



CHAPTER

One The Room in the Book: Psychoanalysis and the Scene of Reading

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Abstract

In an essay entitled ‘Criticism and Interiority’, Georges Poulet presents his phenomenological view of a book’s effect with a scene of reading as an empty room holds a book within a book. This literary criticism presented by Poulet is not too close nor too distant from its object. Another question is raised in that essay regarding how the book, as an object, is transformed into an equivalent subjectivity or into what he referred to as ‘interiority’. The book’s openness is what encourages others to think about whether it exists outside itself, or if one would exist in it. This chapter highlights what is meant by the ‘scene of reading’ — a scene where in imagining an open book in an empty room allows several equivalences like ‘inside me’ or ‘inside the book’.

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GEORGES Poulet, in an essay called ‘Criticism and Interiority’ (1970), opens his phenomenological account of the effect books have on us with a scene of reading—a book within a book, in an empty room: At the beginning of Mallarmé’s unfinished story *Igitur* there is the description of an empty room, in the middle of which, on a table, there is an open book.¹ Poulet’s essay explores the idea of a literary criticism that is neither too close nor too distant from its object—neither absorbed completely into the text, to possess and inhabit it entirely; nor, alternatively, abstracting from it, to think its thoughts at a distance that precludes real engagement. But Poulet also poses another question. If a book is an object, how is it transformed into an equivalent subjectivity—into a place-holder for what he calls ‘interiority’? Poulet’s book awaits deliverance by human intervention, like a caged animal being mistreated as a mere object. The book’s openness (‘on a table, there is an open book’) is what moves us and constitutes its invitation: ‘It asks nothing better than to exist outside itself, or to let you exist in it. In short, the extraordinary fact in the case of a book is the falling away of the barriers between you and it. You are inside it, it is inside you; there is no longer either outside or inside.’² Let me be, the book seems to say, and you too can be (in) me. For Poulet, then, the book exists, not on paper, not in its materiality nor in any physically locatable space (on a table, for instance), but in what he calls ‘my innermost self. When the barriers come down, books are us. Which isn’t to say that we are books, although we may sometimes think so.

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I begin with Poulet because he eloquently evokes the recurrent figure that I’m going to refer to as ‘the scene of reading’—a scene in which imagining an open book in an empty room gives rise to a series of equivalences, such as ‘inside the book’ and ‘inside me’. Needless to say, we come to this imaginary scene of reading with an open book in front of us, the book that contains Poulet’s essay; some other reader has always been there beforehand—Poulet, Mallarmé, the midnight reader in Mallarmé’s *Igitur*.³ But it’s not

this readerly *mise-en-abyme* that intrigues me, nor our need to imagine ourselves as alone in the company of a book (although I think we often do). Rather, I want to explore the question of how things get, so to speak, from the outside to the inside— simultaneously establishing the boundary between them and seeming to abolish it. What does it mean to call this ‘interiority’? Where is this place that has neither outside nor inside, and by what process does it come into being? Poulet makes us wonder how an ‘object’ (an unread book, an unknown person) can turn into an equivalent subjectivity, imaginatively alive and communicated with, registered as different yet in some way available to us for the peculiar use we call ‘reading’ (or knowing, or loving). What might psychoanalysis have to say about this strange phenomenon? In contemporary psychoanalytic accounts of literature, particularly those with a Kleinian emphasis (I’m

p. 19 thinking, for instance, of the recent dialogue about ‘imagining characters’ between the ↵ novelist, A. S. Byatt, and the psychoanalyst, Ignes Sodre), the phrase ‘internal world’ is often used surprisingly unselfconsciously, given the caution with which even minimally sophisticated psychoanalytic readers use a term like ‘self’ (with or without— usually with— scare quotes).⁴ Poulet’s beginning fiction, his open book, is an invitation to speculate not only about the kind of interiority we associate with reading, but also about how books ‘think’ us— about the nature of their peculiar linguistic intervention and their relation to what Alix Strachey, in a paper on the psychoanalytic use of the word ‘internal’, calls ‘the idea of insideness’ or ‘inside things’.⁵

In the discussion that followed Poulet’s paper, the psychoanalytic critic Norman Holland (one of a distinguished group of interlocutors) struck a dissenting note by introducing ‘into all this Gallic logic and lucidity something dark and murky from psychoanalysis’.⁶ This ‘something dark and murky’ that comes from psychoanalysis turns out to be a murkiness that still troubles contemporary discussions of psychoanalysis today, as it troubled Freud and the early Freudians— hypnosis. Here is Holland: ‘in hypnosis, the subject— oh, excuse me, I’d better not use that word— the hypnotisand feels the personality of the hypnotist as though it is a part of himself; and when the hypnotist says: “Your hand feels cold”: your hand does feel cold, which I think is rather like the way we respond to a book’. (Note Holland’s disavowal of the ‘subject’— dead-already?— and how the hypnotisand has acquired a body instead.)⁷ Why isn’t reading like being hypnotized? Holland goes on to question whether the term ‘identification’ (used by Poulet) would really be ‘the psychoanalyst’s term for our relationship with the book’. He suggests, instead, that the psychoanalyst would speak of ‘incorporation’— ‘a much more primitive kind of mechanism; in fact related

p. 20 basically, ultimately, ↵ to eating, as, for example, when we speak of a man as a voracious reader’.⁸ Among other possible figures for reading, Holland cites the relation between two lovers, invoking the opening chapter of *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), where Freud writes of the melting away of boundaries between ego and object at the height of being in love.⁹ In response, Poulet objects that ‘in psychoanalysis you can find some kind of incorporation or identification in more than one example and in particular in the identification of the patient with the doctor. This is not what concerns him, he says, since it occurs on an unconscious level. For him, reading takes place ‘at the fully conscious level’ even if it has to be seen as ‘a kind of confused consciousness, a sort of cloudy consciousness’. Confused and cloudy, but *not* dark and murky. Poulet needs a *cogito*— what Freud calls ‘the activity of thought’— for his theory of reading.¹⁰ Holland responds with a topographical model that puts ‘your *cogito* [i.e. consciousness] at the top’ and ‘a very primitive level at the bottom’. But for Poulet, who has the last word, consciousness is ‘at the bottom end also’.¹¹

p. 21 This twenty-five-year-old exchange on the ‘subject’ of psychoanalysis coincides with two seemingly unconnected features often associated with representations of reading. On one hand, we have the room and the book, and the invitation (not always innocent) to enter an imaginary interior.¹² This can be a quite quotidian, domestic space, or a more venerable one (a library, for instance)— a room with or without a view, overlooking the everyday world of realist fiction or opening on to the world of fantasy.¹³ But as well as the room and the book, we often find a proliferation of Holland’s incorporator^ language: typically, metaphors of eating, savouring, or devouring. As a way to explore this piquant relation between rooms, books, and eating, I want to take a detour back from the structuralist controversy of the 1970s to the time when psychoanalysis and literary production were near neighbours in England— the time, during the 1920s, when James Strachey’s and Joan Riviere’s translations of Freud began to emerge from the basement of the Woolfs’ Hogarth Press (although Virginia Woolf herself seems not to have read Freud seriously until later).¹⁴

p. 22 This ↵ was also the time when shifts in Freud’s own thinking replaced Holland’s topography of levels’ with an emphasis on structure, the so-called ‘second topography’.¹⁵ And partly as a consequence of Freud’s reorientation of psychoanalytic technique towards the transference, attempts to disentangle the effects of psychoanalysis from those of hypnosis took on renewed urgency.¹⁶ Strachey’s lucid formulation of the

problem in his foundational essay of 1934, 'The Nature of the Therapeutic Action of PsychoAnalysis', asks how analytic understanding gets into the analysand, and why psychoanalysis (unlike hypnosis) effects lasting change: questions involving not only transference, but language.¹⁷ For Strachey, the immediacy of the transference interpretation (the so-called 'mutative interpretation') provided the lever for shifting the always fluctuating, permeable, and inconstant boundaries between the ego and the external world.¹⁸ The mobile and overlapping concepts of incorporation, introjection, and projection—concepts to be found in Freud's writing, but developed both from and in the writings of Sandor Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, and Melanie Klein—are indispensable to Strachey's account of the way in which psychoanalytic understanding redraws this movable boundary.¹⁹ It's not surprising that representations of readerly interiority should draw on the same dialectic of introjection and projection which was for Freud himself the genesis of the crucial distinction between subject (or ego) and object (or outside world); while for Kleinians the interchange provides the very basis for the distinction between inside and outside (for Winnicottians, one might add, the in-between space itself—the potential space—becomes the site of imaginative and cultural activity).²⁰ The room is the imaginary 'projective' space that allows us to think there is room for a book inside us.

