MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„The Ancient Greek Legacy in Virginia Woolf's World: from Personal Fascination to Literary Borrowings"

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2022 / Vienna 2022

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt / degree programme code as it appears on the student record sheet:	UA 066 844
Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt / degree programme as it appears on the student record sheet:	Masterstudium Anglophone Literatures and Cultures
Betreut von / Supervisor:	Univ.-Prof. Dr. Sylvia Mieszkowski, Privatdoz. MA

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1. Introduction

It is the year 1915, March 26. The London-based publisher Duckworth has just published Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*. Young Clarissa, whom the entire world will later know as Mrs. Dalloway, enters the realm of literature for the first time, and several pages later she exclaims: "I'd give ten years of my life to know Greek" (Woolf 44). Clarissa remembers seeing the play *Antigon*e at Cambridge but has just confused it with *Clytemnestra* (ibid). She is delighted at the idea to study Plato in original but cannot read Greek (ibid). The ancient letters somewhat ominously come to her in a dream, "stalking round the room" where Clarissa sleeps (ibid 53).

Almost a century later, scholars will argue that there was nothing accidental in Clarissa Dalloway dreaming about knowing Greek. Virginia Woolf, they will say, used the knowledge of this particular language as a key necessary for "the unlocking of her heroine's mental, emotional state and social status" (Kolocotroni, 2005, 317). But allusions to Greece did not cease at the language only: Ridley Ambrose, one of the central characters in *The Voyage Out*, edits works by the Greek poet Pindar, and the whole household attempts to support him; Rachel Vinrace, the main protagonist, dreams about walking in a long tunnel where she meets "a little deformed man" (Woolf 81), who suspiciously resembles the Minotaur hidden inside Daedalus's labyrinth (Kolocotroni, 2005, 315); Greek iambics, Odysseus, Sophocles, Sappho, Greek statues, even direct quotations from Ancient literature – all make their appearance in the novel in due course. References to Ancient Greece abound in the book as if Ancient Greece is its natural and constant background.

In fact, the original title of *The Voyage Out* was Greek, too. Woolf's very first novel was initially called *Melymbrosia* (ibid 318). Woolf developed her draft under this working title from 1907 to 1911, that is – for four out of the five years she worked on it (ibid). "Melymbrosia" is not an actual word, though, and scholars continue to argue about its meaning. Some see a combination of the prefix "μελ-" (black) and "αμβροσία", and thus interpret it as a menacing hint to the Gods' food and drinks (Grundy 211). Others suggest irony and a combination of the Greek words for "honey" (μέλι) and, again, "αμβροσία" (DeSalvo p. xxv). A third group of scholars reads it as a portmanteau word composed out of the words for "honey-toned" (μελίβρομος) and "cared for by men" (μελησίμβροτος), which would be implying that the protagonist of the novel is "cared for by men" for most of her life

(Kolocotroni 2005, 319). As such, it would be a code accessible only to some of the novel's readers – reader-friends such as Lytton Strachey and Sidney Saxon-Turner because for other readers it would be too complicated (ibid).

In my opinion, the exact meaning of "Melymbrosia" is not as important as the fact that Virginia Woolf actually considered using it as her novel's title. Firstly, this is an example of the cross-cultural influence on the writer and her literary legacy. Secondly, it is an attempt to weave Greek motifs inside the novel as a background, much as the Greeks are in the actual background of European culture as a whole. It is as if the Greek presence is the necessary part that makes the text come alive, by imitating life. Thirdly, this is indeed a code: Woolf knowingly turns to the Greek language to obscure her novel's title, on the one hand, and to convey an additional meaning to those able to decode it, on the other. Fourthly, the word "μελησίμβροτος" – "cared for by men" – is a rare word and appears only once in the whole body of the Ancient Greek literature to which we still have access. It is used in the *Pythian odes* by the very same Pindar, who is a scholarly interest of the novel's character Ridley Ambrose (Kolocotroni 2005, 319). Woolf herself read Pindar in the summer of 1907 (ibid), just before starting to work on *The Voyage Out*, and thus, the fictional character and his author are united at some metaphorical level through the Ancient Greek poet's legacy.

Perhaps, one could dive even deeper and read here an irony of a different sort: not only Clarissa Dalloway struggles with Greek, but Virginia Woolf herself ostensibly was not an expert in the language, either, and so she used a mixture of words. Of course, in reality this was not the case: from her very first novel, Virginia Woolf used allusions to Greece consciously and "knowingly" (ibid 317), creating sophisticated layers of additional meanings. As "the terra incognita" for a young writer, Greek words and names both suggested and barred access "into a world of strangeness" (ibid 315), and this opened endless possibilities for her writing. Moreover, Kolocotroni suggests that precisely "an aura of critical obscurity" around the Greek language became a veil which was so attractive for Woolf (ibid 318). Indeed, it is safe to say that the very same aura persisted in all her writings.

Virginia Woolf was not the only modernist writer who turned to the Greeks. James Joyce, T.S. Elliot, Ezra Pound, George Bernard Shaw, and Eugene O'Neill, among others, used Ancient Greek tropes and motifs in order to transform and rethink it, eventually portraying contemporary reality with the help of it, while yearning for something that "may not have perished but simply become invisible", as Vassiliki Kolocotroni puts it (2012, 3). Ezra Pound

anticipates the return of Greek Gods with a potential vengeance (ibid 4). T.S. Eliot uses allusions to Greece with a cultural restoration in sight (ibid 5), and his *Waste Land*, for some, evokes a deserted land waiting to be brought back to life, while Demeter is searching for her daughter Persephone (ibid 7). And James Joyce, of course, builds *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* on the Ancient Greek literary legacy.

For Woolf, however, this practice of cross-cultural inheritance has an additional and clearly gendered significance. Kolocotroni observed that, as early as in 1906, during her first travel to Greece, Woolf already commented on the gender connotations of "knowing Greek" (2005, 317). Gradually, knowing Greek becomes more than language competence: for Woolf, it is a part of "a battle over what knowledge is" and what knowledge should count as important in "making a man or a woman" (Goldhill 190). Accordingly, Clarissa Dalloway's not knowing Greek and confusing Antigone with Clytemnestra clearly signals her cultural ignorance (Kolocotroni, 2005, 315). From this perspective, and if we take into account that Edwardian Britain did not consider knowledge of the Ancient world or its languages to be a necessary part of women's education, then the mere desire to learn Greek becomes a form of a rebellion.

A good example of learning Greek as a rebellion is provided by the letters of one of Woolf's mentors, Jane Ellen Harrison. Describing her childhood-obsession with Greek grammar, Harrison recalls a remark by her "much adored" aunt: "I do not see how Greek grammar is to help little Jane to keep house when she has a home of her own" (qtd. in Stewart 5-6). Essentially, this short remark comprises everything there is to say about the education of and expectation from women in Britain in the late 19th century. As Rachel Vinrace's uncle, in *The Voyage Out*, patronisingly puts it: "what's the use of reading if you don't read Greek? (Woolf 32). To paraphrase it, why read anything at all if you are a woman and do not have access to "real" education? No wonder Harrison, who moved on to become a prominent Greek scholar, had such an influence on Woolf that she portrayed her in *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

To alienate readers even further from all matters Greek, the Ancient culture itself could be perceived as extremely masculine, with very little footing for aspiring female writers or scholars. Of course, the explanation for this phenomenon lies not so much in the culture itself, but in the cultural gates: who were the authors, what they considered important and not, what was recorded and what was omitted, what was deemed worthy to survive for posterity and what not, etc. Yet, Jacob Flanders, the protagonist of *Jacob's Room* (1922), is not the

only one who sees the Ancient world as "strictly virile" (Kolocotroni, 2012, 9). In fact, the "male-oriented Victorian version of classicism" (Kolocotroni, 2005, 315) was shaken to its core when the excavation on Crete yielded Cnossos Palace's clay ceiling decorated with the image of a Goddess – "the Great Mother" – standing on top of a mountain, with lions and worshippers before her. Arthur Evans personally showed it to Harrison, for whom it seemed "to good to be true" (qtd. in Kolocotroni, 2012, 7). Later, she explored Pre-Olympian Greece and the links between ancient rituals and the classical period, seeing "darker and older shapes" behind the male-only world (ibid 8). The contemporary male colleagues resisted her conclusions (ibid), but her ideas and vision of Ancient Greece were undoubtedly important for future generations of female thinkers, who chose turning to Greece one way or another. After all, if men have to accept the decline of patriarchal control over knowledge and art, women have to search "in the silence and invisibility of the past" (ibid 10) for those obscure traces and shapes of the Great Mothers.

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Literature, as other fields of human thought, does not exist in a vacuum. It emerges somewhere at the crossroads of the personal experience of a writer and her or his connections to the historical moment to which s/he belongs. Yet, for reasons that are going to be explored in this master thesis, sometimes writers consciously choose to cross the boundaries of their own time and culture and turn to the legacy of different places or periods. This intercultural literary inheritance becomes an exceedingly interesting phenomenon when one observes patterns as, for instance, the above-mentioned repeated references to the Ancient Greek legacy in European modernism. In the case of Virginia Woolf, it seems to be possible to narrow down this phenomenon and approach it from the perspective of gender studies and with the help of the life-writing and intertextuality theories.

Edwardian Britain did not detain Woolf from being fascinated with Ancient Greece and – even more importantly – from appreciating the importance of knowing about this world. She became one of the first female writers who consciously attempted to gain knowledge of the Ancient Greek language, history, and literature – both by herself and with the help of private tutors. Later on, she transformed her education and knowledge of the Ancient Greek legacy into female independence and agency. My exploration of how she did this, will be structured by several research questions:

1) Why did Virginia Woolf turn specifically to Ancient Greece in/for her education?

2) How did she study the language, what Greek texts did she read and what other exposure to Greek culture did she have? Did Woolf explain her professional interest in the Ancient world? If so: where and how? What part of Greek culture was so significant, close to or appealing for her?

3) And, most importantly, how and to what extent did Greek literature influence her texts in terms of content (motifs, direct allusions) and form (mythical method, mythical plot patterns, stylistic borrowings, other structural devices)?

In order to answer these research questions, my thesis makes use of two theories: life-writing. and intertextuality.

1) Life writing is an umbrella term for a variety of personal narrative genres which, among others, includes letters, diaries, memoir, autobiography, autobiographical fiction, written anecdotes and even wills (Leader 1). Interestingly enough, the term is often attributed to Virginia Woolf herself since she used it in her essay "A Sketch of the Past" when discussing difficulties of a traditional biography (ibid). Literary scholars emphasize the impurity of the genre of life-writing but tend to study texts defined as life-writing in order to identify themes, patterns and variety of interests of their authors (Sanders 1). Such sources not only tell extraordinary and personal stories, but also demonstrate breach of certain boundaries and traditions (ibid, 2). However, for a long time life-writing was neglected as a research area because autobiographical narrative was not seen as a reliable source (ibid). It was only in the second half of the 20th century that life-writing became perceived as a legitimate research filed (ibid, 3). Today scholars see in autobiographical narrative special significance, since it represents "a cultural and social practice that makes lives available for engagement by others" and therefore, fulfils the fundamental need in making ourselves "legible in the social field" (Poletti 5). Moreover, recorded lives broaden our understanding of shared reality (ibid). In case of Woolf's diaries, their analysis could shed light on the author's personal attitudes on the Ancient Greece and the necessity of studying its literary legacy. Additionally, preselected Woolf's letters were studied.

2) I will turn to the intertextual approach towards Woolf's novels in the third chapter of my thesis. Intertextuality is a term first proposed by Julia Kristeva in 1966, and refers to the

phenomenon that individual texts are inevitably related to other texts, which mediate their meaning (Kristeva 1980). Because texts are formed by constant transformation and repetition of previous texts, from intertextual perspective scholars propose to analyse them not as a close system but as "tracings of others" (Alfaro 268). This implies that an analysis of any text always has to take into account its relation to other texts (ibid).

Within the framework provided by these theories, close readings of Virginia Woolf's works will be conducted, especially those where Ancient Greek legacy is mentioned either on its own or in connection to education and female agency. The thesis attempts to enfold broadest possible range of Woolf's writing, but taking into account the limitation of the scope of the master thesis, I propose to concentrate on:

- autobiographical sources such as five volumes of her diaries[1], as well as her earlier diaries[2] and Woolf's autobiography[3];

- selected letters[4];

- selected essays concerning Greek language and culture[5];

- selected short stories[6];

- five novels (*The Voyage Out, Jacob's room, The Waves, To the Lighthouse, Orlando*).

The central hypothesis of this thesis is that Virginia Woolf's relationship with Ancient Greece had multiple intertwined aspects, spanned most of her life and had a direct influence on her writing. Thus, firstly, there is her personal fascination from an early age, traces of which are all over her diaries. Secondly, this fascination with the "aura of critical obscurity" of the Greek language never left Woolf (Kolocotroni, 2005 318) but instead manifested in her novels, essays, and personal writings. Thirdly, "knowing Greek" had grown to have a crucial

[1] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell. Vol.1-5, London: Hogarth Press, 1977-84.
[2] Woolf, Virginia. *Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals 1897-1909*. Ed. Mitchell A. Leaska. London: The Hogarth Press, 1990.
[3] Woolf, Virginia. *Moments of Being*. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind. 2nd edition. San Diego, New York, London: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1985.
[4] from: *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Volume I-VI, Ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975-1980.
[5] from: *The essays of Virginia Woolf: 1912-1918*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987.
[6] from: Woolf, Virginia. *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf* . Ed. Susan Dick. London: Triad Grafton, 1987.

significance in Woolf's perception of education, and in particular – equal education for women.

Last but not least, Woolf's own quest to learn Greek and to gain knowledge of the ancient culture seems to represent a larger cultural shift. Thus, on the one hand, it was an appropriation of the male heritage of the Greek culture by a female writer – basically, the declaration of women's rights on this cultural body via the concept of the androgynous mind. On the other hand, it shows an increase in self-confidence and an intellectual challenge: Woolf did not want to write "light prose" for (women's) entertainment only, as previous generations of female writers had mostly done, but, walking into George Eliot's footsteps, she aspired to become a first-class author, and to reach this level, she needed the same quality of education available to her male colleagues. All of this seems to indicate a new type of self-awareness, too: a declaration of being a woman and a writer, a part of human history and a part of human culture as a woman writer. As if the writer asserts her connection to this history and demands possibilities to study it and to contribute to it, equally with any male writer. And perhaps, the research will show that there was more.

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Virginia Woolf never published *Melymbrosia*. The earlier version of the novel underwent a long process of editing and, among others, lost its initial title – and, maybe, precisely because of it also lost a part of its essence as scholars seem to agree on the novel's weakness (Kolocotroni, 2005 321). Clarissa Dalloway never learns Greek and never reads Plato in the original. Woolf herself, though, did learn it – and her fascinating journey of learning and borrowing will be explored in the succeeding chapters.

2. Four reasons to study Ancient Greek and where to find the audacity

The first chapter of this thesis is based mostly on biographical and secondary sources since it explores the environment into which Virginia Woolf was born, as well as her childhood and family dynamic, which partly pre-dates her diaries. The chapter aims to explore possible reasons behind Woolf's interest in Ancient Greece and to answer the first question posed in

the introduction, namely, why did Virginia Woolf turn specifically to Ancient Greece in/for her education?

A close reading of the sources suggests that it is possible to distinguish four main factors behind Woolf's interest in that ancient culture:

1) The high cultural value of the Greek classics in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. This reason might be called a "fashion of the time", and is closely connected with the notion of education and how it was understood by Woolf's contemporaries, especially by the older generation. Growing up in upper middle-class England at the end of the 19th century, Woolf perceived knowledge of the Greek classics as extremely valuable; much more so than, for instance, in the first half of the 21st century. The fact that Edwardian Britain did not consider the knowledge of the classics important for women, worked as a trigger in the case of Woolf: by excluding her from education, society pushed her straight to it. Moreover, conscious of the fact that she did not have a formal education, Woolf went on to read, obsessively, all her life as a sort of compensation. It turned out that lifelong reading outweighed several years of Cambridge that her brothers and friends had.

2) A Cultural shift that happened during Woolf's early years. Virginia Stephen was 19 years old when the 20th century dawned and King Edward VII succeeded Queen Victoria in 1901. It was a period of modernisation, of both technological and social changes in England. The Stephen family attended a number of scientific exhibitions; they were on friendly terms with many prominent cultural figures; they felt the change of the climate around them and they participated in it, especially as a Bloomsbury Group. Exposure to new ideas, including the Suffragette movement, and acquaintance with female intellectuals such as Jane Ellen Harrison should have given young Virginia Stephen the strength and audacity to undertake a serious study of the classics that even in her lifetime was considered a domain for men only.

3) Woolf's personality and illness. A close reading of Woolf's *Biography*, written by her nephew Quentin Bell, suggests that Virginia Woolf was an ambitious, vivid and inquiring child with a happy childhood that came to a sudden end in 1895 with her mother's unexpected death. This event triggered the first series of mental bouts in Virginia that were so severe that a family doctor systematically prohibited her all studies for several years. The family already had an experience with the mental condition of Virginia's half-sister Laura – the "invisible presence" in the Woolf's life-writing (Lee, 2015, 124) – and the doctor's orders

were taken seriously. A child, who had been publishing her own family newspaper just yesterday, found herself bed-ridden and deprived of all classes, whereas her brothers and sister continued to learn. Taken into account that those were her formative teenage years, it is possible to suggest that learning became especially important to her as a means to prove that she could do it, too. Furthermore, another personal factor could have played a role: Woolf was notoriously critical of her writing and obsessed with its quality, and knowledge of the Greek classics for her could have been a way to master perfection.

4) Family dynamic and friends' circle. This final factor could be described as family influence as well as practical possibility for Woolf to study Greek. Thus, it seems crucial that in Virginia's childhood, there was support from her father, who perceived her literary interest, encouraged it and gave her unlimited access to the library. There was also an older and beloved brother Thoby who shared with Virginia what he learnt at school, including the Greeks, and later introduced her to his Cambridge friends. And, finally, it seems significant that after this initial support, both Leslie Stephen and Thoby died, and other close male relatives – half-brothers George and Gerald Duckworth – forever discredited themselves by sexually abusing Virginia and Vanessa (Lee, 1999, 155). In other words, the sisters were left by themselves – and found the strength to use this freedom. These four factors will be discussed in the next four subchapters, with supporting evidence found in the biographical and autobiographical sources. In the second chapter, Virginia Woolf's actual exposure to the Ancient Greek language and culture will be explored.

