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## *Virginia Woolf's Versions of Russia*

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Virginia Woolf's main source of knowledge about Russia was Russian literature. She was interested in the discoveries made by Russian nineteenth-century novelists in the sphere of transferring the depths of human mind into literary narrative. Early in her life she started reading Tolstoy; she became one of the first English admirers of Dostoevsky when Constance Garnett made the first major English translation of Dostoevsky's novels between 1912 and 1920.<sup>[1]</sup> In one of her letters she confesses that it is from Tolstoy that the modernists 'had to break away'.<sup>[2]</sup> Her reviews of translations from Russian were never solely about Russian literature: she felt it necessary while writing on the literature of Russian people, to comment on the Russian national character. In her 1917 article on Sergei Aksakov, the Russian nineteenth-century writer, she denotes 'the shouts of joy and the love of watching' as 'the peculiar property of the Russian people'.<sup>[3]</sup> Woolf never visited Russia, but her learning about Russian nation from its texts is one of the many examples of her exploring the world through fiction. Her involvement in reviewing and publishing Russian literature (between 1917 and 1946 The Hogarth Press published fifteen translations from Russian)<sup>[4]</sup> required keeping herself up to date with the political and social events in contemporary Russia. The cultural rapprochement between Britain and Russia in the early twentieth century provided a favourable atmosphere for Woolf's promotion of Russian literature. The British press regularly reported on Russian social affairs; a great number of novels were published in early-twentieth century England featuring either a Russian character or Russian setting.<sup>[5]</sup> In this essay, I shall examine how various kinds of literary and media sources shaped Woolf's visions of Russia. The first part deals with Woolf's reading of Richard Hakluyt's collection of Elizabethan travel notes on Russia and the way it formed

the imaginative representation of Russia in *Orlando*. In the second part I look at the articles on Russian exiles and sectaries published in *The Times* in the 1900s and at the evidence of Woolf's familiarity with them. I shall show how Woolf introduces the Russian element in her works by mentioning Russian revolutionaries in *The Voyage Out*, and how she later abandons topical allusions to Russian political life in favour of analysis of Russian literature in her critical writings. In the final part I discuss Woolf's work on her article on Turgenev contemporaneous with her composition of *The Years*. I argue that the character of Nicholas is Woolf's allusion to *Rudin*, Turgenev's first novel, and that another possible prototype of Nicholas is Samuel Koteliansky, a Ukrainian émigré who taught the Woolfs Russian and supplied them with information on Russian literature, politics, and national character.

## I

Woolf acquired her first ideas about Russia not from Elizabethan texts, but from everyday life – news, conversations, reviews of books on Russia that appeared in late nineteenth-century England. By the time she reached adolescence, references to Russia became commonplace in the conversations of English cultural elite. As Helen Szamuely observes:

With a realisation that political fermentation in the great empire was not confined to Poland, but had spread eastward, there came a discovery of Russian literature and art. This discovery, confined at first to a few, spread to ever wider circles, until in the period between the 1905 revolution and the First World War, it acquired all the characteristics of a mass hysteria.<sup>[6]</sup>

Among Woolf's personal links with Russia was Leslie Stephen's friendship with Turgenev; she also might have known Olive Garnett, David Garnett's aunt, who was involved in the activities of Russian political émigrés in 1890s London.<sup>[7]</sup>

Woolf's main personal source of information on Russia was Samuel Solomonovich Koteliansky (1880 – 1955), with whom the Woolfs collaborated on the translations from Russian published by The Hogarth Press. Koteliansky was

born in the region of Volin, which at that time belonged to the Russian empire. As a student, he got involved in the revolutionary movement. To escape police prosecution, he left for England in 1911 and never returned to Russia.

The Woolfs met Koteliansky through Katherine Mansfield and Middleton Murry in 1917,<sup>[8]</sup> but over the next few years they remained only formal acquaintances.<sup>[9]</sup> The first book Koteliansky and the Woolfs worked at together was Maxim Gorky's *Reminiscences of Leo Nicolayevitch Tolstoi*, published by The Hogarth Press in 1920. Woolf learned from Koteliansky that Russia was 'too little civilised to profit by revolution': he told her about his memories of how in 1905 Russian rebels 'were burning houses and stabbing nobles too'.<sup>[10]</sup> In February 1921 Woolf had her first Russian lesson with Koteliansky; keen though she was to learn the language, she made little progress: in one of her letters she admits that she 'merely revised the English of a version made by S. Koteliansky'.<sup>[11]</sup> Koteliansky was an infinite resource on the whole range of Russian literature: he translated not only the authors who were already well known in England, but also the contemporary Russian writers who left Russia after the revolution, but remained undiscovered by English readers, e.g. Ivan Bunin and Alexander Kuprin.

Woolf first read Elizabethan travel accounts in Hakluyt's edition Leslie Stephen 'lugged home' for her when she was 15 or 16.<sup>[12]</sup> Hakluyt's collection is a unique source in the context of Woolf's reading about Russia, for it describes the adventures of people who saw Russia for the first time and had no previous knowledge of the country. While reading Hakluyt, Woolf must have felt that she was discovering Russia with the Elizabethans. She realised that the sixteenth-century travel notes were a source as unreliable as Elizabethan 'obsolete nautical instruments',<sup>[13]</sup> and yet she admired them for the freshness of the impressions they conveyed.

The accounts of British sixteenth-century expeditions to Russia, as well as to other parts of the world, including South America and the East India, were brought together by Richard Hakluyt in his edition of *The Principal Navigations*,

*Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1598 – 1600). In 1809 – 1812 Hakluyt's collection appeared in a 5-volume edition; it is in this edition that Woolf first read Hakluyt.<sup>[14]</sup> The first volume in Evans' edition is largely devoted to Muscovy, as they called Russia in the West at that time. The first British expeditions to Russia took place under Edward VI. Richard Chancellor visited Russia in 1553, with the main aim of opening 'a way and passage to our men for trauaile to newe and vnknown kingdomes'.<sup>[15]</sup> In 1557 – 1572 he was followed by Anthony Jenkinson; in 1568, by George Turberville. In 1584 Ivan IV died, and Jerome Horsey witnessed the coronation of the new tsar. Finally, Giles Fletcher wrote the most thorough account of all Elizabethans notes on Russia, after his visit to the country in 1588.

