



Subversive Interventions in Socio-spatial Constructions in *The Voyage Out*¹

The Voyage Out Romanında Sosyo-mekansal Düzene Yıkıcı Müdahaleler

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Abstract

Throughout *The Voyage Out* (1915), as in its earliest (unpublished) version, *Melymbrosia* (written over several years up to 1912) (De Salvo, 2004, p. xix), Virginia Woolf presents a consistently and insistently critical depiction of the social, physical, and mental spaces. This paper highlights how the novel both illustrates and critiques the spatial norms and practices established by the prevailing social systems that governed the creation and utilization of lived space around the turn of the century. Woolf employs her fiction to explore how, despite the discriminatory regulation of places, social space is heterogeneous, varied, and dynamic, which aligns with the arguments of Lefebvre, Foucault, and Tuan. Bachelard is also referred to as a mouthpiece for the gendered norms of the time with regards to spatial thinking. Extended to sites beyond the domicile and the individual, the narrator's comments, especially those mediated through the female focalizers, present differing spatial experiences that relate to and undermine this discourse and its related classist, patriarchal and imperialist ideology.

Keywords: Space theories, Virginia Woolf, Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Yi-Fu Tuan.

Öz

Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (1915) romanı boyunca, tıpkı ilk (yayınlanmamış) versiyonu olan *Melymbrosia*'da (1912'ye kadar birkaç yıl boyunca yazılmıştır) (De Salvo, 2004, s. xix) olduğu gibi, sosyal, fiziksel ve zihinsel alanların sürekli ve ısrarla eleştirel bir tasvirini sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, romanın hem dönemin sosyal sistemleri tarafından oluşturulan ve yaşanan alanın yaratımını ve kullanımını yöneten mekansal normları ve uygulamaları gösterdiğini hem de eleştirdiğini vurgulamaktadır. Woolf, kurgusu aracılığıyla, mekanların ayrıştırıcı düzenlemelerine rağmen sosyal alanın heterojen, çeşitli ve dinamik olduğunu gösterir. Bu yaklaşım, Lefebvre, Foucault ve Tuan'ın argümanlarıyla uyumludur. Bu çalışmada Bachelard da mekansal düşünce konusundaki cinsiyet normlarının bir temsilcisi olarak bahsedilmektedir. Ev, vatan ve birey ötesindeki alanlara genişletilen anlatıcının yorumları, özellikle de kadın

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karakterlerin bakış açılarıyla iletilenler, farklı mekansal deneyimleri sunar ve mevcut sınıfsal, ataerkil ve emperyalist ideolojilere karşı çıkar.

Anahtar sözcükler: Mekan teorileri, Virginia Woolf, Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Yi-Fu Tuan.

Introduction

Present-day spatiality studies follow Foucault and Lefebvre in recognising that space is no mere “neutral container” or “blank canvas [. . .] filled in by human activity”, but is physically, mentally, and socially produced (Zink, 2018, p. 14). Ahead of her time, Woolf’s novels likewise show a perception that “spaces are generated intersubjectively” (Price, 2002, p. 41), that “any space implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships” (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 82-83), that “space is political and ideological” (Lefebvre, 1976, p. 31). Furthermore, presenting a narrative strongly focalised on and (mainly) through female characters, every page shows Woolf’s early awareness of “the profound and intricate relations of space and the construction of a gendered reality” (Ganser, 2009, p. 66)². This has, in different ways, been recognised by several Woolf scholars. A notable early analysis of space, particularly urban space, in Woolf’s work, for example, is Susan M. Squier’s *Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City* (1985), in which she investigates how the city, as both a concrete and symbolic entity, illustrates the convergence of space, gender, and class. Squier’s examination focuses on works such as *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Years*, and *The London Scene* (1985, p. 11). As Zink observes, Squier’s study coincided with the emergence of the “flâneur debate,” a key component of the academic discourse on modernity, which originated from Walter Benjamin’s analysis of Baudelaire’s symbolic figure of modernity (2018, p. 21). This debate has garnered significant attention from numerous critics, including those exploring the potential for a female flâneur. Woolf’s work has proved to be an essential source for such discussions, due to its portrayals of female characters navigating the freedoms of urban space, from Katharine Hilbery in *Night and Day* to Clarissa Dalloway, and the anonymous figure in “Street Haunting” (Zink, 2018, p. 21). Snaith and Whitworth also observed that particularly the concepts of space and gender are deeply intertwined in Woolf’s work. Space functions as a medium through which questions of gender are posed, including the inclusion and exclusion of one sex, as well as the potential for their access to power. Mental or conceptual spaces, such as libraries, homes, and textual elements like ellipses and parentheses, illustrate the way in which space can diverge along gendered lines, while also possessing the capacity to transcend these divisions. As Snaith and Whitworth elaborated, Virginia Woolf examined the ways in which women were marginalized and restricted through different conceptions of space—whether in the context of national space in *Three Guineas*, intellectual space in *A Room of One’s Own*, or artistic space in *To The Lighthouse*. Through these explorations, she articulated how societal boundaries imposed limitations on both women’s physical and mental autonomy (Snaith & Whitworth, 2007, p. 2). Furthermore, they also acknowledge Woolf’s relational understanding of space, in which geographical connections, such as those between Wimpole Street and Whitechapel in *Flush* or the Thames and the Amazon in *The Voyage Out*, serve to represent abstract economic or imperial relations, which they claim to be particularly evident in Woolf’s efforts to illustrate how daily life in England is shaped by the presence of the colonial “other,” including regions such as Africa, India, and Ireland (Snaith & Whitworth, 2007, p. 2). Considering all these, the readings below reveal that even in her earliest novel, Woolf constructed literary spaces that communicate insights into how the spatial arrangement of society plays a crucial role in shaping social interactions rather than just being an outcome of them (Massey, 1994, p. 4). *The Voyage Out* presents pseudo-domestic, social, and public spaces that are mediated through the perspectives of a floating narrator and through focalizing characters’ thoughts, both presenting and challenging the fixed and homogenous, physical, and abstract (mental) constructions of space dictated by the dominant social discourses of Woolf’s society.