2.1. Fashion of the time and education of Adeline Virginia Stephen

Biography of a prominent person is not always objective or true to life. The theory of life-writing underlines that biographers often stray into fiction when describing life stories, although they use a lot of data and autobiographical sources (Lee, 2015, 124). Yet, according to Lee, in the heart of their writing lies a desire to get "a vivid sense" of their subject (ibid, 125), and it was especially true for Woolf's nephew Quentin Bell who wrote a biography of his aunt in the late 1960s. There, Quentin Bell noted that Virginia Woolf "had a kind of reverence for Greek Scholars, felt them to be rulers over a territory into which she had

attempted to journey" (Bell 118). This was mentioned in relation to an old family friend of the Stephens, the translator and poet Walter Headlam for whom Virginia briefly developed some romantic interest in 1907 (ibid). Walter Headlam was indeed a prominent Hellenist. Born into the same upper-middle class as the Stephens, he attended several public schools for boys before studying the classics in King's College at Cambridge (The Classical Review 163). Attendance of public schools and University was expected of him, as it was also expected of the Stephen-boys Thoby and Adrian (Bell 21). Being a familiar path for English upper-class men, it did not automatically mean that they would excel as scholars. In fact, some argue that scholarship was not a top priority at the English public schools and that these elite institutions focused more on sportsmanship and promotion of "Muscular Christianity" (Picard 2009), in order to raise "Christian gentleman'' (Kashti 36). The curriculum was an issue of long-term disputes, but in the 19th century, its primary focus was Latin and Greek, as well as religion (ibid 37). Ogilvie confirms that teaching classics was a major part of grammar schools' curriculum, too, and that overall, a part of the foundation statutes of British educational institutions (97).

Various sources reveal that knowledge of the classics in 19th century Britain was a status marker with a clear gender aspect. According to Orrells, there was even a postulate in Britain that claimed: "Latin should be available for all, girls and boys, whereas Greek should be available for all gentlemen" (141). Of course, "gentlemen" meant class division, too: the classics were something that only men of the middle and upper classes could study (Silk 35). In short, the classics constituted a major part of the elite education in Britain between the 16th and 20th centuries (Haynes 44). By the 19th century, it had become a marker that identified a person as somebody who belonged to the middle class, professional class or the social elite (ibid). By the Victorian period, knowledge of the classics was already considered "a border between the elite and the rest" (ibid). Significantly, that knowledge of Latin was obligatory for entering such universities as Oxford and Cambridge (Kashti 37). Although to enter them, one also needed to be male, unmarried and a member of the Church of England (Picard 2009).

University education was prestigious, and several generations of the Stephen family attended Cambridge. However, in order to understand why Virginia Woolf considered Walter Headlam to be one of the "rulers over a territory" (Bell 118), it is necessary to take into account the position of antiquity in the 19th century Britain – not only in the educational

curriculum but in the intellectual discourse in general. Historians observe that antiquity was met with unusual interest in that particular period in that particular country (Buda 151). Not only languages – Latin and Greek – and the literary texts written in them became a focus of attention, but also ancient societies as such, in their complexity (Schaps 11-12). Even the term "classical" – that is, "the world of ancient Greece and Rome" (Silk 4) – was finally firmly established in academic literature at the beginning of the 19th century (Schaps 56). In fact, examples from classical societies were used in discussions about the condition of contemporary Britain (Silk 29). Some even claim that knowledge of the classical world contributed to the development of the British national identity (Richardson 14-15) and helped maintain cultural authority (Monros-Gaspar 11). Finally, it is necessary to take into account major archaeological discoveries that were made during the 19th century, too, and that could not fail to attract the attention of certain British circles.

One of the possible reasons for antiquity's attaining such a position in 19th century Britain is connected to the exclusionary practices of the elites. It must be noted that to a certain degree, Greek was well suited to fulfil exclusionary function long before 19th century. Thus, in Roman Empire there was a proverb "Graecum est, non legitur" - "it is Greek, [therefore] it cannot be read". This phrase was latter popularized by Medieval monks whose ability to write in Greek alphabet was decreasing, and, finally, translated into a well-known English idiom "it's (all) Greek to me" which spread in England in the early modern period, after finding its way into Shakespeare's and Dekker's plays. The meaning of the phrase remained unchanged and, interestingly enough, there is an equivalent of it in other languages, although mostly with Chinese, Hindi, Hebrew, etc. In Greece, they say "Are you speaking Turkish?" (from: "It's Greek to me"). Scholar Frank M. Turner explains British interest in the classics in 19th century Britain by the educational system of the elite but suggests a number of contributing factors (63). According to him, starting from the mid-century, civil service examinations – a prerequisite for government posts – also preferred people with knowledge of the ancient languages (ibid). Thus, the British ruling classes appropriated antiquity and made it a shared "cultural trait" (ibid). Rowena Fowler calls it "a male initiation ritual requiring sexual segregation and physical suffering" and emphasises that classical education was "jealously guarded" and played a role in the construction of intellectual and political elites (219). Similarly, Turner quotes John Grote, who in 1856 wrote that even if some men have forgotten their actual Greek and Latin, they still bear "many traces of its influence," and it is this that "makes them, in common parlance, educated men" (qtd. from Turner 63). In other

words, we see here almost complete merging of the term "educated" with "knowledge of the ancient world". Turner suggests the following explanation of this phenomenon: the knowledge of Antiquity provided a frame for the discussions of difficult public topics that was, at the same time, more exclusive than Christianity which, by them, became accessible for all classes (ibid 64). This is strangely comparable to the function of Latin in Medieval Europe: whereas "ordinary" people spoke their local languages, Latin was a language of the Church and the elites and fulfilled the exclusionary function in terms of class and gender, too. Therefore, it is possible to surmise that when Christian texts were translated and thus became accessible to a wider public, the elites needed a new exclusionary language – and the knowledge of Ancient Greek, in a way, became such a language[7].

Interestingly enough, within the broad interest in antiquity, the status of Roman and Greek culture was not the same and kept changing over time. Thus, in the second half of the 19th century, Greek culture gradually became more popular within the intellectual life of Britain than Roman culture (Buda 152). Bookshelves on Greek history were expanding throughout the 19th century, with more and more studies published (Turner 62). The same was true for books devoted to Greek literature and philosophy: Homeric studies received significant interest already in the 18th century, and Turner calls the next hundred years "Homer's century" (ibid 63). The Greek tragedies made it into Victorian theatres; Cicero was replaced by Plato and Aristotle; new English translations of the Greeks emerged (ibid). Furthermore, a dozen eminent intellectuals of Victorian England – William Gladstone, Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin, to name just a few – all chose to become Hellenists, not Roman scholars (ibid), which underlines the prestige of the field.

Again, Turner explains this turn by inner processes within the political life in Britain. If in 17th and 18th century intellectuals, politicians and commentators of all sorts saw it possible and convenient to compare Britain Empire to Roman Empire in order to discuss the balanced constitution, Parliament and other issues of political life, in the 19th century the situation changed. After the French wars, "the Roman polemic" ceased to exist (ibid 69). In 1830s British political structures became more liberal, and it became possible to discuss the positive sides of Greek democracy (ibid). Roman political history simply did not serve the purposes of

[7] If we were to draw a parallel to our own age, one could ask whether nowadays knowledge of the computer languages, the ability to code, and belonging to the STEM disciplines in general fulfil similar exclusionary function. This question, however, remains outside of the scope of the thesis.

Victorian England (ibid), so it chose Greece. A similar change was soon observed in literary criticism, where Virgil was being replaced with Homer, as well as in religious and philosophical studies. In Victorian England, Aristotle's *Ethics* became the most studied text in Oxford (ibid 76). Turner concludes that Victorians appreciated "beauty, intensity, seriousness and antiquity" of Greek religion and philosophy because it reminded them of qualities that they wanted to attach to their own religious life and intellectual thoughts (ibid 76). In other words, political values influenced cultural ones, and vice versa.

This transformation of the languages and cultures of the ancient world into a British status marker, their appropriation into the country's intellectual discourse, their exploitation for the sake of exclusionary purposes, and, finally, the internal British change of preference from Romans to Greeks, all represent a curious example of power construction. No doubts, it deserves further research, which would probably provide a number of additional explanations of mentioned facts. Yet, for the purpose of this thesis, it is important to keep in mind that this was the cultural background into which Adeline Virginia Stephen was born in 1882, as her father Sir Leslie Stephen, a prominent Victorian critic and biographer, was right in the middle of these intellectual processes. It seems logical and highly plausible that Adeline Virginia could not fail to internalise since infancy that education equalled knowledge of the classics; that knowledge of the classics meant prestige and opened all kinds of doors; that people who became anything of significance, including serious writers, all came through University where they studied Latin and Greek languages and texts; and that the Greeks were preferred.

However, being a means of exclusion, knowledge of the classics was not meant for Adeline Virginia or her sister Vanessa. Girls in Victorian Britain were expected to have accomplishments, not systematic knowledge, in order to marry and entertain their husbands' guests (Picard 2009). Regarding the access to formal education, Adeline Virginia's situation was hardly different than the situation of the family's cook Sophia Farrell or this of the maids. Although in 1880 elementary education was already made compulsory in Britain for children of both sexes until 13 years old through a provision to The Elementary Education Act 1870 (ibid), Leslie and Julia Stephen decided to educate their children themselves – either from the "motives of economy" or "from a belief in their own pedagogic attainments" (Bell 26). That meant that boys of the family would receive their elementary education and the girls their full schooling, at home (ibid). The teachers were Swiss and French governesses and the parents themselves (ibid). This proved to be a disastrous decision, and especially so for the girls.

At best, Adeline Virginia's childhood education might be described as inconsistent and weak. Before the age of seven, her mother was trying to teach her some Latin, French and history; her father – mathematics (ibid). Both were impatient and hasty teachers (ibid). As a result, Adeline Virginia – one the greatest authors of the 20th century – all her life "counted on her fingers", "was never fluent in any modern language" and learnt history by herself as an adult (ibid). Neither Virginia nor Vanessa were musical, and neither liked their music teacher (ibid 27). The girls also had classes to instruct them in drawing, singing, dancing and riding (ibid). In other words, the Stephens educated their daughters in full accordance with the Victorian accomplishments' postulate. It was all the education the family and society deemed necessary and provided for the future Virginia Woolf.

Around the same time, Thoby Stephen was attending his first school. It was he who brought to his sister stories about Troy and Hector – "and a whole new world which captured her imagination" (ibid). As Woolf described it herself in her autobiographical essay "A Sketch of the Past", "I felt he was too shy to tell it sitting down; and so we kept walking up stairs and then down; and he told me the story rather fitfully, but excitedly" (126). Virginia Woolf's nephew suggests that "Perhaps it was then that she decided that one day, like Thoby[8], she would learn Greek; and perhaps it was then that she realised that the Greeks belonged to Thoby in a way that they didn't belong to her, that they formed a part of the great male province of education (…) from which she and Vanessa were to be excluded" (Bell 27). There is no way to prove or to contradict this assumption, but it seems significant that Woolf remembered this episode in her autobiographical essay written almost at the end of her life. This might indeed be that key moment in life-writing that reveals a lot to a biographer, since Woolf chose to include it in her autobiographical narrative (Lee, 2015, 127). Also, the episode with Troy and Hector is a good summary of what was happening in Virginia Woolf's early years from the perspective of her education, if we are to understand by it classroom's lessons. Otherwise, it must be noted that Leslie and Julia Stephen were not indifferent to their children, but provided them with a happy childhood with a number of alternative sources for their personal development. The father loved drawing with the children; there were family readings of poetry and novels, and discussions after the readings (Bell 26). There were yearly family vacations in St Ives, a village in Cornwall, where the children were exposed to nature and botanical lessons – "bug hunting", which evolved into a family hobby (ibid 33). And, of

[8] Interestingly enough, in "A Sketch of the Past", written at the end of her life, Virginia Woolf noticed that Thoby "was not clever; but gifted" and that "his Latin and Greek were very rough" (125).

course, there was an extensive circle of family friends and relatives, who all provided the children with some sort of experience. Yet, the boys of the family had all of this – and the formal school education, too.

The death of Julia Stephen in May 1895 marked the end of a happy part of the childhood for her children. For Adeline Virginia, it also marked the beginning of a dark period of her first mental breakdown, which was to further interrupt her chaotic home-schooling. Now a responsibility of her father, all lessons were stopped by Dr. Seton, the family doctor (ibid 45). Whereas the consequences of her illness in teenage years will be further discussed in the subchapter 2.3, adult Virginia Woolf could not fail to understand how inadequate her initial education had been – especially when taking into account the cultural background of the Victorian Britain and its high esteem for the classics: "she considered herself to be ill-educated and felt that this was an injury inflicted on her by reason of her sex" (ibid 70). Victorian Britain clearly stated which people with what sort of knowledge were really valued – and then excluded from this privileged group young Adeline Virginia, who was already dreaming about becoming a writer. The next half-century proved that this initial exclusion in this particular case worked as a stimulus for life-long studies. But is it questionable whether Virginia Woolf would have even set off on this journey if she had not known previous examples of the female intellectuals who were, by then, successfully overcoming similar obstacles right next to her.

2.2. Predecessors and contemporaries: changes in the air

When one is faced with a widespread attitude, such as the above-mentioned – "Latin should be available for all, girls and boys, whereas Greek should be available for all gentlemen" (Orrells 141) – several options seem to be available:

1) One could conform, obey the rules and accept the place that society is expecting one to accept; this was a path of so many who never became what they could have.

2) One could ignore social values, such as prestige associated with knowledge of the classics, and try to proceed with your career without it.

3) One could revolt and find one's own way to that restricted knowledge, with appropriation of the classics being "both the symbol and instrument of rebellion" (Fowler 219). But to

revolt, one needs to be able to conceive the revolt and have a means to execute it. Of course, support is an essential part of the execution, and support that Virginia Woolf had will be discussed in sections 1.4.

Although more extensive research is needed, it seems that generations of female writers before Virginia Woolf were excluded from access to the Greeks, and they proceeded with their literary careers while substituting limited formal education or luck of such by extensive reading. Thus, Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra attended elementary schools, but most of their schooling happened at home (Sutherland, 2014). They learnt French, writing and spelling, history and geography, and the usual set of female accomplishments (ibid). Jane Austen spoke a little Italian and compensated her lack of formal education with extensive reading from her father's library (ibid). But that was all her training.

The education of the Brontë sisters shows a similar pattern. Their aunt taught the girls to sew, while their father instructed the only son in Latin and classical Greek (Reef 5). Wishing to train the girls as governesses – the only available profession for respectable women in that time – Patrick Brontë later sent his daughters to the infamous Clergy Daughter's School where they mostly learnt cruelty and abuse (ibid 6). After the two eldest daughters contracted tuberculosis at the school and died, Brontë removed the youngest from that institution and continued educating them at home (ibid 11). Their home education consisted of Bible studies, grammar, geography, and history, as well as reading Shakespeare and other English writers (ibid). Later on, Charlotte Brontë was sent to another school – Roe Head School – which was "a happier place", but a school "for young ladies" (ibid 22). The curriculum there included French, grammar, geography, as well as manners, dancing, music, needlework, and drawing (ibid). Later, she taught her sisters what she learnt at the Roe Head School, and both Emily and Anne briefly attended it, too (ibid 28). In her turn, Elizabeth Gaskell was taught some history, French, as well as "sewing and stitching", before being sent to a boarding school of the Byerley family at the age of twelve (Gérin 20). That school for young ladies, again, trained pupils in English spelling, literature and grammar, history, French, arithmetic, and in a usual set of female accomplishments (ibid 24). However, the teachers – Miss Byerleys – were dedicated and highly educated themselves, and Elizabeth Gaskell might be considered luckier than most in respect of formal education, although it finished before she was seventeen (ibid 29).

These examples illustrate a significant disparity in education for boys and girls in 19th century Britain. Of course, the education that Jane Austen, sisters Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell eventually received was not altogether insignificant and better than what most of their contemporaries had access to, especially women. Yet, the educational system set boundaries and determined what was expected of children of different sexes; who was considered capable of studying difficult subjects and who was good for embroidery only; and the classics seem to be the core element of this division. The mere idea that certain knowledge should be accessible or restricted based on somebody's gender is outrageous for a European mind today and cannot be comprehended otherwise than through the power relation of a certain period; in the 19th century it must already have been felt as offensive for many.

Contrary to the initial hypothesis of this thesis, research shows[9] that Virginia Woolf was not the first female intellectual who attempted to study the classics. Several decades before her time, there were at least two other notable female writers who crossed the boundaries of the 19th century – they were Mary Shelley and George Eliot.

In terms of education, Mary Shelley found herself in a very controversial situation. On the one hand, being a daughter of the anarchist philosopher William Godwin and the feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley was growing up in the most unusual circle of intellectuals and received an education better than many of her contemporaries could dream of. Following Mary Wollstonecraft's death, Godwin was educating the children himself, focusing on the history of Roman Republic, Greece and England, as well as on the Latin and Greek classics, mythology, Shakespeare, Milton and contemporary poets (Sunstein 39). On the other hand, the anarchist philosopher was not as liberal as he might have thought about himself. As Emily Sunstein notes in Mary Shelley's biography, it was Godwin's view that "Nature reserved the ultimate in genius to men" (41). If Mary had been a boy, her father would have sent her to a public school, the most prestigious of which "concentrated on the classics" (ibid 40). Instead, he sent her brothers there and continued educating the daughters at home, but "does not start Mary on Latin until she was adolescent and never taught her Greek, which was viewed as a male preserve and unnecessary for females, so that she looked up to those 'more cultivated' males who had read and written Greek and Latin since boyhood" (ibid 41). This quote once again underlines the position of knowledge of Greek in the 19th century Britain: it was not only knowledge of yet another language, but a part of male

[9] See Sunstein and Sprague, discussed below.

privilege. Restricted information accessible only to those deemed worth it, and, in turn, information that made those possessing it better than those who did not. In short, it was a sophisticated means of power construction. Interestingly enough, when Mary left her father's home and began to live with Shelley, he started to teach her Greek as a part of their daily studies (ibid 90). With Shelley's tutoring, Mary eventually became "an accomplished scholar in Latin" and studied Greek through the *Iliad*, using "translations and lexicon" (ibid 106). She will continue returning to Greek classes again and again (ibid 205) which is especially fascinating when taking into account what a tumultuous life Mary Shelley was living.