Elizabethan impressions of Russia fall into two kinds: admiration of the country's size, the number of its people and the abundance of its natural resources, and aversion to Russian ways of behaviour - highly uncivilised, according to Elizabethan standards. The Russian allusions in *Orlando* (1928) reflect both kinds. Every Elizabethan traveller was impressed by the size of Russia: 'Moscouie ... is a very large and spacious Countrey' (Chancellor); 'The whole Countrey is of great length and breadth' (Fletcher).<sup>[16]</sup> Not surprisingly, the Russian princess in *Orlando* feels 'in a cage' at the English court and tells her lover about the Russian rivers, 'ten miles broad on which one could gallop six horses abreast all day long without meeting a soul'.<sup>[17]</sup> This is a deliberate hyperbole on Woolf's part: she must have read Fletcher's observation that the Volga, the broadest Russian river, is only 'broad an English mile and more'.<sup>[18]</sup>

Alice Fox observes that in *Orlando* Woolf 'used very little licence in her entire coverage of Russia'.<sup>[19]</sup> Analysis of the Russian element in *Orlando* proves the opposite: Woolf made her image of Russia far more exotic than it is in Hakluyt. Sasha is dressed in 'the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion'; nowhere in Hakluyt it is mentioned that Russian women wear trousers – naturally enough, for that would contravene the Russian Orthodox dress code.<sup>[20]</sup> Another fantastic image in *Orlando* is the delegation of the Russian Ambassador: 'In their great

beards and furred hats they sat almost silent; drinking some black liquid which they spat out now and then upon the ice'.<sup>[21]</sup> Here Woolf refers to the visit of 'Osep Napea the Moscouite Ambassador' mentioned in Hakluyt; however, the Russian custom of spitting out a liquid is purely a fruit of her imagination.<sup>[22]</sup> Orlando's ideas about Russia are the quintessence of how Russian ways might have been pictured by the Renaissance people who never visited the country: 'He had heard that the women in Muscovy wear beards and the men are covered with fur from the waist down'.<sup>[23]</sup> In *Orlando*, Elizabethan notions of Russia seem to echo those parts in Hakluyt's accounts which refer to the unknown parts of the world, where, according to Fletcher, 'dwell men of prodigious shape, of whom some are ouergrownen with haire like wilde beastes, other haue heads like dogges, and their faces in their breasts'.<sup>[24]</sup>

It appears that Woolf did not aim to give a historically true version of Elizabethan ideas about Russia in *Orlando*; she intentionally develops these ideas to the verge of improbability. *Orlando* is a fantasy, in which the reader expects facts to be distorted; however, the fantasticality of the descriptions of Russia in the novel is striking and yields only to Orlando's ability to change sex. The reason for this might be that Woolf wanted these images of Russia to stand out against the general background of Elizabethan London, which itself looked exotic to the twentieth-century English reader. Woolf's essays confirm that both Elizabethan and Russian cultures struck her contemporaries as peculiar: to use Marilyn Schwinn Smith's terminology, in the case of the former it was 'the unknowability wrought by time'; in case of the latter – the unknowability wrought by 'cultural difference'.<sup>[25]</sup> Woolf's explicit aim was to 'make these strange Elizabethans more familiar to us'; in her review of translations from Tchekov, she notes that with the increasing number of translations from Russian literature, the English reader 'ought not ... to be still drawing a rough plan ... of this strange Russian temperament'.<sup>[26]</sup> But while in her essays Woolf tries to diminish the extent of Elizabethan 'strangeness', in *Orlando* she exaggerates it. Partly she does this by introducing frost, snow, furs, and sledge driving – the typical Russian attributes which

fascinated Elizabethan voyagers – into her picture of Jacobean London. On the frozen Thames in *Orlando*, ‘lovers [dally] upon divans spread with sables’; English courtiers travel by sledges, the commonest ‘maner of carriage’ among Russian peasants, according to Chancellor.<sup>[27]</sup> Woolf presents Elizabethan England as a country foreign to the contemporary English reader:

Their morals were not ours; nor their poets; nor their climate; nor their vegetables even. Everything was different. ... Sunsets were redder and more intense; dawns were whiter and more auroral. Of our crepuscular half-lights and lingering twilights they knew nothing.<sup>[28]</sup>

Why does Woolf present the Elizabethans in *Orlando* as even more ‘strange’ than they appeared to the English reader from a three hundred years’ perspective? The reason lies in the genre of the novel. In her mock biography, Woolf defies the ‘official’ historical writings of the nineteenth century.<sup>[29]</sup> She must have known the biographical works on the age of Elizabeth that were seen as authoritative at her time, for example, Shakespeare’s biographies by Edward Dowden and Sidney Lee.<sup>[30]</sup> In these works, Elizabethan England bears a strong likeness to England at the age of Victoria; Shakespeare is portrayed as a Victorian gentleman, ‘a man of realities... A man of fact and calculation’.<sup>[31]</sup> By choosing the genre of mock biography, Woolf claims that the only thing to be said with certainty about people of the past is that they were different: further efforts of characterisation inevitably involve fantasizing. The picture of Jacobean London in *Orlando* is a mirage, and not an attempt to reconstruct the past according to historical sources. Its transitoriness is exemplified by the image of the frozen Thames: the royal pleasure grounds melt with the first rain, and a new chapter begins in Orlando’s history.

To retain their role of the exotic element in the fanciful opening chapter of *Orlando*, the images of Russia had to be hyperbolic, as, for instance, in the following passage: ‘[Sasha] was determined to live in Russia, where there were frozen rivers and wild horses and men, she said, who gashed each other’s throats

open'.<sup>[32]</sup> However, their grotesqueness has to do not only with the 'strangeness' of the Elizabethans in *Orlando*, but also with the way in which Woolf depicts Russia itself. In *Orlando* Woolf mocks various kinds of stereotypes, and the image of Sasha's country is her obvious response to those clichés that English contemporaries held about Russia. What points to this fact is that a number of allusions to Russia in *Orlando* are anachronistic. For instance, Orlando fears that in Russia he will have to drink 'vodka instead of canary'.<sup>[33]</sup> There is no references to vodka in either of Hakluyt's descriptions of Russia – not surprisingly, for the word 'vodka' in the current sense of 'a strong alcoholic drink' came into wide use in Russia not earlier than the nineteenth century.<sup>[34]</sup> However, references to vodka drinking are frequent in Russian nineteenth-century novels, so to the readers of *Orlando*, who knew Russia through Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, vodka was an indispensable part of Russian everyday life.