While including examinations of the ideas expressed in the work *Poetics of Space*, written by Woolf’s contemporary, Gaston Bachelard (first published – in French – in 1957), this paper will take as its primary

² In Tally (2013, p. 132)

theoretical framework the works of the late twentieth century thinkers Foucault, Lefebvre, and Tuan, whose separate analyses of space will be explained in their turn, chronologically. Unlike Bachelard, the later theorists explore space more broadly (not just the poetic images of physical spaces); in different ways, Tuan, Lefebvre and Foucault, regard the different configurations of space as socially, historically, and ideologically constructed.

Bachelard based his *Poetics of Space* upon the concept of imaginative subjects (dreamers, readers, poets) having shared “transsubjective” (1994, p. xix) understandings of space, that (he claims) arise from unconscious archetypal responses to images of space (p. xvi); as a result, he presents and interprets his selection of “felicitous” (1994, p. ix) poetic images of space as timeless, static, ordered, and (he finds) maternal. He analyses the meanings of the real, concrete spaces that the images relate to for the mind of the subjective consciousness (or “dreamer”), seeing them as apparently fixed physical and imagined characteristics of the home. Bachelard’s idealized home, described in “feminized” terms (Price, 2002, p. 49), is constructed by his evidently bourgeois “particular cultural reading of something called ‘Woman’” (Massey, 1994, p. 11), “the housewife” who “awakens furniture” by constant polishing while her husband “builds a house from the outside” oblivious to this “wax civilization” (Bachelard, 1994, p. 68). While naturalizing an age-old, imagined division between female/interior and male/exterior in this way (a division challenged by Woolf’s fictional females’ preferences for “voyaging” outdoors), he also denies the exhausting rigour of women’s enforced household labour by claiming that housework “cheers” a woman’s “heart” (1994, p. 81), something that is refuted by Woolf’s exhausted and sometimes resentful fictional housekeepers, including the character Mrs Chailey in *The Voyage Out*. *The Voyage Out* also depicts no established home, and transposes its domestic scenes into a pseudo domesticity of life on board a boat, in a villa rented for a season, or in hotel rooms. This paper will find that the novel therefore extends beyond Bachelard’s “methodologically desocialized” spaces (Price, 2002, p. 54), to show the fundamentally social and intersubjective construction of metropolitan, mobile, and pseudo-domestic spaces, demonstrating how socially constructed spaces can be transposed and imposed, often unconformably, onto other physical, mental, and social spaces.

Like Bachelard, but with emphasis on human geography rather than phenomenology and its focus on the individual (if transsubjective) mind, Tuan believes that when we “know” a place we endow it with value (1977, p. 6) and meaning, a process strongly affected by the subjects’ society and experiences. He emphasizes the co-dependence of abstract space (that is usually considered open and implies freedom and possibility), and concrete place (that is perceived as confined, restricted, and safe). He maintains that space is also associated with a sense of threat, exposure and vulnerability coming from anxiety over the unoccupied and unknown qualities of open space. Meanwhile, Tuan shares Bachelard’s idea that “home is an intimate place” and also maternal (1977, p. 144), and he draws an affinity between attachment to home and to homeland, claiming that people are likely to regard their homeland as the centre of the world (1977, pp. 38-39). He believes that such an emotional connection to land or space is a human emotional behaviour, and an enforcement of identity. Important to this paper’s analysis of different types of physical space, or sites, is Tuan’s claim that modern tools and machines such as cars enlarge “the human sense of space” and create “a world of speed, air, and movement” (Tuan, 1977, p. 53). *The Voyage Out* explores how subjects and societies endow places with value and meaning, including emotional and other responses, and further including associations (or dissociations) of spaces with the intimate, the maternal, the homeland, and identity. It does so in relation to especially women’s different and conflicted attachments to the spaces they inhabit, and in relation to colonial and imperial Britain. The novel exposes its male characters’ conventional and shared vision of imperial Britain as a male-created myth, an exposure that Woolf was to present in many other works, but most directly and forcefully in *Three Guineas* (1938).

As these key points in Tuan’s arguments show, his work, like Bachelard’s, shows some uncritical, fixed and even overgeneralised understandings of space; Lefebvre’s theories of space, in contrast, provide a more analytic, critical and elaborated framework for the interpretation of space. He is known for his formulation of three interconnected spatial concepts. Importantly, for Lefebvre space in the modern world is “never constituted as a singularity” (Wegner, 2002, p. 182), it is defined rather as a unity that comprises all three aspects or identities he discusses; in other words, there is no Lefebvrian space that is solely (in his

words) “perceived”, “conceived” or “lived” (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 42-43). As most clearly set out by Elden (2007, p. 110), these labels thus identify three characterizations, models or constructs of space: (1) space as perceived through the senses and practised materially, in its physical forms (a material construct); (2) space as conceived and represented mentally, the conceptual or non-physical representations provided by “scientists, planners, urbanists” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 46) (a mental construct); and (3) space as lived socially (“a material and mental construct” (Elden, 2007, p. 110)), “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 47). The production of space relies on all three, the first two – space as a material and space as a mental construct – being mostly shaped by the status quo, but it is more heavily influenced by its social aspect, which is more dynamic and open to change (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42).