This chapter in the history of psychoanalytic thought is helpful for understanding both Poulet's phenomenology of reading and Holland's objection to it. If indeed books change us (and many readers have thought so), we could conceptualize reading—much as Freud and Strachey conceptualize the therapeutic effects of psychoanalysis—as a matter of widening the ego's field of perception. 'It is a work of culture,' Freud declared roundly in 1932.²¹ Both Strachey and Woolf say much the same thing about literacy: where illiteracy was, there civilization shall be.²² Freud refers to his student passion for owning and collecting books ('I had become a *book-worm*').²³ But for all his habitual use of literature to further his thinking, he has remarkably little to say about reading itself, as opposed to the collector's passion or the distinction between thing-presentation and word-presentation which he derived from nineteenth-century philology.²⁴ An exception is a youthful letter written to Eduard Silberstein in 1875, when Freud was only 17:

I recently read a chapter of Don Quixote and experienced an idyllic moment. That was at six o'clock and I was sitting alone in my room before a nourishing plateful which I devoured voraciously while reading the magnificent scene in which the noble Doctor Pedro Rescio de Tirteafiera, which must mean something dreadful in Spanish, has the food taken away from under poor Sancho's nose.²⁵

Tantalizing as it is, however, this 'idyllic moment' does not prove to be a prelude to any sustained account of Freud's voracious reading habits. Instead, I want to explore the testimony of other writers, while trying to understand it in ways made possible by Freud's breakfast. In particular, I will be asking what Strachey and Woolf have to say about the scene of reading—the room, the book, and the meal. I will start with Strachey's miniature psychoanalytic squib, 'Some Unconscious Factors in Reading' (published in 1930), and then move back in time to Woolf's posthumously published essay, 'Reading' (probably written in 1919). For Strachey, the book-as-object is obsessively recovered, hung on to, recycled, trashed. For Woolf, by contrast, reading is at once the delirious feast that one of her essays calls, hyperbolically, 'this orgy of reading, and potentially melancholic.'²⁶ Read together, Strachey's and Woolf's essays suggest how a phantasized identification with books may be a way to preserve or destroy what we love by consuming it. In this sense, both essays—consciously or not—are 'readings' of Freud's account of object-loss in 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917). They invite us to think about our own relation to lost objects when we read, and even about the way our consumption of literature figures in ostensibly cultural accounts of reading.

The Psychopathology of Everyday Reading

if we turn from communities as a whole to the individual members of them, we may find that writing and reading perform functions of some appreciable importance in the economics of the mind of modern man ... (James Strachey)²⁷

As an adolescent, I used often to annoy my parents by bringing a book to meals. Sometimes I got away with it. But mostly they objected that if I read while I ate, I might not know what I was eating. I could swallow anything, they pointed out. In retrospect, it seems odd that neither parent thought of making the opposite argument—that if I ate while I read, I might not know what I was reading; after all, I could have been swallowing anything ... It was only much later, when I came across Strachey's 'Some Unconscious Factors in

Reading', that it occurred to me to think of reading as connected with eating in other, less palatable ways. Derrida, you may recall, alludes to Strachey's paper in the closing paragraphs of 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' (the essay my title riffs on). Derrida's exploration of the role of repetition, trace, and deferral in Freud's structural model of the mind as a pictographic script uses his 1925 'Note on the Mystic Writing-Pad' to uncover the systematic devaluation of writing in a logocentric philosophical tradition.²⁸ But my concern isn't with the metaphysics of presence and absence, let alone with deconstructive reading as such (except to note that as soon as Poulet's *cogito* enters the argument, *differance* comes in to challenge his phenomenological approach; while Holland's top-to-bottom model gets redefined by the magic writing-pad—in Derrida's words—as 'a depth without a bottom').²⁹ Rather, I'm interested in the end of Derrida's essay, which sketches several directions his inquiry might take, and among them, what he calls 'a new psychoanalytic graphology'.³⁰ Derrida suggests that Melanie Klein 'opens the way' for such a theory of writing with her account of the cathexis of signs in 'The Role of the School in the Libidinal Development of the Child' (1923). This is the context for his parenthetical allusion to Strachey's 'Some Unconscious Factors in Reading'.

Strachey's essay resurfaces in Derrida's closing lines at the point when he asks rhetorically how Artaudian excrement can be put in relation to Ezekiel's 'son of man who fill his entrails with the scroll of the law which has become as sweet as honey in his mouth?'³¹ Although Derrida doesn't say so, Strachey cites this quotation from Ezekiel in the last footnote of his own paper—making it a bit of unacknowledged recycling on Derrida's part (a case of the subtext parasitically invading the host text). Like Holland after him, Strachey had noted that the discourse of reading is shot through with metaphors of oral consumption. We speak (excessively) of voracious readers, of devouring books, of browsing in a library, and so on. But Strachey, surprisingly, turns out to have as much to say about the specific, materially located scene of reading as about its unconscious aspects. No sooner does the subject of reading (the subject in, or of, a book) enter the picture than the scene gets (literally) set. The idea of reading a book quickly ushers in the idea of being in a room—and sometimes eating at the same time. This movement is Strachey's version of the structure of equivalences found also in Poulet's scene of reading, between what's inside the book and what's inside the reader. The difference is Strachey's cultural framing of the scene—and (I want to insist) his humour. It's hard, in fact, not to read his paper as something of a psychoanalytic *jeu d'esprit*, aimed at an audience of over-earnest British colleagues. 'Some Unconscious Factors in Reading' is a miniature psychopathology of everyday reading, with its dead-pan catalogue of modern reading practices (reading in bed, in the bathroom, and even in London's public lavatories).³² Strachey also reminds us insistently that these private and public spaces have as their cultural boundary that ubiquitous representative of the modern public sphere, the gutter press. He even manages to include in his seriocomic account the clowns indispensable prop, a custard pie.

Melanie Klein's 1931 essay, *A Contribution to the Theory of Intellectual Inhibition*, cites Strachey approvingly as having shown that 'reading has the unconscious significance of taking knowledge out of the mother's body'.³³ Her own position is characteristically unnuanced; there's taking out, and then there's taking in. Klein adds that it's essential for a satisfactory reading experience that 'the mother's body should be felt to be well and unharmed'. The inside of the child's body, too, must be felt as safe and non-persecutory if intellectual investigation is to take place—and, more importantly, if the child is to become acquainted with its own intrapsychic processes. Good mothering and good feeding set the scene for satisfying experiences of thinking, feeling, and introspection (remember Sendak's Mickey in *In the Night Kitchen*: 'I'm in the milk and the milk's in me'). Klein's model for the child's understanding of the relation between inner and outer worlds involves this constant two-way movement of introjection and what she here calls 'extrajection'—or (to use the more familiar term) projection, with its suggestion of purposive casting out, or the depositing of our own ideas or feelings into someone else, whence they may return to persecute us. Klein pairs the ability to absorb knowledge with the ability 'to give it out again, i.e. return it, formulate it, and express it'; that is, to put it into words and make it available for thought.³⁴ For her, the degree of freedom from anxiety accompanying this two-way process ultimately determines the capacity to order one's mind and to inhabit it peacefully. At the opposite extreme from intellectual inhibition—the refusal to take in mental nourishment at all, or mental anorexia—Klein places indiscriminate appetite (A craving to take in everything that offers itself, together with an inability to distinguish between what is valuable and what is worthless').³⁵ Intellectual binging, she implies, comes from the feeling of emptiness. An over-stocked mind is amassing secret reserves against phantasized attacks or the fear of inner impoverishment. So much for indiscriminate readers.

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In Klein's book, incorporation—the subjective phantasy of actual bodily intake—provides the ground for the metaphor of introjection. Strachey's essay, however, posits a more material (not to say materialist) relation between the cultural consumption of books and food. As one might expect given his intellectual milieu, Strachey seems more interested in reading than eating, and he regards learning to read as much more arduous than learning to talk (which presumably came naturally to members of the Strachey family).³⁶ But although Strachey opposes talk to reading, the distinction quickly breaks down. Talking is for him 'a process of expulsion, a method of extruding something inside oneself (one's thoughts) into the outer world'. Talk gets one's thoughts out. Reading, by contrast, 'is actually a method of taking someone else's thoughts inside oneself. It is a way of eating another person's words' (Strachey, 326). Both talk and reading turn out to partake of the primitive, cannibalistic processes of incorporation. At times, Strachey comes close to making his colleagues eat their own words; for instance, when he footnotes Ernest Jones on 'the phallic significance of coprophagy' (Strachey, 329 n.) in a parody of collegial acknowledgement.³⁷ But his remarks on obsessional reading habits are close to home. Who hasn't recently defaced a book—succumbing to the temptation to mark a difficult or significant page, line by line, and paragraph by paragraph? Who hasn't mutilated a paperback by turning down the corner of a page, or read and re-read a particularly obscure passage (by Derrida, for instance—or even Freud)? Missed meanings haunt us. And surely everyone who has learned to read once went through the arduous transition from forming words in one's mouth to silent reading—the crucial difference, according to Strachey, between fast and slow readers, or what he calls *sotto voce* readers, 'persons who, though not reading aloud, always say each word to themselves as they go along, remaining for ever hindered by 'abortive movements of the tongue and lips' (Strachey, 324). We could call these *sotto voce* readers poetry-readers (or readers of prose that demands a hearing, if only by an inner ear). After all, the 'hindrance' of an auditory imagination is an essential ingredient in poetic pleasure and even understanding. Every silent reader contains a *sotto voce* reader, undoing the distinction between talk (putting out) and reading (taking in).