In contrast to Mary Shelley, Mary Ann Evans, known later as George Eliot, was initially educated in two boarding schools. The curriculum in her first school consisted of literature and composition, calligraphy, elementary arithmetic, and sewing (Sprague 20). There was also a substantial amount of Christian instruction involved, and Mary Ann Evans later taught at the Sunday School herself (ibid 23). Yet, in the School in Coventry, where Mary Ann Evans was completing her formal education, there were no mathematics beyond those needed for household accounts, no science beyond "a smattering of natural history and astronomy", and no philosophy or metaphysics (ibid 26). However, Mary Ann Evans had a talent for languages. Her childish dream – "to learn not just embroidery and French and music, but subjects like Latin and Greek and Algebra, that were supposed to be too hard for girls" (ibid 17) – partly found its way later in life, when she started to study German, Spanish, Greek, Latin and even Hebrew first by herself and later with tutors (ibid 45). Much like the Brontë sisters, Mary Ann Evans anticipated that she would need to earn her own living – and her studies were meant to contribute to this aim (ibid 40). Therefore, knowledge of languages, including the classical ones, was a way for her to achieve independence.

By the last decades of the 19th century, the atmosphere in Britain seems to have altered dramatically, and the Stephen family witnessed it first-hand. In 1897 Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, and the Stephens saw "troops and horses and the old lady" which did not arouse in them any "deep emotions" (Bell 57). Meanwhile, within several years, the cinematograph, X-rays, telegraph, radium and plutonium were discovered. In the same year, in one of her earliest, short-lived diaries, Virginia described how the family witnessed these "new curiosities of science" and saw "Animatograph" and "Rontgens Rays", as it was called then (ibid 48). In 1901, Queen Victoria died; the same year the first wireless communication connected Europe and the USA. More subtle, but profound intellectual changes were to follow with the works by Conrad, Einstein, Shaw, Freud. By the time Roger

Fry organised "The First Post-impressionist Exhibition" in Britain in 1910, it was arguably a different country than in 1895. And the Bloomsbury Group, with Virginia and Vanessa at the centre, was particularly famous for being "revolutionary", "notorious", and an "object of public disapproval" (ibid 168). Then, there was newly born feminism and the Suffragette movement, to which Virginia "wanted to be helpful" (ibid 161), and, last but not least, prominent female intellectuals such as Jane Ellen Harrison whose works interested Woolf (Lee, 1999, 946), and whom she later mentioned in *A Room of One's Own*.

The life of Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928) – the classical anthropologist – is, probably, the best illustration of the changes that happened between the time of Mary Shelley (1797-1851) and George Eliot (1819-1880), and this of Virginia Woolf. Not only did Jane Ellen Harrison access knowledge of the classics – she managed to become a prominent scholar in this field despite "the handicap of an early education at the hands of unschooled governesses" (Robinson 1). In fact, Harrison received a university education and had an academic career, and her young friend Virginia Woolf regarded her as mentor and was influenced by her ideas (Robinson 9). Harrison's research was focused on Ancient Greek religion and mythology, but outside of this field, her example "redefined the possibilities for academically gifted women" (ibid 10) and, furthermore, "transformed the discipline of classics at Cambridge (ibid 11) – something that neither Mary Shelley nor George Eliot could dream of. This was possible because teenage Jane Harrison was sent to a Cheltenham Ladies' College, founded in 1853 (ibid 24). Significantly, that this institution was rather revolutionary: it had in its core an experimental principle that girls should receive the same education as boys (ibid 25). Although its Principal in 1868, Dorothea Beale, still supported the Victorian ideal of a submissive wife, she believed that future wives needed a thorough education, not accomplishments (ibid 26). The curriculum at the Cheltenham Ladies' College consisted of Latin, German, arithmetic, chemistry, among other subjects (ibid 27). Greek was introduced a few years after the time Jane Ellen Harrison was a student there, but she acquired some knowledge of it "by her own efforts" (ibid). Otherwise, it was a proper academic institution with external examiners and, moreover, a chance of further education at Newnham College, Cambridge (ibid 26). This was a path that Jane Ellen Harrison took, when she started her studies at Cambridge in 1874-1879 (ibid 34). And although women at that time were not considered "members of the university", although they had no access to libraries or laboratories, and no right "to read for a degree" (ibid), it was a start. It is fairly safe to conclude that the world would never have seen the scholar Harrison, if she had not received a

scholarship and a place to live at Cambridge, as well as access to at least some lectures – some of which women were allowed to attend "chaperoned" only (ibid 34). With only so little support, Jane Harrison went on to become an internationally renowned classical anthropologist and was working on her first monograph in the year when Virginia Woolf was born. Many more works were to follow; it was an important precedent after which the classics could no longer remain an exclusively male domain.

To sum it up, Britain shortly before and during the time of Virginia Woolf seems to reflect the values of two centuries simultaneously: on the one hand, reading of the classics was still regarded as prestigious – more so than it will be regarded later in the 20th century and in the 21st; on the other, the access to that knowledge was gradually opening. Yet, to embark on this journey, one needed to have personal or professional reasons to do it, as well as some support in overcoming obstacles that were still there. Both these aspects will be discussed in the following.

2.3. Adeline Virginia Stephen's childhood and professional thoroughness

Before Adeline Virginia Stephen became Virginia Woolf, she was a child with a dream. When reading the story of her earlier years written by her nephew Quentin Bell, it is possible to observe patterns that could have contributed to her lifelong relationship with the Greeks. Firstly, Adeline Virginia Stephen seemed to feel her vocation starting from very early in life, publishing a family newspaper since she was nine years old, weekly and for four years (Bell 28). By the age of 13, she was already attempting writing "a novel of manners" (ibid 37) and imitating the style of Hawthorne (ibid 51). Secondly, the nursery in the Stephen's house was "a unit of four members" (ibid 22) – that is, Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia and Adrian, all of whom were close in age. Thirdly, Bell characterises Virginia as "always enormously sensitive to criticism" (ibid 29) and, on another occasion, as a "shy, intelligent girl" (ibid 80). Then the disaster struck and their mother died in 1895, and young Adeline Virginia Stephen found herself in a dark place and heard "those horrible voices" (ibid 45) for the first time. She was but 13 years old.

From this moment, Adeline Virginia Stephen suddenly became a sick child. Her lessons were stopped; she was prescribed a simple life and outdoor exercises for four hours per day (ibid

45). The family was seriously worried about her condition, especially taking into account that Virginia's half-sister Laura had some sort of mental deficiency and was already sent to an "idiot asylum" (Lee, 1999, 129) by 1893. It was "a difficult family story" and possibly even more so than was ever written on paper by her father and step-mother (ibid). Biographer Hermione Lee suggests that Laura had a form of autism but it is not certain (ibid). In any case, even though Laura did not play a lasting role in life of Adeline Virginia, the "abnormal daughter" cannot be ignored because she lived in the same house, with the same people, and was treated by the same doctors as Adeline Virginia from 1895 onwards (ibid 130). Later, adult Virginia Woolf would fearfully distinguish her own madness from "idiocy" (ibid). As Lee puts it, "Laura's influence works through fearful opposition, not identification" (ibid 131). She, Virginia, is not to be put away; she was not an idiot; she was the daughter "who learnt to read and write" (ibid), although there is evidence that Laura could read, too (ibid 129). Laura's story seems incomplete to biographers despite all the letters of Leslie and Julia Stephen. Either they, themselves, did not know what was wrong with her or the truth was even more disturbing (ibid 129). Regardless, when in 1895 Adeline Virginia had her first breakdown, heard "the voices" and possibly even saw "hallucinations" (ibid 208), she stopped writing, but read "feverishly and continually" (Bell 45). We are left to speculate whether she compared her situation to Laura's already at that time; whether other members of her family might have been comparing the symptoms of the two sisters; whether they did it aloud. The fact is, Laura was always there – in the metaphorical family's attic. She died at age 74 in 1945 (Lee 902), outliving Virginia.

In 1895, Adeline Virginia's recovery was slow and her lessons seemed to be on and off again for a few years. In 1897, she was still unstable, and Leslie Stephen wrote to her aunt "I hope, though I still hope with trembling, that she is a bit better" (qtd. in Bell 50). In February 1897, Dr. Seton allowed some lessons, and Adeline Virginia was learning history, German and "did some Greek" (*Passionate Apprentice 47*). Yet, already in May 1897, the lessons were stopped again since her health deteriorated (Bell 55). By the time of her other half-sister Stella's death in July 1897, Adeline Virginia had physical symptoms of illness and was complaining of "rheumatic pains" (ibid 57). In other words, a happy child who in summer of 1894 was publishing a newspaper, writing novels and articles, hunting bugs and enjoying sea holidays at St. Ives, in the summer of 1897 was bed-ridden and had behind her three years of mental illnesses. It certainly was a traumatic experience with consequences for Virginia Woolf's personality.

Meanwhile, the other three of her siblings, however stressed because of the deaths in the family, all continued with their lives and education. Thoby attended Clifton College in Bristol; Adrian went to Westminster School; Vanessa was not sick and home-ridden, but taking drawing classes (ibid 190). Only she, Adeline Virginia, was unwell and for several formative teenage years was lagging behind her brothers and sister. Again, one might only speculate how that must have been felt to the "shy, intelligent girl" (ibid 80). Was she afraid to miss out on education and to never become a writer? Was she jealous of her healthy siblings? Did she need a way to prove that she was, after all, sane and capable of learning, and even more – of learning something that was regarded prestigious, but difficult for girls?

In any case, in November 1897 and in January 1898 Adeline Virginia Stephen was taking Greek and History classes at King's College, London (*Passionate Apprentice 132*). Whereas Wool's exposure to Greek, her lessons and her actual knowledge of the language will be explored in detail in 2.1, here it is necessary to add that another personal factor that could have play a role in her continuous desire to study Greek and the Greeks: Quentin Bell mentions the "thoroughness" with which she prepared herself for "the profession of letters" (Bell 93). He called it "constant, almost compulsive reading and writing" with which she intended to substitute "a real education" – that is, a university education (ibid). And, as discussed above, a university education at the time of Virginia Woolf to a significant degree consisted of the classics. It seems to explain why she decided to study Greek, and not, for example, modern languages of which she spoke none: eventually, what Virginia Woolf was doing was creating a university programme for herself – the way she understood it and the way she needed to for her chosen future profession. Thus, in 1908, Woolf wrote in response to Clive Bell's critic of *The Voyage Out*: "I see all you say of my looseness (…). If I had had a good grounding in Greek I might have done better" (*Letters* 1, 330). This quote might be read as a confirmation that knowledge of Greek for Woolf was a precondition for good writing. Similarly, in her essay "*The Feminine Note in Fiction*" Woolf suggests that studying Greek and Latin classics may give female novelists "that sterner view of literature which will make an artist of her" (*Selected essays* 128). And, on the contrary, "handmaiden innocence, sweetness, unselfishness, sympathy" – all of this, according to Woolf, "might suffer if women were allowed to learn Latin and Greek" (*Two Women* 421). This ironic quote further illustrates how Woolf understood the role of classics in intellectual development. As Rowena Fowler concludes it, the mere process of studying Greek was for Woolf "a precondition of her intellectual and creative life, of her self-respect as a woman and of her fulfilment as a

writer" (218). Yet, it is a question for a discussion whether she would conceive a plan of a lifelong studying of the classics, if not for the support that she had from her friends and family – and the freedom she gained from them.

2.4. Family dynamic and friend's circle: unique case of supported freedom

Despite the profound changes in Britain at the turn of the century, the situation was not changing fast enough and was not changing for everyone; patriarchal society kept imposing its rules as it still does now. Women very close to Virginia Woolf's family circle – in fact, women *within* this circle – were sacrificing their "lives and talents" for their husbands, as did Madge Vaughan, married to Virginia's cousin Will (Bell 92). Instead of getting versed in the Greeks and reading and writing, this could be Virginia's fate, too – if not for unique family circumstances.

First, there was Leslie Stephen. A man of letters himself, he played a crucial role in supporting his daughter's interests and this seems to be especially true for the years following his wife's death. As discussed above, a teenage Adeline Virginia had chaotic home-schooling and Leslie was not a good teacher, although he was the one who started to teach her Greek (Nagel 64). As Quentin Bells notes, Virginia's surviving writings from 1894-1895 leave a "rather flat" general impression (Bell 37), and as such they could hardly impress a professional literary critic. Yet, Virginia and Leslie seemed to grow close as time passed and her serious interest in literature became more and more evident – between them, "a real bond of sympathy" was established (ibid 64). Perhaps sensing their similarity, in 1897 Leslie did something that compensated his poor teaching abilities in the past – he granted Virginia the freedom of his library about the same time she read more than 30 books in just half a year (ibid 51). Moreover, he declared that his daughter "must decide for herself what she ought to read", because literature, in his opinion, has to be accepted "with all its risks" – even if certain books are not suitable for young ladies (ibid). This in itself was a revolutionary idea. It showed that he trusted Virginia, and he trusted her to be equally bright and reasonable as he himself was, and treated her as such. This attitude from the father and its impact cannot be underestimated for any woman growing up in the patriarchal society.

Second, being "a unit of four members" and a rather isolated group (ibid 22), Virginia and her sister Vanessa had constant and close contact with their brothers Thoby and Adrian. They provided examples of what boys of that time had, bringing home news from the schools (ibid 27). It was Thoby who in 1902 presented Virginia J. W. Mackail's *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*, which delighted her (Kolocotroni, 2005 317). It was Thoby who introduced Virginia and Vanessa to his Cambridge friends – most importantly, to Lytton Strachey, Saxon Sydney-Turner, Leonard Woolf and Clive Bell (Bell 191). And later, it was Thoby again who in February 1905 established a tradition of "Thursday evenings" – regular friends' gatherings to exchange ideas, which gradually developed into the Bloomsbury group (ibid 97). Thus, Virginia and Vanessa found themselves at the centre of a society of intellectuals with whom they quickly became close – a rare and important occasion, for it provided them with a possibility to participate in informed discussions with educated people. In fact, Virginia used to complain to Thoby that she had to get from books – "all alone" – what he got from the conversations with Strachey and his other Cambridge friends (ibid 70). Bloomsbury evenings opened this opportunity to her, too.

Third, after this initial support and influence, it seems significant for Virginia's future that both Leslie Stephen and Thoby died in 1904 and 1906 respectively, leaving her and Vanessa in charge of themselves. Leslie was a Victorian man; Thoby was "heartily masculine" figure of authority (ibid) and would, as it seemed to Quentin Bell, "have tended to strengthen rather than weaken those barriers of speech and thought and custom which were soon to be overthrown among his friends" (ibid 113). In fact, as Virginia Woolf wrote in her autobiographical essay "A Sketch of the Past*"*, even as a little boy Thoby "was dominant among us. He could impose himself. (…) He dominated and led our world" (125). While his death was a deep personal disaster for his siblings it also removed last obstacles for a profound change in the moral climate (Bell, 124) that was happening around Virginia and Vanessa from 1904 onwards. Especially, since Adrian did not seem to have an equal authority to Thoby's in the family. Other male family members were either distant relatives, or, as did their half-brothers George and Gerald Duckworth, lost sisters' trust and respect through sexual abuse that the sisters could reveal only years later, in an obscure, half-said, half-omitted Victorian manner (Lee, 1999, 155). Thus, Virginia and Vanessa were left to care for themselves. And although both soon married, they seemed to be much more in control of their lives than their female contemporaries – and so Virginia could proceed with her readings as long as she wanted. It goes without saying that financial state of the Stephen

family, although they were not particularly rich, nevertheless guaranteed her the practical possibility to pursue her interests.

To sum it up, the social prestige attributed to the classics, contemporary social changes, Virginia Woolf's childhood and professional ambitions, as well as her male family members and close friends all contributed, firstly, to her initial aspiration to learn Ancient Greek, and, secondly, when she was already sufficiently fluent in it, to her studying the Greek authors. Early chaotic home-schooling, constant self-conscious awareness of not having a formal education and persistent prejudices around her, specifically as to what women should and could learn and what they should and could not, in the case of Virginia Woolf worked through opposition, not submission. Life-long studying became her habit, if not her professional obsession – and perhaps, with time, as she was delving deeper in the Ancient Greek culture, there were more reasons for her never to stop. In the next chapter Woolf's personal attitudes towards the Greek language and culture, Greece and the Greeks, both living and ancient, will be explored based on her dairies and letters.

3. Virginia Woolf's Greece: ideal past and fragile present

The second chapter of this thesis explores Virginia Woolf's actual exposure to Ancient Greek language and culture. In particular, it answers the second sub-set of questions mentioned in the introductory part: How and with whom did Virginia Woolf study the language? What Greek texts did she study, and how? Did she have other experiences with Greek culture and, if yes, what were they? Did Woolf explain her interest in the ancient world and, if yes, where and how? I will start answering these questions by examining Virginia Woolf's Greek lessons, her teachers, her actual known capabilities in the language, her readings of the Greeks and the reading notebooks that she kept in the process, as well as her attempts at translation. The following is based on both (auto-) biographical sources, such as Woolf's diaries and letters, and on the secondary literature since the theory of life-writing states that a life story is told via different and mixed narratives (Lee, 2015, 124). Therefore, in this thesis the attempt was made to select and analyze the broadest possible range of life-writing sources.

Woolf's visited Greece twice, in 1906 and in 1932. Both times she recorded her impression of actual Greece in her journals and diaries, and it is interesting to compare the differences between the imaginary, ideal Greece that Woolf and her compatriots admired, and the Greece that she actually saw. Her reaction to the disparity offers yet another answer to one of the questions posed in the introduction: what part of Greek culture was so significant and appealing for her? It must be noted that since Greek and the Greeks are reoccurring topics in Virginia Woolf's diaries and letters with countless references, the part of this second chapter of my thesis do not aim at collecting all the instances when Virginia Woolf wrote about Greece. Instead, select points are discussed – namely, only those diary entries that help answering the research questions. Finally, the second chapter's third part attempts to explore Virginia Woolf's attitude towards Greek and the Ancient Greek culture as it is stated in her essays. Based on preliminary research, two essays were selected for a close reading, namely: "The Perfect language" (1917) and "On Not Knowing Greek" (1925), as well as a short story "A Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus". Close reading of these texts provides further explanation of Virginia Woolf's professional interest in the ancient world.