Lefebvre explores how the prevailing ideologies in a society create specific interpretations of space that limit individuals’ movements to designated areas. By adopting these particular spatial codes, members of that society may conform to “their space and [. . .] their status as ‘subjects’ acting within that space” and “comprehending it” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 17). In this respect, Lefebvre makes an association between the body and space (1991, p. 193), suggesting that there is a mutual, dynamic interaction between them. He argues that the body is not only an entity within space but actively shapes and defines the space around it, which makes members of a society shape and change the spatial codes of their society as well. As Foucault also emphasizes, spaces and their functions can be changed, and the open-ended (and heterogeneous) character of social space can make it a site for the creation of “a differential space” one that defies the hegemony of the ruling ideology (Lefebvre, 1976, p. 302).

Foucault’s essay “On Other Spaces” presented his elaborations on the concept he defined as heterotopias. There he characterized them as cultural and discursive spaces that are unsettling, transformative, incompatible, and contradictory; thus, embodying the concept of the “other.” They are real places within which “all the other real sites can be found within the culture [. . .] simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted”; as “worlds within worlds”, heterotopias both reflect and challenge what is outside (1986, p. 24).

In combining the material site with the ideated form, Lefebvre’s concept of social space, while being more comprehensive in all respects, resembles Foucault’s narrower interpretation of human spatiality that focused on a typology of physical sites characterised by particular human and social functions, that he calls heterotopias. Such places emerge out of the intersection of material space, knowledge, and power, and yield new ways of thinking spatially in making us aware that, for humans, physical sites are infused with competing concepts like justice and injustice, utopian ideals and dystopian oppression, oppressive power and the possibility for emancipation. Foucault’s discussions of such sites will be referred to in relation to the heterotopias encountered in the novel: moving vehicles, hotels, and colonies.

The Voyage Out

The paragraphs below will trace and discuss the novel’s different sites such as London (as observed mainly by Helen Ambrose at the beginning of the novel and as referred to by several characters and the narrator later when characters are in Santa Marina), moving vehicles (such as cabs, hansoms, boats, stream-powered boats), and a villa, hotels, streets and villages in Santa Marina as they are conceived, lived, and produced as social spaces, whereby the novel critically examines social and political considerations and their constructedness. The ideas of the four major spatial theorists have been introduced above; only Tuan and Foucault make particular comments in relation to moving spaces, however. The narrative will be shown to indicate repeatedly that, in spite of displacement, increased heterogeneity and glimpses of alternatives, the travelling English characters (re)produce mental and social constructions of lived spaces that are rigid, stable, singular and fixed by the residual and still dominant nineteenth-century socio-political and cultural forms³ of London, regardless of subjects’ personal desires and situational circumstances.

³ The concept of dominant and residual cultural forms comes from Raymond Williams, (1977, p. 76 et passim). See also the discussion in Tally (2013, p. 70).

Starting off: Social Spaces and Circles in London

The Voyage Out commences with the Ambrose couple walking in London, foreshadowing how moving around in a city would become as fundamental a physical, social and psychological localising or mapping feature of Woolf's novels as they were of many other modernist novelists, like Proust, Joyce and Dorothy Richardson (Seal, 2012, np). The first chapter of the novel acts in some ways as an anchor, showing known parts of a mapped town, a world familiar to the novel's main characters, before the spatial narrative sets out in a steam-driven boat, taking four (briefly, six) passengers, and readers alike into unmapped places, moving between more and potentially less constrained physical spaces, and indicating a similar potential for a loosening of mental and social constraints. Even as characters move from one material and mental space to another, however, it is seen that they carry with them and re-produce the constrained social spaces of their European bourgeois base, despite the heterogeneous nature of social space and their new sites presenting them with (unpursued) possibilities for change.

The initial London part of the novel presents a detailed overlaying of social upon topographical mapping. Seen from the perspective of the depersonalised narrator and through the focalisation of Helen Ambrose, readers join this character and her husband, Ridley, at a very precisely demarcated location, in Westminster, beyond the Houses of Parliament (seat of government) and approaching the Sphinxes by Cleopatra's Needle (redolent of colonialist plunder). This spot lies at the boundaries of the city (the legal and financial hub of the empire), and a little less than halfway between the wealthier and the poorer parts of London. The narrator shows the evidently wealthier and higher class couple entering a territory, that is populated by lower-middle and working class people, where they impede the passage of busy workers, progress "arm in arm" down a narrow street, and are treated as interlopers (Woolf, 2013, p. 1). The narrator explains this hostility as the result of a specifically spatialized, even localized, class consciousness, for in that part of town the people "had appointments to keep, and drew a weekly salary, so that there was some reason for the unfriendly stare which was bestowed upon Mr Ambrose's height and upon Mrs Ambrose's cloak" (2013, p. 1). Gazing tearfully onto the industrial south bank, across the river, Helen, who does not wish to "voyage out" from home, and who is the dominant focalizer of this scene, recognizes the spatialized processes of production and consumption of goods and economic interdependencies of London; and as she is driven out of the West End, she notices that none of the "thousand" pedestrians she sees is "either a gentleman or a lady", for the London she now observes appears to her mind as "a great manufacturing place, where the people were engaged in making things as though the West End, with its electric lamps, its vast plate-glass windows all shining yellow, its carefully-finished houses, and tiny live figures trotting on the pavement, or bowled along on wheels in the road, was the finished work" (2013, pp. 4-5). In this way, the interconnectedness of space and class, and the subjective experience of this interconnectedness, are emphatically introduced. They will continue as major themes of the novel.