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For Strachey, reading is a fragile form of sublimation, always liable to the hindrance of instinctual trends. Passing over scopophilia and anal eroticism, he moves quickly to orality. 'There is', he writes, 'a peculiar appearance of intense and continuous absorption in a person immersed in a book' (Strachey, 325). The absorbed reader is as irritated at being disturbed as an infant enjoying a meal. Readers may suck their fingers, or their pipes. But it's not just a matter of pre-ambivalent sucking (when 'everything seems to go smoothly and easily'), since reading has a tendency to pass into the later, ambivalent stage of orality, biting: 'There are the other, more solid books—the ones that we have to get our teeth into and chew up before we can digest them' (Strachey, 326). The 'blissful absorption' of the novel reader is only one side of the story. Reading has its aggressive and destructive aspects, like talk. When sublimation is unstable, writes Strachey, 'Each word is then felt as an enemy that is being bitten up ... an enemy that may in its turn become threatening and dangerous to the reader.' The enemy is always lurking somewhere ... between the lines', ambushing the reader with unsuspected meanings, causing him 'to turn back, to read and re-read, to read each word aloud, to fix each word with a tick, and yet never to be reassured' (Strachey, 327). Close readers, take note. But, Strachey reminds us, the same reader may also be engaged in an act of loving, incorporatory consumption—'simultaneously loving the words, rolling them round in his mouth and eventually making them a part of himself' The scroll of the law can taste as sweet as honey; biting and loving may both be ways to repossess that elusive object, meaning.

Suppose, for a moment, that oral incorporation really is the unconscious aim of reading—the way we imagine putting the world inside us, disposing of its dangers by making its meanings ours, cannibalistically consuming it, recycling it, savouring its borrowed sweetness as our own. What does this make the literary object—the books, words, and printed pages that Poulet imagines as so many caged animals awaiting release? Or, as Strachey asks, what do they symbolize? He offers two answers—both reductive, and neither apparently of much interest to him (Strachey, 327 and n.). For Freud, books and paper are female symbols (hence the phallic pen that writes on them in the familiar, reductive binarism of gendered accounts of writing). For Ernest Jones, books are the symbol of faeces, an ingenious metonymy whereby the page stands in for the print ('*by association with paper and the idea of pressing [smearing, imprinting]').³⁸ Rather than pursuing this line of argument, Strachey segues to the defecatory habits of the British reading classes, with their morning newspapers and specialized bathroom book collections; not to mention one obsessional patient—as we learn from Strachey's letters, a character called Enery—who spends much of his time in public and private lavatories, where he writes, reads (deriving his knowledge of current affairs from small squares of newspaper), and even eats; his greatest satisfaction, he confessed to Strachey, was to eat something (the specific food was a custard tart) at the very moment of defaecating' (Strachey, 328).³⁹

p. 32 Strachey, straightfaced, moves from this symbolic act of coprophagy to a generalized coprophagic theory of reading: 'The author excretes his thoughts and embodies them in the printed book: the reader takes them, and, after chewing them over, incorporates them into himself' (Strachey, 329). Don't give me that shit. Strachey is showing us how smoothly the symbolic equivalences go down if we are only willing to swallow them. But what, one wonders, is the real enemy lurking between his lines?

If literacy is the mark of modern civilization, as Strachey argues, then 'the economics of the mind of modern man is a coprophagic economy of production and consumption, waste and recycling. Strachey invokes 'the orgies of newspaper reading which have accompanied the spread of literacy to the lower classes of the community. Inconceivably vast masses of ink-stained papers are ejected every day into the streets; there they are seized and devoured with passionate avidity, and a few moments later destroyed ...' (Strachey, 329). The lives and breakfasts of the reading classes are lined with the evacuations of the gutter press, parodied by the voracious reading habits of the lower classes: 'no one can find enough abuse for the rags of this gutter Press, but no one feels he has breakfasted unless one of them is lying beside his coffee and his toast' (Strachey, 329). Class analysis of modern print culture could do worse than begin here, with a nations ceremonial reading of the daily newspapers—an imaginary community of taste, built on the consumption of newsprint. Strachey pauses briefly to cite Karl Abraham as his authority for considering coprophagy 'a process of compensation for the loss of a loved object' (Strachey, 329), then turns reading into the type of ambivalent Oedipal rivalry (including 'feminine wishes directed towards the father': i.e. the wish to bear his faeces/children). A lurid primal-horde scene of reading culminates in the spectacle of 'the reader, the son, hungry, voracious, destructive and defiling', forcing his way into his mother 'to find out what is inside her, to tear his father's traces out of her, to devour them, to make them his own, and to be fertilized by them himself (Strachey, 331). In case we should think this excited prose Strachey's own—after all, it's the kind of thing that has given psychoanalysis a bad name— Strachey goes on to give us the ambiguous footnote recycled by Derrida at the end of 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', in which he cites 'the schizophrenic prophet Ezekiel': 'And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it, and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them' (Strachey, 331 n.).⁴⁰ Can one doubt that in this moment of scriptural self-authorization, Strachey (a schizophrenic psychoanalytic prophet) is letting loose the belly-laughter of his own ambivalence about psychoanalysis?

On some level, the subject of Strachey's short history of reading is the gullible psychoanalytic reader. Confronted by the writings of Freud, Abraham, and Jones, and perhaps by the assembled members of the British Psychoanalytic Institute, Strachey unleashes the desublimatory effects of laughter. Psychoanalytic words are consumed, recycled, trashed; lovingly quoted, and sent outrageously over the top. The element of send-up depends on a too concrete, too literal reading of the 'roll' (the scroll) of psychoanalysis. Strachey reminds us that every attempt to engage with another discourse—including psychoanalytic discourse— carries with it the ambivalent wish to appropriate, to make it one's own, but also to trash or destroy it; or at least to give it a bit of a chewing over. But in the last resort, the interest of Strachey's paper lies less in what it has to say about the unconscious factors in reading, or about Strachey's own relation to psychoanalysis, than in locating the scene of reading in the historically specific private and public spaces of his time, the spaces of modernity where the modern citizen comes into being. These are both the spaces of the middle-class household (bedroom, bathroom, and breakfast-room) and the urban spaces of modern publicsphere literacy (the gutter press that no breakfast table can be without)—not to mention the public lavatories of a relatively recently sanitized cityscape, inhabited by the guilty, custard-pie-consuming Ianeur. We haven't lacked recently for histories of reading, or of the rise of literacy and the growth of print culture (or class- and gender-specific accounts of reading).⁴¹ But Strachey reminds us that the rise of privacy in bourgeois life, with its separation of bodily, social, and mental functions, may have more to do than we realize with the form taken by Poulet's idealized scene of reading.⁴² His paper invites us to consider, not only the instinctual aspects of reading (and the biting function of humour), but the relation between privacy and the management of a self, conceived as a bodily entity occupying a discrete space in a particular, historical, class-bound environment—a domestic and social setting where we eat together but for the most part read (and perform our bodily functions) alone; or, for that matter, where we may meet with an analyst in a private room in order to obtain access to our caged interiority through the intervention of language.

As a coda to Strachey's account of the psychic economy of reading, I'd like to contrast a different image of mass readership in the age of mechanical reproduction—what Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, calls 'this extraordinary mass ceremony: the almost precisely simultaneous consumption ("imagining") of

the newspaper-as-fiction'. Anderson goes on to link newspaper reading with the construction of fictional communities and ultimately with national identities:

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The significance of this mass ceremony—Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers—is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion ... What more vivid figure for the secular, historically-clocked, imagined community can be envisioned? At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life. ... fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating the remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations.⁴³

This seepage of fiction into everyday life is a reminder that the private lair of the skull (like the room in the book) opens on to the streets; print capitalism turns an individual, psychic economy of reading into a way of relating to others— anonymously, as befits the subject of modernity. But if the room is imaginary, so too is the community. Notice how Anderson's scene of reading makes one reader indistinguishable from the next. Reading enters the public sphere at the cost of making readers, as well as newspapers, a visible fiction— exact copies of one another, a collectivity of reading heads replicating the same activity. The very move to figure the social and material dimensions of cultural consumption proves to be the point at which fiction enters most unmistakably and insidiously to shape our relations to ourselves, to others, and to reading.