Another anachronism occurs when Sasha compares Orlando to 'a million-candled Christmas tree (such as they have in Russia)'.<sup>[35]</sup> The custom of decorating fir-trees for Christmas appeared in Russia in the 1700s: Peter I first introduced it at the Russian court, and throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it remained an exclusively aristocratic habit. But Russia is traditionally famous for its forests; in Hakluyt's collection, Chancellor reports that 'towards the North it hath very large and spacious woods, wherein is great store of Firre trees, a wood very necessarie, and fit for the building of houses'.<sup>[36]</sup> Imagining Christmas in Russia, Woolf's contemporaries would most likely think of an enormous fir-tree sparkling with candles, so for them there was nothing incongruous about a sixteenth-century Russian princess remembering such image in snowy London.

Summing up this analysis of Woolf's references to Russia in *Orlando*, Elizabethan travel accounts shaped the image of the Russian princess and her homeland to a considerable extent. They provided Woolf with the impression of Russia as a vast, boundless space, natives of which develop a sense of claustrophobia at the court of King James. The situations in which English voyagers failed to understand local customs brought Hakluyt's authors to the



conclusion about the cunningness of the Russians, as, for instance, in Jenkinson's account: 'They are great talkers and liars, without any faith or trust in their words, flatterers and dissemblers'.<sup>[37]</sup> In *Orlando*, it is hard to tell whether Sasha is indeed 'faithless, mutable, fickle', as Orlando calls her at the end, or whether she plays the role of a mysterious woman whose foreign ways are beyond Orlando's comprehension.<sup>[38]</sup>

As a whole, however, the image of Sasha and her Russian background is a sheer fantasy. The reason for this partly was that Jacobean England has an exotic air in the novel, and Woolf had to make the Russian allusions even more exotic, if she wanted to introduce them as a foreign element. The main reason for the images of Russia in *Orlando* being grotesque is Woolf's agenda to defy various stereotypes, including those held by her contemporaries about Russia. Hence some of the Russian allusions in *Orlando* are anachronistic: they refer to facts that are absent in Hakluyt, but frequent in Russian nineteenth-century prose.

## II

Woolf makes no use of her knowledge of contemporary Russia in *Orlando*, even in the chapter devoted to the present moment, in which Sasha reappears as a 'grey woman in fur'.<sup>[39]</sup> Later in this essay, I shall try to explain why she had been avoiding references to current Russian events since the time she started reviewing Russian literature. In her early work, however, Woolf paid tribute to the fashion which spread among English writers at the turn of the twentieth century of decorating their prose with sensational references to Russian politics. In *The Voyage Out* (1915) Evelyn mentions her friend 'whose brother is in business in Moscow':

"They want me to stay with them, and as they're in the thick of all the conspiracies and anarchists, I've a good mind to stop on my way home. It sounds too thrilling." She wanted to make Rachel see how thrilling it was. "My friend knows a girl of fifteen who's been sent to Siberia for life merely because they caught her addressing a letter to an anarchist. ... I'd

give all I have in the world to help on a revolution against the Russian government, and it's bound to come."<sup>[40]</sup>

As Anthony Cross observes, secret societies and revolution 'were the dominant themes in English imaginative writing on Russia' in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.<sup>[41]</sup> Woolf uses the reference to revolutionaries to reveal the shallowness of Evelyn's character: to Evelyn, the horrors of Russian penitentiary system constitute merely a 'thrilling' discussion topic. Evelyn's words are an example of Russian politics becoming a commonplace subject among the English public in the 1900 – 1910s, when the occasional news about an exile sent to Siberia resulted in sympathetic talk about the revolutionary activities in Russia.<sup>[42]</sup>

Woolf's source of the information about Russian conspirators was everyday talk about Russian contemporary politics, as well as the articles on Russia in the British daily press. Woolf most certainly heard of the Russian political émigrés who in the late nineteenth century fled Russia to escape police prosecution and settled in London, namely, Petr Kropotkin, Feliks Volkonsky and Sergei Kravchinsky (known by the pseudonym Stepniak).<sup>[43]</sup> In 1890 Volkonsky and Stepniak founded the 'Foundation for Russian Free Press', 'in order to publish political writings in Russian'.<sup>[44]</sup> Woolf could learn about these activities from Edward and Constance Garnett: as Anat Vernitski points out, the Garnetts took part in the meetings of the 'Friends of Free Russia,' a 'spin-off' from the Foundation for Russian Free Press.<sup>[45]</sup> Evelyn's words in *The Voyage Out* echo a number of articles on Russia, including those by Kropotkin, published in *The Times* in the 1900s. Petr Kropotkin (1842 – 1921), an explorer and an anarchist, was imprisoned in St Petersburg in 1874; in 1876, he escaped from the military hospital and settled in London ten years later. In the 1890s, his articles on the poor state of Russian prisons appeared in the *The Times* in 'Letters to the Editor' and 'News' sections. In 1906 and 1908 *The Times* published another four of his letters to the editor reporting the brutal suppression of the 1905 insurrection in Moscow and the thousands of arrests that followed. In *The Voyage Out*, Woolf seems to refer to his particular article under the title "Administrative Exile" in Russia'. Kropotkin's

aim was to bring ‘to the knowledge of English readers the ghastly forms which political prosecution has taken lately in Russia’:

A man or a woman, very often a mere boy or a girl, is arrested by the police – of course without any warrant from a magistrate. ... At this very moment thousands of men and women ... are arrested in this way every day. ... The victim is locked up and often mercilessly beaten if he or she objects to the arrest.<sup>[46]</sup>

The passage conveys the style characteristic of Kropotkin. He described Russian ‘atrocities’ so vividly, that his English readers could not help developing ardent hatred towards the Russian government. Objectively Moscow official policy was more complicated than the Russian political exiles presented it, but individuals like Evelyn welcomed a revolution in Russia, as some sort of a miraculous social transformation after which ‘atrocities’ would no longer be possible.

Evelyn’s belief in the inevitability of the Russian revolution echoes the end of Kropotkin’s letter:

It is reported from trustworthy sources that no less than 1,500 children of exiles – mostly peasants – have followed their fathers to the province of Archangel. ... Winter has already set in in the north, and it brings with it all the horrors of the Polar regions... This is what the present rulers of Russia have resorted to in order to maintain for a few more months their rule, which is doomed already to disappear.<sup>[47]</sup>

In 1908 – 1913, the years in which Woolf wrote her first novel, it was far from obvious that the Russian revolution was ‘bound to come’. However, in Britain the universal public opinion of the time was that the Russians would soon rebel against the tsarist regime, and Woolf communicates it by Evelyn’s words.

