

Following suit(e): Woolf, Carlyle, Deleuze

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*Literature was suffering from a plethora of old clothes. Cézanne and Picasso had shown the way; writers should fling representation to the winds and follow suit.*¹

1. **T**aken from Virginia Woolf's *Roger Fry: a Biography*, the above epigraph is, in more than one sense, a starting place: both a paragraph from where to start, and an arresting locus of semantic partings, of differential, divisive departures and multiple beginnings. One of the effects of the statement is to require, if not multiple readings, at least a glance backwards or an exercise in metaphoric retrofitting. Written in the filtered voice of free indirect discourse, a voice in which the biographer comes as close as possible to reporting the biographed's very words, the quotation is strewn with clichés ranging from a "plethora of old clothes", to flinging representation "to the winds", and "following suit". Each of these clichés inscribes a dead lexical incrustation on the surface of what declares itself, on the other hand, independant from pre-determined forms of expression. Yet something in Fry/Woolf's declaration requires a fresh start: the encounter of two clichés, "*old clothes*" and "*following suit*", two phrases both attracted and separated by a productive micro-interval. If the metaphor at work in "following suit" involves a card-game, the act of playing a card from the same set as the leading card, and figuratively of acting in a similar fashion or following the same custom, the term "suit" is itself less stable, ready to betray the metaphor of card-games for other implications. On the other hand, Woolf's metaphor of "old clothes" reactivates the sartorial acceptance of "suit". The two phrases form a differential pair, in which the second, arguably freer from cliché than the first, produces in writing the degree of abstraction Fry seeks to obtain visually. "Suit" both translates and repeats "follow". Latin-based, the word ranges semantically from feudal law, in which it describes a service, something owed either in

1 V. Woolf, *Roger Fry: a Biography*, 172.

the form of attendance at court or in the form of a sum paid in lieu of attendance, to the other end of the semantic spectrum: to sue, to bring to justice. Next to the suitor appears the suer. And once out of the legal domain, more semantic directions emerge: a suite of rooms, and the flowing quantities found in Newton's "suites and fluxions", in the "method of fluxions and infinite series" on which rests differential calculus. "Following suit" reads as a case of differentially stuttering repetition.

2. Broaching or approaching the question of Virginia Woolf-among-the-philosophers from what appears to be a mere narrative detail or digression, the following essay attempts to rewrite "philosophy" as a "following", a term here taken as an retranslation of Deleuze and Guattari's "line of flight"² or "ligne de fuite". A French "*fuite*" (both a leaking and a fleeing) comes close to an English "following suit(e)", which, depending on a variation in the speed of reading, literally becomes a "flow" as much as a "following". A f(o)l(l)owing-suit: a "*devenir*".
3. Virginia Woolf's writing literally "follows suit"; forms a "philosophical" alliance with a number of major concepts in Deleuze and Guattari. A pliant "*fil*" or thread runs across her writing, the thin and sturdy ingredient of a "*filosophy*"—a literal and literary philosophy from the edge of which representation (in *Roger Fry*) is addressed and skirted. To "follow suit" will be taken here as a "post-modernist" escape route, both an abstract and concrete way out of representation, a term against which Deleuze builds his thesis in *Difference and Repetition*³, in terms which resemble Fry's statement. The path leading from Deleuze to Woolf involves Thomas Carlyle, whose *Sartor Resartus* both works address. It is "after" Carlyle that one of the key concepts in *Difference and Repetition* is elaborated—the concept of "disguised repetition". Deleuze follows Carlyle, followed by Woolf, whose writing flies far ahead of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The four names exist in a shared zone of proximity, a common "following suit". A close reader of Carlyle, Virginia Woolf follows the strangely one-dimensional, clothes or suit-related thread of *Sartor Resartus*—whose cumbersome, latinate title circulates a quasi-imperceptible, decapitalized form of "art" in its syllables. What follows does not approach the Woolf-Carlyle-Deleuze and Guattari alliance as a succession, as a historical sequence, but as a form of becoming or interaction.