The narrative shows Helen's consciousness of her alienation from London's poor women by introducing, together, two recurrent motifs: circumscribed socio-spatial life as a circle, and prostitution; this is done by Helen putting herself in the place of economically deprived women, and imagining "herself pacing a circle all the days of her life round Piccadilly Circus" (2013, p. 5), a roughly circular junction in a part of West End of London that was a well-known site for prostitution. Later in the novel, when referring to these women in Piccadilly Circus, Helen confirms that "they are prostituted" (2013, p. 85)—firmly placing the agency of and responsibility for their morally derided situation on their circumstances. Geographically, physically, and spatially divorced from the "innumerable poor" elsewhere within London, in another circle, the Ambroses exist within established socio-spatial frames of power and privilege, and Helen is as much trapped and forced to perform her role in that circle, as the women in Piccadilly are in theirs. Here, still very early in the novel, we see how socially identified spaces are also – and inextricably – genderized. The social construction of gendered spaces resonates through the novel with repeated direct and indirect references to Piccadilly Circus, to prostitution, and to other 'circles' and spaces to which women physically or metaphorically are restricted.

Transits: Vehicles as Spaces

The voyaging theme of the novel, so clearly indicated by the title, manifests itself not only in movement but also in spaces that move: the vehicles that the protagonists inhabit, however temporarily. When, in the opening London scene, Helen suggests taking a cab, the narrative enters a temporarily private (or pseudo-private) place of purposeful, directed displacement, a place that Foucault would consider a “useful space” which will seal the Ambroses away from the rain and the crowds. The cab is also a space produced by and embodying economic imbalance, with the passengers in the back exchanging their use of this space for money, and cab driver, who depends on such transactions for his meagre living, seated outside at the front, driving the horses.⁴ The pseudo-privacy of the cab’s indoor space is precarious, and referred to many pages later by one of the guests in a hotel in Santa Marina, who talks of the embarrassment of being espied in a place of privacy – “in a hansom for instance” (Woolf, 2013, p. 144).

For the Ambroses back at the start of their voyage, their cab provides only a short-term shelter, because, as the broad thoroughfare of the improved (1870) Embankment cedes to the cobbled roads of the unmodernised, poverty-stricken and overcrowded East End near the docks (Bullman & Hegarty & Hill, 2013, p. 8 et passim)-- emblematically and as in the well-known parable,⁵ the rich passengers’ cab is too wide to proceed through the narrow streets to a desired destination (their river transportation). This depiction of a perceived space is both socio-geographically accurate and recognizably literary (the crowded, impoverished streets and yellow fog make a recognizably Dickensian scene). Within it, a multitude of labourers are shown to be entirely preoccupied in their world of work, and oblivious to the Ambroses who, having (literally and metaphorically) no place among these people, have to squeeze through the masses on foot, in order to get to the river and the next part of their voyage.

At the other end of the long and watery part of their voyage, the Ambroses and their fellow boat passengers will be met at Santa Marina by another hired vehicle, this time a carriage of unspecified model, that shares with the London hansom cab two features of social space. The first is that it provides transportation for the relatively wealthy, and is driven by a relatively poor driver (the several appearances of carriages in the novel⁶ are associated only with wealthier and European passengers); the second being that, as with the cab, its status as a Foucauldian useful space is contingent upon the space it moves through, because when the road is very steep Ridley and Rachel (Helen’s niece, a main focalizer of the novel who functions in the story as its protagonist) get out of the carriage and walk beside it perhaps because the horses cannot otherwise manage their load, or perhaps for preference since the carriage is now moving at walking pace (Woolf, 2013, p. 96).

The novel’s old-fashioned horse-driven cabs and carriages with their poorly paid drivers and the “bobb[ing]” rowing boat of the poor Thames waterman (2013, p. 6) fail to extend and modify social spaces as enlarging the characters’ “sense[s] of space” in the way that Tuan theorized (Tuan, 1977, p. 53). Further, the steam-powered boat to which the Ambroses are ferried is only briefly presented in Tuan’s terms. This boat better fits Foucault’s identification of boats as “the great instrument of [colonization and] economic development”. The *Euphrosyne* is self-propelled and carries its own fuel, and is a “heterotopia par excellence”, “a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea” that “goes as far as the colonies in search of the treasures they conceal in their gardens” (Foucault, 1986, p. 27). In a strange lapse into an almost Bachelardian poetics, Foucault’s final comment on boats as “the greatest reserve of the imagination” implies that boats not only facilitate but also create the mental (conceived) spaces of expansion and appropriation that lie behind and impel colonizing and imperialist urges (the attractions of adventure and piracy); he states

⁴ Both motorised and horse-drawn vehicles were available at that time and are mentioned in this part of the novel; but this is a hansom (horse-drawn) cab, described as “trotting steadily along” (Woolf, 2013, p. 4).

⁵ “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Carroll & Stephen, 2018, p. 59).

⁶ Carriages appear or are mentioned on more than 10 separate occasions in *TVO*, most notably on pages 96, 106, 118, 139, 183, 215, 222, 384, 418.

that “in civilizations without boats dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates” (1986, p. 27). The steamer in the novel is not only identified with these aspects of its physical and mental spatiality, but its significance as a (re-)producer of social spaces spanning across oceans is presented as inextricably intertwined with the (re-)production of social spaces within the microcosm of the lived spaces in the boat, and both are presented with scathing satire as part of the novel’s critique of colonialist and conservative discourses, which will be further elaborated below.