Along with the revolutionaries, another aspect of Russian social life treated by turn-of-the-century English writers was the prosecution of religious minorities: Anthony Cross mentions several novels published in 1890s England which deal

with the history of the Stundist sect.<sup>[48]</sup> The sect Woolf most certainly knew of were the Dukhobors who were treated ruthlessly by the Russian government for their refusal to do military service. The Dukhobor sect was founded in the eighteenth century; in 1887, after a new refusal to agree to military conscription, the Dukhobors confronted severe persecution. At that point, Leo Tolstoy became interested in their case and donated the profits from his novel *Resurrection* to enable the sectaries to emigrate. Aylmer Maude, Tolstoy's admirer and the future translator of his works, negotiated with the Canadian authorities on behalf of the Dukhobors; as a result, over 7,000 of the sectaries successfully moved to Canada in 1899.

The Dukhobor adventures were closely followed by the British correspondents: nine articles on the subject appeared in *The Times* between 1902 and 1907 - in the same years as the articles on the revolutionaries. Though the interest in the Russian sects corresponds with fin-de-siècle enthusiasm about the new spirituality discovered by the English reader in the Russian classical novel, there are no allusions to the Russian sectaries in Woolf's novels. However, in 1917 she reviewed the novel containing an obvious parody of the Dukhobor story, namely, Norman Douglas' *South Wind*(1917). Douglas' novel deals with a small multinational community on an imaginary Mediterranean island. Members of the Russian sect form a considerable and notorious part of the community:

They were religious enthusiasts, ever increasing in numbers and led by their Master, the divinely inspired Bazhakuloff, who was then living in almost complete seclusion on the island. They called themselves the "Little White Cows," to mark their innocence of worldly affairs, and their scarlet blouses, fair hair, and wondering blue eyes were quite a feature of the place.<sup>[49]</sup>

Few critical works have been written on Douglas' novel, and none of them point out the similarity between the 'Little White Cows' and the Dukhobors as they were described in the British press. Woolf only briefly mentions the 'Little White

Cows' when enumerating all those 'interesting and delightful facts' covered by Douglas in his eccentric novel.<sup>[50]</sup> In her diary entry for 17 October 1917 she recalls someone's mentioning *South Wind*: 'much praised by the reviews – all clever conversation, Italy', but she herself remained obviously indifferent to the topicality of the references to the Russian sect.<sup>[51]</sup>

The parallels between the image of the sectaries in Douglas' novel and the Dukhobors are evident. *The Times* correspondent writes on the 'extreme form of vegetarianism' the Dukhobors gradually adopted: 'Not content with abstaining from meat, they now regard it as a sin to use milk or to keep any domestic animals for any purpose'.<sup>[52]</sup> The sectaries in *South Wind* adhere to the following revelation of their Master: 'Everything derivable from dead beasts is Abomination to Little White Cows'.<sup>[53]</sup> *The Times* quotes the Dukhobors' letter to the Sultan of Turkey: 'We cannot submit ourselves to the laws or regulations of any State, or to be the subjects of any other ruler except God'.<sup>[54]</sup> The name of the Little White Cows represents their 'innocence of worldly affairs'. Finally, in his 1906 letter to the editor of *The Times*, Aylmer Maude accused the Dukhobors' leader of abusing the religious cause to cover his political ventures; he also reported that the head of the sect 'holds among the Dukhobors the place both of a Pope and a King'.<sup>[55]</sup> The leader of the Little White Cows calls his followers the 'apostles and himself their Messiah'.<sup>[56]</sup>

The correspondence between Douglas' novel and the real events in Russian socio-religious life did not attract Woolf's attention. Her review of *South Wind* is highly ironic; it convinces the reader that Douglas' characters are 'merely a gallery of whimsical grotesques', though Woolf pretends to be proving the opposite.<sup>[57]</sup> At first sight, it is surprising that she remained unimpressed by the Russian element in *South Wind*, for Douglas clearly meant his image of the sect to embody the unique Russian spirituality. One of the islanders becomes a supporter of the Little White Cows:

She began to understand the inward sense of that brotherly love, that apostolic spirit, which binds together every class of the immense Empire – to revere their simplicity of soul and calm god-like faith.<sup>[58]</sup>

The ‘simplicity’ of the Russian soul and the Russian ‘spirit of sympathy with suffering’ are precisely what Woolf was celebrating in her essays written close to the time she was reviewing *South Wind*.<sup>[59]</sup> In her review of the Maudes’ translation of Tolstoy’s *Cossacks* she quotes the passage where Tolstoy’s protagonist Olenin goes on a hunt and experiences spiritual revelation:

And it was clear to him that he was not a Russian nobleman, a member of Moscow society, the friend and relation of so-and-so and so-and-so, but just such a mosquito, or pheasant, or deer, as those that were now living all around him. ...

‘Happiness is this!’ he said to himself. ‘Happiness lies in living for others’... He was so glad and excited when he had discovered this, as it seemed to him, new truth, that he jumped up and began impatiently seeking someone to sacrifice himself to, to do good to and to love.<sup>[60]</sup>

Similar as Olenin’s aspirations might seem to the ‘brotherly love’ of the Russian sectaries in *South Wind*, they are absolutely different in their aesthetic quality. As Woolf observes, Tolstoy combines Olenin’s simplicity with ‘the utmost subtlety which seems to mark both the educated Russian and the peasant equally,’ and it is this combination that makes *The Cossacks* a brilliant study of human psychology.<sup>[61]</sup> *South Wind* lacks the subtlety of Tolstoy’s prose: Douglas’ drawing on the sensational aspects of social life in contemporary Russia places his book in the same bracket as the dozens of popular novels featuring Russian exiles that were published in England in the 1890 – 1910s.<sup>[62]</sup>

To Woolf, neither political (revolutionaries) nor religious (sectarians) fanatics represented the genuine Russian soul, ‘the chief character in Russian fiction’ which she praised in *The Russian Point of View*, her major essay on Russian literature.<sup>[63]</sup> In her works following *The Voyage Out*, she confined her

preoccupation with contemporary Russia to writing articles on nineteenth-century Russian prose. Consequently, her Russia became a country that no longer existed at the time she was writing about it. For example, the autobiographical chronicle by Sergei Aksakov that she reviewed in 1917 deals with life in provincial Russia at the start of the nineteenth century. Woolf wrote most of her Russian essays in 1917 – 1919, the years of two revolutions and a continuing civil war in Russia.<sup>[64]</sup> It is remarkable that only one out of these ten essays deals with current Russian events, namely, a review of *Petrograd. The City of Trouble 1914 – 1918* by the British Ambassador's daughter.<sup>[65]</sup> This highly critical review proves that Woolf was well informed about the Russian revolutionary politics; however, in her own writing, she chose to focus on Russian literature of the previous century.