A Room of Their Own

At this very late hour of the world's history, books are to be found in almost every room of the house—in the nursery, in the drawing room, in the dining-room, in the kitchen. But in some houses they have become such a company that they have to be accommodated with a room of their own—a reading room, a library, a study. (Virginia Woolf, 'How Should One Read a Book?')⁴⁴

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In March 1925, Strachey wrote: 'I've also once more during the weekend read Abraham's [A Short Study of the Development of the Libido]', which as usual is extraordinarily illuminating, especially now that I see rather more deeply into Eury's story. But why, oh why, is Eury not a melancholic?'⁴⁵ Karl Abraham's study of obsession and melancholia (translated by Alix Strachey in 1927) provides the theoretical model for Strachey's interest in the economics of reincorporation. Abraham builds on Freud's thesis in 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917) that the melancholic, 'after having lost his love-object, regains it once more by a process of introjection'.⁴⁶ Abraham had associated coprophagy with this melancholic phantasy of taking back an expelled love-object into the body by means of oral introjection ('The unconscious', he writes, 'regards the loss of an object as an anal process, and its introjection as an oral one').⁴⁷ But, alas, Eury is not a melancholic. The obsessional hangs on to his book in his own fashion—indeed, as Freud puts it, consideration for the (literary) object makes its first appearance here.⁴⁸ The melancholic, by contrast,

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consumes his object, and it in turn consumes him. But in the manic interval, Abraham writes, 'his ego no longer being consumed by the introjected object', the melancholic 'turns his libido to the outer world with an excess of eagerness'.⁴⁹ One patient calls this excess a 'gobbling mania'— 'a kind of intoxication or orgy', 'a wild excess'. He wants to devour 'every thing that comes his way', including impressions; the manic patient's 'flight of ideas, expressed in a stream of words, represents a swift and agitated process of receiving and expelling fresh impressions'.⁵⁰ This, according to Freud, is 'the festival of [the ego's] liberation'.⁵¹ It would be a stretch to associate Abraham's manic patient with the aesthetic of literary modernism. None the less, Woolf's attempt to render the speed and mobility of impressions in her writing—the 'stream' of consciousness—can feel greedy and intoxicating in just this way.⁵² Her account of her relation to books and reading is particularly orgiastic.

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Hermione Lee's rich and informative chapter on Woolf as reader, in her recent biography, points out how often, when Woolf is ostensibly writing about fiction, she is actually—or also— writing about herself as reader and how intimate and visceral her relation to books tends to be.⁵³ 'Indeed', writes Woolf, 'it is precisely because we hate and we love that our relation with the poets and novelists is so intimate that we find the presence of another person intolerable.'⁵⁴ Alongside her experimental fiction, the Woolf of the

1920s was meditating the never-to-be-written book on 'reading' that became *The Common Reader* (1925 and 1932). Three years before *A Room of One's Own* (1929), in 'How Should One Read a Book?' (1926), a lecture given to a girls' school, Woolf had written that books, like women writers (and women readers), need 'a room of their own' (*Essays*, iv. 399 n. i).⁵⁵ Woolf's imaginary reader—by taste and breeding a bibliocrat—inhabits a country house; the pageant of history passes before her eyes. She demands solitude and freedom, and wanders off at will into a pastoral or urban landscape.⁵⁶ She can be greedy, gossipy, and frankly hedonistic—and critical of other fictional rooms, especially those of psychoanalysis. Woolf's 1920 review of 'Freudian Fiction', for instance, complains about the scanty furnishings: 'The door swings open
 p. 39 briskly enough, but the apartment to which ↵ we are admitted is a bare little room with no outlook whatever' (*Essays*, iii. 197). Her own reading room, by contrast, has plenty of books and a view of the garden: 'Let us imagine that we are now in such a room: that it is a sunny room, with windows opening onto a garden, so that we can hear the trees rustling, the gardener talking, the donkey braying, the old women gossiping at the pump—and all the ordinary processes of life pursuing the[ir] casual irregular way ...' (*Essays*, iv. 388–9). But Woolf's relation to the consumption of books is darker and more perplexing than the casual irregularity of this bucolic scene allows. The reader who lives in a book runs the risk of 'over-reading' in the face of too much excitement, too much life; the book itself can turn into a melancholic object.⁵⁷ This is especially clear in her earlier essay, 'Reading', whose gracefully constructed, country-house scene of reading contains an inset scenario of intoxication, excitement, and melancholic collapse. 'Reading' seems to point to an implied understanding on Woolf's part of differing imaginative activities —incorporatory, projective, introjective—involved in reading, but also to an intensity of libidinal investment that Woolf links to eating, to change, and ultimately to creativity.⁵⁸ I want to suggest that this is, in part, a melancholic
 p. 40 economy involving the consumption and destruction of a precious lost object, and that the ↵ movement towards repair tends to be registered by Woolf as a saving or recuperative turn to poetry (or, perhaps one should say, to what poetry signifies in her writing).

Hermione Lee observes that it is hard to decide whether 'Reading' is 'an essay on reading—or dreaming—or an autobiographical reminiscence'.⁵⁹ What has reading, for instance, got to do with the capture and death of a splendid, drunken moth? The centre-piece of Woolf's essay is a memory based on the activities of the Stephen children's Entomological Society, a compressed version of which resurfaces in *Jacob's Room* (1922) as part of Jacob's childhood.⁶⁰ This narrative of a moth-hunting expedition occupies the night-time, or dream-space, of an essay unobtrusively structured by the passage from one day to the next, like *The Waves* (1931)—which, we know, Woolf originally thought of as *The Moths*.⁶¹ 'Reading' opens with another country-house library, 'lined with litde burnished books, folios, and stout blocks of divinity'; the carved shelves bear their procession of titles from Homer and Euripides to 'Wordsworth and the rest'. Outside, the gardener mows the lawn: 'One drew the pale armchair to the window, and so the light fell over the shoulder upon the page. The shadow of the gardener mowing the lawn sometimes crossed it ...' (*Essays*, iii. 141). The hypnotic movement of the reader's eye (falling like light on the page, or crossed by a shadow that goes 'up and down' like lines of print) renders this outside scene as dream-like distance. The tall ladies and gentlemen play at tennis, butterflies and bees visit the flowers, birds hop, 'But they did not distract me from my book':

p. 41 None of these things distracted me in those days; and somehow or another, the windows being open, and the book held so that it rested upon a background of escallonia hedges and distant blue, instead of being a book it seemed as if what I read was laid upon the landscape not printed, bound, or sewn up, but somehow the product of trees and fields and ↵ the hot summer sky, like the air which swam, on fine mornings, round the outlines of things. (*Essays*, iii. 142)

'These things' don't distract the reader from her book. 'Somehow', Woolf conveys, they render it transparent instead, 'laid upon the landscape not printed'; the book becomes the product of the landscape, like the swimming air of summer. Somehow—but how? The book's transparency guarantees the solidity of the scene, yet its outlines too have a tendency to dissolve into the swimming air of summer. This mutual dissolving and resolidifying of book and landscape, like the movement into the past and back to the imaginary time present of reading, structures Woolf's essay so insistently that it becomes an inescapable aspect of its meaning as well as its principal technique of evocation.