"A" BIOGRAPHY OF ROGER FRY: ROGUEING/FREEING THE SUBJECT

4. Relying on the double ploy of an indefinite article and on the painter's first name, *Roger Fry: A Biography* may be read as a paradoxical

2 G. Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 3-4, 11, 21, for brief definitions.

3 G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*: "Modern thought is born of the failure of representation", Introduction, xvii.

literary exercise, in which “a biography” comes close to reading as “abio-graphy”. In Woolf’s approach of her “subject” operates a strange fascination for “roguing”: roguing the subject, making it wander, rendering the limits and identity of the biographed object uncertain and porous. The apparent vagueness and lack of determination of the indefinite article “a” in the title lacks nothing, however, from the point of view of a philosophy of the event, in which “individuation [...] does not pass into a form and is not effected by a subject.”⁴ A “free” subject roams between biographer and biographed, roguing the space in between. What Virginia Woolf writes of Roger Fry’s search for non-representational forms of expression applies to her “own” displacement of frames of representation:

He laid sacrilegious hands upon the classics. He found glaring examples in Shakespeare, in Shelley, of the writer’s vice of distorting reality, of importing impure associations, of contaminating the stream with adjectives and metaphors. Literature was suffering from a plethora of old clothes. Cézanne and Picasso had shown the way; writers should fling representation to the winds and follow suit.⁵

5. Taken as a sentence in isolation, framed as a declaration of stylistic independence, the above passage might be taken as a failed manifesto, one which in no way performs what it promises or embraces. More clichés abound, more adjective-ridden metaphors: “sacrilegious hands”, “glaring examples”, “contaminating the stream”, occurring in a paragraph which states the urge to resist adjectives and metaphors.
6. Yet another plane of expression forms: a style or non-style in which Woolf’s writing is displaced, pulled (as much as pulling) in the direction of what Deleuze and Guattari have termed “haecceities”, “subjectless individuations that constitute collective assemblages”⁶. In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, an haecceity belongs to “a plane of immanence and univocality”⁷, to “a plane of proliferation, peopling, contagion”⁸. The same passage, once placed in a wider frame, given enough space or atmosphere for a “peopling” to occur, reads differently. Instead of adjectives, metaphors, and clichés, or next to them, a plane of immanence may be traced, on which “old clothes” are dislodged by a “following suit”:

Writers should **f**ling representation to the winds and **f**ollow suit. But he never **f**ound time to work out his theory of the **i**nfluence of Post-Impressionism upon literature, and his attempts to **f**ound a broadsheet, **prof**usely illustrated, to be sold for one penny at all the bookstalls, in which the two arts should work out the new theories side by side, **f**ailed — the money **d**ifficulty **f**loored even him.⁹

7. To the earlier image of a “stream” contaminated with adjectives and metaphors is substituted a flow of alliterations, that concur to form no pic-

4 G. Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 264.

5 V. Woolf, *Roger Fry*, 172.

6 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 266.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*, 267.

9 V. Woolf, *Roger Fry*, 172.

ture and call for no interpretation — a mobile parody perhaps of the critical cliché of the “stream of consciousness”. Overflowing its banks, the metaphorical, representational stream now gives way to a singular, sub-representative flow of phonemes which render literal the writing of a “biography”: a life crossed with what Deleuze and Guattari have termed traits, particles, quasi-formed elements and affects. Woolf’s following of Fry, her following close on Fry brings about a process of anonymous co-signing, a becoming-common of two proper names, atomized to a floating, repeated collection of “f” or “f-l” phonemes peopling Woolf’s quick non-portrait. The alliterative letters disperse from the twofold non-origin of two verbs, “fling” and “follow”, skirting the “nomos” of two names, biographer and biographed. Against the order words that a painting should represent, that a sentence should be interpreted, the passage and its particle-based, non-representational literal following belongs to another plane of expression, on which “form is constantly being dissolved, freeing times and speeds.”¹⁰

8. In the following “portrait” of Roger Fry as a “water-diviner”, another minor, local “dissolution” or contestation of form occurs:

The Post-Impressionist movement, as the casual words show, was by no means confined to painting. He read books by the light of it. It put him on the track of new ideas everywhere. Like a water-diviner, he seemed to have tapped some hiddel spring sunk beneath the incrustation that has blocked it.¹¹ (RF 172).