The vision of Russia that Woolf developed in her essays on Russian nineteenth-century literature was almost as detached from reality as the images of Russia in *Orlando*. This was partly due to the delay between publication and translation which affected the way in which Woolf – like all English readers who knew Russian fiction through translations – became acquainted with Russian literature. The main reason, however, for the Russians depicted in Woolf's essays being a generalized and idealized portrait of the real people was that Woolf used their image as an expedient example in her argument on 'how one should write a book'. It is 'the Russians' to whom she turns in search of 'understanding of the soul and heart'; according to her, a Russian writer has 'by right of birth a natural reverence for the human spirit'.<sup>[66]</sup> The inconclusiveness Woolf admired about Tchekov's stories allowed her to refer to 'the inconclusiveness of the Russian mind' in general.<sup>[67]</sup> Vice versa, the vivid image of the 'compassionate' Russians added persuasiveness to her defence of the new writing techniques, which, in her opinion, would enable English authors to overcome their 'gross impediments of vision'.<sup>[68]</sup> It was especially striking to comment on the 'compassionate' Russian mind at a time when all kinds of atrocities were happening in Russia during the Civil War, but this seemed to be of no significance to Woolf.<sup>[69]</sup> Tchekov's short story about the Russian soldier coming back from the Far East ('Gusev', 1890),

interpreted by Woolf in 'Modern Fiction', might be irrelevant to global events in twentieth-century Russian history, but to Woolf it served as a convenient illustration of the modernist sensibility.<sup>[70]</sup>

### III

Emily Dalgarno argues that Nicholas in *The Years* (1937) is 'the Tolstoyan character' modelled after Nicholas Rostov in *War and Peace*.<sup>[71]</sup> Later in her essay, she claims that Woolf translates Nicholas' name 'into a particularly Tolstoyan combination of the ordinary with the authoritative'.<sup>[72]</sup> Analysis of Woolf's last novel shows no evidence of the connection between the Nicholas of *The Years* and Tolstoy's character. Dalgarno does not explain why she sees the 'combination of the ordinary with the authoritative' as specifically Tolstoyan; the name of Nicholas Pomjalovsky could belong to the character of any Russian novelist. The link between the Nicholas of *The Years* and Nicholas Rostov seems to go no further than the similarity of their first names. Neither as 'a wildly patriotic young man' nor as 'a mature adult who becomes a good landowner', does Tolstoy's Nicholas resemble the 'impressive and solitary' figure of the Pole in Woolf's novel.<sup>[73]</sup> Tolstoy was not the writer who occupied Woolf's mind during her work on *The Years* in 1932 – 1934. It is impossible to deny his influence on Woolf's representation of historicity in *The Years*: Woolf was re-reading Tolstoy throughout her life, and in *The Russian Point of View* she called him 'the greatest of all novelists'.<sup>[74]</sup> However, the image of Nicholas in *The Years* is more likely to be a reference to the works of Ivan Turgenev, whom Woolf was re-reading while composing her last novel to be published in her lifetime.<sup>[75]</sup>

Woolf decided on the genre of *The Years* – an 'Essay-Novel' – by November 1932, and by October 1934 she finished the first draft.<sup>[76]</sup> She was reading Turgenev over the summer of 1933; in autumn 1933, she promised an essay on Turgenev's novels for *The Times*. She worked on the essay mostly in October 1933, and it appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* in December the same year.<sup>[77]</sup> In November 1933 she sent the proof of her article on Turgenev with the



letter to Helen McAfee, the editor of *The Yale Review*. In the letter she acknowledges that she ‘was greatly impressed by Turgenev, reading him again after many years’, and expresses hope that her article will ‘lead some of the younger generation to look at him again’.<sup>[78]</sup>

One of the characteristics of his prose that impressed Woolf was Turgenev’s selectiveness in his use of detail; his ability to construct a scene with the minute objects which are crucial for the depiction of the inner life of his characters. Woolf refers to this feature of Turgenev both in her diary and in her essay: the entry for 16 August 1933 says, ‘T. [Turgenev] wrote and re-wrote. To clear the truth of the unessential. ... T.’s idea that you the writer states the essential & lets the reader do the rest.’<sup>[79]</sup> In her essay she demonstrates how the observer in Turgenev is constantly checked by the interpreter and vice versa:

With his infallible eye he observes everything accurately. Solomin [the character in Turgenev’s *Virgin Soil*] picks up a pair of gloves... But [Turgenev] stops when he has shown us the glove exactly; the interpreter is at his elbow to insist that even a glove must be relevant to the character, or to the idea.<sup>[80]</sup>

Revealing details like the gloves are abundant in Woolf’s last novel. An example is the little blue flower in the portrait of Mrs Pargiter. When Martin returns home from Africa he notices that the flower is no longer visible under the dirt. He tells Eleanor that he can remember it when he was a child, but Eleanor has forgotten about the flower: ‘She had not looked at [the portrait], so as to see it, for many years’.<sup>[81]</sup> In ‘Present Day’ she has the picture cleaned, and the flower becomes visible again. She shows it to Peggy who is examining her grandmother’s portrait: ‘It was hidden by the dirt,’ said Eleanor. ‘But I can just remember it, when I was a child’.<sup>[82]</sup> To use Woolf’s words about Turgenev, even the flower is relevant to the idea of *The Years*: in this case, to the idea of the unceasing relay race between the generations of one family or even of one nation. Peggy will remember her grandmother’s portrait as clearly as Martin did when he was a child.

