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## **Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary by Claire Nicholson.**

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This supplement to Issue no. 74, September 2023, of the Virginia Woolf Bulletin, of the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain consists of the text of the lecture held by Claire Nicholson on the occasion of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain, held in person “at the Old Diorama Arts Centre, regent’s Place, 201 Drummond Street, London NW1 3FE, as part of the anniversary celebrations, on 20 May 2023” (p. 1).

Mainly, the lecture consists of a historical outline of the staple moments of the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain. We could go as far as to claim that this Society actually forms a subculture centred on the common interest in Virginia Woolf’s work and life shared by both “common readers” and members of the academic medium alike. Originally, the purpose of the society, as mentioned in this supplement, was to reunite those passionate about the work and life of Virginia Woolf, who were also very knowledgeable of various aspects and details, such as reading her novels in relation to her life, exploring various details about her manuscripts, discovering various significant details in her letters that could shed new light on her works, and others. Surprisingly, Woolf’s work and life can be, as we see throughout the issues of the Virginia Woolf Bulletin, subject to constant discoveries and rediscoveries. The passionate members of the society treat Woolf as a mystery from various points of view, ready to be analysed in spite of so much research that has been ongoing about her work and life. We can speak about a research field called Woolf Studies to which academic researchers pay attention. The Annual Virginia Woolf Conference is by now a well-known event for researchers interested in her works, an event which is attended by both academic researchers and common readers. Additionally, actors performing in plays based on Woolf’s life together with her sister are also present. The Annual Virginia Woolf Conference is held, every year, in another part of the world. It has been held, as an example, in Scotland, as well as in various areas of the United States, organized by various universities.

The Virginia Woolf Bulletin documents events related to Woolf of both the Virginia Woolf Association of Great Britain, as well as of other organizations, for those who have not attended them.

The beginnings of the Virginia Woolf Association of Great Britain are mentioned in the Anniversary Lecture, with the key personalities involved, such as Sheila Wilkinson, Stephen Barkway, and Stuart Clarke, who are all familiar authors in the issues of the Virginia Woolf Bulletin.

The Virginia Woolf Association of Great Britain is portrayed, in the Anniversary Lecture, as a true community of those passionate about Woolf’s work and life, or even as a true subculture. We could speak of symbols, personalities or heroes, traditions, rituals, and practices, as well as values, of this community, in a similar way that we can apply such culture identity manifestations, as defined by Sorin Baciú (2013) when referring to cultures, in his book *Culture: An Awareness-Raising Approach*, published at Cavallioti Publishing House, in Bucharest, Romania. The activities organized by the Association can be included in the category of rituals, traditions, and practices. Such activities are: the publication of the Virginia Woolf Bulletin, the Study Week, the Annual Woolf Lecture, and others. The perspective of the

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“common reader” can be considered a value of the Virginia Woolf Association of Great Britain, focusing on the aspect of passion for Woolf’s work and life. The members participating in the Study Week activity also visit places that were meaningful to Virginia Woolf, such as Talland House, a place which inspired Woolf to write her novels *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* (p. 6). Definitely, while being in such places the passionate readers can connect all the more with the writer they admire and with whom they sympathize.

As for personalities, the founding personalities of the Virginia Woolf Association of Great Britain can be considered. To these, we can add Cecil Woolf, the last living relative of Woolf, and his wife Jean Moorcroft Wilson, who were frequently present at Woolf-related events, academic and otherwise.

When it comes to symbols, we could consider symbolic places which were meaningful to Virginia Woolf herself and which can be visited, such as Talland House, or her house in London, together with the places in London where she enjoyed taking walks.

A symbol could be considered the Virginia Woolf Memorial in Tavistock Square, which was unveiled in June 2004. The Memorial “was to form the culmination of the International Virginia Woolf Conference being hosted at the University of London in June” (p. 17). Another symbol can be represented by the blue and black plaques. Such a plaque was placed on the Tavistock Hotel, “after a long campaign by Lindsay Martin,” on the home of Virginia and Leonard Woolf “from 1924 to 1939, a period in which Virginia produced *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, *A Room of One’s Own*, *The Waves*, *The Years* and *Three Guineas*” (p. 20).

Among the practices we could also include “Dallowday, held in June each year since 2017, [...] comprising a walk in London, followed by themed talks by invited speakers” (p. 21). This supplement is an occasion to review the major events of the Virginia Woolf Association of Great Britain, as well as its contribution to popularizing and better understanding, as well as celebrating, Virginia Woolf’s works and life.