9. Representation is blocked by the mixed metaphor of the “hidden spring”, a phrase intended to establish a straightforward connection between water-divining and finding fresh springs. On another plane of reading, the “hidden spring” interacts with two other terms: “incrustations”; “blocked”, resulting in the formation of a non-aquatic, mechanical “spring”. Doubled (as in the case of the previous “suit” of cards or clothing), a metaphor produces a minor crack or interpretive gap: which spring to tap? Which suit or suite?

10. Woolf’s biography of Fry sets off, in turn, its own hidden traps or springs, in the form of minor motifs that affect the overall “picture” and challenge the self-identical, representational pursuit of biography-writing, to the effect that picturing is delayed, impeded, “posted” or blocked, as in the following lines which follow immediately on the previous quotation:

There it was—this reality, the thing that the artist had managed to say, now in Frances Cornford, now in Wordsworth, now in *Marie Clare*, a novel by Marguerite Audoux in which, if memory serves, the writer has contrived to express the emotions of a peasant at the sight of a wolf without using a single adjective.

11. The apparently superfluous detail of Roger Fry’s praise and admiration of Marguerite Audoux’s 1910 novel, in which the writer “had contrived to express the emotions of a peasant at the sight of a wolf without using a single adjective” not only adds a further example of Fry’s distaste

10 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 266-267.

11 *Ibid.*

for qualification and representation (to be placed on a par, perhaps, with Barthes' own aversion for adjectives¹²). One of the effects of the addition is to circulate, in animalized form, a semblance of Woolf's proper name, thus honing the limit between biographer and biographed to a thin edge, to an infra-thin membrane. At the sight of a "wolf"? Which sight? On which side? What wolf? How anonymously?

12. A strange "suit" involves, in one and the same fold, the name of an "author" and the name of an animal—creating a line of flight from Fry to Woolf via Marguerite Audoux, or, in Deleuze and Guattari terms, a "multiplicity": a line "following alogical consistencies or compatibilities,"¹³ —a wolf or "Woolf" pack on the move.
13. Woolf/Deleuze/Carlyle belong to the same pack as *Roger Fry*, less a biographed subject himself than a collection of sudden taps of his water-divining "twig". A "suite", a "following", a common emission of particles flow from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* to Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, which quotes *Sartor Resartus* in its opening pages¹⁴. In the final pages of *Sartor Resartus*, literature has become one with the character of Teufelsdröckh, who has become an embodiment of non-representation:

Literature would also never rightly prosper: that striving with his characteristic vehemence to paint this and the other Picture, and ever without success, he at last desperately dashes his brush, full of all colours, against the canvass, to try whether it will paint Foam?¹⁵

HOW TO WEAR AN ENGLISH SUIT

14. The critical thread commonly followed from Carlyle to Woolf takes a detour through Sir Leslie Stephen, as well as through Virginia Woolf's portrait, in *To The Lighthouse*, of the philosopher as Mr. Ramsay, as a "crusty old grumbler who lost his temper if the porridge was cold"¹⁶. At a distance from paternal associations, from the towering figure of the male artist dressed in the "old clothes" of philosophy, isolated in his sound-proofed room, a more direct link could be seen operating between T. Carlyle and V. Woolf, one in which tradition and filiation are less prominent than alliances. If Woolf/Fry's project to "throw representation to the winds" is taken up, almost word for word, in Deleuze and Guattari's affirmation that it is "necessary to eliminate, to eliminate all that is resemblance and analogy (...); to reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one's zone of indiscernibility with other traits,"¹⁷ that very project involves the paradoxically sartorial art of disappearance: "an English elegance, an Eng-

12 R. Barthes, "Refusal of the Adjective", *The Neutral*, 57.

13 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 250.

