine Froula who examine the trip at length.