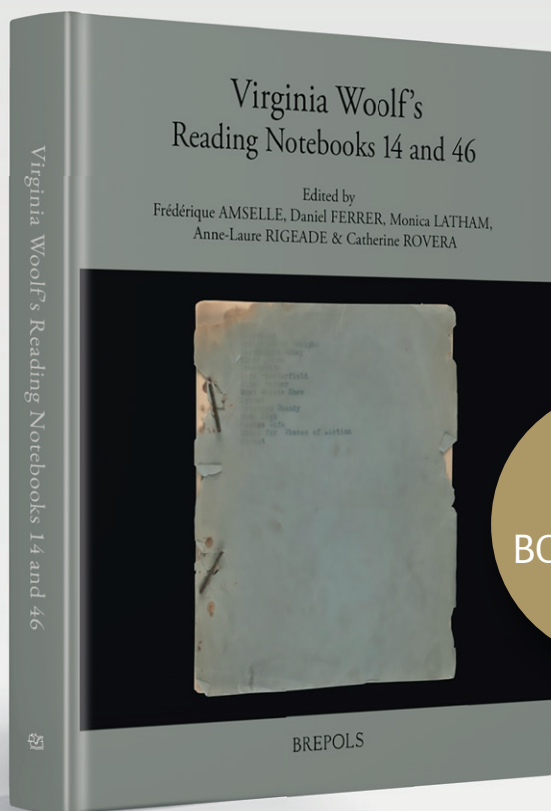


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Virginia Woolf

A Writer's Reading Notes



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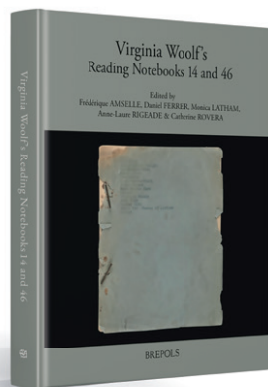
Virginia Woolf

A Writer's Reading Notes

Series Editors: Daniel Ferrer, Monica Latham, Anne-Laure Rigeade

Woolf's sixty-seven reading notebooks constitute a vast repository of facts, ideas, quotations and comments from which several projects stem: reviews, essays or chapters of critical books.

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The two notebooks published and presented in this volume, notebooks XIV and XLVI (according to Brenda Silver's classification), were used for the preparation of "Phases of Fiction", one of her most original works, and for several essays and reviews. They include quotations, comments on the spur of the moment, and tentative planning for the writing in progress.

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4 Letter of Lord Chesterfield.
r W. G. Dunne's Diary.

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Notes on Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*
Notes on Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*
Notes on John Ruskin, *Præterita*
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195.
aware that the audience never heard of George
an audience with some awareness of the
importance of the play - yet the play is not
W. G. Dunne
46 hearing the audience of the
55 he has a play
136
R.F. Meredith. 2. *3

← Source: Herman Melville, *Moby Dick or The Whale* [1851]. Boston: The St Botolph Society, 1892.

→ Use: 'Phases of Fiction' [*The Bookman*, April, May and June 1929], *Essays* V: 40-88.

Moby Dick.

9 the sea the image of the ungraspable phantom of life loose – generalised.

← *Moby Dick*, 9: Were Niagara but a cataract of sand, would you travel your thousand miles to see it? Why did the poor poet of Tennessee, upon suddenly receiving two handfuls of silver, deliberate whether to buy him a coat, which he sadly needed, or invest his money in a pedestrian trip to Rockaway Beach? Why is almost every robust healthy soul in him, at some time or other crazy to go to sea? Why upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration, when first told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land. Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a

but meaning. And still
it grasp the tormenting,
But that same image,
graspable phantom of life;

the great flood gates
see a snow hill in the

his coasts. Not ignoring
al with it – would they
gates of the place one

By reason of these things, then, the whaling voyage was welcome; the great flood gates of the wonder world swung open, and in the wild conceits that swayed me to my purpose, two and two there floated into my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale, and, mid most of them all, one Grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air.