14 G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 24.

15 T. Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 222.

16 V. Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*, 46.

17 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 280.

lish fabric, blend in with the walls, eliminate the too-perceived, the too-much-to-be-perceived.¹⁸

15. Blending in with the walls requires a specific language or resistance to language, one which gives precedence to indefinite articles, verbs in the infinitive, and anonymized proper names:

One has made a necessarily communicating world, because one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping between things and growing in the midst of things. One has combined [...] the indefinite article, the infinitive-becoming, and the proper-name to which one is reduced.¹⁹

16. Woolf's "following suit" becomes, from this angle, one of the (molecular) names of a line of flight, a line of "suing" in which fabric, proper names, and (French) infinitives/English ing-forms communicate. A "wolf" imperceptibly haunts such a "following", which one may associate with Fry's quest for anonymity — voiced for example in a letter Woolf inserts, in its original French, in Fry's biography: "*il faut que l'on se résigne ne pas croire même dans sa propre personnalité*"²⁰. A footnote, on the same page, references Lao Tzū : "*celui qui connaît le Lao coule par les interstices*"²¹. In the note is inscribed, yet once more, one of the traits of Woolf's easily anonymized name, literally made to "flow" (couler) in the footnote.

FOLLOWING/FLOWING: BECOMING-IMPERCEPTIBLE

17. To the question of Woolf's asymptotic move towards egolessness, Ann Banfield has devoted a remarkable chapter of *The Phantom Table*, "How Describe the World Seen Without a Self", a text in which quotations involving (unaddressed) occurrences of the verbs "to flow" or "to follow" abound: "*the flow of faces streaming*"²²; "*to follow her thought was like following a voice which speaks too quickly to be taken down by one's pencil*"²³. Captured from a Deleuze and Guattari angle, the verbs read as stray "molecules": as traits dispersed from a proper name in the process of becoming anonymous.

18. Ann Banfield's reading of Woolf's meanderings relies on metaphoricality as a scaffold on which to build interpretation: "Street haunting is the metaphor for the preliminary empirical process, literature's *Ecole de Plein Air*, withdrawing into a room is for the post-wandering logic"²⁴. Woolf's art of composition is analyzed in terms involving, yet once more, metaphors, in the following quotations:

18 *Ibid.*, 279.

19 *Ibid.*, 280.

20 V. Woolf, *Roger Fry*, 252; "one must resign not to believe in one's personality."

21 *Ibid.*, note 1, 252: "Who knows the Tao flows out through interstices."

22 V. Woolf, *Night and Day*, 269.

23 V. Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*, 40.

24 A. Banfield, *The Phantom Table*, 355.

The various threads are picked up and worked into patterns as wool by needles. [...] The “cotton-wool” is transformed into fabric on a frame which gives it rigid geometry²⁵.

19. Quoting *Roger Fry: A Biography*, Ann Banfield isolates another example involving the art of sowing, spinning, weaving: “The vagueness had to be expelled; the simmer had to be spun into a tough thread or argument that held the whole together.”²⁶
20. Concerning the above quotation, however, a slightly broader cast of the net brings in a different version. Once rescaled, the paragraph embraces terms which inflect or bend the textual metaphor, and, like the title of Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*, develop a metaphor-resistant, rhizoming line of writing:

It was thus, in front of the paintings, that the material for the lectures was collected. It was from these new and nameless experiences that vague hints at new aesthetics came into being. Then the vagueness had to be expelled; the simmer had to be *spun into a tough thread* of argument that held the whole together. And after the lecture had been given the drudgery of re-writing the spoken word would begin. The obstinate, the elusive word had to be found, had to be coined, *had to be “curled round”* the sensation.²⁷

21. Spinning and other textural activities give way to the convoluted technique of a non-orthogonal curling that pertains, rather than to weaving, to the kind of “felt-making” described by Deleuze and Guattari in “The Smooth and the Striated”:

Felt is a supple solid product that proceeds altogether differently, as an anti-fabric. It implies no separation of threads, no intertwining, only an entanglement of fibers obtained by fulling [...] What becomes entangled are the micro-scales of the fibers. An aggregate of intrication of this kind is in no way homogeneous: it is nevertheless smooth, and contrasts point by point with the space of fabric (it is in principle infinite, open, and unlimited in every direction; it has neither top nor bottom nor center; it does not assign fixed and mobile elements but rather distributes a continuous variation.²⁸

22. But, one might ask, in what way does this “curling” produce an alliance or a metamorphosis rather than a metaphor? A “smooth”, curling space connects, one-dimensionally, to its “outside”, without leaving its own dimension, Moebius-wise. The “art” of *Sartor Resartus* retailors the art of clothes-making, reindexes it, to its outside—to the open space of a writing-in-progress.