I want to notice the persistent effect of transparency that attends Woolf's scene of reading, an effect which renders 'outside' the window fleetingly solid by virtue of the book's material irrelevance to what is seen by the reading eye. The 'past effect' in Woolf consists similarly of 'seeing things' (Queen Elizabeth I, for instance—'She flaunts across the terrace superbly and a little stiffly like the peacock spreading its tail', *Essays*, iii. 145). We note how easily Woolf's attention wanders from 'the broad yellow-tinged pages of

- Hakluyt's book' to 'the green shade of forests' (*Essays*, iii. 148). These green shades and greener thoughts, like the inaudible poetry of Elizabethan prose falling on some inner ear, lull us to sleep. Is this hypnosis? Are we hallucinating the past? After all, we hold no yellow-paged book; even *sotto voce* readers presumably hear nothing. Yet Woolf persuades us otherwise ('Let us imagine ...'). In an essay called 'On Vivacity: The Difference between Day-dreaming and Imagining-Under-Authorial-Instruction', Elaine Scarry similarly contrasts the sensory content of 'the particular room one, at this moment, inhabits while reading', with the absence of actual sensory content represented by the book as object. A book's physical features (its print—
- p. 42 'monotonous small black marks on a white page'; its texture and weight) are irrelevant to the mental images it tries to produce in us: '(steam rising across a window pane, the sound of a stone ↵ dropped in a pool, the feel of dry August grass underfoot).' ⁶² With this casual parenthesis, Scarry dissolves the book much as Woolf conjures with light and shadow, or puts us to sleep with unheard sentences. There is', Scarry observes, 'only *mimetic content*, the figural rooms and faces and weather that we mimetically see, touch, and hear, though in no case do we actually do so/⁶³ Scarry asks how the writer persuades us that we are imagining rather than day-dreaming. Her inquiry into the relation between Vivacity' and the illusion of solidarity fascinatingly draws attention to the part played by what she calls 'the glide of the transparent over the surface of something, or the passing of a luminous film over solid walls at moments of fictional fragility (compare Woolf's swimming air round the outlines of things). Scarry's point is not so much that the fragility of the fiction gives rise to transparency. Rather, the transparency is what makes us 'see things' as if they were real.⁶⁴ As Scarry observes, only the 'fictional walls' of reading (the walls of the reading room) prevent us from '*sinking inward*' (her italics) and enable us to perform what she calls 'the projective act'—the projection of planes and solids, the perception of light or solidity at a distance from our eyes or touch; but also (in the other sense of projection) allowing us to 'lift the inhibitions on mental vivacity' which usually protect us, so that what we see is no longer what we (actually) see.⁶⁵
- p. 43 This 'risky projective space' of narrative that Scarry calls the 'mimesis of givenness' would be hallucinatory if we didn't happen to be reading a book.⁶⁶ What happens next in Woolf's 'Reading'? By now the author has read enough. She shuts her book—'So that, if at last I shut the book, it was only that my mind was sated'—and we recognize immediately that we are moving into the mimetic realm of the sensory writer. When 'the yellow page was almost too dim to decipher' and 'the book must be stood in its place' (*Essays*, iii. 149), then (writes Woolf) 'the moths came out, the swift grey moths of the dusk ... It was, I supposed, nearly time to go into the woods' (*Essays*, iii. 149–50). The glide of the swift grey moths across the woods leaves imaginary solidity in its wake (just as the lantern leaves a wake of darkness, 'a fine black snow piling itself up in banks on either side of the yellow beam', *Essays*, iii. 150); even the hand sliding across the backs of books feels them swell with 'fullness and ripeness' (*Essays*, iii. 149). At this moment of unquestioned solidity and sensory life, the reader quits the room and the pace suddenly changes. Woolf slips into a remembered narrative of visceral excitement, primitive triumph, and its disquieting after-effects, rehearsed with all the checks and delays and shocks of animism, like a Wordsworthian 'spot of time'. This is the dream-time of
- p. 44 her essay.⁶⁷ Roped ↵ together by their beam of light, the children venture into the woods (The little irregular beam of light seemed the only thing that kept us together, and like a rope prevented us from falling asunder and being engulfed', *Essays*, iii. 150). Woolf, bearing her light, guides us 'further and further into this unknown world' of heightened awareness, and 'As if we saw ... through the lens of a very powerful magnifying glass', we too see the swarming of insect-life attracted by the lantern. Only when Woolf turns her lens (the light of authorial imagination) cautiously on to a bacchanalian orgy of drunken moths do we realize that we are in the presence of something resembling our own readerly absorption. Trans-fixed in the lantern beam, gorging on a moth-trap that consists of pieces of flannel soaked in rum and sugar, the moths are no longer 'whirring wings', but 'soft brown lumps' stuck in 'cataracts of falling treacle':

These lumps seemed unspeakably precious, too deeply attached to the liquid to be disturbed. Their probosces were deeply plunged, and as they drew in the sweetness, their wings quivered slightly as if in ecstasy. Even when the light was full upon them they could not tear themselves away, but sat there, quivering a little more uneasily perhaps, but allowing us to examine the tracery on the wings, those stains, spots, and veinings by which we decided their fate. (*Essays*, iii. 151)

Strachey refers to the 'peculiar appearance of intense and continuous absorption' of readers immersed in their books (might he have seen a coprophagic subtext in these 'unspeakably precious' lumps, mired in their treacle?). The moths' ecstatic feeding—all plunged probosces and quivering wings—is greedily consonant with our own readerly phantasy of oral ingestion, just as the scrambling insects ('greedy and yet awkward in their desire to partake of the light') pick up our fascination with the authorial eye.

p. 45 In the syntax of Woolf's phantastic scene of reading, the young entomologists share both the mounting excitement of the hunters and the ecstatic absorption of their prey. We too are changed as we read, from moment to quivering moment, by the intensity of our own libidinal investment, our sense perceptions ↵ and palpating thoughts.⁶⁸ Woolf's central exhibit in 'Reading'—the prize specimen destined for the poison jar—is a single immobilized moth, a scarlet underwing:

Cautiously shielding the light, we saw from far off the glow of two red lamps which faded as the light turned upon them; and there emerged the splendid body which wore those two red lamps at its head. Great underwings of glowing crimson were displayed. He was almost still, as if he had alighted with his wing open and had fallen into a trance of pleasure. He seemed to stretch across the tree, and beside him other moths looked only like little lumps and knobs on the bark. He was so splendid to look upon and so immobile that perhaps we were reluctant to end him; and yet, when, as if guessing our intention and resuming a flight that had been temporarily interrupted, he roamed away, it seemed as if we had lost a possession of infinite value. (*Essays*, iii. 151)

p. 46 The first thing we see is 'the glow of two red lamps', fading in the light. With its splendid, immobile body, its glowing underwings, and its lamp-like eyes, the scarlet moth is at once the quarry of the lantern-bearing reader and her other. What meets her eyes in this moment of aesthetic rapport is the equivalent of the elusive, iridescent moment of being that Woolf attempted to capture in her writing.⁶⁹ Her reluctance to 'end' here is ours; we ↵ too want to prolong the graceful symmetries of identificatory reading, lost in our own trance of pleasure. A brief flight of the mind brings us to a second rendezvous, in the densest part of the breathing, sighing, alien, and inhuman forest ('No moth could have come as far as this'):

The scarlet underwing was already there, immobile as before, drinking deep. Without waiting a second this time the poison pot was uncovered and adroitly maneuvered so that as he sat there the moth was covered and escape cut off. There was a flash of scarlet within the glass. Then he composed himself with folded wings. He did not move again.

The glory of the moment was great. (*Essays*, iii. 152)

But this glorious moment is marked, ominously, by 'a volley of shot'. An entire forest's death-rattle seems to salute the death of the moth: 'a hollow rattle of sound in the deep silence of the wood which had I know not what of mournful and ominous about it ... An enormous silence succeeded.' A tree" we said at last. A tree had fallen (*Essays*, iii. 152). What has happened?

p. 47 This mournful and ominous response to the moth's capture (displaced from hunters to forest) suggests that Woolf is registering some other, more disquieting triumph. What is 'the hostile alien force' against which the moth-hunters prove their skill? At the end of 'The Death of the Moth' (1942)—the posthumously published essay in which the writer, pencil in hand, watches an exhausted moth in its death throes—Woolf says: 'Death had triumphed.' In the closing lines of this later wartime essay, she uses the same word, 'composed', to describe the dead moth that she had used here of the scarlet underwing's graceful acquiescence in its death; her essay too has been 'composed' and must now come to its appointed end.⁷⁰ In 'Reading', after the moth's capture, Woolf asks, 'What is it that happens ... ?'; and repeats, ↵ 'Something definitely happens' (*Essays*, iii. 152,153). She marks the passage of time by registering 'the little shock' between the hour of midnight and dawn that is the shock of waking ('repeated shocks, the queer uneasy moment, as of eyes half open to the light'). Elsewhere, in 'How Should One Read a Book?', Woolf makes poetry a necessity for surviving aesthetic trauma and emotional turbulence—what she calls 'the intermittent but powerful shocks dealt us by beauty' and 'the incalculable impulses of our minds and body' (*Essays*, iv. 395). Here, in 'Reading', she wonders if 'repeated shocks' of experience, 'each unfelt at the time', have the effect of 'loosening the fabric' and 'breaking something away'. Is it the shock of 'collapse and disintegration', or is this a different process? A thought process, or a moment of emotional creativity? 'It is not destructive whatever it may be, one might say it was rather of a creative character' (*Essays*, iii. 152–3). Despite Woolf's swift conversion of collapse into creativity, the internal process ('whatever it may be') has certainly involved a destructive element. But Woolf moves quickly to bind 'Sorrow' at 'this sudden arrest of the fluidity of life' to a sense of aesthetic mastery: As with a rod of light, order has been imposed upon tumult; form upon chaos ... one wakes, after heaven knows what internal process, with a sense of mastery' (note how the lamp has become an omniscient and omnipotent 'rod of light'). Repair comes, defensively as it were, in the wake of disintegration. Woolf turns adroitly to 'another sort of reading', poetry, resuming her unruffled literary progress through the poets of the past. No tremor of discomposure

is allowed to shake her essay again, until the last lines when, instead of a tree falling, she turns the rose in its jar ('which, by the way, has dropped its petals', *Essays*, iii. 159), with an imagist turn all her own.