40 my shadow is my true substance – mysticism Cf. Dostoevsky

← *Moby Dick*, 40: It needs scarcely to be told, with what feelings, on the eve of a Nantucket voyage, I regarded those marble tablets, and by the murky light of that darkened doleful day read the fate of the whalers who had gone before me. Yes, Ishmael, the same fate may be thine. But somehow I grew merry again. Delightful inducements to embark, fine chance for promotion, it seems — aye, a stove boat will make me an immortal by brevet. Yes, there is death in this business of whaling — a speechlessly quick chaotic bundling of a man into Eternity. But what then? Methinks we have hugely mistaken this matter of Life and Death. Methinks that what they call my shadow is my true substance.

53 So soon as I hear that a man gives himself out for a / philosopher I conclude &c → yet they make Ish[mael] one

← *Moby Dick*, 52: [...] perhaps, to be true philosophers, we mortals should not be conscious of so living or so striving. So soon as I hear that a man gives himself out for a philosopher I conclude that, like the dyspeptic old woman, he must have 'broken his digester.'

104 all deep thinking: the effort of the soul to / keep the independence of her sea – The effort of the word to transubstantiate / the flesh: to become mystical

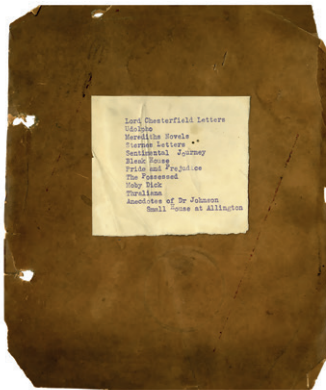
← *Moby Dick*, 103-104: When on that shivering winter's night, the Pequod thrust her vindictive bows into the cold malicious waves, who should I see standing at her helm but Bulkington! I looked with sympathetic awe and fearfulness upon the man, who in mid-winter just landed from a four years' dangerous voyage, could so unresistingly push off again for still another tempestuous term. The land seemed scorching to his feet. Wonderfuller things are ever the unmentionable; deep memories yield no epitaphs; this six-inch chapter is the stoneless grave of Bulkington. Let me only say that it fared with him as with the storm-tossed ship, that miserably drives along the leeward land. The port would fain give succor: the port is pitiful; in the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that's kind to our mortalities. But in that gale, the port, the land, is that ship's dearest jeopardy; she must fly all howl-jipitality, one touch of land, though it but graze the keel, would make her shudder through and through. With all her might she crowds all sail off shore; in so doing, fights 'gainst the very winds that fain would blow her homeward; seeks all the lashed sea's landlessness again; for refuge's sake forlornly rushing into peril; her only friend her bitterest foe!

Know ye now, Bulkington? Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth, that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore?

111 These characters are strange & violent: Stab Starbuck / like W[uthering], H[eights].

← *Moby Dick*, 111-112: Starbuck was no crusader after perils; in him courage was not a sentiment; but a thing simply useful to him, and always at hand upon all mortally practical

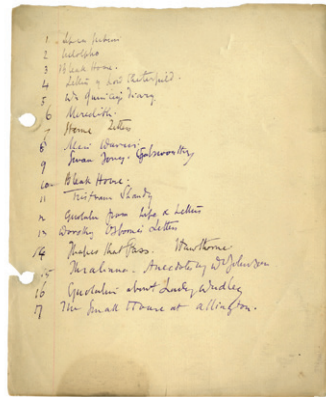
16 Quotation about Lady Widdley
17 The Small House at Allington.



Reading Notebook 46, front cover

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Reading Notebook 46, 2.

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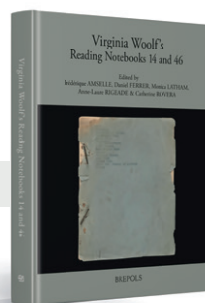
Daniel Ferrer is Directeur de recherche émérite at the Institut des Textes et Manuscrits modernes (ITEM), France.

Anne-Laure Rigeade holds a PHD in Comparative Literature and is Chercheuse associée at ITEM, France.

Monica Latham is a Professor of British literature at the Université de Lorraine, France.

Frédérique Amselle is a Senior Lecturer in British literature at the University of Valenciennes, France.

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