Euphrosyne is a cargo boat that implies a line between England and South America, carrying “dry goods to the Amazons, and rubber home again”, taking passengers only “by special arrangement” (Woolf, 2013, p. 36). Like the cargo, the passengers make money for the shipping line, and the profitable use of passenger traffic is also illustrated by the mention of ships bringing English tourists to Santa Marina in the tourist season. The *Euphrosyne* is one of ten ships owned by Willoughby Vinrace, widower of Ridley Ambrose’s sister (2013, p. 14), a wealthy and successful businessman with political ambitions. The boat is clearly presented as a moving space that articulates and makes possible the economic and colonialist spaces of the British trading empire; the close identification of Vinrace and three of his passengers with this economic empire and conservative politics shows the inter-reliance of these elements and illustrate the social aspects of the spaces it produces and maintains. During the ocean voyage, when Richard Dalloway and his wife Clarissa are excited to spot English warships, Richard raises his hat while the prospective conservative politician Vinrace has his boat dip its flag in a token of respect; Clarissa exclaims “Aren’t you glad to be English!” They then talk of “valour and death and the magnificent qualities of British Admirals”; but the narrator has described the dreadnaughts as “two sinister grey vessels, low in the water, and bald as bone, one closely following the other with the look of eyeless beasts seeking their prey” (2013, p. 69). The dreadnaughts (had been a matter of discussion in real-life parliament from 1909 at the time when Woolf was writing her early drafts of *Melambrosia*⁷) are honoured because they protect what the Dalloways perceive as the national interests, which are, in fact, the capitalistic and colonialist interests of the very classes represented by Vinrace and the Dalloways – a conclusion that readers may be led to by the exaggerated and trivial nature of the Dalloways’ patriotic expressions, and by contrasting them with Helen’s and Pepper’s observations “it seemed wrong to keep sailors as to keep a zoo, and as for dying on a battle-field, surely it was time we ceased to praise courage – ‘or to write bad poetry about it,’ snarled Pepper” (2013, p. 70).

The creation of profitable space out of the natural space of the seas by capitalism and colonialism is only one of the aspects of spatiality associated with the Foucauldian heterotopia of ships in *The Voyage Out*. The name of the ship which takes the characters to Santa Marina is also significant, for it implies change and transformation, *Euphrosyne* being the name of the Greek Goddess of joy and Mirth, and also that of a saint who adopted cross-dressing to escape marriage (Yilmaz, 2016, p. 95). These allusions hint at carnivalesque aspects of pleasure (reflected in the characters’ joyful embrace of change at the beginning of their voyage), and at some sort of metaphorical masquerade related to sexual relations. As a disguised sex suggests, *Euphrosyne*’s name and thence the boat’s appearance also implies the presence of gendered uncertainty, ambiguity and instability (ibid). Enveloping these interpretations are Foucault’s elaborations on the concept of heterotopias which, as described above, are worlds within worlds that challenge what is outside. As a heterotopia, the novel’s *Euphrosyne* presents a world that includes the ‘world’ of gendered space. In this sense, Woolf’s depiction of the ship aligns with Foucault’s idea of a heterotopia, particularly since the narrative illustrates how the characters on board feel they are free of the prevailing social systems and regulations of London.

Once the ship sets sail, the city’s fixed position on land stands in stark contrast to the ship’s movement across the seemingly boundless expanse of the sea, reflecting Tuan’s idea that undifferentiated space symbolizes freedom and possibility for action (Woolf, 2013, p. 54): “It seemed dreadful that the town should blaze for ever in the same spot; dreadful at least to people going away to adventure upon the sea, and beholding it as a circumscribed mound, eternally burnt, eternally scarred” (2013, pp. 10-11). Passengers of

⁷ On 29 March Parliament debated a proposal to equip the British Navy with “an efficient fleet of 20 ‘Dreadnoughts’ and ‘Invincibles’ in April 1912” as part of a replacement and expansion policy. (Hansard archives)

the ship are filled with a sudden feeling of “exhilaration at their freedom”, (2013, p. 22) escaping from the oppression of stability and certainty: “They had left London sitting on its mud [. . .] the burden of Paris [. . .] They were free of roads, free of mankind” (2013, p. 22). Being free from roads can be interpreted as a temporary rejection of physical space and spatial practices in London, aligning with Tuan’s notion of undifferentiated space as a symbol of liberation from constraints, but it can also be viewed as a threatening freedom, indicating the dangers of unregulated travel to an unknown, possibly unmapped or uncivilized territory, since the conversation reported in the preceding paragraph had introduced “proper road building” as a sign of civilization (starting with the Greeks, being improved by the Romans, and finding the “right method” in England, before it deteriorated to a “wrong method” (2013, p. 20)). The narrative also strengthens this latter implication by describing the ship as “a virgin unknown of men” (2013, p. 27), an association which is compatible with Lefebvre’s idea of the human body as a kind of space (1991, p. 193). Such associations foreshadow Rachel’s vulnerability to sexual harassment, which is more explicitly shown when the married Richard Dalloway kisses her on board.

Even though the ship, at first, implies a feeling of escape from the limitations and regulations of London for the characters, they soon replicate on board the same social system they experienced in London, also shown spatially, as clearly seen in the scene where Rachel’s housekeeper, Mrs Chailey complains about being assigned a sub-standard cabin on the ship, and Rachel gets angry over the fact that a member of the “lower orders” (Woolf, 2013, p. 23) wants a room she has, in her “mistress’s” mind (2013, p. 24), no right to. Such class-based consciousness is also expressed by other characters such as Richard Dalloway. He emphasizes the necessity of a class structure to maintain the “vast machine” (2013, p. 67) of English society in which all members occupy different but fixed spaces, participating in designated sets of activities, all of which maintain the prevailing system.