3.1. Learning the language, studying the literature

Although Virginia Woolf studied many languages in her lifetime, including Latin[10], German, Spanish and Russian (Nagel 64), it was her relationship with Greek that lasted for most of her life. It began under her father's roof when Leslie Stephen started to give his daughter lessons as part of her home-schooling (ibid). In her autobiographical essay "A Sketch of the Past" Woolf describes her "Greek lexicon" and "some Greek play or other" on the writing table in her private room where she moved at the age of 15, after Stella's wedding (122). It was that room where Woolf was spending "those long solitary mornings reading Greek" (ibid 125). Starting from 1897 and for two years she was studying Greek and Latin at the women's annex of King's College where her Greek teacher was Dr. George Warr (Fowler 218). Later she took private lessons with Clara Pater, and in 1902-1903 she studied under the supervision of Jane Case, who would become her lifelong friend and most consistent Greek teacher (ibid). Thus, Virginia Woolf's Greek lessons were predominantly private, compared to the classes at

[10] On one occasion in 1905 Woolf explicitly compares Latin and Greek texts, saying that Virgil's *Georgics* had no "vitality of my dear old Greeks" (*Passionate Apprentice* 238).

public schools and universities where her male contemporaries studied the language – as Rowena Fowler puts it, where Greek was "beaten" into them (ibid 217). This might explain why Woolf viewed Greek as her "daily bread, and a keen delight" (Woolf, *Letters*, 1, 35) instead of yet another school subject, but of course, it would be only a partial explanation of her heightened motivation to study the language. While Virginia Woolf's attitude towards Ancient Greek will be explored in detail later on, it is useful to start with the questions of how well Woolf actually knew the language, and how she used it.

Linguistically speaking, Janet Case had the most important and systematic influence on Virginia Woolf's Greek. Thus, one of the greatest writers of the 20th century famously found grammar to be "hopelessly dull" (Woolf, *Passionate Apprentice* 231) and, therefore, was not good at it[11]. Janet Case saw her pupil's grammatical mistakes and attempted to correct the problem, although Woolf found her exercises "detestable" (ibid 183): "she saw that my foundations were rotten – procured a Grammar & bade me start with the very first exercise – upon proper use of the article – which I had hitherto used with the greatest impropriety" (ibid 183). Case focused on grammar and was "a person of ardent theories" (ibid 182), but had less "purely literary interest" in the Greek texts than her student (ibid 183). As a result, there was "some sparring" between Woolf and her teacher, but the later did not lose her temper and the lessons evolved into discussions (Bell 68). Yet despite Case's thorough and systematic approach, her student continued to read Greek dramas without grammar, rarely used accents or breathings, and never marked scansion (Fowler 220). As observed by Rebecca Nagel, Woolf also "did not study enough to do good prose and verse compositions" in Greek (67). While this approach to a language might be explained by an insufficient formal education, it must be noted that it seems to answer the aims that Virginia Woolf had in learning Greek: it was not necessary for her to speak or write in the language that she was learning, nor could her pronunciation be of any meaningful concern to her. As Bell notes, Virginia Woolf was "intensely interested not only in the language but in the ideas of the Greeks" (Bell 68). Therefore, what she needed was an access to the Ancient Greek texts through quick reading (Fowler 220). This was precisely the approach that Leslie Stephen taught her, putting aside grammar and getting straight to the meaning of the text (ibid). Indeed, for Woolf, "a successful reading always rapid, a disappointing one slow or distracted" (ibid 221). Woolf indicated her reading speed of Greek texts in her "reading notebooks" (ibid). Among others,

[11] As Woolf wrote, "Many teachers have tried to break me in to that – but with only a passing success" (*Passionate Apprentice* 183). As somebody who has struggled with grammar of already several languages, including my native, I strongly relate to her feelings here.

she read and commented on the following Ancient Greek works: *Odyssey, Trachiniae, Choephori, Ion, Ajax, Philoctetes, Agamemnon, Supplices, Antigone, Electra, Prometheus Bound, Oedipus Rex, Plato's Dialogues, Aristotle Poetics, Symposium, Phaedrus, Protagoras, Euthyphron, Frogs, The Birds* (ibid 221-229), as well as *Oedipus Coloneus* (Bell 68), *Oedipus Tyrannus* (*Passionate Apprentice* 245) and *Bacchae* (On Not Knowing Greek 25). She developed a "passion for Aeschylus and for Euripides" and "saw their relevance to her own time" (Bell 68). Additionally, she studied Thucydides (*Passionate Apprentice 2*31) and was familiar with the poems by Simonides of Ceos, Theodoridas of Syracuse, Meleager of Gadara and Asclepiades (Woolf, "The Perfect language", 119).

In addition to reading these texts, it is known that Virginia Woolf saw at least some of them in theatrical production. Thus, in 1900 and 1903 she visited the Cambridge Greek plays and attended Agamemnon and *The Birds*[12], respectively (Fowler 229). The Cambridge Greek play – indoors productions in Greek, still held today by students and alumni of Cambridge University – must have been unimpressive at the beginning of the 20th century, for Virginia Woolf left no written commentary on the performances produced with the traditional English pronunciation of the Ancient Greek, and by men only (ibid). Instead, years later, in the essay "On Not Knowing Greek" she came to the conclusion that "plays are better read than seen" (46). Language could have played a part in it, too: as Rowena Fowler surmises, attending a play in Greek for young Virginia would have meant "catching many of the words but not understanding the whole" (Fowler 229). In contrast, the male Cambridge students on the stage not only understood the plays, but also knew them by heart and even pronounced them, and that would be hard for anybody in Woolf's position to enjoy. Apart from the Cambridge plays, Woolf had some experience with Greek theatre from her travels. Thus, while on tour in 1906, Virginia Woolf and her company visited the theatre at Epidaurus and appreciated its circular outdoor space, with Woolf commenting that "the grey seats scooped out of the hillside, with wide air & country all round are as noble a theatre as could be had" (*Passionate Apprentice* 330*).* Many years later, in 1927, she and Leonard observed a rehearsal of *Medea* in the Greek theatre of Syracuse in Sicily, and Virginia noted that the rehearsal was "rather beautiful" (*Letters* 3, 364). Finally, during her second visit to Greece in 1932, Virginia Woolf visited the theatre of Dionysos in Athens, somewhat romantically commenting that "we said

[12] A year later, after the death of Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf had her second breakdown and famously heard birds "singing Greek choruses" (Woolf, *Old Bloomsbury* 184). Scholars provided multiple interpretations of this incident, but whatever the truth of it, it illustrates that Greek was constantly on her mind.

that Sophocles, Euripides & Aristophanes must have sat here" (Diary 4, 98). Yet, it was all her documented exposure to the Greek theatre.

Despite her lack of a university education, Virginia Woolf studied both Ancient Greek and Ancient Greek literature to a level sufficient for the active use of her knowledge. Thus, she was teaching mythology[13] and Greek history at the Morley College when she volunteered to give lectures to working men and women (Woolf, *Old Bloomsbury* 186). In her reading notebooks, she commented not only on the plays themselves, but also on the quality of their English translations – if she used English or French versions – and would "confidently fault even the most respected scholars" (Fowler 224). Moreover, on at least one occasion Woolf attempted a translation of her own: in 1922 she wrote in her diary that she was making "a complete edition" of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*: "text, translation & notes of my own – mostly copied from Verrall; but carefully gone into by me" (Woolf, Diary 2, 215). For this, she cut the Greek text from an old edition, copied Verrall's translation onto the left-hand page and wrote her own comments on difficult untranslatable words next to it (Fowler 226). Yet, despite this scholarly activity, Woolf never felt any "mastery" of the Greek language (ibid 218). In 1905 she dreamed of something that "would tear away the veil which still separates me from the Greeks – or is it inevitable?" (*Passionate Apprentice* 250), and even in 1930, after lifelong learning, fantasized about siphoning Greek from Saxon Sydney-Turner's brain[14] (Fowler 220).

3.2. Visits to Greece: "And the thyme smelt sweet as ambrosia"[15]

Despite studying Greek language and literature all her life, Virginia Woolf visited the actual country only twice in her life. This might be explained partly by the fact that the Woolfs were not great travellers (Bell, vol.2, 5) and partly by the fact that traveling, at the beginning of the 20th century, was still a complicated and even dangerous process. Thus, when the Stephens decided to visit Greece in 1906, both Thoby and Adrian started the preparations with writing their wills (Bell 107) and went a month ahead of Vanessa, Virginia, and Violet Dickenson to

[13] In her diary, Woolf claims that Greek myths are "a subject of which I know nothing. But they are really beautiful & I should like to try & put them into English" – but nevertheless proceeds with the teaching and "managed the speaking all right" (Passionate Apprentice 249), so she knew something.
[14] Saxon Sydney-Turner was famous among the Bloomsbury circle for his extraordinary erudition. Thus, Thoby believed that he was "an absolute prodigy of learning" and "had the whole of Greek literature by heart" (Woolf, *Old Bloomsbury* 189*).*
[15] Woolf, *Passionate Apprentice*, p.332.

prepare for their arrival (ibid). The women travelled by boat to Patras and proceeded by slow train to Olympia, where both groups reunited on 13 September 1906 (*Passionate Apprentice* 317). From there, they travelled to Corinth, Athens, Eleusis, Nauplia, Epidaurus, Mycaenae, Euboea, and again to Athens (Lee, 1999, 229).

During this journey, Virginia Woolf carefully kept a travel journal, describing the places, noting their dates of arrival there, and commenting on the people and her surroundings. This journal is especially significant to this research, since it was written simultaneously with the journey. Otherwise, memory is a complicated issue in life-writing theory, since it may foul both biographers and autobiographers (Lee, 2015, 127). In her journal, Woolf states that she has no intention to write a guide book (*Passionate Apprentice*, 319), but instead extensively comments on the landscape, nature, colours, and shapes. As such, her travel journals from Greece represent an interesting example of life-writing from the early 20th century. They could be an object for a research even without Woolf's literary record, since contemporary life-writing scholars tend to question and deconstruct fame as a reason to study biographical sources (Mayer and Novak 149). Instead, modern literary criticism proposes to value biographical narrative concerning all sorts of everyday experience (ibid), and from this perspective Woolf's travel journals are important since they tell a lot about the travel practice at the beginning of the previous century.

In her first diary entries from Greece, Woolf seems to be a little ecstatic. Patras for her is "cosmopolitan & very garrulous," the sea "turned its innermost heart to the light; it was a heart of the deepest blue," the surroundings are "fiery & somewhat fragile," and lines are "emphatic" (*Passionate Apprentice*, 318). On the train from Patras to Olympia, she attempts speaking Modern Greek: "Stafeele stafeele – I cried" (ibid)[16]. In Olympia, on the very next day after their arrival in Greece, Woolf records that Apollo looks "serene," while other fragments of statues evoke the comment, "Ah but the beauty!" (ibid 319). Hermes's statue, too, for Woolf, is something that words cannot describe – instead she suggests to "let the eye spring like a creature set free along those curves & hollows; for it has secretly craved such beauty!" (ibid). At the same time, already in Corinth, Woolf faces a hotel where "no kind of philosophic or aesthetic mediation" was possible – instead, she records herself spending the night fighting with bed fleas and comments that "dirtiness is the only quality the Greeks possess" (ibid 320). Thus, the contrast is established for the first time: Woolf's expectations

[16] Gr. Σταφύλι – Grape. This is one of the few Modern Greek words that Woolf recorded herself speaking (Fowler 224).

for philosophic thoughts in Greece versus the reality of the war-ravaged country in 1906. This duality seems to be omnipresent in her diary entries from Greece in 1906, although at first the delight prevails. Thus, on the next day after the night with fleas in Corinth, they ascended the Acro Corinth acropolis and Woolf already admired the hospitality of their Greek coachman and the benevolence of nature: "Grapes for nothing! (…) hanging so close that you must hesitate, like the donkey, before you chose which to eat. Here you realise that nature can be benevolent & so man becomes generous too" (ibid 321). Athens, again, for Woolf is not possible to describe in a single description; it is "on sacred ground" (ibid). Parthenon is "still radiant & young" and evokes a "numb feeling as though our minds had been struck inarticulate by something too great for them to grasp" (ibid). There is also a museum in which "perhaps the most beautiful thing we have yet seen[17]" was displayed – the head of the boy known as Ephebos (ibid 322). Other "beautiful statutes" at Parthenon for Woolf have "a look not seen on living faces, or but rarely, as of serene immutability, here is a type that is enduring as the earth, nay will outlast all tangible things, for such beauty is of an essence that is immortal" (ibid). The Parthenon "over comes you; it is so large & so strong & so triumphant" (ibid 323). In other words, it is evident to any reader that the author of these lines is enjoying her journey.

The motif of beauty and greatness dominates Woolf's early descriptions of the Acropolis and everything that is associated with the Ancient Greek culture and rituals. Her thoughts are clearly occupied with the past, not with the present: with statutes, marble, tombs, and graves (ibid 332). In Mycenae she picks up "an earthenware handle" and from this artefact alone quickly constructs an imagined life of "the prehistoric city" (ibid). There is truly something melancholy and romantic in the way Woolf describes it: "And the thyme smelt as ambrosia. (…) And yet after all, they may have thought many of our thoughts & felt many of our passions. Certainly they beheld the same hillside, grey with rock; ominous & melancholy I thought it, in the September light" (ibid 333). One can wonder whether Woolf's perception of the "common mind" – transhistorical continuities of human thought (Flowler 219) – was being formed during that visit to Mycenae. Yet, the motif of beauty and greatness quickly fades when Woolf describes the Greece of 1906 which is "so flimsy & fragile, that it goes to pieces entirely when it is confronted with the roughest fragment of the old" (*Passionate Apprentice* 324). And although "if you choose you may see exactly what the Greeks of the 5th

[17] Later, while writing her short story "A Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus", Woolf will summarise this experience by saying that "in Greece it is possible to forget that statues are made of marble" (*A Dialogue*, 63).

century saw" (ibid 324), on their way to Eleusis, Woolf feels that their group was "very belated wayfarers": "the Ancient Greek had the best of it (…) the shrines are fallen & the oracles are dumb. You have the feeling very often in Greece – that the pageant has passed long ago & you came too late & it matters very little what you think you feel" (ibid). Virginia Woolf was not alone in this feeling of being late in Greece. On the contrary, it was very common among her compatriots. As Bell notes, an English traveller with a classical education at the beginning of the 20th century could "find much to delight and much to distress him in modern Greece. He came in pursuit of an idea and found instead a reality which was at times disconcerting" (ibid 107). According to Bell, Thoby was such a traveller, and Virginia, too, experienced a reaction similar to that of any young cultivated English-woman's in 1906 (ibid). For the Modern Greeks, she did not care (ibid). Rowena Fowler agrees with Bell, stating that Virginia Woolf also experienced "usual English emotions" and shared "the typical responses of her classically educated companions, their disappointment with the modern inhabitants who could no longer speak their own language properly or measure up to their own history" (235). Hermione Lee goes further in her analysis and rightfully notices that Woolf, during the visit in 1906, complained about her inarticulateness, resorting to comparison between Greece and her beloved Cornwall (229). At the same time, modern Greece "appalled her," concludes Lee (ibid).

In fact, a close reading of Virginia Woolf's diary suggests a more complicated picture of dual perception. The modern town of Athens is for Woolf "rather fragile & gimcracky" with trams and official buildings (ibid 325), but at the same time and "oddly enough" Athens's narrow streets remind Woolf of St. Ives, where the Stephens were so happy (ibid 330). Athens's people are, rather arrogantly, "no more Athenians than I am" (ibid 328), but at the same time they have "a pleasant habit of lounging up here in the evening (…) sit about on classic marble, chatting & knitting (…) they do not vulgarise the place as we Tourists must do; but rather make it human & familiar" (ibid). Woolf's mind anticipates "brigands" on the streets (ibid 329), but at the same time describes the people on deck to Nauplia as "courteous & cheerful" (ibid). The country around Epidauros is both "strange" and "beautiful" and reminds Woolf of Cornwall (ibid 330). "It needs learning to see anything but chips of stone" at Epidauros, but the place itself is "lovely" and "wide & harmonious" (ibid). Mycenae is "but a great congeries of ruined houses, on a hill side," but Woolf is left almost speechless by it and suggests "leaving a blank page" instead of a diary entry (ibid 331). There is "little to see & nothing to hear," but the two lions "admit you to something august which is beyond," and

Woolf feels “the taste of Homer” in her mouth and concludes that “this is the pearl of seeing things here; the words of the poets begin to sing & embody themselves” (ibid). In other words, I suggest that Woolf’s diary captures a peculiar struggle: she came to Greece with a clear image of the ancient civilization that was overthrown by the reality of modern Greece; the disparity between expectations and reality was disturbing and disappointing – yet, oddly enough, she seemed to feel attracted to that fragile country with dirty inns – an attraction that was unexpected, un-English, and unsettling. Greece for Woolf is “always in a state of ferment & effervescence; every journey you take seems to lead through beautiful, or majestic or romantic country places. There is no rest; but a perpetual curve & flow, as if the land ran fluid & exuberant at the sea” (ibid 333). This is a beautiful description; a romantic one, yet, very true to life. It is as if Woolf perceived the deeply vibrant nature of a country with thousands of years of history and as many cultural layers, but was stunned by it, almost speechless, expecting to find the classical Greece only.

Many years later, during her second visit to Greece in 1932, Woolf seemed to reconcile with this disparity and accepted Greece as it is, writing in her diary “I could love Greece, as an old woman, so I think, as I once loved Cornwall, as a child” (Diary, 4, 97) and even contemplating “a plan to remove the Hogarth Press to Crete” (Letters, 4, 62). But on her first visit in 1906, the ideal imaginary Greece still dominated Woolf’s thoughts and made her leave rather unfair commentaries on the Greek language and the Greeks themselves. Thus, a number of times in her diary Woolf stresses that “the races have changed” (*Passionate Apprentice* 336) and modern Greeks, in her opinion, are not Greeks anymore. The people are “calling themselves Greek indeed, but bearing the same kind of relation to the old Greek that their tongue does to his” (ibid 340). Woolf even goes so far as to call modern Greeks “a nation of mongrel element” (ibid), whose houses remind her of England in the 14th century, “dark & probably smelly” (ibid 335). She is especially critical of the language. After years of studying Ancient Greek, Modern Greek for Woolf is “the impure dialect of a nation of peasants” (ibid). On another occasion, she stresses that even the people of Athens “do not understand Greek of the age of Pericles – when I speak it. Nor are their features more classic than their speech” (ibid 328). Instead, Athens speaks “a barbarous language” and its people are “liars & cheats” (ibid 346). When educated, high-cultured Englishmen try to address them, they “answered with a gabble of Greek” (ibid 327). These infamous commentaries once again illustrate that Woolf does not accept Greece as it was in 1906. She came there with an ideal image, and she compares everything and everyone to this image. Of course,

Woolf is perfectly aware of this and on one occasion attempts to justify her division between the old Greece and the new, stating that to separate them "is the sanest plan" and that "nothing that I say of the one shall apply to the other" (ibid 340). Yet it is hardly a strong justification.