p. 48 I have chosen to read Woolf's essay on 'Reading' as giving conscious literary form to unconscious phantasies that delineate the boundaries between psychic reality and reading, between instincts (both creative and destructive) and thoughts. It shouldn't need saying (nor, I think, does Woolf intend anything so pedestrian as an allegory of reading) that the most ancient symbol for the psyche is a moth; the flight of the moth interests her more than the moth itself. I want to end with Wallace Stevens's supreme fiction of the scene of reading, *The House was Quiet and the World was Calm*, as a way of drawing together the different strands in both Strachey's and Woolf's essays, as well as saying something about literary modernism's self-reflexive turn:

The house was quiet and the world was calm.
The reader became the book; and summer night

Was like the conscious being of the book.
The house was quiet and the world was calm.

The words were spoken as if there was no book,
Except that the reader leaned above the page,

Wanted to lean, wanted much most to be
The scholar to whom his book is true, to whom

The summer night is like a perfection of thought.
The house was quiet because it had to be.

The quiet was part of the meaning, part of the mind:
The access of perfection to the page.

And the world was calm. The truth in a calm world,
In which there is no other meaning, itself

Is calm, itself is summer and night, itself
Is the reader leaning late and reading there.

p. 49 The truth', for Stevens, is the absorbed reader, 'leaning late and reading there.' Such truth depends on a fictional construction: 'summer night | Was like the conscious being of the book', 'like a perfection of thought'; 'The words were spoken as if there was no book'. By now, we should not be surprised at a form of consciousness rendered as a series of equivalences (as reader is to poem, so reader in the poem is to book ...); or at the fleeting solidity of house and world in the wake of the adjectival glide of 'quiet' and 'calm'; or even at the *sotto voce* reading which makes us hear the written word as if spoken aloud. The poem's hypnotic repetitions—with-slight difference ('the world was calm', 'the world was calm', 'And the world was calm', 'in a calm world', 'itself is calm') insist that the poem, like the house, 'was quiet because it had to be/ Quietness is at once the condition of its being and the way in which we internalize its meaning—'part of the meaning, part of the mind'. The unfolding, repeated sequence of nouns and adjectives at the end of each pair of lines—'calm', 'night', 'book', 'page', 'thought', 'mind', 'world'—work unobtrusively, like a half-heard, subliminal syntax, to reinforce this movement of internalization. The stealthy transfer of calm from world to book to thought is what persuades us of the poem's 'truth'.⁷¹

p. 50 But the poem's meaning is ultimately its refusal of all referentiality other than the one it posits so insistently: 'there is no other meaning'. If 'the truth' of a calm world is 'itself' (three times repeated in the last three lines), it can only be found in the poem—in 'The access of perfection to the page.' The word 'access' implies the coming in from outside of something, as if the page (and the reader) have to be breached by what is other than itself, some differentiating desire. The book is open, like the mind, but it is entered by means of a powerful wish—the wish of the reader who emphatically 'Wanted to lean, wanted much most to be | The scholar to whom his book is true'. Does wishing alone make it so? Apparently. And what about the tell-tale mark of the negative—'as if there was no book', 'a calm world | In which there is no other meaning'? In his condensed but suggestive paper on 'Negation' (1923), Freud remarks that 'the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness provided it is negated' (*SE* xix.

235).⁷² The ‘truth’ of Stevens’s poem requires an immense effort of exclusion— *no book, no unquiet house, no turbulent world*; not even the language of what Freud (also in ‘Negation’) calls ‘the oldest—the oral—instinctual impulse’, expressed in the judgement “‘It shall be inside me” or “it shall be outside me”” (SE xix. 237). Freud goes on to argue that, ‘with the help of the symbol of negation, thinking frees itself (SE xix. 236). How might thinking ‘free itself from material and even temporal contingencies in Stevens’s poem? ‘Negation’ contains some of Freud’s own subtlest and most speculative thinking about thought. He writes, for instance, that the function of judgement comes to apply to questions ‘of *external and internal*’—‘What is unreal, merely a presentation and subjective, is only internal; what is real is also there *outside*.’ Freud continues:

The antithesis between subjective and objective does not exist from the first. It only comes into being from the fact that thinking possesses the capacity to bring before the mind once more something that has once been perceived, but reproducing it as a presentation without the external object having still to be there. (SE xix. 237)

The aim of reality-testing is not to ‘*find* an object in real perception which corresponds to the one presented’, but rather—in its absence—to ‘*re-find* such an object, to convince oneself that it is still there’ (SE xix. 237).⁷³ Freud suggests that a precondition for reality-testing ‘is that objects shall have been lost which once brought real satisfaction’ (SE xix. 238); the strange shift of tense projects into the future the gains accrued from losses in the past. In effect, thinking is redefined as the representation to oneself of an absent object. ‘The truth’, for Stevens, is the reader ‘reading there’; that is, elsewhere—not here, not now; perhaps not even yet. His poem, which appears to insist so calmly, so beautifully, and so metaphorically on the absolute adequacy to itself of the aesthetic experience of reading, can also be read as a meditation ↪ on the impossibility of ‘thereness’, at least when it comes to symbolization. What Stevens has digested and cohabits with in the quiet house of his mind (the room in the book) is the inevit-ability of absence—that the object shall have been lost which once brought real satisfaction. This is why the world of the poem (a world in which privacy and privation are inseparable from reading) can be calm: it has become available to be thought.

Notes

- 1 Georges Poulet, ‘Criticism and Interiority’, in Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (eds.), *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy* (Baltimore and London, 1970), 56.
- 2 Poulet, ‘Criticism and Interiority’, 57.
- 3 See Stephane Mallarme, *CEuvres completes*, ed. Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris, 1945), 423–51. Igitur is a Hamlet figure; the unfinished story opens at midnight, with a scene that includes ‘la paleur d’un livre ouvert que presente la table; page et decor ordinaires de la Nuit, sinon que subsiste encore le silence d’une antique parole proferee par lui, en lequel, revenue, ce Minuit evoque son ombre finie et nulle par ses mots: J’etais l’heure qui doit me rendre pur’ (435).
- 4 See A. S. Byatt and Ignes Sodre, *Imagining Characters: Six Conversations about Women Writers*, ed. Rebecca Smith (London, 1995); and see Ch. 2 below (p. 52), for Byatt’s reflection on the relation between books, rooms, and what she calls ‘the world in the head’ or ‘the world inside, in which everything can take place’, ‘a meaningful internal world’ (ibid. 37–8).
- 5 See Alix Strachey, ‘A Note on the Use of the Word “internal”’, *IJP-A* 22 (1941), 37–43–
- 6 *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, 86.
- 7 Ibid. 87.
- 8 *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, 87. Holland’s move from identification to incorporation is sketched by Freud himself in *The New Introductory Lectures* (1933) when he defines ‘identification’ as ‘the assimilation of one ego to another one, as a result of which the first ego behaves like the second in certain respects, imitates it and in a sense takes it up into itself. Identification has been not unsuitably compared with the oral, cannibalistic incorporation of the other person’ (SE xxii. 63).
- 9 In *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), Freud writes that the main exception to our sense of having a distinct, autonomous, and unitary sense of self is the experience of being in love: ‘... towards the outside, at any rate, the ego seems to maintain clear and sharp lines of demarcation. There is only one state—admittedly an unusual state, but not one that can be stigmatized as pathological—in which it does not do this. *At the height of being in love the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away. Against all the evidence of his senses, a man who is in love declares that “I” and “you” are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact* ... Pathology has made us acquainted with a great number of states in which the boundary lines between the ego and the external world become uncertain or in which they are actually drawn incorrectly’ (SE xxi. 66; my italics). See also ch. VIII, ‘Being in Love and Hypnosis’, in *Group Psychology and the Analysts of the Ego* (1921)—especially relevant to Holland’s objection that Poulet’s account of reading sounds like hypnosis.
- 10 See *New Introductory Lectures*, where Freud writes of the ego as interposing a postponement between need and action ‘in