Gender relations, expectations and discriminations on board are equally reminiscent of domestic spatialized intercourse. For at least a century, dining rooms (only possible in middle and higher class houses) had been generally considered as masculine spaces (Tally, 2013, p. 133, citing Domosh and Saeger), used and decorated accordingly. On the *Euphrosyne* the saloon functions as a dining room at mealtimes, and accordingly the women leave the room to the men after dinner; but the space to which they withdraw is less well adapted and uncomfortable. When Helen asks if there is somewhere for the women to sit they have only an inadequately transformed transitional or liminal space that is cold (Woolf, 2013, p. 11) and “more like a landing than a room” (2013, p. 11). As seen, gendered spatial behaviour is maintained even in the absence of the required architectural spaces for women to sit, leading to a literal marginalisation of women. These implications are further strengthened by the scene in which Helen calls Mrs Chailey to help her adjust her scholar husband’s cabin to his requirements – nay, demands - for comfort (2013, p. 25), which reflects Bachelard’s ideal of a comfortable, safe and harmonious home as built by “the housewife” (1994, p. 68). A hotel (later in the novel), though, being non-domestic, does not code its spaces in the same way, and here the rooms are used differently along the axes of class (servants in the kitchen or when a room has been emptied (Woolf, 2013, p. 107), age (older visitors prefer the drawing room, younger ones gravitate towards the Billiards room and “Lounge”) (2013, pp. 107-108), and level of privacy (bedrooms vs. reception rooms) (2013, p. 111). In conclusion, *The Voyage Out* vividly illustrates how gendered expectations shape the use and experience of space, with women repeatedly relegated to marginal and uncomfortable areas, reflecting broader societal structures that confine them to domestic roles, even within the seemingly neutral setting of a ship.

The ship’s so-called insulation and freedom from the restricting nationalist and imperialist norms of London life also turn out to be an illusion. Far from London, the warships still leave “a curious effect of discipline and sadness upon the waters” as they draw past, which serves as an example of Lefebvre’s insight that space is socially and ideologically inscribed (1991, p. 53) and Tuan’s statement that the designed environment serves both educational and disciplinary purposes (1977, p. 112). Built as mobile embodiments of national power, discipline, and ideals, these warships can leave emotionally significant marks on the expansive sea surrounding them.

Pseudo Homes: Temporary Rented Accommodation and Excursions

As mentioned in connection to boats, Foucault implies that the colonizing impulse was fed by dreams of adventure and piracy, and that some colonies function, in conception at least, as “heterotopias of compensation” for the shortcomings of the social space that is the home country. With respect to the touristic and seasonal colonization of Santa Marina, it is possible to see how leisure-based travel and its production of spaces may also be interpreted as compensatory, and indeed this is something that explains some of the underlying tensions in *The Voyage Out*. The English characters are blatantly patriotic, while evidently happy to leave England and take from their overseas residence some benefits that make the long journey worthwhile. In this respect, temporary accommodation (in a rented villa and a hotel), excursions on streets, up mountains or into a jungle in this fictional town of Santa Marina reflect how differing characters and their socioeconomic discourses respond to and, (re) produce social spaces and in a few cases, transgress the existing spatialized practices and conventions of the Edwardian bourgeoisie.

Once in Santa Marina, Rachel and Helen start exploring the ideals of change and freedom implied by their “voyage out” from convention-bound London life. They take a critical view of their lifestyle in London. Just a few days after their arrival, Helen begins to compare this new place of “flowering trees which grew wild quite near the house, and the amazing colours of sea and earth” to England which lacks such a variety of colours (Woolf, 2013, p. 102). In a fit of anger, she focuses on other British visitors who are engaged in rumours of London over “a General Election” that “had reached them even out here” (2013, p. 102). Questioning the importance that those visitors attach to “whether Asquith is in or Austen Chamberlain out”, she criticizes the snobbish attitudes of people in England, while expressing her admiration for the social system she has noticed in Santa Marina: “When have you ever encouraged a living artist? Or bought his best work? Why are you all so ugly and so servile? Here the servants are human beings. They talk to one as if they were equals. As far as I can tell there are no aristocrats” (2013, p. 102).

Rachel and Helen spend a great deal of time outside, “seeing life” (2013, p. 105), regularly strolling through the town after dark, which, Helen thinks, compensates for the time Rachel spent in “interminable walks round sheltered gardens, and the household gossip of her aunts” (2013, p. 134) in England; this new way of wondering in the streets presents a contrast to the circular or confined wandering of women in London. They observe local people leading their lives mostly outside. The life within appears to spill out into outside, and vice versa, as innocent flirtations are carried out between the male space of the street below, and the female spaces of the rooms upstairs, losing the hidden and abusive nature of the prostitution in Piccadilly Circus, and becoming joyously public.

Money affairs lose privacy, too, being carried out between indoor and outdoor spaces: “At the open windows merchants could be seen making up the day’s account” (2013, p. 105). The streets are portrayed as being “full of people” who “interchanged their views of the world as they walked, or gathered round the wine-tables at the street corner” (2013, p. 106). It seems that life in Santa Marina unfolds openly for all to see, contrary to the life in England that was previously and insistently described as spatially divided into private and public, upholding divisions between women, men, the poor, the rich, “normal” ordinary citizens and the marginalized. Comparing this new spatial experience with England, Helen resembles the people of London to “the kings and queens, knights and pawns of the chessboard” (2013, p. 106), able to move around only within their limited confines and in predetermined ways, living out their lives according to the roles assigned to them.

Another notable contrast between life in Santa Marina and life in distant London is that the interiors of homes in Santa Marina are often depicted as visible through uncurtained windows. By exposing domestic spaces to outside view in several scenes, the novel challenges the patriarchal notion of domesticity as primarily a private and feminized realm, in a way similar to a Bakhtinian carnivalization, a “leaping over all that is comfortably habitable, well-arranged and stable, all that is far from the threshold” (Yılmaz, 2016, p. 108).⁸ Without further explanation, Helen instructs that the dining-room windows in her villa “are left uncurtained” (Woolf, 2013, p. 98). As they become more accustomed to life in this new place, Rachel and

⁸ Yılmaz is describing Bakhtinian carnivalization with reference to Dostoevsky’s practice.