25 *Ibid.*, 356; 357.

26 V. Woolf, *Roger Fry*, 265-266.

27 *Ibid.*; emphasis mine.

28 G. Deleuze, and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 475-476.

THE “ART” OF SARTOR RESARTUS

23. A strange “philosophy” of clothes forms in the book’s very title, in the fold, the rhythmic “*suite*”, the following at work in the repeated syllable “art” of its title. In Carlyle’s “Philosophy of Clothes”, what matters is literally “material”, a word involving both materialism and cloth. Retranslated in Woolf’s terms, *Sartor Resartus* literally “follows suit”: both follows, in a mixture of “Babylonish dialect” (appendix) and translated German, the flamboyant subjectmatter of dress, and yet wears it threadbare, into a metafiction with no subject-matter but its own production.
24. *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* requires to be retailored at each reading: sitting ill in any category or on any prelabelled bookshelf, it is a restless text—a “tailor patched”, a patchwork or quilted collection one could approach as “an amorphous collection of juxtaposed pieces that can be joined together in an infinite number of ways.”²⁹
25. Carlyle’s sartorial, patchwork philosophy draws the contours of a social multiplicity, of a society “founded upon Cloth”³⁰ (which the book largely parodies and undoes). The term “Cloth” differs slightly, however, from “clothes”. Whereas “clothes”, as textile, belong to the category of the woven, the binary or “striated”, “cloth” resists binarity. Carlyle’s “cloth” translates the German word “*Kleider*”, of which it retains, like other nouns in the book, its capital letter. Common to both “cloth” and “*Kleider*” is the etymological meaning found in the German *kleben* (to stick), in the English “cleave”. Cloth, akin to glue or clay, as “*Kleider*” is to *kleben*, has therefore little or nothing to do with sowing and stitching. It pertains, rather, to what sticks, waxes, to clotting and cloying. The convolutions of *Sartor Resartus* follow a pattern best described as a “curling” around, to take up Woolf’s word for Fry’s aesthetics of the sensation.
26. In a diary entry for September 1830, Carlyle describes how he conceived the *Sartor* project in the following terms: “I am going to write—Nonsense. It is on ‘Clothes’. Heaven be my comforter!”³¹ “Comforter”? While making a show of calling for heaven’s help (and of being a literal translation of the Greek “Paraclete”), the word invites the reader to look no further than his or her own immediate surroundings: to put a finger on, in tactile, haptic fashion, the most common, close-at-hand article of clothing: a woollen scarf worn round the neck as protection from the cold.
27. Writing in *Sartor* proceeds by subtraction: although the work is clad in the “gay costume in which the Author delights to dress his thoughts,”³² a costume in which to find evidence of an aesthetics of representation, its writing follows the logic of the patchwork or “felting”: following a difficult, broken line between the concrete and the abstract, between cloth and writ-

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 476.

³⁰ T. Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 41.

³¹ T. Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, 176 (about the 28th of September, 1830).