- the form of the activity of thought' (SE xxii. 76).
- 11 *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, 87–8. Perhaps only recourse to Freud's thesis in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) that there is something unconscious in consciousness could resolve the impasse here. *Bloomsbury/Freud: The Letters of James and Alix Strachey 1924–1925*, ed. Perry Meisel and Walter Kendrick (New York, 1985), 264. For other accounts of the relation between Woolf and Freud, see also Elizabeth Abel, *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago, 1989), esp. ch. 1.
 - 12 Cf. Andre Green's Gallic version of the book's invitation, in 'The Unbinding Process' (1971): 'The desire to see is patent in the act of reading. The book cover, the binding, function as garments ... which offer themselves fascinatingly to the eye.' He goes on to depict the reader-as-^neur entering the bookstore to browse: 'we pick up a book. Here the pleasure starts, as we open it, finger it, thumb through its pages, probing it in various places' until finally 'we pay for the book and leave the store arm-in-arm with it'. What is this but a pick-up? Green goes on to suggest that 'In order to read, we'll need to lock ourselves up with the book—in a public place or in more confined quarters—sometimes in the most unlikely or, shall we say, the least propitious places for this kind of exercise' (his footnote on bathroom-radiator libraries alludes to reading as 'a scatological ritual'). See *On Private Madness* (Madison, Conn., 1986), 342–3 and n.
 - 13 Keats, for instance, pictures himself reading thus: 'I should like the window to open onto the Lake of Geneva—and there I'd sit and read all day like the picture of somebody reading—' (To Fanny Keats, 13 Mar. 1819); see *Letters of John Keats: A Selection*, ed. Robert Gittings (Oxford, 1970), 203.
 - 14 Hermione Lee suggests in her biography that Woolf did not actually read Freud until the late 1930s, although she used psychoanalytic terminology and had a conversational knowledge of Freudian concepts; Leonard Woolf was, of course, familiar with the primary texts prior to the 1920s, and had reviewed *The Psycho-pathology of Everyday Life* in 1915. See Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London, 1996), 191, 197, 713, and esp. 722–6. Strachey records Woolf making 'a more than usually ferocious onslaught upon psycho-analysis and psychoanalysts, more particularly the latter', at a dinner party in 1925; see James Strachey to Alix Strachey (14 May 1925),
 - 15 See *The Ego and the Id* (1923), translated by Joan Riviere in 1927 (published by the Hogarth Press).
 - 16 Freud's chapter on transference in the *Introductory Lectures (1916–17)*; trans. 1929) admits that the force within the patient to be mobilized on the side of recovery is the familiar power of suggestion, then goes on to ventriloquize 'an objection boiling up ... so fiercely' that it has to be put into words: "Ah! so you've admitted it at last! You work with the help of suggestion, just like the hypnotists! That's what we've thought for a long time ..." (SE xvi. 446). See Joseph Sandler and Anna Ursula Dreher, *What Do Psychoanalysts Want?* (London and New York, 1996), 23–31, particularly for papers by Sachs, Alexander, and Rado which raised the problem of a therapy based on transference and superego transformation as opposed to hypnosis.
 - 17 See James Strachey, 'The Nature of the Therapeutic Action of Psycho-analysis', *IJP-A*, 15 (1934), 127–59. Strachey builds on and refers to earlier papers such as Rado's to make his own point about hypnosis but substitutes the idea of the analyst as 'auxiliary super-ego', administering reality in 'minimal doses'. In his 1937 summary of his original paper, Strachey writes that the analyst hopes 'that he will be introjected by the patient as a super-ego—introjected, however, not at a single gulp ... but little by little and as a real person' (*IJP-A* 18 (1937), 144). For the lasting reputation and reassessment of Strachey's first paper, see also Herbert Rosenfeld, 'A Critical Appreciation of James Strachey's Paper on the Nature of the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis', *IJP-A* 53 (1972), 455–611. Side by side with Strachey's 1934 paper is an interesting paper by Richard Sterba, 'The Fate of the Ego in Analytic Therapy', *IJP-A* 15 (1934), 117–26, which remedies Strachey's omission of the question of language.
 - 18 See Strachey, 'Nature of Therapeutic Action', 142, 149–52. Cf. the passage in *Civilization and its Discontents* (cited n. 8 above) which continues: 'There are cases in which parts of a person's own body, even portions of his own mental life—his perceptions, thoughts, and feelings—, appear alien to him and as not belonging to his ego; there are other cases in which he ascribes to the external world things that clearly originate in his own ego and that ought to be acknowledged by it. Thus even the feeling of our own ego is subject to disturbances and the boundaries of the ego are not constant' (SE xxi. 66).
 - 19 See, for instance, Sandor Ferenczi, 'Introjection and Transference' (1909), *First Contributions to Psycho-Analysis* (1952; repr. London, 1994), 35–93; Karl Abraham, 'A Short Study of the Development of the Libido' (1924), *Selected Papers of Karl Abraham*, trans. Douglas Bryan and Alix Strachey (1927; repr. London, 1979), 418–501; Melanie Klein, 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms' (1946), *Envy and Gratitude*, *WMK* iii. 1–24. For a Kleinian account of the evolution of introjection, projection, and projective identification, see R. D. Hinshelwood, *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* (London, 1991); for a post-Lacanian account of these concepts, see also J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* (New York, 1973).
 - 20 For this distinction in Freud's writing, see 'Negation' (1923): 'Expressed in the language of the oldest—the oral—instinctual impulses, the judgment is "I should like to eat this", or "I should like to spit it out"; and, put more generally: "I should like to take this into myself and to keep that out." That is to say: "it shall be inside me" or "it shall be outside me"' (SE xix. 237). See also Joseph Sandler and Meir Perlow, 'Internalization and Externalization', in Joseph Sandler (ed.), *Projection, Identification, Projective Identification* (London, 1989), 1–11. For Winnicott's account of 'potential space', see 'The Location of Cultural Experience' (1967), *Playing and Reality* (1971; repr. London, 1991), 95–103.
 - 21 See *New Introductory Lectures* (SE xxii. 80): 'the therapeutic efforts of psychoanalysis have chosen ... to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the superego, to widen its field of perceptions and enlarge its organizations, so that it can appropriate fresh portions of the id. Where id was, there ego shall be. It is a work of culture— not unlike the draining of the Zuder Zee.' Freud is repeating an earlier passage from the *Introductory Lectures*, cited by Strachey in 'Nature of Therapeutic Action', 132.
 - 22 Cf. Strachey in 'Some Unconscious Factors in Reading': 'Among the characteristics that distinguish the more advanced