A number of things should be said in connection with these particular commentaries. First of all, one senses a certain snobbism and self-assurance of Englishmen who have somehow decided that the classics and Antiquity belong to them, and therefore, they are in a position to judge a country and people who have been through several centuries of relentless wars. In this respect, it is suspiciously reminiscent of English colonial narrative, and Virginia Woolf could have internalized it subconsciously. Secondly, linguistically speaking, there is no reason to define Modern Greek as an "impure dialect." It is true that during the 2200 years between Aristotle's lifetime and Woolf's visit to Greece in 1906, the Greek language underwent a significant transformation and simplification – but this is the natural course of all languages, for languages are alive and change all the time. A description like an "impure dialect" has a strongly negative connotation, but again, from the linguistic perspective, no dialect is better or worse than another if we are to ignore the power constructions that attribute prestige to certain dialects. In reality, the Modern Greek language is exquisitely rich, vibrant and precise, and has a lot of common ground with the old one. Thirdly, the same can be said about the people of Modern Greece – whatever their historical ethnicity, as long as they feel themselves Greeks, they are Greeks. To assert anything else would be to ignore thousands years of a very complicated history of the country. Finally, the mere idea of comparing Modern Greece with Ancient Greece is based on an arrogant assumption that we know the life of Ancient Greece in its fullness, whereas in truth there are many gaps. No living people can live up to a constructed ideal, and disappointment is inevitable. Virginia Woolf herself seemed to have come to this conclusion in her short story "*Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus*" and explored it further in her major essay "On Not Knowing Greek" – that Ancient Greece was not a reality, but rather "an idealization of the dreams and aspirations of the modern European mind" (Fowler 237). Whereas both the short story and the essay will be explored in the subchapter 2.3, here it is necessary to add that the Stephens' visit to Greece in 1906 was rather unlucky for Vanessa was ill for the most of the journey. Yet, worse was to come: on their return, Thoby fell ill with typhoid and died soon after (Bell 111). His death was a horrific experience for his siblings. Even twenty years later Virginia was writing that her own life "was no more than an excursion without him, and that death would be no more

than a return to his company" (ibid 112). After such a deep personal disaster, it would have been understandable if Virginia Woolf had developed painful associations and stopped reading the Greeks altogether, but this never happened. Instead, she continued reading them and studying the language until the end of her own life and even in September 1939, amid the new European disaster, she tried to find solace in the perfect old world: "Trying to anchor my mind of Greek. Rather successful" (*Diary* 5, 236). Despite this success, unfortunately, Greek turned to be not a permanent solution, neither for Woolf in 1939 or for us in 2022.

Seven years before this diary entry, in 1932, Virginia Woolf returned to Greece. This time, her travelling party consisted of Leonard Woolf, Roger Fry, and his sister Marjorie. In was a different visit, and not only because more than 25 years had passed since the first one, and Virginia Woolf was now fifty[18]. This time they travelled in a rented a Hupmobile convertible with a chauffeur, instead of donkeys and Greek boys to belabour them (*Travels with Virginia Woolf* 216). Roger Fry was at that moment fond of Byzantine art, and he seemed to influence the company's route to a certain extent. Thus, they visited the Byzantine Church at Daphnis (*Diary* 4, 91), the Byzantine Church at Hymettus (ibid 93), and the monastery Hosios Loukas to view the mosaics (*Travels with Virginia Woolf*, 218). Roger and Marjorie travelled with paint boxes and painted along the way (*Diary* 4, 94). The company visited Corinth, Nauplia, Mycenae, Mistra, Tripolitza, Athens, and Delphi (ibid 94), but Woolf's diary from this second visit to Greece is scarce and inconsistent, with no detailed descriptions of these places. From what can be seen from the existent diary entries, her perception of Greece is, again, somewhat ambiguous. The living Greeks for Woolf are still "worn down, for ever travelling the roads Greeks" who "cannot master Greece any longer" (both ibid), although at the same time the villagers "come up & begin, like friends, to talk about things in general", they were "loquacious friendly people" (ibid 97) who brought them "a great saucepan of yoghurt" (ibid 95). As Fowler notices, for Woolf, the country itself lacks a continuous history (Fowler 238). Despite all the discussions with Fry, for Woolf "the fourth century B.C. and the present day shared a single and simultaneous existence without intervening epochs" (ibid). Thus, she compares Greece with England in the time of Chaucer (*Diary*, 4, 92) and suggests that "the centuries have left no trace" on Greece, and that there is "nothing between them & 300 BC" (ibid 94). At the same time, rather suddenly, by her last diary entry from Greece Woolf seems to be at home there and writes "I'm not sure if I'm in Greece or London: but

[18]The young and mature Virginias metaphorically met at Parthenon, as Virginia Woolf famously wrote in her diary: "my own ghost met me, the girl of 23, with all her life to come" (*Diary* 4, 90).

think it more likely I'm in Greece, happy, easy, friendly with everything swimming easily forward" (ibid 96). On "a genuine impulse", she suggests coming to Greece every year: "with a tent, escaping England, & sloughing the respectable skin; & all the tightness & formality of London; & fame, & wealth; & go back & become irresponsible, livers, existing on bread yaot, butter, eggs, say in Crete" – for she could "love Greece, as an old woman, so I think, as I once loved Cornwall, as a child" (ibid 97). Similar thoughts and feelings can be found in Woolf's letters from those days. To Vanessa she writes, "I can't think why we don't live in Greece. It's very cheap. (…) The people are far the most sympathetic I've ever seen. Nobody jeers, or sneers. Everybody smiles" (Letters, 6, 58). To Vita Sackville-West – that Aegina has "the loveliest temple" and that they saw "an island all carved in terraces with olives and wild flowers" (ibid 52). To Ethel Smyth – "I solemnly inform you, Ethel, that Greece is the most beautiful country in the whole world; May is the most beautiful season in the whole year; Greece and May together - !" (ibid 59). In other words, Woolf's attraction to Greece had not faded since 1906 – although the comparison to the other, Ancient Greece, seems to be significantly less important to her in 1932 than it was 25 years earlier.

To sum it up, Woolf's travel journal from 1906 illustrates a wide spectrum of impressions, ranging from ecstatic admiration to profound disappointment. This might be explained by the fact that she and her closest circle, following the tradition of their compatriots, initially anticipated and valued only the classical Ancient Greece – the illusionary, mythical Greece which to a certain extent was a construction: a myth about a myth, which embodied the values of high culture, intelligence, and order. While this myth is just as attractive today as it was in 1906, to appreciate only the Ancient Greece equals setting limits to yourself and ignoring vibrant and complex continuation of the country's history, as well as its present. In case of Virginia Woolf, she seemed to reconcile her disappointment by the modern Greece by her second visit in 1932. Her diary supports this assumption, whereas her essays explain her attraction to the Ancient Greek language and culture in detail. These will be explored in the following subchapter.

3.3. The unknowable perfect language: Woolf's Essays on Greek

Apart from her diary, Virginia Woolf's thoughts on the Ancient Greek language and culture are conveyed in her essays, dedicated to this subject. Preliminary research identified three such essays – "Magic Greek", "The Perfect Language" and "On Not Knowing Greek", as well as a prose sketch "A Vision of Greece" and one short story – "Dialogue upon Mount Pentelicus". However, the essay on "Magic Greek" was lost, and there are only several references to it in her diary. Similarly, "A Vision of Greece" is only a fragment, too, and it was never published[19]. Nevertheless, these texts are mentioned in this chapter for the completeness of the research; the analysis of the remaining texts will be attempted in order to establish Woolf's own explanations of her attraction to the Greek literature and her reasons to study the language.

3.3.1. "Magic Greek" and "A Vision of Greece"

The "Magic Greek" is first mentioned in Woolf's diary on March 15, 1905 (*Passionate apprentice* 252). She notes that she is writing an article under this title and that she considers sending it to the Royal Academy (ibid). On March 20 she finishes the text – "a short column" – types it and sends it (ibid 254). However, already on March 25 the Academy sends the article back, rejecting it, because it is "uncompromisingly opposed to their point of view" (ibid 256). Woolf notes that it is "rather a bore", but she is "amused all the same", and never mentions the text again (ibid 256). Based on the title, Rebecca Nagel suggests that it portrayed the "attitude of delighted mystification", but this suggestion is impossible to prove (62). In turn, Rowena Fowler argues that the essay explored "closeness" and "unknowableness of the Greeks", and that much of this material Woolf later used in her surviving essays (218-219). Again, this is impossible to prove.

"A Vision of Greece" is an even more obscure text, which is never mentioned in Woolf's diaries. According to Fowler, it is an incomplete fragment that is based on Woolf's experience of Greece in 1906 (235). There is no answer in Woolf's diary as to why the text was never finished or published. However, taking into account an entirely different position on the modern Greece that Woolf defends in "A Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus", it seems

[19] "A Vision of Greece" is quoted from Rowena Fowler's article. Fowler has seen Woolf's unpublished manuscripts, known as the "*Monks House Papers"* that are kept in the University of Sussex' library and are inaccessible online.

reasonable to suggest that she changed her mind and her previous thoughts about this issue, reflected in "A Vision of Greece", now seemed to her outdated. In the unpublished fragment, Woolf attempts to comprehend her disappointment by the Modern Greece and calls it "impious" that there are railway stations at Olympia, Tiryns and Mycenae, which Woolf defines as no less than "sacred" names (qtd. from Fowler 235). She continues to argue that Greece ceased to exist "in about the year one A.D.", and that the modern Greeks "lisping in a foreign tongue and are "Turks & barbarians" with curved noses (ibid). However, in her story, at night the modern Athens disappears in the darkness and the statue of Athena – "the maiden goddess", the feminized version of the ancient gods – becomes the centre of the Woolf's vision of the old city (ibid 236). "A Vision of Greece" ends abruptly, when a modern Greek farmer, enchanted by the goddess in front of him, is "half inclined to lay a cabbage as offering at her feet", but instead curses her and place his "votive carrot to a male's god's shrine" (ibid). Whereas Woolf's disappointment with modern Greece was already discussed above, this choice of Athena and a subsequent feminization of the old gods is curious, although understandable – I would argue that Athena is by far the most potent of the Greek gods and the most feminist, and one can feel her appeal to Woolf in 1906.

3.3.2. "A Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus"

Similarly, it is curious to observe how in the short story "A Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus" Woolf came to a conclusion that the Ancient Greece was rather an idealization by the Englishmen. The story is based on her own experience of ascending the mount Pentelicus in 1906. In it, Woolf half-jokingly describes how a party of friends, all male and English, attempts the same outing, while feeling themselves no less than the Greeks. "Germans are tourists and Frenchmen are tourists but Englishmen are Greeks", ironically observes Woolf, as their souls "were subject to no such limitations" (*A Dialogue* 63). Being inspired by the "tremendous presences" around them, the Englishmen feel inclined to share their wine with the "dirty Greek peasant boys" who accompanied their donkeys while addressing them "in their own tongue as Plato would have spoken it had Plato learned Greek at Harrow" (ibid 64). To their horror – oh, perhaps, to their twisted pleasure from the sense of superiority – "Greek words spoken on Greek soil were misunderstood by Greeks" and it destroyed at once "the whole population of Greece" (ibid). The indignant scandalized Englishmen had but one word

to shout: “barbarians” (ibid). In was their duty “on behalf of the dead”, but also – “to declare the rightful inheritors” of the Ancient Greek culture, that is, themselves (ibid). The shout thundered upon the mountains; the people – “dusky garrulous race, loose of lip and unstable of purpose” – was convicted (ibid). The Englishmen proceeded, “as careless and as jocund as though the land were theirs” (ibid). Although written in 1906, this ironic narrative brings to mind later postcolonial criticism.

The discussion that evolves when the party dismantles for a short break also undoubtedly reminds many of the thoughts on Modern Greek and the Greeks that were found in the Woolf’s travel journal. In fact, scholars observe that the two participants of the dialogue are reminiscent of Woolf’s brothers Adrian and Thoby (Fowler 237). However, if in her journal Woolf is noticeably outraged with the contemporary Greeks herself, in the story the main conflict is transformed into a witty situation: the Englishmen observe “barbarian antics” of the Modern Greeks, but know that the real Greeks were “still people, significant of gesture and speech” (*A Dialogue* 65). So that even when the real Greeks sat under the tree, “they disposed themselves as the vase painter would have chosen to depict them” (ibid). That is, the old man would prop his chin, his brow “bent dark above the youth”, the young would lay at his feet, presumingly listening to his wisdom (ibid). And the party felt that they had “a better right” to construct such picture than anyone else (ibid). In other words, there is, of course, a great deal of irony and self-critique in these lines. At the same time, it is a result of analysis that must have been happening in Woolf’s mind during her Greek travel in 1906. For the party then proceed to the main issue – the position of the Modern Greek and the status of the modern Greeks. One of the Englishmen (Adrian) supports the position that the Greeks died once and for all. A little ecstatic, he says that the Greeks “fixed their minds upon the beautiful and the good”, and that their culture was an absolute perfection, with no place for any other form of the beauty (ibid 66). As a result, there is nothing left for his contemporaries, but to “worship in silence” (ibid).

However, his opponent – presumingly, Thoby – has a different opinion. He accuses the first speaker of being sentimental and suggests that “Certainly there never was a people like them” (ibid). The reason why the first speaker loves Greeks so much – it is because they represent “all that is noble in art and true in philosophy” and “all that is best in yourself” (ibid). As such, they are an ideal construction of the Englishmen, but the Englishmen find it “impious” to call them by “the name of any people indeed who can build bigger fleets than ours” and

who speak a language that they understand (ibid). Instead, they call them "Greek" and it means "all that we dream and desire", while denying that the mount Pentelicus' "children exist any longer" (ibid 67). So, rather sarcastically observes the second speaker, "there is no reason why you should read their writings, for have you not written them?" (ibid 66). At this moment, as if to resolve the dispute, a "great brown form" comes at them from the bushes – a real-life episode that happened to Woolf and her company at the mount Pentelicus, too. It is a monk from the nearest monastery, and he has "the nose and brow of a Greek statue" (ibid 67). He might still be "dirty and illiterate", the author suggests, but at the same time – "one of those original figures which (…) have resisted time, and recall the first days" (ibid). In other words, he is that Greek who was supposed to be extinct just a minute ago. His gaze "pierced trough much" and connected "ages and races" in one, for the flame in his eye "had been lit at the original hearth" and will burn in somebody's mind longer than a human life (ibid 68). Thus, from the discussion about the modern Greeks rather unexpectedly arises the motif of human continuity and connectedness – the issue that Woolf repeatedly refers to, calling it "the common mind[20]". The story ends with the monk saying "καλησπερα[21]" – and the first speaker responding him "as a Greek to a Greek" (ibid 68). Jumping from the philosophical back to the ironic, Woolf concludes that even if Cambridge disavowed such relationship, the mount Pentelicus and the "olive groves of Mendeli" will confirm it (ibid). Thus, for her the issue of the position of the Modern Greek and the Greeks is resolved, the Cambridge scholars are put in their place[22], and justice is served.

3.3.3. "The Perfect language"

The first of the two survived Woolf's "Greek" essays – "The Perfect language"– was written more than a decade after her first travel to Greece, in 1917. It is a very short review of the Loeb edition of the *Greek Anthology*, translated by W. R. Paton, with no more than 4,5 pages. Yet, it has a special significance for this thesis as it provides a precise answer as to how Virginia Woolf explained her interest in the ancient world to herself, and what was so appealing to her in the Greek language and literature.

[20] In her diary in 1903, she connects the notion of the common mind to Greeks, too: "I think I see for a moment how our minds are all threaded together - how any live mind today is of the very same stuff as Plato's & Euripides… It is this common mind that binds the whole world together" (*Passionate Apprentice* 178).
[21] Eng. good evening
[22] Woolf famously detested and often mocked conventional "pale scholars with their questioning about life, and the message of the classics" (*Letters* 1, 386).

The essay starts with Woolf paying tribute to the Loeb library – publication of the classical texts that made them accessible to an amateur reader, by providing both Greek or Latin texts and their English translation on the same book spread. Previous Greek editions in England contained editorial notes for two-thirds of each page, or only Latin translation, or English translation but in an appendix (Fowler 225). In any case, it was difficult to read them and especially for amateurs, or common readers, how Woolf calls them (ibid). Leonard Woolf bought all the Loeb editions when they were published, and used them extensively (ibid). Virginia Woolf preferred her old editions but appreciated the Loeb library, too (ibid). In her opinion, it was "a gift of freedom" to those who could not read in Greek freely ("The Perfect Language" *114).* Although translation cannot fully reproduce "the bloom and scent" of the original, it gave her compatriots a possibility to read quickly, and that is important because it creates "the arrogant and (…) scarcely warrantable belief" that the readers understand exactly what Aeschylus or any other Greek meant (ibid 115). In other words, the readers reconstruct a new original poet every time they read the texts and this, according to Woolf, is the only way forward because otherwise the reading of the classics would be an impossible task, for "Greek is an immensely difficult language" (ibid). Somewhat humbly, Woolf adds that we should accept the fact that Loeb editions will always be needed for the readers of the Greeks (ibid). However, the difficulty – she stresses the word four times on one page – and the "sense of unrewarded effort", and our highly limited understanding all point to the "miracle of the language" (ibid 116). The power of the Greek language is such that, according to Woolf,

It will not let us go. It will not agree to be a respectable branch of learning which we are well content to admire in the possession of others. (…) Greek is the golden bough; (…) we know, even with our imperfect understanding, that there is a beauty in the Greek language which is unlike and beyond any that we have met elsewhere (ibid 116).