Helen appear at ease gazing into a hotel through its uncurtained windows. In these scenes, Rachel's and Helen's fascination with secretly observing people (primarily men) represents a reversal of the more typical scenario discussed by feminist critics, which highlights the issue of women being objectified by the male gaze (Rabinowitz, 2013, p. 195). Woolf's fictional works point to the construction of women as objects of men's gaze by often emphasizing that women have functioned as mirrors, reflecting men as larger and more significant than their actual selves; this is an insight voiced by Hewet (in *TVO*) who associates horses with women in seeing men "three times as big as" they are (2013, p. 233). In this first novel, however, the two women peering into the homes, rooms, and so-called private spaces of others associate the female gaze with the pursuit of knowledge and an authentic understanding of life.

These walks open Rachel's eyes to new possibilities of living, especially for women, as demonstrated in her identifying her room at the Ambroses' villa with "a fortress as well as a sanctuary" from which she can "defy the world" (2013, p. 133). In this room, she can choose to become and maintain whatever she wishes, removed from the world of "the interminable walks round sheltered gardens" and the "household gossip of her aunts" in England (2013, p. 134). She selects her own books to read and reflects on life. After reading Ibsen's *A Doll House* (also translated as *A Doll's House*) (1879), for example, she recognizes key questions such as: "What is the truth? What's the truth of it all?" (2013, p. 133). Here Rachel is depicted in a "space of two hours" in her room, a setting which echoes Tuan's idea of a close link between time and space and Lefebvre's ideas on social space as being alive, and being the centre of passion, action and lived – thus temporal – situations (1977, p. 52). Within this chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84)⁹, Rachel transcends conventional ideas about the world, engaging with Ibsen's art and developing a view of herself as the most vibrant and significant (heroic) aspect of her perspective on the world (through her window, a liminal space), far more important than the "men on the hill washing the trunks of olive trees" (Woolf, 2013, p. 133). This scene echoes Woolf's ideas about the significance of having a room of one's own (in *A Room of One's Own* originally published in 1929), which, through its silence and privacy, can serve as a liberating space where women can express themselves freely and without constraints.

In Santa Marina, the Ambroses' villa and the hotel function as the two focal points of action. A closer examination of the narrative shows that the hotel is where the conventions of "London" are rigorously maintained, as evidenced by guests meticulously reading the sole copy of *The Times*, discussing the state of the Empire, and engaging in parlour games, strictly adhering to the English system of mealtimes, and evaluating each other's behaviour according to English standards of etiquette. The novel's portrayal of a party in the hotel vividly illustrates how some guests are eager to maintain their English customs. During the event, they implore Rachel to keep playing the piano once the musicians take a break. When she begins to play, blending various musical styles, some guests complain, saying "that's not a dance", but she continues by replying, "'Invent the steps.' [. . .] 'This is the dance for people who don't know how to dance!'" (Woolf, 2013, p. 181). According to Tuan, dance accompanied with music can repeal the sense of historical time and oriented space, and free people: "from the demands of purposeful goal-directed life" (1977, p. 129). While some guests embrace the rhythm and let go of certain English conventions, the presence of others who critique Rachel's distinctive blend of music or Helen's enjoyment of dancing, finding it inappropriate for a woman of her age (Woolf, 2013, p. 174), highlights the rigidity and inflexibility of London's middle-class society.

Feeling repressed by such restrictive conventions, Rachel finds that "Physical movement was the only refuge, in and out of rooms, in and out of people's minds" (2013, p. 291). This connection between rooms and human minds and bodies is established multiple times throughout the novel, and the hotel, with its many differently socially allocated spaces, is a rich situation for such associations and interactions: When Rachel and Helen gaze into the hotel, for instance, they perceive that "each window revealed a different section of the life of the hotel" (2013, p. 107), depending on the people who occupied it. Then, in the earlier phases of Rachel's illness, her room is presented in terms that evoke her otherwise unmentioned appearance, standing

⁹ Bakhtin defines chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" in which "[t]ime, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (1981, p. 84).

metaphorically for her body, being “painfully white, and curved slightly, instead of being straight and flat” (2013, p. 369). This rhetorical interchangeability of body and room reflects Lefebvre’s notion of the body as a space in itself, highlighting the interdependence and interaction between the human body, capable of establishing its own spatial boundaries and rules for living, and the cultural space of society, which dictates the norms that govern how the body should exist (1976, p. 170). From these and other passages the novel presents the hotel and rented accommodation as complex spaces (heterotopias) that serve as cultural living spaces for the English travellers, with rooms that house their guests’ rituals and conventions, along with their psychological interiority and personal belongings.

Two group trips, one to the top of Monte Rosa and the other to the natives’ village in Santa Marina are also important to spatially analyse. They function as important tools that link the narratives of characters’ interiorities with the novel’s on-going representation and critique of colonialism and imperialism. As suggested by Peach, they echo the Ambroses’ journey from London’s West to East End, illustrating how the industrial East supports the affluent West. Similarly, excursions in Santa Marina unveil the economic ties between the Empire’s core and its distant colonies, primarily serving the Empire’s interests (2000, p. 49). Such scenes of walking or travelling between places are thus used in this novel as a major trope that highlights the interconnectedness of various spaces and challenges the idealization of space as single, absolute, enduring, self-sustaining, and homogeneous.