Another general impression of Turgenev's prose that influenced Woolf's style in *The Years* is the impression of 'a generalized and harmonized picture of life'. As Woolf observes, in Turgenev's novels, 'the connection is not of events but of emotions': 'Even if he uses an abrupt contrast, or passes away from his people to a description of the sky or of the forest, all is held together by the truth of his insight'.<sup>[83]</sup> An example of such an 'abrupt' ending in *The Years* is at the end of the '1917' chapter. Eleanor gets on the omnibus, and another passenger, a complete stranger, all of a sudden shows her what he has got for his supper:

And he held out for her inspection a hunk of bread on which was laid a slice of cold meat or sausage.<sup>[84]</sup>

The image of the old man seems to be out of place in the chapter: he does not re-appear later on in the novel. However, the scene corresponds with the conversation between Eleanor and Nicholas earlier in the chapter. Eleanor wonders how people could 'live more naturally ... better [...]?' Nicholas replies that in modern society 'each is in his own little cubicle,' while the human soul 'wishes to expand; to adventure; to form – new combinations'.<sup>[85]</sup> The encounter between Eleanor and the old man demonstrates how people can break out of their 'cubicles' and interact in a more sympathetic and spontaneous way natural in time of war.

In spite of the links between Woolf's comments on Turgenev's prose and her own mode of writing in *The Years*, it would be a generalisation to ascribe Woolf's experiments with narrative to Turgenev's influence. And yet, it appears that she modelled the character of Nicholas in *The Years* on one particular character of Turgenev, namely, on the eponymous Rudin from Turgenev's 1856 novel.

Both Rudin and Nicholas are outsiders to those who surround them: Rudin due to the long time he spent out of Russia, in Heidelberg, and Nicholas due to his nationality. Nicholas relishes vast subjects like laws, religions and the process of their production; twice in the novel he plays the role of an orator, attempting to deliver a speech. Sara tells North how Nicholas tends to lecture his audience, in

the manner of some spiritual ‘Master’.<sup>[86]</sup> Similarly, Rudin arrives at a country estate in a Russian province, and straight after being introduced to the local society, he prattles for a quarter of an hour on a French political pamphlet. Turgenev mocks his didactic manner by making another character pretend as though he is going to take notes on Rudin’s speech. Finally, Nicholas treats the others in a patronising manner:

“And why were you so late?” said Nicholas, turning to Sara. He spoke gently, reproachfully, rather as if she were a child. He poured her out a glass of wine.

Eleanor sees him as a kind of spiritual guide:

He seemed to have released something in her; she felt not only a new space of time, but new powers, something unknown within her.<sup>[87]</sup>

Rudin is a governor and spiritual master to Natalya, the daughter of his hostess. Most of Turgenev’s protagonists (Insarov in *On The Eve*; Bazarov in *Fathers and Children*; Nezhdanov in *The Virgin Soil*) pose as orators, and many of them play the role of spiritual guides towards their female friends. However, Rudin must have raised special interest in Woolf, for at the end he upsets Natalya’s expectations by suggesting that they should submit to Natalya’s mother’s protest against their marriage. This plot turn could have appealed to Woolf who was preoccupied with ‘the reaction of women to the ‘confused but tumultuous clamour’ (‘You shall not, shall not, shall not’) produced by those powerful subconscious male motives’.<sup>[88]</sup>

Some of the features of Nicholas’ character suggest that one of his prototypes was a real person, namely, Samuel Koteliansky. This possibility does not disprove the similarity between Nicholas and Rudin: in her diary Woolf notes that Koteliansky ‘has some likeness to the Russians of literature’.<sup>[89]</sup> It would be natural for Woolf to pay tribute to her long-lasting friendship with Koteliansky in the chapter entitled ‘1917’, perhaps the most intensely ‘Russian’ year in twentieth-century

European history. In her letters and diary Woolf notes Koteliansky's habit of vigorously shaking hands and the striking straightforwardness of his speech:

Kot I saw on Christmas Day... He almost crushed my hand; he abused Murry [John Middleton Murry]; he spoke with enormous sincerity, staring at one out of his rather bloodshot eyes.<sup>[90]</sup>

She also observes his fondness of discussing the soul: 'He will begin to explain his soul without preface. He explained Katherine [Mansfield]'s soul, not at all to her credit'; 'He always speaks the truth, & gropes after it in psychology'.<sup>[91]</sup> In *The Years*, Nicholas crushes North's hand, which North finds 'effusive'; he talks about the soul with Eleanor, and at the start of '1917,' he is involved in the discussion of 'the psychology of great men... by the light of modern science'.<sup>[92]</sup>

The way Woolf employs the Russian element in *The Years* is further evidence of her determination to keep her references to Russia as non-topical as possible. It is remarkable that the '1917' chapter contains no allusions to current political events in Russia. Nicholas and Renny discuss Napoleon, a political character of the distant past. The scene takes place on a winter night in 1917; in reality, it was right after the Bolsheviks came to power. However, in '1917' Woolf introduces the atmosphere typical of the Russian nineteenth-century novel: people come together, eat, drink, and discuss random subjects – now dress, then the improvement of one's soul. The reader becomes almost oblivious to the fact that Woolf's characters are in the cellar because of the air raid, and that at any moment the bomb could destroy the house.

In this essay I have examined Woolf's use of various images of Russia and the Russians which she derived from both biographical and literary sources. The image of an immensely large and plentiful country populated by savage and at the same time alluringly mysterious natives inspired the character of Sasha in *Orlando*. In *Orlando* Woolf also mocks the way people tend to create fantastic stereotypes about those whom they do not wholly understand. Woolf's knowledge of contemporary Russia through newspapers and the references to current Russian

affairs in the English novels of her time resulted in the references to Russian revolutionaries in *The Voyage Out*. Under the influence of newspaper reports on the Dukhobors and Siberian exiles, Russian sects and revolutionary societies came to represent Russian spirituality to British reading public. The more Woolf worked on Russian literature, the more she realised that the Russia of the sectaries, for example, as shown in *South Wind*, was a country no less imaginary than Muscovy in *Orlando*.

In her essays on Russian literature Woolf created her own symbol of Russia, an image of the Russian writer who summons his readers to learn to make themselves 'akin to people' and whose interest lies 'in the dark places of psychology'.<sup>[93]</sup> As a starting point for examining modernist modes of writing it was useful, but, as any generalised image, it did not always reflect the reality.