It is tempting to read this quote, although written with impersonal "we", as Woolf's own confession. The language will not let *her* go. *She* will not agree that somebody else has the privilege of knowing it, and *she* does not. *She* knows, *she* feels a beauty in the language which is incomparable to anything else that *she* met. This is a declaration of love of a writer to a language. A humble declaration, for she does not expect anything in return, definitely not a possession of the object of her admiration. Tenderly, lovingly, but very convincingly Woolf

quotes several Greek poets and writes about Greek's "peculiar magic", "unattainable perfection", "extremely individual and definite spirit", "extreme beauty", "extreme unlikeness to anything in any other language" (ibid). She suggests that it is precisely this "unlikeness" that attracts us, although at the same time she hears voices of "maturity" and praises Greeks for their "direct and unclouded" outlook on life (ibid 117). Speaking from the European reality of 1917, Woolf claims that in their language, the Greeks had to restrain their passions, for they loved life stronger than we do: "….*this people had everything to restrain, a love of man or woman, a love of earth, a love of life itself more passionate, it seems, than ours"* (ibid). And so, their literature, for her, is "a succession of complete" and even "perfect utterances" and if a veil – that old veil of separation that first appeared in her diary in 1905 – would ever lift in Greek writing, it will reveal "something beautiful, something strong and sincere" (ibid). Woolf proceeds to make a curious observation on the word "beauty" in the context of the Greeks: whereas she uses it repeatedly throughout her essay, she admits that the Greeks could have a different conception of beauty, its rarity and value, than the English people have (ibid). Woolf feels that the power of the Greeks was their ability to see "with absolute candour upon the truth of things" and so the beauty came to them naturally, not as a separate ornament, but as "an essential part of the world" (ibid). Rather philosophical, such observation underlines Woolf's connection between the truth, the beauty and the original Greek literature, and also reminds about the gaze of the monk in "A Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus". The Greeks were both mature thinkers and restraint writers, with original flame in their eyes, so curiously unlike us, so powerfully attractive; they have seen through things and they used their language to say the truth about life; and so, the beauty was their naturally, effortlessly, as an intrinsic part of their world. As a result, Greek literature for Woolf is "the supreme example of what can be done with words" and "the perfect form of human utterances", and there is nothing more beautiful than this difficult and unknowable language (ibid 118). It is, indeed, sufficiently appealing to spend hours and hours, trying to mastering Ancient Greek.

3.3.4. "On Not Knowing Greek"

In her second Greek essay "On Not Knowing Greek" Woolf discusses much wider spectrum of issues, connected to the Greek literature. Written in 1925, it is already a professional and highly confident literary analysis that concerns with nature of poetry and Greek drama, the

power of literary texts, the comparison between Greek authors, the role of language and translation, the place of laugh and the chorus. Woolf starts with reiterating her opinion from "The Perfect Language", stressing the unknowability of Greek: not only we do not know the sound of the language, but there is also a profound difference between races and traditions (On Not Knowing Greek *23).* Therefore, the real question is why do we want to know Greek? What is it about this language that we "try to know Greek, feel for ever drawn back to Greek" (ibid)? As with the quote above, it is tempting to read it in Woolf's own voice: in 1925, she is still drawn to the language and feels it necessary to analyse, why exactly. For some, this question remains relevant in 2022, too. Moreover, it seems to raise a number of profound questions about the power of literate in general, as if the Greeks have started this discussion, too.

Remarkably, answering this question, Woolf does not mention such motifs for studying Greek as, for example, broadening general erudition or enhancing an understanding of English literatures (Nagel 62). For her, the answer lies in the nature of the Greek literature, and she tries to formulate it in words. The Greek literature is "impersonal" (On Not Knowing Greek 23) and was influenced by the climate in Greece (ibid 24). The sunshine and very warm weather instantly change the scene: the life is happening out of doors, and is more "dramatic" and "voluble" in contrast to the Northern "brooding introspective melancholy" (ibid). Therefore, the literature appropriates "the lightning-quick, sneering, our-of-doors manner" and even obtains streets' cruelty (ibid 25). The climate consciously influences the authors: they know that their works will not be read for hours in closed settings of a private house and so concentrate on topics "emphatic, familiar, brief" (ibid). The audience should know the story well and should receive the meaning of the action instantly, without sitting hours in the sun. Yet, it does not explain the power of the Greek tragedies. Their power "to cut and wound and excite", according to Woolf, lies partly in the fact that we know the characters – we learn about their characters, their sufferings, their appearances – and so we can compassionate them, but also partly in the fact that the characters themselves are very much alive and complex, subtle, multidimensional (ibid 26).

In a very "Woolfian" manner, Woolf corrects herself already in the next subchapter, claiming that there is an abundance of feelings in modern European prose, too, but it is the "heroism itself", "the fidelity itself" that struck us so much in the Greek literature, for there are "original men and women" (ibid 27):

…it is this that draws us back and back to the Greeks; the stable, the permanent, the original human being is to be found there. (…) Antigone and Ajax and Electra behave in the way in which we should behave thus struck down; the way in which everybody has always behaved (…). These are the originals, Chaucer's the varieties of the human species (ibid).

This quote is extremely important: here, Woolf practically speaks about the Mythical method, as defined by T.S. Eliot[23]. Woolf suggests that the characters in the Greek dramas reflect the original common behaviour, that is, combine in themselves the experience of many people in one. Yet, in comparison to the European heroic Kings and Queens who are, for Woolf, "among the greatest bores", the Greek's original characters are "decided, ruthless, direct" (ibid). Woolf specifically underlines their "clear and sharp" voices and general "sharpness" and "compression" of the Greek drama (ibid 28). Of course, to a certain extent it remains an observation and a description, and Woolf concedes, saying that the question of nature of poetry remains "insoluble" and we are still perplexed as to why Electra's words are so surely "immortal" and "must eternally endure" (ibid). Talking about poetry in drama, Woolf proceeds to analyse the chorus and its role in the Greek plays. For her, the drama is restricted because of the body on the scene, its movements and associations (ibid). In order to supply the author's poetic comment without the interruption of the action, "the undifferentiated voices" are needed – they comment, summarise, provide another point of view (ibid 29). Woolf suggests that such voices are needed in any literary work where the author wants to remain obscure (ibid).

Coming back to the question posed at the beginning of the essay, Woolf then attempts to compare the techniques of Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus and seems to deconstruct their texts in an attempt to answer what makes their texts so powerful. For her, the answer varies: Sophocles builds a play around the characters; Euripides includes poetry and unanswered questions; Aeschylus stretches "every phrase to the utmost" with the help of metaphors (ibid 30). As the result, there is an ambiguity in his phrases that is the sign of the "highest poetry" with the meaning "on the far side of language" (ibid 31). Every sentence of Greek dramatists "explodes on striking the ear" (ibid). However, in winter Greeks, too, hide indoors, and read Plato, and gaze "at the truth" with Socrates, extracting the "meaning of

[23] The Mythical method and its definition by T.S. Eliot are described in the subchapter 4.2 of this thesis.

words" (ibid 32). Interestingly enough, the motif of truth was already mentioned by Woolf in the "The Perfect language". Here, it specifically describes the Plato's *Dialogues* – slow, reflexive reading.

Importantly, Woolf briefly touches upon one more significant question: the written texts and our reading of them. It is not only the pronunciation that we do not know. Mostly, it is the issue of interpretation: Woolf suggests that, perhaps, we read in Greek poetry "not what they have but what we lack" (ibid 35). If we are drawn to "an image of reality not the reality itself", then the unknowable Greek language plays a crucial part in the misunderstanding and "perpetually lures us back" to understand some more (ibid). As if, paradoxically, the unknowability of the Greek was a stimulus to study more (Nagel 62). For Woolf, the translations are "vague equivalent" and will not help, for they are full of "echoes" and "associations" (On Not Knowing Greek 36). Besides, they do not explain where to laugh in reading Greek (ibid 36).

Woolf concludes her essays by calling the Greek literature "the literature of masterpieces" with no forerunners and no heirs[24] (ibid 37). Suddenly, a rather unexpected ending brings one more thought in the essay: Woolf suggests that we turn to Greeks when we are "sick of the vagueness, of the confusion, of the Christianity and its consolations, of our own age" (ibid 38). This, written in 1925, is strikingly reminiscent of something Woolf wrote in September 1939 and already quoted above: "Trying to anchor my mind of Greek. Rather successful" (*Diary* 5, 236). So were the cruel and sharp Greek tragedies, apart from everything else, also more preferable to Woolf to the reality of her own time? Was this literary escapism the reflection on the 20th century? And if so, what is the place of the ancient literature in the 2022, if any? These are, of course, rhetorical questions, from the Ancient Greek word ῥήτωρ, orator.

To summarize, earlier Virginia Woolf's works on Greek, written after her first travel to the country in 1906, concern mainly her partial disappointment with the contemporary Greece and a discussion regarding the place of the Modern Greek and the Greeks. Her later essays, written in 1917 and 1925, attempt to analyze more profound questions of power and beauty

[24] That is probably the only line in the essay where I cannot agree. I believe that all European literature is a metaphorical "heir" of the Greeks. Would we even write fiction if not for the Greek tradition? Where would we start, on what basis?

of the Greek literature. Woolf does not have all the answers, but provides a number of observations that inevitably explain her own attraction to these specific ancient texts. The Greek literature also seems to be Woolf's permanent material for broader literary analysis and conclusions that she then later used in her own fiction. In the next chapter, the examples of such borrowings in Woolf's novels will be explored in detail.

4. Ancient Greek borrowings in Virginia Woolf's novels

After examining Virginia Woolf's personal relationship with the Greek language and culture, the third chapter of this thesis aims at answering the third subgroup of questions posed in the introduction: namely, how and to what extent did Greek literature influence Woolf's fictional texts in terms of content and form? The research showed that it is possible to distinguish Greek traces on the vocabulary level as well as on the textual level. For instance, Idris Anderson suggests that wistful verbal forms in Woolf's novels might be traced to a grammatical mood in Ancient Greek, called "optative mood" (195). Fowler proposes that certain word choices and the vocative case, unusual in the English language, but frequent in Woolf's fiction, might be explained by the Greek's influence, too (226). However, one should take into account that Virginia Woolf was an avid reader and the majority of writers of her time had a certain degree of knowledge of the Greeks. Therefore, it is difficult to assess whether the language of Woolf's novels was influenced by her reading the Greeks directly or by her reading other British writers, educated in the classics. The latter would correspond to the theory of intertextuality which states that "there are always other words in a word, other texts in a text" (Alfaro 268). No texts are self-sufficient, self-contained and closed system, but instead they are "differential and historical" (ibid), and it is possible to trace other texts in them. At the same time, there might be no reasonable doubt that Virginia Woolf consciously employed Greek literary devices on the level of text in her novels. Among these, five were selected as the most prominent and significant: usage of Greek motifs, re-accommodation of the classical myths, reporting of action, reinventing the Socratic dialogue, and the chorus. They will be analyzed below with the relevant examples.

4.1. Greek motifs in Virginia Woolf's fiction

Greek motifs in Woolf's novels are often obvious, but their frequency is remarkable, and references to Greek culture might be found all over Woolf's texts. This corresponds to a wider trend, since in the modernist period intertextuality – traces of other texts inside the new ones – might be found in every section of culture, including literature, where most obvious examples of intertextuality were produced by James Joyce and T.S. Eliot (Alfaro 271). In Woolf's case, already her very first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915) begins with rather specific settings of a ship and a sea voyage, with "sirens hooting in the river" (19) and Odysseus being casually mentioned in the very first chapter (14). The characters, too, have personal histories with the Greeks: one of the protagonists of this novel, Ridley Ambrose, happened to be a professional Greek scholar who published numerous studies on Pindar and continued working all throughout the novel, "from morning to night" (27). Another character studies Greek as a hobby, wishes for a woman "who could read Greek" (21) and starts quoting in Greek as soon as Clarissa Dalloway mentions the play *Antigone* (46). While Mrs. Dalloway dreams of reading Plato in the original (ibid), Mrs. Ambrose has a face "warmer than a Greek face" (8) and even her name – Helen Ambrose – is not accidental, but consists of two parts: Helen is a reference to Helen of Troy and Ambrose, or Ἀμβρόσιος, means "immortal". Much as Helen of Troy, Mrs. Ambrose is "waving events in her embroidery" (Lawrence 161). In other words, through these details Woolf is introducing Homer in her novel, re-constructing the pieces of both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in her own way. Thus Ancient Greece becomes a cultural background to the novel. The story itself is no longer isolated literary fiction but continues the ancient tradition of see voyages and adventures that happen on board. Even the characters are given an additional dimension. As mentioned in the introduction, Clarissa Dalloway dreams about knowing Greek and, although she never learns it, such thoughts alone underline her social status and mental state (Kolocotroni, 2005, 317). Ridley Ambrose is perceived by readers as highly intelligent and serious man just because he edits Pindar. The main protagonist Rachel Vinrace sees in her dream someone resembling the Minotaur, and it hints at her unfortunate fate later on in the novel. The Greek allusions become a cultural code and a significant part of the novel.

Yet, geographically, *The Voyage Out* is a voyage to South America, whereas in *Orlando* (1928) Greece becomes a part of the novel's settings. Orlando visits Greece soon after

transforming into a woman and is ecstatic about the country, much as Woolf was at the beginning of her first journey:

…she beheld, far off, across the Sea of Marmara the plains of Greece, and made out (her eyes were admirable) the Acropolis with a white streak or two which must, she thought, be the Parthenon, her soul expanded with her eyeballs, and she prayed that she might share the majesty of the hills, know the serenity of the plains, etc., etc., as all such believers do (*Orlando,* 106).

The protagonist of *Jacob's Room* (1929), Jacob Flanders, is travelling straight to Greece, too. Chapters 12 and 13 of this novel are set in Greece, featuring the Acropolis as one of the major settings. These chapters are largely built on Woolf's own experience during her first visit to Greece in 1906, with Jacob's apparent death at the end of the novel providing a direct literary analogue of Thoby Stephen's death after the family's journey (Kolocotroni, 2012, 10). As many other characters from Woolf's novels, Jacob romanticizes "the flavour of Greek" (*Jacob's Room* 122), quotes Sophocles and arrogantly believes that he and his schoolmate are "the only people in the world who know what the Greeks meant" (ibid). For Jacob, connection to Greece is "the only chance I can see of protecting oneself from civilization", for which purpose he intends "to come to Greece every year so long as I live" (238). Jacob's perceives Greece as "a strictly virile world", which corresponds to his imperial worldview (Kolocotroni, 2012, 9). In reality, however, his knowledge of this world is very limited: he knows enough of language to "stumble through a play" (*Jacob's Room* 123) and nothing about ancient history, which, again, is reminiscent of Thoby Stephen. Apart from being built on highly personal memories of her brother, *Jacob's Room* is Woolf's attempt to satirize "male academic philhellenism" and, more broadly, to craft new ways of engagement with Greek and Greek culture, while conducting "a feminist revision of the Hellenism" (Smith 43). By showing Jacob's arrogance go hand in hand with his lack of actual knowledge of Greek culture, Woolf emphasizes that his real interest is not intellectual but rather "a prop for a massive male (imperialist) ego" (ibid 44) as well as a remedy against contemporary emptiness and drudgery of London's life. In other words, undoubtedly, Greece and the Greeks are an important part of the *Jacob's Room*, which is especially striking given that it was written in 1922, some 16 years after the Stephens' journey to Greece. Once again, it indicates that Woolf repeatedly returned to the elitism and misogyny of contemporary Greek studies, trying to create "a counter-hegemonic feminist approach to Greek myth and

literature" (ibid 45). On the textual level, however, it illustrates how Greek influenced Woolf's fiction – it is a crucial structural and content element of *Jacob's Room*, with Greece being its actual settings.

Much as in *The Voyage Out*, beauty is conveyed in several of Woolf's novels through direct comparison to a Greek ideal. Thus, in *To the Lighthouse* (1930), Mrs. Ramsay features are "Greek, blue-eyed, straight-nosed" (50) and while she talks, "one would be thinking of Greek temples, and how beauty had been with them there" (ibid 301). Other characters "worship" her much as a goddess (ibid 79). Similarly, Ralph in the *Night and Day* is described to have "the brow of a young Greek horseman" (*Night and Day 238)* and when he judges the beauty of Katharine, he consciously consults a book of photographs of the Greek statues (408). Thus, Greek cultural norms become a reference point in Woolf's novels. They determine what beauty is and who is beautiful, cultural, educated. Her numerous characters study the language and read the Greeks, but whether they succeed or not is used as a description of their personal qualities, thus being an element of characters' construction.

To summarize, there are a lot of Greek references in Woolf's novels for a writer from a different, albeit European culture. While outside of the research focus of this thesis, close reading of the same novels showed that much closer and familiar cultures – for instance, Scottish, French or Spanish – do not play such a role in Woolf's fiction as the Greek one does. The Greeks are intentionally introduced in her novels, and become plot elements, geographical settings, philosophical content, reference points, and even serve for characters' evaluation.

4.2. Re-accommodation of the classical myths

If Greek motifs and allusions might be found on the surface of Woolf's fiction, then re-accommodation – that is, rewriting and reusing existing cultural texts for different purposes – of the myths is something that lies beneath. It is possible to distinguish several examples of this phenomenon, both in Woolf's early fiction – *The Voyage Out* – and in her major works such as *To the Lighthouse, Mrs Dalloway,* and *Orlando*. The degree of mythological presence varies, but each time it might be explained by the theory of intertextuality, which proposes that all texts are formed by "repetition and transformation of other textual structures" (Alfaro

268). As was already mentioned, *The Voyage Out* contains clear allusions to Homer, but in terms of the myth re-accommodation, the most interesting episode of the novel is Rachel Vinrace's dream after Richard Dalloway kisses her, unexpectedly, unprovoked and without Rachel's consent. Ignorant and naïve, twenty-four-year-old Rachel experienced a mixture of feelings, ranging from "a strange exultation" (*The Voyage Out* 85) to a feeling of discomfort and, finally, to horror (ibid 86). In this state Rachel falls asleep and has a dream: a long tunnel that grew narrower and narrower until it became a vault where she is trapped "alone with a little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering, with long nails. His face was pitted and like the face of an animal" (ibid). Rachel wakes up feeling herself "pursued", so she gets up and locks the door of her room (ibid). Sleepless, she hears "a voice moaned for her" and felt "eyes desired her. All night long barbarian men harassed the ship; they came scuffling down the passages, and stopped to snuffle at her door" (ibid). Vassiliki Kolocotroni hears "Greek echoes" in this episode, proposing that the tunnel is actually the Minoan labyrinth, and the little deformed man with the face of an animal – the mythical Minotaur (2005, 315). In this reading, Rachel Vinrace is one of the virgins that Athenians sent to the King Minos of Crete every three years, to be fed to Minotaur as a terrible payment for causing King Minos' son's death. The motif of human sacrifice is reinforced when Mr. Dalloway's appetite is emphasized, right after the kiss episode: "Beef for Mr. Dalloway! (…) Come now – after that walk you're at the beef stage, Dalloway!" (*The Voyage Out* 85). Whereas this reading is fully reasonable, I see here an echo of a different myth: that of the river nymph Daphne and love-stricken, rapist-in-waiting Apollo. Just as Daphne[25], Rachel does not ask for a male attention and is terrified by Mr. Dalloway's action, and Woolf's text underlines it by using the word "terrified" three times on one page (90). Just as Daphne, Rachel feels pursued and in danger. Just as Daphne, Rachel is changing after the confrontation with the male desire – not in a tree, but in a more complex and reflective character than she was at the beginning of the novel. Just as Daphne, Rachel eventually disappears at the end of the story. As for the little deformed man with the face of an animal, hardly is it a fitting description for a Minotaur – it could be, for instance, an ironic description of the little winged Eros, who caused Apollo's love and Daphne's troubles. After all, as Joseph Blotner notes, "One must not expect a point-for-point correspondence between symbol and referent, and, by implication, no exact parallel between character and plot on the one hand and mythic personage and mythic pattern on the other" (550). Whether it is the

[25] Although made famous by the Roman authors, this myth has ancient Greek origin and should be considered Greek.