³² T. Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Appendix IV, 241.

ing; making one cleave to the other, latch onto the other by invisible hooks or “microscales”. Such a term as “article”³³ forms one of the book’s microscales, a pass-word articulating an article of writing to an article of clothing. What is “rapt”, as in rapture, is also wrapped, as in wrapping.³⁴ “Custom” and “costume”³⁵ belong to a similar “suit”. Circulating the fiction of an original correspondance gathered by the book’s narrator, the private papers of the German professor, shipped to the Editor in bags, are described as containing “miscellaneous masses of sheets, and oftener shreds and snips,”³⁶ terms which apply to writing as much as to the sartorial. Among the clothes mentioned in “The World in Clothes” chapter, not a single one could be identified, with any certainty, as belonging to the striated, orthogonal, woven sort:

Sheepskin cloaks and wampum belts; phylacteries, stoles, albs; chlamides, togas, Chinese silks, Afghaun shawls, trunk hose, leather breeches [...].³⁷

28. Habiliments and masks point, here as in Deleuze and in Woolf, to more masks. Beneath cloth lies more tissue and membrane. The “fabric” of the body and the (non) woven fabric of the style of *Sartor Resartus* form a continuous line, as in the following quotation, in which Teufesldröckh imagines the sudden, accidental dissolution of all clothes:

Should the buttons all simultaneously start and the solid wool evaporate [...] with them the whole Fabric of Government [...] and Civilized Society *are dissolved*, in wails and howls³⁸.

29. “Wails” and “howls” retain more than a trace of the sartorial, overheard in the disguised phonetics of two words followed closely upon by their metamorphic body-doubles: “veils” and “shawls”. How close to “*Kleider*” is the human body? How close to a veil and a shawl is a wail and a howl?

30. *Sartor Resartus* has been variously interpreted as a manifesto for authenticity, as a book aiming at presenting clothes as symbols relaying a spiritual truth buried beneath the sartorial surface. Most symbolic readings leaves aside, to a large extent, the metamorphic, early-Deleuzian ingredients of a volume in which “all [...] lives through perpetual metamorphoses.”³⁹

31. R. S. Koppen’s *Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity* has recently repositioned *Sartor Resartus* and proposed Carlyle’s book as an intertext for *The Waves*. Metaphoricity, however, occupies a large part of Koppen’s analysis of what he calls Carlyle’s “hermeneutics of the material world”⁴⁰. The body as garment in particular is a convincing Carlylean connection in *The*

33 *Ibid.*, 8.

34 *Ibid.*, 23.

35 *Ibid.*, 28.

36 *Ibid.*, 60.

37 *Ibid.*, 30.

38 *Ibid.*, 49.

39 *Ibid.*, 56.

40 R. S. Koppen, *Woolf, Fashion and Literary Modernity*, 158.

Waves, in which flesh metamorphoses into a garment, into “the wax that coats the spine”, into “the waxen waistcoat”⁴¹. Yet at this stage the tension between metaphor and metamorphosis, between “old clothes” and “following suit”, between representation and repetition, is too vital to be overlooked. Wax is, if anything, not woven. Nor is a “coat” of wax. As a cloying, malleable material, wax inflects the garment, the “coat”, towards the non-woven. The “coat” becomes a film, a coating: less a garment than a thin membrane, a “suiting”. What wax affords is not so much a substance, not so much a substantive as a verb, along with the element of mobility, growth or becoming that affects it: waxing or waning, the substance is akin to—repeats and disguises—the “waving” of *The Waves*.

32. *Sartor Resartus* is introduced in *Difference and Repetition* as a floating title briefly quoted, without Carlyle’s name. In *Sartor* Deleuze finds the paradoxical idea that masks are the truth of nakedness⁴². Deleuze elaborates two forms of repetition, disguised versus naked, extensive versus intensive, inanimate versus living, regular as opposed to non-symmetrical. One is involved, folded into the other.
33. A practical example is given of what differentiates one repetition from the other, with the example of meter versus rhythm, the measurable beat of a tempo, versus a series of differential, unequal rhythmic intensities. Deleuze’s distinction between regular meter as an external envelope, as the outer skin of true repetition, which takes the form of rhythmic imbalances secretly operating within the first, repeats Roger Fry’s search for “hidden springs” beneath surface blockages or incrustations. “This other repetition”, Deleuze adds, “is in no way approximative or metaphorical. It is on the contrary the spirit of every repetition. It is the very letter of repetition, its watermark and constitutive cipher.”⁴³
34. Out of the watermarks, ciphers, and moments of inflexion found in *Sartor Resartus* and in *Roger Fry: A Biography* emerges a “philosophy” without origins: a philosophy of becomings, in which names become anonymous, malleable, multiple or feminine — as of a wolf in Woolf’s clothing.