It is therefore logical that Nicholas, the Slav character of *The Years*, talks about the soul and 'the psychology of great men'. Nicholas is not the only link between *The Years* and Woolf's essays on the novels of Turgenev. The funeral scene in the '1880' chapter echoes the final passage of Turgenev's major novel, *Fathers and Children*. Delia watches pebbles falling on her mother's coffin:

As they dropped she was possessed by a sense of something everlasting; of life mixing with death, of death becoming life. For as she looked she heard the sparrows chirp quicker and quicker; she heard wheels in the distance sound louder and louder; life came closer and closer...<sup>[94]</sup>

In Turgenev's novel, the protagonist Bazarov, a doctor; dies of a blood infection received from his patient. He is the only son of his elderly parents. His father, a kind-hearted and patient man, proclaims he will curse God if he loses his son, but life goes on its way, and eventually he and his wife find consolation in visiting their son's grave:

They exchange some brief word, wipe away the dust from the stone, set straight a branch of a fir-tree, and pray again, and cannot tear themselves away from this place, where they seem to be nearer to their son, to their

memories of him. ... Can it be that their prayers and their tears are fruitless? Can it be that love, sacred, devoted love, is not all-powerful? Oh, no! However passionate, sinning, and rebellious the heart hidden in the tomb, the flowers growing over it peep serenely at us with their innocent eyes; they tell us not of eternal peace alone, of that great peace of 'indifferent' nature; they tell us too of eternal reconciliation and of life without end.<sup>[95]</sup>

Though the questions raised in *Fathers and Children* remain open after Bazarov's death, Turgenev finds a way to end his novel with an air of harmonious simplicity. The similar motif of reconciliation is interrupted in the '1880' chapter of *The Years* by the priest's mention of 'this sinful world'. However, the final passage of *The Years* echoes *Fathers and Children* in its sense of serenity and completeness:

The sun had risen, and the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace.<sup>[96]</sup>

Woolf's analysis of Turgenev's prose in her essays and her structuring of her own texts after the aesthetic principles she observed in Turgenev provide an example of the close interaction between her critical and fictional writing.

### Endnotes

<sup>[1]</sup> Transliterations from Russian follow Woolf's own practice.

<sup>[2]</sup> Letter to V. Sackville-West, 8 January 1929. *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. N. Nicolson. Vol. 4. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978).

<sup>[3]</sup> V. Woolf, 'A Russian Schoolboy'. *Books and Portraits*. Ed. M. Lyon (Triad Paperbacks, 1982) 127.

<sup>[4]</sup> O. Kaznina, 'S.S. Koteliansky (1880-1955) i angliiskie pisateli'. *Russkie evrei v Velikobritanii*. Ed. M. Parkhomovskii (Jerusalem, 2000) 161.

- [5] A.G. Cross, *The Russian Theme in English Literature from the Sixteenth Century to 1980: An Introductory Survey and a Bibliography* (Oxford: W.A. Meeuws, 1985) 44-67 passim.
- [6] H. Szamuely, *British Attitudes to Russia 1880-1918*. Thesis (DPhil) (University of Oxford, 1983) 375.
- [7] P. Waddington, *Turgenev and England* (London: Macmillan, 1980) 251; A. Vernitski, 'Russian Revolutionaries and English sympathizers in 1890s London: The Case of Olive Garnett and Sergei Stepniak'. *Journal of European Studies* 35 (2005): 299-314.
- [8] Letter to D. Garnett, 26 July 1917. *Letters*, Vol. 2, 168.
- [9] Cf. Woolf's addressing her future friend 'Kot' as 'Mr Koteliansky' in her letter from 4 April 1919. *Letters*, Vol. 2, 344.
- [10] 18 January 1918, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. A.O. Bell. Vol. 1 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1977) 108.
- [11] *Letters*, Vol. 5, 91.
- [12] 8 December 1929, *Diary*, Vol. 1, 108.
- [13] V. Woolf, 'The Elizabethan Lumber Room', *The Common Reader: First Series* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1975) 60.
- [14] Cf. her reference to 'these magnificent volumes', 'The Elizabethan Lumber Room', 60.
- [15] *Hakluyt's Collection of the Early Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries, of the English Nation*. Vol. 1 (London: Printed for R.H. Evans, J. Mackinlay, and R. Priestly, 1809) 270.
- [16] *Hakluyt's Collection*, 275, 536.
- [17] V. Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography*. Ed. B. Lyons (Penguin Books, 1993) 30.

- [181] *Hakluyt's Collection*, 537.
- [191] A. Fox, *Virginia Woolf and the Literature of the English Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 47.
- [201] *Orlando*, 26.
- [211] *Orlando*, 27.
- [221] *Hakluyt's Collection*, 351.
- [231] *Orlando*, 33.
- [241] *Hakluyt's Collection*, 558.
- [251] M.S. Smith, 'Woolf's Russia: Out of Bounds'. *Virginia Woolf Out of Bounds: Selected Papers from the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf* (University of Maryland, 7-10 June 2000). Ed. J. Berman and J. Goldman (New York: Pace UP, 2001) 266.
- [261] V. Woolf, 'The Strange Elizabethans'. *The Common Reader: Second Series* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965) 15; 'The Russian Background', *Books and Portraits*, 147.
- [271] *Orlando*, 25; *Hakluyt's Collection*, 275.
- [281] *Orlando*, 19-20.
- [291] S.N. Gilbert, Introduction. *Orlando*, xxi-xxii.
- [301] Edward Dowden, *Shakespeare, His Mind and Art* (1875); Sidney Lee, *Life of William Shakespeare* (1898). She almost certainly knew the work by Sidney Lee who worked with Leslie Stephen as a co-editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*.
- [311] G. Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990) 165. See Chapter 4, 'Victorian Values', 162-230 passim.



- [32] *Orlando*, 34.
- [33] *Orlando*, 34.
- [34] W. Pokhlebkin, *A History of Vodka*. Trans. R. Clarke (London; New York: Verso, 1992) 6-7.
- [35] *Orlando*, 39.
- [36] *Hakluyt's Collection*, 276.
- [37] *Hakluyt's Collection*, 350.
- [38] *Orlando*, 46.
- [39] *Orlando*, 209.
- [40] V. Woolf, *The Voyage Out*. Ed. L. Sage (Oxford World's Classics, 2001) 374.
- [41] Cross, 53.
- [42] Cross, 46.
- [43] Vernitski, 301.
- [44] Vernitski, 302.
- [45] Vernitski, 302.
- [46] P. Kropotkin, "Administrative Exile" in Russia'. *The Times*, 19 October 1906, 5.
- [47] Kropotkin, 5.
- [48] Cross, 53-4.
- [49] N. Douglas, *South Wind* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1947) 11.
- [50] V. Woolf, 'South Wind'. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. A. McNeillie. Vol. 2 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1995) 127.