Minotaur myth or the myth about Daphne and Apollo or any other – the motif of sexual violence against women is present in many Greek myths, for instance, Europa and Zeus, Io and Zeus, Danae and Zeus[26] among others – is a question of personal interpretation. What seems to be much more significant is Woolf's use of a myth in her own fiction. It is a literary device called "mythical method" (Eliot 177), first defined by T.S. Eliot in his famous essay on Joyce's *Ulysses*:

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. (…) It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history (177).

Explaining the essence of Eliot's mythical method, Denis Donoghue notes that Joyce tells a modern story by constantly addressing Homer's poem (206), that over the centuries the Homeric story has acquired "the authority of form and tradition" (ibid 208) and that Eliot believed that portraying "contemporary events in the critical light of a myth, a coordinate story already significantly shaped" will redeem "penury of mere events" (ibid). Myths are capable of doing it, because, according to Donoghue, they are stories that are "told for the benefit of the community to which it is addressed: it tells the members of that community how to live, what to do, which forces they should dread" (ibid). Most importantly, myths attempt to "to clarify human life as such" (ibid). Myths include "whatever is known of life" (ibid 208), speak from "a long perspective" of time (ibid 209) and thus provide "a foundational understanding" and insert "itself as mediation between the community and the natural world" (ibid). By employing the power and authority of a myth, it is possible to shape a framework of a literary story, but also to enlarge immediate experience as it was done by Joyce: by identifying "pattern of life", which creates "value in sharing it" (ibid). In other words, the mythical method is a way to structure a literary text on the basis of a well-established myth that underlines a universal experience of humanity, identifies patterns and thus imparts additional significance to individual events that otherwise are random and futile.

Traces of the mythical method are visible in the Woolf's early novel *The Voyage Out* – both in Rachel's dream and in the sea voyage itself, with its allusions to the sirens and Odysseus,

[26] It is telling that the most prolific seducer also happens to be recognized as the supreme god.

and a Greek scholar on board. While the latter might be an overinterpretation, Woolf's use of myth is much more evident in *To the Lighthouse*. Ever since Blotner's ground-breaking article, published in 1956, scholars tend to read this novel through the prism of the Greek myth of Demeter and her daughter Persephone, as well as the Oedipus myth (Blotner 547). Blotner's reading of the novel through the Oedipus myth concentrates on the relationship between Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay and their son James, and is less convincing than the Demeter myth reading (ibid 560). The Demeter myth reading, however, is very plausible. Whereas there is no direct evidence for Woolf's conscious use of this myth (ibid 548), there are many symbolic elements that seem to support this reading. Thus, Mrs. Ramsay has "many of the physical attributes of a goddess" (ibid 551). A number of characters in the novel describe her as an unusually beautiful woman of "august shape" (*To the Lighthouse* 83), possessed of "royalty of form" (ibid 51). The motif of fruitfulness – the main attribute of Demeter – follows Mrs. Ramsay all through the novel: apart from her own eight children, she arranges marriages, supports the arts and sciences, and provides understanding and reassurance to everybody around her (Blotner 550). In the minds of other characters, she is associated with flowers: "with stars on her eyes and veils in her hair, with cyclamen and wild violets" (*To the Lighthouse* 27). She wears a green shawl (ibid 51) and even on her family's dinner table there is "a yellow and purple dish of fruits" (ibid 150), which evolves in her mind a picture of "a trophy fetched from the bottom of the sea, of Neptune's banquet, of the bunch that hangs with vine leaves over the shoulder of Bacchus" (ibid 151). Apart from the beauty and fruitfulness, Mrs. Ramsay and Demeter are united by the motif of "darkness and loss" (Fowler 233) and even sorrow (Blotner 554). Demeter loses her daughter Persephone, Mrs. Ramsay's sadness – "Never did anybody looked so sad" (*To the Lighthouse* 49) – is unexplained, perhaps, intuitive and foreshadowing. Such a mythical reading suggests that *To the Lighthouse* has a clear and coherent structure, and that at the centre of it is Mrs. Ramsay herself – the novel's primary meaning (Blotner 549). The parallel Demeter – Mrs. Ramsay has an additional depth, given that Mrs. Ramsay is an elegy for Woolf's own dead mother (Fowler 233). The mythical method in this case enlarges the individual experience and figure of Mrs. Ramsay, making not only her primal goddess of fruitfulness, but, by implication, making the primal goddess of Mrs. Stephen.

Re-accommodation of the classical myths might be traced in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), too, although in a less coherent, more fragmental manner. Thus, in *Mrs. Dalloway* Greece becomes a place from which Septimus's friend Evans, killed in the war, repeatedly haunts

him (Fowler 233). Right before shell-shocked Septimus sees Evans, he hears sparrows singing "in Greek words how there is no crime (…) from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death" (*Mrs. Dalloway* 28*).* The river "where the dead walk" (ibid) is an apparent allusion to the mythical river Lethe, which souls of the dead were supposed to cross before coming into the Underworld. There were five rivers in the Underworld: Lethe, Acheron, Cocytus, Styx, and Phlegethon. Lethe, being the river of oblivion, seems to be the one meant by Woolf here, since oblivion is something that is not granted to Septimus, who cannot forget the war. Later in the novel, Septimus hears Evans himself chanting: "The dead were in Thessaly[27], Evans sang, among the orchids" (ibid 78). Eventually, even the half-dead flowers that his wife Rezia bought remind Septimus of Evans in Greece: "So there was a man outside; Evans presumably; and the roses (…) had been picked by him in the fields of Greece" (ibid 103). This is especially interesting, given that Evans is actually killed in Italy, not in Greece (ibid 96). Fowler suggests that parallels with the Greek mythology in *Mrs. Dalloway* go beyond explicit mentioning, and that Septimus's wife and her sisters represent mythological Fates, whereas his doctors are male Erinyes (Fowler 234). While this seems to be plausible, the association between haunting dead friend, the Underworld, and Greece is much more pronounced and significant. I personally see here an allusion to the Orpheus and Eurydice myth: Orpheus is returning from the Underworld, the shadow of his dead wife is behind – Septimus is returning to the world of the living from the war, the shadow of his dead friend is behind. Orpheus sings his grief, plays his lyre – Septimus hears sparrows and Evans singing. On his way to the living, Orpheus loses his nerve, turns around to look at his wife, and she must return to the Underworld. On his way to recovery and peaceful life, Septimus loses his nerve, and goes back to the Underworld after his friend. Of course, as the Underworld and the Lethe are present in many Greek myths, other readings are possible. The "fundamental pattern of human experience" (Blotner 561), however, is established via this parallel: it is not random soldier in shock after yet another war and mourning his friend on the streets of London. Septimus is no longer an isolated individual but repeats an experience of death, and grief, and pain, known to others and captured in the myths. Via myths, he shares this experience with humanity, with Orpheus, with the whole mythology of the Underworld and life after death. And, on the textual level, this parallel connects a random literary character with the Homeric tradition and the Greek mythology.

[27] The Greek region that in the Ancient Greece was known as Aeolia. Mentioned in the Homer's Odyssey.

Finally, Woolf's usage of Greek mythology is evident in *Orlando*, which is constructed around the mythological concepts of androgyny and metamorphosis. The concept of androgyny – from the Ancient Greek "ἀνήρ" (man) and "γυνή" (woman) – implies the presence of the two sexes in one body and represents an ancient desire of wholeness (Yılmaz 85). Apart from writing *Orlando*, Woolf famously defended the idea of the androgynous artist. Such characters in her fiction are Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* and Bernard in *The Waves*. The reference myth about androgyny in Greek mythology is that of Hermaphroditus, although *Orlando* shares no plot similarities with it. At the same time, Orlando's metamorphosis, which is used to destabilize the limits of biography as well as gender and sex, has many mythological precedents: Daphne's turning into a laurel tree, Io's turning into a heifer, Zeus's turning into a swan, an eagle or a bull, in different myths, Pygmalion's statue coming to life, Narcissus's turning into a flower, Arachne's turning into a spider, etc. These myths are not mentioned in the novel and do not play a role per se, but the metamorphic tradition is preserved and used by Woolf as a structural device and an inseverable plot-component. As a result, it is possible to say that the whole idea of *Orlando* has its roots in the Greek mythology, albeit with a lot of imagination on Woolf's part.

4.3. Reporting of action as a literary device

Another Greek literary device that found its way into Woolf's fiction is reporting of 'off-stage action. In the Greek tradition, is happening with the help of a figure called "a messenger" and, according to James Barrett, such a messenger can be found in three out of four of the most prominent Greek tragedies (Preface xv). Traditionally, Greek tragedies contain a number of voices which produce "opacity and ambiguity" in the plays, while reflecting the way political life and public discourse was organized in Athens (ibid xvi). This debate of equal free men, however, needed an impartial narrator, untouched by any personal motivation – "a reliable vehicle" for reporting offstage events (ibid). In his analysis of the possible reasons of the literary success and popularity of the messenger, Barrett underlines two key elements: firstly, the messenger in the Greek tragedies resembles a narrative voice of the epic, thus introducing the unique authority of Homer (ibid xvii). Since the narrator of both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* refers to the Muse as their ultimate source, the messenger invokes in plays the divine authority, too (ibid xix). Secondly, the messenger claims a special status on stage

by means of "self-effacement" and disassociating with the general action (ibid xvii). Among the Greek tragedies with a messenger are Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, Sophocles's *Ajax, Antigone, Electra* and *Trachiniae, as well as* Euripides's *Bacchae* (Barrett 224), all of which were read and commented upon by Virginia Woolf[28].

Interestingly enough, Rowena Fowler emphasizes that initially Woolf was unsure about the figure of the messenger, but with time seemed to appreciate the "resonance of violent or tragic events" that happen offstage (227). The evidence of this might be found in some of Woolf's novels, where a number of characters' deaths are not described in detail, but mentioned abruptly and briefly, as if reported "almost in passing" (ibid). Thus, Jacob Flanders, the protagonist of *Jacob's Room,* dies offstage, and his death is coded in one atmospheric but rather impersonal line: "Darkness drops like a knife over Greece" (288). In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay, her son Andrew and her daughter Prue all die during the 'pause' in the story which occurs in the Part II of the novel, fittingly called "Time passes". In it, over the space of just 26 pages, years fly and the Ramsay family is changed forever. Yet, the deaths of the main characters are mentioned briefly and enclosed in parentheses, as if to underline this reporting in passing:

[Mr. Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but, Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, he stretched his arms out. They remained empty.] (200)

[Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, people said. They said nobody deserved happiness more.] (205).

[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous.] (207).

Woolf employs the very same tactics in *The Waves*, to announce the death of Percival: "'He is dead', said Neville. 'He fell. His horse tripped. He was thrown'." (107). Rhoda's suicide, too, is introduced in the novel in an unpronounced and somewhat obscure, illusive manner:

[28] See chapter 3.1 of this thesis.

"…Rhoda, always so furtive, always with fear in her eyes, always seeking some pillar in the desert, to find which she had gone; she had killed herself" (199). Even in *Mrs. Dalloway,* where Septimus's death is central to the plot, it is announced in the middle of a party by one of the guests: "A young man (…) had killed himself. He had been in the army" (279). In comparison to the Greek tradition, there is no independent and impartial character serving as a messenger. However, these reports themselves seem to be detached and lacking any evaluation of the event or involvement with it. This creates a sober atmosphere deprived of unnecessary emotions, as if not death, but life has a meaning in Woolf's novels – her famous moments of being when actual presence in the moment is achieved through multiple and detailed observations. At the same time, precisely this briefness and abruptness in reporting a tragic event resonate with the reader, as it is especially evident in the case of Mrs. Ramsay's death.

4.4. Reinvention of the Socratic dialogue in Woolf's fiction

Virginia Woolf had a lifelong interest in Plato and was closely familiar with his *Dialogues.* Study notes, left by Woolf on *Euthyphro, Phaedrus, Symposium,* and *Republic,* all indicate that she paid special attention to the discussions about truth, love, and creativity in these texts (Lyons, 292). Simultaneously, she noted the atmosphere that was created through the descriptions of talks and evening banquets (Fowler 227). Yet, although Woolf acknowledged Plato's importance, in her essays and novels she chose not to discuss his arguments as 'real' Platonists would do (Lyons 290). Instead, she used *The Dialogues of Plato* to inspire and to support her own aesthetic goals (ibid). Thus, Brenda Lyons suggests that Plato's texts discussing love, idealism, and the duality of body and soul are "shadow texts" that operate in the background of *Jacob's Room* (293). In fact, Lyons proposes to read the whole novel as a "poetical exploration" of Platonic themes and their reimagination in the twentieth century (ibid 294). Indeed, it might be one of the possible readings of the novel. What is more, it seems reasonable to suggest that Plato's influence on Woolf's fiction goes beyond just one novel. As Woolf wrote in "On Not Knowing Greek*",* Plato's *Dialogues* inspire "to love knowledge better" and it is not so much about the end result as about the process (32):

…what matters is not so much the end we reach as our manner of reaching it. That all can feel – the indomitable honesty, the courage, the love of truth which draw Socrates and us in his wake to the summit where, if we too may stand for a moment, it is to enjoy the greatest felicity of which we are capable (ibid).

Interestingly enough, this approach towards knowledge is reminiscent of Woolf's broader approach towards fictional texts as such: there is famously little plot in Woolf's novels, but almost every scene is expanded in fictional time through numerous details, observations, and secondary thoughts, as if for Woolf, the development of a story is not about the end result but about the process of getting there.

At the same time, on the pages of *The Dialogues of Plato* this process of reaching the truth occurs in all-masculine connoted indoor space, through dialogues in which only men participate, known as the "Socratic dialogues". These dialogues aim at finding answers to fundamental questions, which are at the centre of the discussions (Brune and Krohn, 8). Significantly, these questions undermine assumptions that we make when formulating our thoughts, as well as concepts and values that we believe in (ibid). Interestingly enough, when analysing Socratic dialogues, Mikhail Bakhtin underlined in them the plurality of truth-seeking voices that he called "dialogism" and Kristeva later called "intertextuality" (qtd. in Alfaro 269). The dialogues are inconclusive, with rather "playful tone" (ibid). Since Woolf studied *The Dialogues of Plato* not so much as a philosophical treatise, but with a focus on the artistic structure, vocabulary and arguments (Dalgarno 1), it was precisely these elements that found its way into her fiction. In several of her novels – among them *The Voyage Out, To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Dalloway* – a large part of the action happens around a table or at a party, with characters addressing philosophical questions over the dinner, without finding any conclusive answers. Again, the process of finding them is more important to Woolf than the actual result. However, she did not copy Plato blindly, but reinvented him according to her own aesthetic aims. This transformation is a necessary part of imitation, according to the theory of intertextuality (Alfaro 269). It must be noted that female characters always play a central role in Woolf's version of the Socratic dialogues. Sometimes there is even an irony directed towards all-male Plato, as is the case with *The Voyage Out*: when Mrs. Thornbury exclaimed "You men! Where would you be if it weren't for the women!", and Mr. Ridley replied somewhat sharply and ironically: "Read the *Symposium*" (*The Voyage Out 235).* On another occasion, Woolf noted in her reading notes how the figure of the symposiarch makes

Plato's character Alcibiades uneasy: "He feels all Socrates's grandeur – yet wishes the man dead sometimes – such is the conflict he raises in the bodies of his followers" (qtd. in Fowler 227). Rowena Fowler sees in this quote the future Mr. Ramsay – a complicated, patriarch who excites in his children conflicting and extreme emotions (ibid). But it is not Mr. Ramsay who is presiding over a banquet in *To the Lighthouse*. Mrs. Ramsay is in charge[29] of the dinner and the discussion that follows, and with it – over "the quest for knowledge through love and for permanence by way of momentary unity" (ibid 228). The same might be said about Mrs. Dalloway's party. Precisely this "momentary unity" (ibid) is reminiscent of Plato, where the dialogues evolve from talks into thoughts and invite the reader to join them (Dalgarno 1). In turn, Plato's "play of voices" (ibid), too, is characteristic of Woolf's fiction, but one can only speculate to what extent, if any, her studies of the Socratic dialogues contributed to such a manner of writing. Similarly, one could only speculate about Plato's influence on Woolf in terms of intertextuality: Plato famously defended the idea of poets always coping earlier creations, which are already copies themselves (Alfaro 269). Since Woolf was familiar with Plato's works, this perception of text as an imitation might have been a start to her extensive use of Greek literary devices in her own fiction.

4.5. Virginia Woolf's Chorus

The final and probably most prominent feature that Virginia Woolf borrows from the Ancient Greek literature is the chorus. Defined by Fowler as "a collective and anonymous voice beyond the individual, subjective, or omniscient voice of the novelist" (228), the chorus initially belonged to a stage where it was, quite literally, the chorus of male actors singing "inside and outside" of the main action (ibid). Albert Weiner notes that the Greek chorus consisted of fifty, twelve or fifteen people[30] during different periods of the Greek theatre (205). It was a part of the orchestra, and dancing was a major part of the chorus' role (ibid). Ancient poets considered the chorus to be extremely important, which is evident because of the two facts: firstly, all the Greek tragedies that survived contain a chorus and, secondly, the chorus always has an extensive number of lines in a play (ibid). Nowadays, there are

[29] Fowler suggests that Mrs. Ramsay is Aphrodite at that table, just as Plato's Socrates – Eros (228).