The first of those excursions, the one to the top of Monte Rosa, causes feelings of confusion and fear in the tourists (Woolf, 2013, p. 143). After such exposure to a vast landscape, the characters turn the topic and their minds to England with its “four-wheeled cabs” and aeroplanes (2013, pp. 144-145), indicating their need to feel secure within familiar, humanly-formed and controlled, small spaces, in the face of this unfamiliar expanse (reactions which conform with Tuan’s ideas on home and homeland (Tuan, 1977, p. 154)). They start “to name the places beneath them and to hang upon them stores of information about navies and armies, political parties, natives and mineral products” (Woolf, 2013, p. 148). There are in this part of the novel, however, a few moments in which the foreign setting somehow allows the suspension of the prevailing order of constructed meanings and conventions. In these moments characters experience something like Foucault’s heterotopias and respond with less constrained behaviour. On one occasion, for example, “it was very hot, and the heat, the food, the immense space, and perhaps some less well-defined cause produced a comfortable drowsiness and a sense of happy relaxation in them. They did not say much, but felt no constraint in being silent” (Woolf, 2013, p. 149).

Rachel also places her trust in a man and becomes free enough from London’s hold to recognize and express her love for him only when she journeys up the Amazon River “into the heart of the night” (2013, p. 300) and goes deep into the jungle (2013, p. 306). As Montgomery suggests, the journey into the wilderness acts as a sublime escape from the symbolic order, a space liberated from the control of the oppressive systems of the external world (2000, p. 49). However, this shedding of the physical and mental spaces of England does not seem to last long, for while looking at the river Rachel murmurs her version of Kurtz’s - of *Heart of Darkness* (first published in 1899) - famous “The horror! The horror!” (Conrad, 1999, p. 97), (Montgomery, 2000, p. 49): “‘Terrible—terrible,’ she murmured after another pause, but in saying this she was thinking as much of the persistent churning of the water as of her own feeling. On and on it went in the distance, the senseless and cruel churning of the water” (Woolf, 2013, p. 307). The narrator’s comment here implies fear of something enduring and inescapable. Rachel seems to be affected by this immense river into a sense of insignificance in relation to time, as well as space; immediately after her utterance, Hewet reminds her of the fact that they should return. The need to leave this seemingly limitless lived space and to go back to the other British visitors foreshadows Hewet’s expected trajectory of their near future lives: the fact that love will lead inevitably to the ocean and a voyage back to the land of the overwhelming conventions they have momentarily almost escaped; once back, London will once again provide the physical and social background to their lives.

Representations of the spaces of native women during these trips in Santa Marina also need to be considered with respect to the fixity, stability and restrictedness implied in their relation to space. In this novel, the native women serve as tools rather than subjects of Woolf’s feminist protest, notwithstanding their contribution to Rachel’s feminist awakening, as the narrative renders them silent and envisions no

future for them beyond their current colonial situation. They make their first appearance in the narrative as “squatting on the ground in triangular shapes, moving their hands, either plaiting straw or kneading something in bowls” (Woolf, 2013, p. 320). Their hands stop for a moment and they start gazing, then stop when they resume their work: “If they moved, it was to fetch something from the hut, or to catch a straying child, or to cross the space with a jar balanced on their heads; if they spoke, it was to cry some harsh unintelligible cry” (2013, p. 321). Their bodies reduced to mere shapes, these women are described as occupying space passively, taking a position that is stereotypically non-European (squatting) but that is also fixed, restricted, somewhat stable, and not characterized by much mobility or dynamicity; if they move, it is just to do some domestic chores that raise characteristically non-European images (huts, jars on heads, unintelligible cries). Similar to the indigenous people encountered in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, even “if they spoke, it was to cry some harsh unintelligible cry” (2013, p. 321). The sight of these women acts upon Rachel and Hewet in a way that parallels to the earlier impact on Rachel of the sight of the river’s immense and churning waters; they are overwhelmed by a sudden wave of melancholy, pondering that they—perhaps all of humanity—are neither significant nor unique, and never will be (2013, p. 321). As Nadeau and Amherst claim, the narrator’s focus on the village women and their space characterized by female labour together with Rachel’s claim that “it would go on for ever and ever [. . .] those women sitting under trees,” creates a close identification between Rachel and the native women (2014, p. 20). Maternity and domesticity serve as the main responsibilities of the women in the village, and they will also be Rachel’s anticipated duties in her future role as a wife in London. She comes to understand that women are crucial components of the imperial machine (as noted by Richard Dalloway on the ship), with both those on the margins and those in the capital being exploited as reproducers of empire and imperial labour. They are confined to limited roles and assigned specific duties primarily within the home, all aimed at sustaining the dominant social system.

Conclusion

The Voyage Out renders its particular criticism of women’s restricted and suppressed conditions, discriminating and dehumanizing class consciousness, and the degrading English gaze upon people of other nationalities, through its portrayal of the spatialization of English society, especially as experienced by female characters. Firmly establishing the interconnections between class, gender and place through the trip that Helen and Ridley take in London at the outset of the novel, the city becomes a space in the mind against which all other experienced places and spaces are contrasted. To some extent the novel deflates its own critical portrayal of life in London or in London society by implying the changeability, heterogeneity and dynamicity of lived, physical space through a voyage (mobility between spaces) in which particularly an ignorant and uneducated young woman, Rachel, is awakened to different configurations of places and ways of living. This protagonist also recognizes how these domineering systems are interrelated and feed each other, in order to maintain the larger social system and its classist, patriarchal and imperialistic ideologies, for which the mental space of London is made, by the novel, to stand as a true heart of darkness for Rachel. The novel also offers a series of interconnected scenes that act like Foucauldian heterotopias, in offering characters cultural and discursive spaces that challenge the stability of familiar spatial practices. In voyaging out, for the narrating eye (but not for most characters) London is transcended and one character, Rachel, is transformed, pointing to the false rigidity of universalizing spatial constructs. The transformed character dies, however, after recognizing that divisive spatiality, like mortality, is universal and inescapable.

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