- [51] *Diary*, Vol. 1, 61.
- [52] *The Times*, 14 November 1902, 3.
- [53] *South Wind*, 235.
- [54] *The Times*, 14 November 1902, 3.
- [55] A. Maude, 'The Dukhobors'. *The Times*, 25 December 1906, 8.
- [56] *South Wind*, 133.
- [57] *Essays*, Vol. 2, 127.
- [58] *South Wind*, 137.
- [59] V. Woolf, 'The Russian View'. *Essays*, Vol. 2, 342.
- [60] *Essays*, Vol. 2, 78.
- [61] *Essays*, Vol. 2, 79.
- [62] *Cross*, 126-53.
- [63] V. Woolf, 'The Russian Point of View'. *The Common Reader: First Series*, 225.
- [64] In 1917, 'Tolstoy's "The Cossacks"', 'More Dostoevsky', 'A Minor Dostoevsky', 'A Russian Schoolboy'; in 1918, 'Tchekov's Questions', 'Valery Brussov', 'A View of the Russian Revolution', 'The Russian View', *Essays*, Vol. 2. In 1919, 'Dostoevsky in Cranford', 'The Russian Background', *Essays*, Vol. 3.
- [65] V. Woolf, 'A View of the Russian Revolution'. *Essays*, Vol. 2, 338-40.
- [66] V. Woolf, 'Modern Fiction'. *The Common Reader: First Series*, 193.
- [67] 'Modern Fiction', 194.
- [68] *Ibid.*

[69] 'Modern Fiction' is a revised version of 'Modern Novels' (*TLS*, 10 April 1919).

[70] 'Modern Fiction', 192-3.

[71] E. Dalgarno, 'A British *War and Peace*? Virginia Woolf Reads Tolstoy'. *Modern Fiction Studies* 50 (2004): 140.

[72] Dalgarno, 144.

[73] Dalgarno, 141; V. Woolf, *The Years*. Ed. with an Introduction by H. Lee and Notes by S. Asbee (Oxford World's Classics, 2000) 286.

[74] 'The Russian Point of View', 180.

[75] Woolf read Turgenev in a 15-volume Heinemann edition, *The Novels of Ivan Turgenev*, trans. C. Garnett. London: Heinemann, 1894-9. See E. Steele, *Virginia Woolf's Literary Sources and Allusions: A Guide to the Essays* (London; New York: Garland, 1983) 189-90.

[76] *Diary*, Vol. 4, 129, 245.

[77] *Letters*, Vol. 5, 218, 228, 246.

[78] *Letters*, Vol. 5, 246.

[79] *Diary*, Vol. 4, 172-3.

[80] V. Woolf, 'The Novels of Turgenev'. *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1950) 56.

[81] *The Years*, 152.

[82] *The Years*, 308.

[83] 'The Novels of Turgenev', 57, 58.

[84] *The Years*, 286.

<sup>[85]</sup> *The Years*, 281, 282.

<sup>[86]</sup> *The Years*, 268, 307.

<sup>[87]</sup> *The Years*, 271, 282.

<sup>[88]</sup> H. Lee, Introduction. *The Years*, xiii.

<sup>[89]</sup> *Diary*, Vol. 1, 108.

<sup>[90]</sup> *Letters*, Vol. 4, 31.

<sup>[91]</sup> *Diary*, Vol. 1, 108; Vol. 2, 34.

<sup>[92]</sup> *The Years*, 352, 267.

<sup>[93]</sup> ‘The Russian Point of View’, 221; ‘Modern Fiction’, 192.

<sup>[94]</sup> *The Years*, 84.

<sup>[95]</sup> I. Turgenev, *Fathers and Children*. Trans. C. Garnett (London: Heinemann, 1895) 358-9.

<sup>[96]</sup> *The Years*, 84, 413.

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### **First Response**

Virginia Woolf's interest in Russia and its literature has only recently begun to get the attention it deserves. This relative neglect is surprising, considering that she wrote several essays on Russia and Russian writers and that, significantly, she suggested in her keynote essay 'Modern Fiction' that these writers could capture 'spirit' in ways which offered exciting possibilities for contemporary English writing.<sup>1</sup> Darya Protopopova's carefully researched article makes a significant contribution to the debate by examining some of Woolf's writings in the light of her knowledge of Russian politics and society through personal contacts and the media.

This essay demonstrates that Woolf engaged with Russia (as she did with so much else) through the filter of her imagination. As Protopopova comments, Woolf's imagination was stirred by reading Hakluyt's travel writings, so that she 'must have felt that she was discovering Russia with the Elizabethans'. Hakluyt figures in Woolf's essay 'Reading' (1919), where she demonstrates very clearly her awareness of how reading involved a dynamic confluence of personal interest, mood, surroundings and text. Thus, the riches Hakluyt describes seem to be conjured up in the very room where she sits:

They talk of commodities and there you see them; more clearly and separately in bulk, colour, and variety than the goods brought by steamer and piled upon docks; they talk of fruit; the red and yellow globes hang unpicked on virgin trees; so with the lands they sight; the morning mist is only just now lifting and not a flower has been plucked.<sup>2</sup>

So, while Woolf was aware that Hakluyt was an unreliable source factual information, as Protopopova notes, he was a perfect stimulus for her imagination. Protopopova's study of *Orlando* shows that this fantastic and parodic work is an epitome of imaginative synergies, for Woolf's description of Sasha the Russian Princess is closely tied in with an imaginative recreation of the Elizabethan era.

Woolf's fascination with these early literary representations of Russia help explain why her novels contain so little evidence of her interest in and knowledge of contemporary Russian society and politics. As Protopopova notes, 'her Russia became a country that no longer existed'. Perhaps Woolf's apparent neglect of Russia in her novels is the reason why critics had paid little attention to her interest in Russia until recently: an omission which Protopopova's work helps to address.

#### Notes

1 Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', in *The Common Reader, First Series*, ed. A. McNeillie (Orlando, Fl.: Harcourt Brace, 1984) pp. 153-54.

2 Virginia Woolf, *Collected Essays*, 4 vols (London: Hogarth, 1966), II.21.