[30] Fitton Brown suggests that the importance of the chorus was declining over the years whereas fifty people involved in early tragedies' chorus were difficult to accommodate on some Greek stages (2). The difference between twelve or fifteen members, and even the factuality of it, is an issue of a centuries-long debate between scholars (1).

numerous theories that attempt to explain its role in Greek tragedy. Thus, some propose that the choruses "elevate commonplace details into universal verities" (ibid 206). Others believe that the choruses are a buffer between the actors and the audience (ibid). Third suggest that the chorus transforms the passions of the play's characters into "sharp focus" (ibid). There is also a theory that the chorus is "an ideal audience" on which the real audience should model its response (ibid). Aristotle, who discusses the chorus's role in his *Poetics*, sees it as "a practical element" for a play (ibid 209). For Weiner, the chorus is important only in terms of a theatrical production because he proposes to understand it as "an interlude of alienation" during which the audience can reflect on the play, as well as to relax while watching dancing and singing (ibid 211). In other words, the chorus is "a collective character" (ibid 206) and its literal meaning is less essential than "the emotional mood or ton" (ibid 212). Yet, for Weiner the chorus represents a theatrical element only and does not exist without the singing and dancing bodies of the actors (ibid 212). Whereas this might be true for the theatre, the introduction of the chorus into a novel, that is a genre not intended for the stage, requires different tactics, and Woolf, after appreciating the chorus in the Greek tragedies, spent years on its adaptation into written modernist texts.

Interestingly enough, initially Woolf did not appreciate the tradition of the chorus. From her unpublished reading notebooks where she seemed to lament the chorus, Fowler concludes that she was puzzled by this tradition: "These old men got up with ivy & fawn skins" (qtd. in Fowler 228). Whereas this might be understood as a sarcasm or irony, on another occasion Woolf attempts to understand the role of the chorus in *Antigone,* but fails: "difficult to see exactly what bearing a chorus has upon a play" (ibid 229). However, with time, Woolf appreciated the sounds and feelings, if not the meaning of the chorus, finding "some lyric beauty", "a rude boisterous kind of joking", and "a rough kind of beauty & pathos… a music of words – transcending meaning" (ibid 228). In her essay "On Not Knowing Greek" Woolf acknowledges the need for a voice that would comment upon "general and poetic" without interruption of the text flow (28). This voice would be a means for a poet to provide his own point of view or a view, opposite to this of the characters, and for Woolf, "always in imaginative literature, where the characters speak for themselves and the author has no part, the need for that voice is making itself felt" (ibid 29). Importantly, she defines the Greek chorus, here, as "the old men and women who take no active part in the drama, the undifferentiated voices who sing like birds in the pauses of the wind" (ibid). From this definition, it is suspiciously close to the stream of consciousness and, therefore, it is tempting

to speculate that the analysis of the Greek drama and the deconstruction of the Greek texts became that material that prompted Woolf to develop her pioneering technique.

Even if this is just a mere speculation, it is evident that Woolf clearly paid a lot of thoughts to the phenomena of the chorus. Observing that Shakespeare set the chorus aside, but that novelists such as Thackeray and Fielding, attempted to create a substitute for it (ibid), she proceeds to attempting something similar in her own novels. Examples for this are her experiments with the sparrows in *Mrs. Dalloway,* one-figure chorus of Mrs. McNab in *To the Lighthouse* and the choruses of birds in *The Waves,* among others (Fowler 228). For instance, there is an episode in *Mrs. Dalloway* when a sparrow intrudes into the novel, suddenly, unexpectedly, as if flipping directly from the pages of the Aristophanes' *Birds*:

A sparrow perched on the railing opposite chirped Septimus, Septimus, four or five times over and went on, drawing its notes out, to sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words how there is no crime and, joined by another sparrow, they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death (*Mrs. Dalloway* 28).

Rowena Fowler calls this episode a blend of "Euripidean jubilation with the detached compassion of Aristophanes' chorus" (231), but I see here a mixture of poetry, Woolf's recollection of her dream after her second breakdown soon after the death of Leslie Stephen – birds singing Greek choruses – as well as, indeed, a modernist attempt at reinvention of the traditional Greek chorus. Thus, on the level of language, these lines seem to have some sort of rhythmic structure:

A sparrow perched on the railing opposite
Chirped:
Septimus,
Septimus
[Four or five times over]

and
went on,

[Drawing its notes out],
To sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words

How there is no crime

and,
joined by another sparrow,

They sang in voices
[prolonged and piercing in Greek words,]

From trees
In the meadow of life
Beyond a river
[Where the dead walk,]

How there is no death *(Mrs. Dalloway* 28).

If broken up in this way, an irregular metre appears which seems to reflect the words' meaning by imitating the chirping of the living sparrows. When read this way, this quote introduces the singing of a chorus of two birds into a novel not intended for a stage or reading aloud, while at the same time bringing in allusions to Greek mythology.

The usage of the chorus might be traced in *To the Lighthouse* and in *The Waves.* In the first of these, the chorus is represented by one character only – by the elderly Mrs. McNab, whose internal monologue seems to push forward the time in "Time Passes" section of the novel, while she "rolled from room to room" and "sang" (*To the Lighthouse* 202). Quoting unpublished manuscripts of the novel, Fowler suggests that in the first versions of the text Mrs. McNab played a more universal role of "the voice of the indomitable principle of life & its power to persist", as well as expressed "what in moments of high great emotion great poets have said" (qtd. in Fowler 232). All of which, according to Fowler, echoed Sophoclean choruses (ibid). On the other hand, *The Waves* might be read as a text which consists of the six individual voices, the "community" and, again, the birds who "sang their blank melody

outside" (*The Waves* 6). Thus, the whole novel becomes a chorus which transcends "the choric style of any individual Greek dramatist" (Fowler 232). Once again, it summons speculations about the connection between the Greek tragedies and Woolf's stream of consciousness. It seems entirely possible that this technique was developed as a result of her long-time analysis and observation of the structure and literary devices of the Ancient Greek literature.

5. Conclusion

Virginia Woolf's connection with the ancient Greeks, their language, culture and texts was remarkable and spanned her whole writerly career. Despite such obstacles such as the lack of a formal education, the complex grammatical structures of the ancient language, as well as "separation of nature and spirit" (Gorry 155) between the British people of the 20th century and the ancient Greeks, Woolf's diaries, essays and fiction all portray a picture of a deep engagement with the Greek culture on many levels, from personal to professional. It is my claim that this connection was predisposed by cultural significance and prestige assigned to the Ancient Greek language and literature by the educated British elites. As Woolf concluded in "A Dialogue Upon Mount Pentelicus", Ancient Greece was appropriated and idealized by the Englishmen[31]. Even in the 19th century, British intellectuals were still under the influence of their 17th and 18th century predecessors, who compared the Britain Empire to Roman Empire, evoking the medieval concept of 'translatio implerii', or linear succession of power from one empire to another (see: Translatio imperii, Britannica). As summarized by Woolf, "Beginning with the Greeks, (…) he continued with the Romans, passed to England...", and it was about far more than the "proper method of making roads", as in the novel (*The Voyage Out*, 22). The status of the Roman and Greek legacy in British public life was changing in different periods, but by the time Virginia Woolf was born, the definition of an 'educated person' was almost completely synonymous with the 'person who possesses knowledge of the Greek classics'. Greek, being a part of the educational curriculum of closed boys-only

[31] This controversial status quo is closely connected to the British imperialism, and the controversy is not fully resolved even in our days. Thus, it is not a coincidence that in 2022 the issue of repatriation of the Parthenon marbles back to Greece is still unfinished and, in fact, British bureaucracy does whatever it can to stall the process (Higgins 2022). The British cultural imperialism, however, remains outside of the research interests of this thesis.

schools and universities for the privileged classes, became a status-marker and a gate-keeper to all powerful positions in the British society, thus reinforcing exclusionary practices of the elites and representing an example of power construction.

Taking all of this into account, it seems reasonable to conclude that the initial reason for Virginia Woolf's interest in the Greek language and literature was the public perception of the value of the knowledge of the Greek classics, which she must have internalized while growing up under the roof of a Victorian literary critic. The fact that Edwardian Britain excluded her from this prestige knowledge worked as a serious motivation for Woolf to persevere, and therefore, her lifelong studying of Greek might be understood as much more than studying a foreign language. In the late 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, it was an act of rebellion and a challenge to an existing power construction, but it would not be possible if not for a very special set of circumstances. Thus, the research identified six contributing factors for Woolf's success, explored in detail in the first chapter of this thesis. Firstly, by the end of the 19th century, a major cultural shift was happening in the Great Britain, with the gradual opening of the classics for women being one example of it. Importantly, by this time there were famous precedents of the female intellectuals-predecessors who have learned Greek, such as the examples of Mary Shelley and George Eliot, as well as this of Woolf's mentor Jane Ellen Harrison, who became a Greek scholar. Secondly, Woolf developed an early interest in literature, displayed professional thoroughness, and realized early on that all contemporary British writers went to University and studied the classics. Perhaps, she even came to a conclusion that you can write great texts only when you know great texts, and they are Greek[32]. Thirdly, Woolf's mental illness and a potential desire to prove that she was capable of learning just as her siblings did must have played a role of a personal motivational factor. Fourthly, Virginia Woolf was lucky enough to enjoy friendly influence and support of her brothers and their Cambridge friends, with whom she became closely acquainted through the 'revolutionary' Bloomsbury group. There was also support of Virginia Woolf's father, who gave her access to the family library and started teaching her Greek. Last but not least, it was important that her family and social status gave her a practical opportunity to continue studying Greek with tutors such as Janet Case, and to reconstruct the university education for herself only. Not many women of her time had such an opportunity. Woolf appreciated it, and made the best of it.

[32] As brilliantly summarized by Gorry, "The Greek tragedies repay repeated visits" (158).

As discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, all of these factors resulted in Woolf being sufficiently fluent in the Ancient Greek to study the Greek authors in the original, for which many biographical evidences were found. It is my claim that with time, the initial reason to study Greek – public prestige, attributed to the classics – was replaced by the genial interest that Woolf developed for the Greek literature and Greek ideas, if not so much for the Greek grammar. This re-evaluation of the Greek culture might be traced by Woolf's diary and her Greek essays. For instance, the journals that Woolf kept during her two visits to the country in 1906 and 1932 reveal a curious change of perception and thoughts on actual, not imaginary Greece. In 1906, Woolf is initially ecstatic in her description of Greece, but the delight of a traveller is soon replaced with a complicated and controversial duality, inspired by the contrast between her anticipations and real Greece. The motifs of beauty and greatness still dominate Woolf's diary entries, but she was not able to ignore the pitiful and distressing state of the country in 1906. Close reading of her journal reveals that Woolf's thoughts are constantly focused on the comparison between the past and the present, and the obvious disparity is disturbing for Woolf. Since the Greece of 1906, after the centuries of Ottoman occupation and war, had very little of the ancient civilization, with all its prestige and significance for the British public life, Woolf made rather arrogant and unfair commentaries on the modern Greeks and their dialect. However, rather unexpectedly, this real, disorganized, dishevelled Greece seemed to win Woolf over and in her later diary entries, she expressed attraction and speechlessness, as if the real Greece turned out to be more vibrant and impressive than the classical one. This peculiar struggle between expectations and reality was solved by 1932, when during her second visit to Greece Woolf was already thinking about moving to Crete permanently.

Similar processes were observed in Woolf's essays, where she gradually comes to the conclusion that ideal Ancient Greece was not a reality, but rather a projection of those who believes in it. Instead of comparison between Ancient Greek and Modern Greek, the focus of Woolf's later essays shifted to the literary analysis of the Greek texts and their beauty, as well as to the role of language, the chorus, and the voices in the Greek drama, among others. The whole narrative of Britain being a cultural successor of Ancient Greece, and associated prestige are notably absent from Woolf's later Greek essays, too. Interestingly enough, instead, in 1925 Woolf still ponders the question of why we want to study the language of such a distant time, as if this question is unresolved in her mind, too. She suggests that the explanation lies in Greek literature, which she attempts to analyse while exploring the nature

of the written text and its power. Importantly, she also suggests that perhaps our interest in the Greek language might be explained by its ultimate unknowability, which allows us to interpret the texts how we want while finding in them what we lack and not what they really contain.

Whereas Virginia Woolf does not have all the answers to her own questions regarding the power and beauty of the Greek literature, her Greek essays reveal a deep and consistent analysis of it that she attempted for years. In the final chapter of this thesis, the influence of this analysis on Woolf's fiction is considered, and five examples are identified, The first among them is the prevalence of the Greek motifs in Woolf's novels, for example, in *The Voyage Out, Jacob's room, Orlando, Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse.* Allusions to Greece create additional layers of meaning in these texts and serve as a reference point, as well as enable characters' construction. Greece is also a partial geographical setting for two of Woolf's novels. Secondly, re-accommodation of the classical myths was observed in *The Voyage Out, To the Lighthouse, Mrs Dalloway,* and *Orlando.* The mythical method allows Woolf to identify patterns and underline the universal experience of her characters, thus contributing additional significance to otherwise random events and connecting her characters to Homeric tradition and Greek mythology. Thirdly, in her novels Woolf uses reporting of action without a messenger as in the Greek tragedies, but with the same impersonal and abrupt effect, as if in passing, with no emotions conveyed even in case of the characters' sudden death. Fourthly, she is reinventing the Socratic dialogue in *The Voyage Out, To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Dalloway* according to her own aesthetic aims, resulting in long philosophical discussions indoors, over the dinner, but with female characters present. Finally, examples of the chorus, albeit highly reconstructed from the traditional chorus of the Greek tragedies, intended for the stage, might be found in Woolf's novels. There is evidence to suggest that Woolf was considering the tradition of the chorus for many years, trying to adapt it for a modernist text, not intended for reading aloud. Her stream of consciousness technique – essentially, the voices in a written text, as in *The Waves* – might have been developed as a result of this literary analysis and observations.

To conclude, Ancient Greek culture is omnipresent in Woolf's own literary legacy. Its distant strangeness and unknowability suited her writing style, enriched the texts with the additional coded meanings, and connected them to a broader cultural context. At the same time, fictional texts with the Ancient Greek motifs demonstrate cross-cultural influence and imitate European life where the Greeks are in the background, too. On a different level, such an

approach towards the Greek legacy and literature corresponds to a larger cultural shift of emancipation of the early 20th century since Woolf effectively refused to be barred from the Greek legacy and power associated with it, and instead consciously and persistently attempted to find her way through this knowledge, declaring her rights on this part of the human culture as a woman-writer and intellectual, and efficiently building on this basis her own work.

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7. Abstract

References to Ancient Greece abound in the books of European modernist writers. One of these writers was Virginia Woolf who created sophisticated layers of additional meanings in her novels based on her knowledge of the Ancient Greek literature and language. Woolf highly appreciated the Ancient Greek legacy and repeatedly turned to it her whole life. Since Edwardian Britain did not consider knowledge of the Ancient world or its languages to be a necessary part of women's education, her lifelong studying of Greek might be understood as much more than studying a foreign language. In the late 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, it was an act of rebellion and a challenge to an existing power construction, but it would not be possible if not for a very special set of circumstances.

This thesis attempts to explore why Virginia Woolf turned specifically to Ancient Greece in her education, how she studied the language, what Greek texts she read, what other exposure to Greek culture she had, and, eventually, how Woolf managed to transform her knowledge of the Ancient Greek legacy into female independence and agency. In order to answer these questions, the thesis attempts to enfold the broadest possible range of life-writing sources, including Woolf's diaries and selected letters. The environment into which Virginia Woolf

was born, as well as her childhood and family dynamic, was studied based on secondary sources.

In order to answer how Greek literature influenced Woolf's texts, a close reading of several essays was conducted. Whereas even Virginia Woolf did not have all the answers to her own questions regarding the power and beauty of the Greek literature, her Greek essays reveal a deep and consistent analysis of it that she attempted for years. In the final chapter of this thesis, five examples of Ancient Greek literary borrowings are identified in Woolf's major novels: usage of Greek motifs, re-accommodation of the classical myths, reporting of action, reinventing the Socratic dialogue, and the chorus.

Keywords: Virginia Woolf, Greece, Ancient Greek, Ancient Greek literature, myths, chorus, Socratic dialogue, reporting of action

8. Zusammenfassung

Verweise auf das antike Griechenland sind in den Büchern der europäischen Schriftsteller der Moderne reichlich vorhanden. Eine dieser Schriftstellerinnen war Virginia Woolf, die in ihren Romanen auf der Grundlage ihrer Kenntnisse der altgriechischen Literatur und Sprache raffinierte Schichten zusätzlicher Bedeutungen schuf. Woolf schätzte das altgriechische Erbe sehr und wandte sich ihm ihr ganzes Leben lang immer wieder zu. Da das edwardianische Britannien die Kenntnis der antiken Welt oder ihrer Sprachen nicht als notwendigen Teil der Ausbildung von Frauen ansah, könnte ihr lebenslanges Griechischlernen als viel mehr verstanden werden als das Erlernen einer Fremdsprache. Im späten 19. Jahrhundert und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts war es ein Akt der Rebellion und eine Herausforderung an ein bestehendes Machtgefüge, aber es wäre nicht möglich gewesen, wenn es nicht eine ganz besondere Konstellation von Umständen gegeben hätte.

Die vorliegende Arbeit versucht herauszuarbeiten, warum Virginia Woolf sich in ihrer Ausbildung speziell dem antiken Griechenland zuwandte, wie sie die Sprache lernte, welche griechischen Texte sie las, welche anderen Kontakte sie zur griechischen Kultur hatte und wie es Woolf schließlich gelang, ihr Wissen darüber zu transformieren und das altgriechische Erbe mit weiblicher Unabhängigkeit und Entscheidungsfreiheit zu verquicken. Um diese

Fragen zu beantworten, versucht die Masterarbeit, ein möglichst breites Spektrum lebensbeschreibender Quellen zu erfassen, darunter Woolfs Tagebücher und ausgewählte Briefe. Das Umfeld, in das Virginia Woolf hineingeboren wurde, sowie ihre Kindheit und Familiendynamik wurden anhand der Sekundärquellen untersucht.

Um zu beantworten, wie die griechische Literatur Woolfs Texte beeinflusst hat, wurden mehrere Essays einer eingehenden Lektüre unterzogen. Während selbst Virginia Woolf auf ihre eigenen Fragen zur Kraft und Schönheit der griechischen Literatur nicht alle Antworten parat hatte, offenbaren ihre griechischen Essays eine tiefe und konsequente Analyse, auf die sie jahrelang hingearbeitet hatte. Im letzten Kapitel dieser Arbeit werden fünf Beispiele für altgriechische literarische Anleihen in Woolfs großen Romanen identifiziert: Verwendung griechischer Motive, Wiederaufnahme der klassischen Mythen, Berichterstattung über Handlung, Neuerfindung des sokratischen Dialogs und des Chors.

Suchbegriffe:

Virginia Woolf, Griechenland, Altgriechisch, Altgriechische Literatur, Mythen, Chor, Sokratischer Dialog, Handlungsberichterstattung