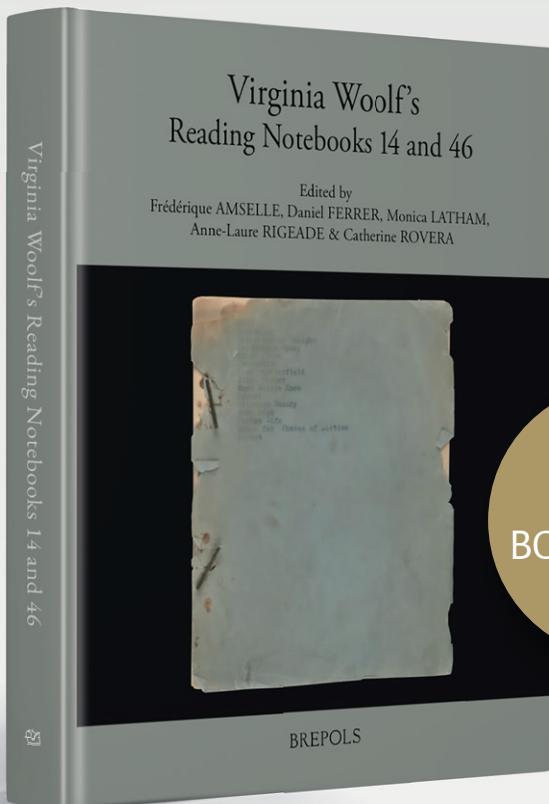


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# Virginia Woolf

## A Writer's Reading Notes



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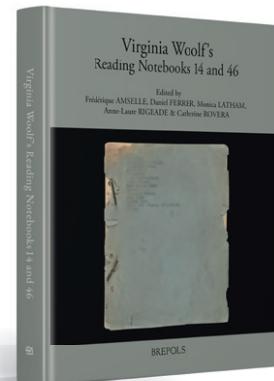
# Virginia Woolf

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

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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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- Notes on Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*
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695.

aware that the audience never blurted out  
an audience will come aware of the  
importance of Taylor - but Taylor aren't  
9/17, 1911.

R. F. Meredith.

2/23

46 hearing the audience  
55 he has a phobia  
136 he

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

→ **User:** '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 post of Temnesses, 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 to sail out of sight of land. Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a

name, and put it out of the sun? Why did the Romans put it out of the moon? Why did they not grasp the tormenting, the unutterable? But that same image, ungraspable phantom of life,

the great flood gates  
a snow hill in the

us coasts. Not ignoring  
it with it - would they  
inates 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 immost 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 whalenmen who ha 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 stow 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[majel, 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 women, 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

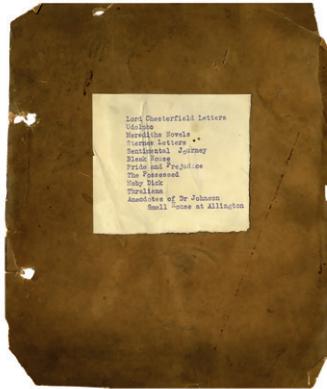
← *Moby Dick*, 103-104: When on that shivering winter's night, the Pequod thrust her vindictive bows into the cold malicious waves, who should I see standing at her helm but Bulkington! I looked with sympathetic awe and fearfulness upon the man, who in mid-winter just landed from a four years' dangerous voyage, could so irresistibly push off again for still another tempestuous term. The land seemed scorching to his feet. Wonderfieldest 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, heartstone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that's kind to our mortalities. But in that gale, the port, the land, is that ship's direst jeopardy; she must fly all hon-/pitiable, one touch of land, though it but grazzle 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:    **Starb** 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

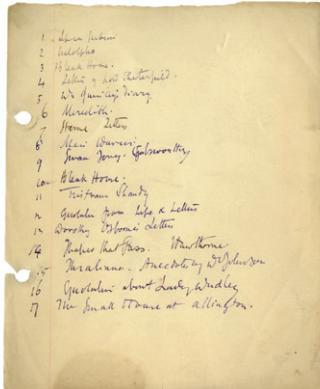
16 *Quotations about Lucy Wodehouse*  
 17 *The Small House at Allington.*



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Reading Notebook 46, 2.

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