BECOMING-WO(OLF)MAN

35. If Carlyle’s sound-proofed room enters Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, his hollowed-out, feminized name haunts the essay both in its lawful form and as a disguised proper name, under the traits of the fictitious Mary Carmichael, introduced in a sartorial environment of scissors, her work “cut out for her”, ready to “have out her scissors and fit them close to every hol-

41 V. Woolf, *The Waves*, 185; 190; quoted by R.S. Koppen, *op. cit.*, 147.

42 G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 37.

43 *Ibid.*, 25.

low and angle”⁴⁴. To Woolf’s list of names, stand-ins for any outspoken feminine figure, Carlyle’s name is imperceptibly added in the Carmichael variation.

36. If Carlyle metamorphoses, possibly, into the syllables of a Mary Carmichael’s name, a second becoming-Woman awaits the “philosopher of clothes”. Carlyle’s opening line at the beginning of his “abstruse Inquiry”, in the company of the faceless figure of the “Editor of these sheets”⁴⁵ in *Sartor Resartus* associates him to a watery environment one could mistake for a metaphor, where he appears “fishing in all manner of waters, with all manners of nets”. But such words as “sheets” or “nets” reduces metaphoricity: both terms run a thin line between clothing and writing. In the opening pages of a *Room Of One’s Own*, Woolf adopts a similar Carlylean stance and sentence, in which “thought” metamorphoses into a “tug”: its concrete, differential, “suit” or *suite*. In the following line, a fishing line and a line of writing form the felted material of a single, vast projection or continuum:

Thought—to call it by a prouder name than it deserved—had let its line down into the stream. It swaves, minute after minute, hither and thither among the reflections and the weeds, letting the water lift it and sink it until—you know the little tug—the sudden conglomeration at the end of one’s line.⁴⁶

37. Against the grain of metaphor, the fishing line has become a line of prose. The sheets of bedding/covering are sheets of writing. “Thought” has become the anonymous subject of the sentence, and returns in disguise. It inhabits the sentence twice, once in its naked version, the other in its clothed version, in the guise of a “tug”, its differential phonetic twin. The “old clothes” of thought both expand and telescope into a newly invented “tug”. Shortened to three letters, it may have ceased to cut a “proper” figure; ceased to represent; but it has picked up speed in the process — and does not differ from the process of thought.

38. In one of Woolf’s shorter essays, “The Fascination of the Pool,”⁴⁷ thoughts are also introduced in a fishing environment, as the water holds fancies and thoughts in a “liquid state”. Beneath each submerged voice, “there was always something else”. No narcissism affects the scene, little or no representation. Thoughts, in what could be characterized as a heavily metaphorical and representation-bound early exercise, exist in a liquid state which no spoon can capture. Narcissism does not affect, as one might expect, the moment by the pool. A multiple subject, a “we”, is introduced, keeping the ego at a distance. A strange verb appears at the end of the essay, which instead of welcoming a mark of closure, a turning away from the pool or a turning over, reversibly, of a pool into a closing, closing-off loop, opens up onto a flowing or a following: “we flow back again over the edge into the pool”⁴⁸. “Flowing back” spells, anonymously, one of Woolf’s reversible

44 V. Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 84.

45 T. Carlyle, *op. cit.*, 6.

46 V. Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 7.

47 V. Woolf, *Complete Shorter Fiction*, 226-228.

48 *Ibid.*, 228.

proper names, a name which also flows in the “following suit” of *Roger Fry*, and recurs in the last verb at the end of Woolf’s biography, “to follow”. Woolf’s “flowing back”, like Deleuze and Guattari’s lines of flight, is not without its dangerous, darker sides — as it writes in filegree Woolf’s “flowing back” into the River Ouse, her becoming “reterritorialized”, caught in the deadly substance, the philosophical “*ousia*” of a river whose name suddenly knew Greek. When not knowing Greek, philosophy should perhaps be respelt “followsophy”.

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