- forms of civilization from the more primitive perhaps the most outstanding are the arts of writing and reading. ... even today it is usual to estimate the relative degree of civilization in different countries from the percentage of illiterates among their inhabitants' (*IJP-A* 11 (1930), 322; cited thereafter as Strachey); and Virginia Woolf in 'How Should One Read a Book?' (1926), who writes that it would not be surprising to find reading 'the reason why we have grown from pigs to men and women, and come out from our caves, and dropped our bows and arrows, and sat round the fire and talked and drunk and made merry and given to the poor and helped the sick and made pavement and houses and erected some sort of shelter and society on the waste of the world' (*The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (4 vols., London, 1986), iv. 399; hereafter cited as *Essays*).
- 23 See *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *SE* iv. 172–3. Freud suggests that his childhood memory of pulling a book to pieces like an artichoke was a 'screen memory' for 'later bibliophile propensities'.
- 24 See Sigmund Freud, *On Aphasia: A Critical Study* (London, 1953), esp. 72–8; 'The Unconscious' (1915), *SE* xiv. 201–2 and Appendix C. See also John Forrester, *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis* (London, 1980), for Freud's relation to the 19th-century philologists.
- 25 *The Letters of Sigmund Freud to Eduard Silberstein, 1871–81*, ed. Walter Boehlich, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 87; I am grateful to Maria Antonia Garces for drawing my attention to this Quixotic meal.
- 26 'Hours in a Library' (1916), *Essays*, ii. 55.
- 27 Strachey, 322. Strachey's paper was read to the British PsychoAnalytic Society in Mar. 1930.
- 28 See Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1978), 196–231.
- 29 See *Writing and Difference*, 224: 'the depth of the Mystic Pad is simultaneously a depth without bottom, an infinite allusion, and a perfectly superficial exteriority: a stratification of surfaces each of whose relation to itself, each of whose interior, is but the implication of another similarly exposed surface.'
- 30 *Ibid.* 230–1.
- 31 *Ibid.* 231.
- 32 Strachey cites Edward Glover's 'Notes on Oral Character Formation', *IJP-A* 6 (1924), 139: 'Sleep can ... be successfully wooed after a certain amount of reading ... in certain cases a fixed dose is ingested regularly before sleep, a "nightcap", the directly oral equivalent of which is familiar to all' (quoted in Strachey, 325). The first public conveniences were introduced into London in the 1850s, a technology thereafter successfully exported across Europe and to the Empire.
- 33 See Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation*, *WMK* i. 241. Klein's essay on intellectual inhibition starts from mealtimes and from a little boy's difficulty in distinguishing between *poulet*, *poisson*, or *glace* (chicken, fish, and ice [-cream]). Mixing up *poulet* with *poisson* suggests to Klein that the child is warding off dangerous food for thought. Throughout, I follow the Kleinian usage of using the term 'phantasy', as opposed to 'fantasy', to refer to unconscious phantasy.
- 34 *Ibid.* 244.
- 35 *Ibid.* 246.
- 36 See Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 256, for Woolf's account of mealtimes at the Strachey family table.
- 37 Compare the fun Strachey has when he refers to the gustatory impossibility of 'suck[ing] down the works of Bertrand Russell or chew[ing] up those of Miss Ethel M. Deir, or tough writers and sloppy ones (326).
- 38 Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, and Ernest Jones, 'Anal-Erotic Character Traits', *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (1918); see also Otto Fenichel 'The Scopophilic Instinct and Identification' (1935), *Collected Papers of Otto Fenichel* (2 vols., New York, 1953–4), i- 373–4, developing Strachey's ideas about reading.
- 39 We could call him the Peppermint Man; see Strachey, 328 n.
- 40 Ezekiel 2: 9–10. See Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', which ends: '... or what is said in Ezekiel about the son of man who fills his entrails with the scroll of the law which has become sweet as honey in his mouth' (*Writing and Difference*, 231). See also Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York, 1996), 170–1, for this and other eating metaphors so richly present in the phenomenology of reading.
- 41 See, most recently, Manguel, *A History of Reading*, as well as Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837–1914* (Oxford, 1993); Flint's book contains an invaluable bibliography.
- 42 Mary Wollstonecraft in her Enlightenment *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* singles out for special condemnation the habit of communal or non-private evacuation, as if the regulation of bodies and their separation has everything to do with her subject, women's education.
- 43 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), 39–40; Susan Buck-Morss first drew my attention to this striking passage. The issue of nationalism offers a different perspective on the Britishness of both Strachey's paper and his audience.
- 44 'How Should One Read a Book', *Essays*, iv. 388–9.
- 45 *Bloomsbury/Freud*, 229–30.
- 46 Abraham, *Selected Papers of Karl Abraham*, 419. Abraham recounts how he came to accept 'the idea of an introjection of the loved object' through his own experience of mourning the death of his father— when his hair turned grey, like his father's (*ibid.* 437–8).
- 47 See *ibid.* 443–4; cf. also *ibid.* 481: 'In his unconscious he identifies the love-object he has lost and abandoned with the most important product of bodily evacuation— with his faeces— and reincorporates it in his ego by means of the process we have called introjection.'
- 48 See Freud's commentary on Abraham in *New Introductory Lectures*, which clarifies the importance of this emergence of the object: 'Abraham showed in 1924 that two stages can be distinguished in the sadistic-anal phase. The earlier of these is dominated by the destructive trends of destroying and losing, the later one by trends friendly towards objects— those of keeping and possessing. It is in the middle of this phase, therefore, that consideration for the object makes its first appearance as a precursor of a later erotic cathexis. We are equally justified in making a similar subdivision in the first, oral

- phase. In the first sub-stage what is in question is only oral incorporation, there is no ambivalence at all in the relation to the object— the mother's breast. The second stage, characterized by the emergence of the biting activity, may be described as the "oral-sadistic" one; it exhibits for the first time the phenomena of ambivalence, which become so much clearer afterwards, in the following sadistic-anal stage' (SE xxii. 99).
- 49 Selected Papers of Karl Abraham, 472.
- 50 Ibid. 472. Abraham goes on: 'In melancholia we saw that there was some particularly introjected object which was treated as a piece of food that had been incorporated and which was eventually got rid of. In mania, all objects are regarded as material to be passed through the patient's "psychosexual metabolism" at a rapid rate. And it is not difficult to see from the associations of the manic patient that he identifies his uttered thoughts with excrement' (ibid. 472).
- 51 See ibid. 474.
- 52 Woolf recorded that, as she wrote the last words of *The Waves*, she experienced such 'intensity & intoxication that I seemed only to stumble after my own voice, or almost, after some sort of speaker (as when I was mad). I was almost afraid, remembering the voices that used to fly ahead'; see *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (5 vols., New York, 1976–84), iv. 10. For the vexed question of Woolf's own relation to manic depressive illness, see, for instance, Roger Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf* (3rd edn., Cambridge, 1990); Poole is especially graphic on the treatment of Woolf's periodic collapses with forced rest and over-feeding by the conventional specialists whom Leonard Woolf consulted, initially over the post-marriage manic-depressive breakdown of 1913–14; see ibid. 148–58 for Woolf's problems with eating and the regime used to counter it. Leonard Woolf records that 'there was always something strange, something slightly irrational in her attitude towards food. It was extraordinarily difficult ever to get her to eat enough to keep her strong and well. Superficially I suppose it might have been said that she had a (quite unnecessary) fear of becoming fat; but there was something deeper than that, at the back of her mind or in the pit of her stomach a taboo against eating. Pervading her insanity generally there was always a sense of guilt, the origin and exact nature of which I could never discover, but it was attached in some peculiar way particularly to food and eating. In the early acute, suicidal stage of the depression, she would sit for hours overwhelmed with hopeless melancholia ...'; see *Beginning Again* (London, 1964), 162–3, and, for accounts of mealtimes during these periods, ibid. 163–4.
- 53 See Lee, 'Reading', *Virginia Woolf*, 402–17.
- 54 Woolf inserted this passage when she revised 'How Should One Read a Book?' for *The Common Reader* (1932): 'we may try to sink our own identity as we read. But ... there is always a demon in us who whispers, "I hate, I love", and we cannot silence him. Indeed it is precisely because we hate and we love that our relation with the poets and novelists is so intimate ...'; see Rachel Bowlby (ed.), *Virginia Woolf: The Crowded Dance of Modern Life* (Harmondsworth, 1993), 67.
- 55 Woolf initially found this subject 'a matter of dazzling importance and breathless excitement', but subsequently became weighed down by the lecture ('I grind out a little of that eternal How to read, lecture'). Woolf's substantial revisions for the version republished in *The Common Reader* (1932) suggest her dissatisfaction with it as it stood when published in the *Yale Review* for Oct. 1926.
- 56 See Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 413, for an account of Woolf's street-haunting. Rachel Bowlby (who also writes of Virginia Woolf as *fldneuse*) notices how often Woolf uses gustatory metaphors for reading; see *The Crowded Dance of Modern Life*, p. xviii: 'They sometimes ... imply an excess, a crude abundance that will need to be sorted out; and sometimes the stress is rather on eating as a basic need, an impulse or appetite that must be satisfied.'
- 57 'Often the pages fly before us and we seem, so keen is our interest, to be living and not even holding the volume in our hands. But the more exciting the book, the more danger we run of over-reading. The symptoms are familiar. Suddenly the book becomes dull as ditchwater and heavy as lead' ('How Should One Read a Book?', *Essays*, iv. 393).
- 58 For an extensive but professedly 'anti-Freudian' study of Woolf and her writing in relation to manic-depressive illness, see Thomas C. Caramango, *The Flight of the Mind: Virginia Woolf's Art and Manic-Depressive Illness* (Berkeley, 1992); Caramango, like Poole, argues against an old-fashioned view of Woolf's 'insanity', but on the basis on a modern, neuroscientific understanding of manic-depressive illness as bipolar affective disorder, throwing in his lot with Crews's revisionist stance *vis-a-vis* Freud (equated with a psychoanalytic understanding of manic-depressive illness), on the grounds that such psychoanalytic approaches pathologize Woolf. Caramango basically endorses the rest-cure regimen administered by Leonard Woolf under Savage's supervision, although his reading of Woolf's novels is often illuminated by ideas drawn from post-Freudian object-relations and by his thesis that her fiction allowed Woolf to find viable ways of surviving as a manic depressive.
- 59 *Virginia Woolf*, 404.
- 60 See ibid. 31–2 for the entomological activities of the Stephen family, and see also Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room*, ed. Kate Flint (Oxford, 1992.), 26–7.
- 61 See *The Waves: The Two Original Holograph Drafts*, ed. J. W. Graham (London, 1976), app. A, and see also Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, 417.
- 62 'On Vivacity: The Difference Between Day-dreaming and Imagining-Under-Authorial-Instruction', *Representations*, 52 (1995), 2. Scarry's essay bears on the old argument about whether, when we read, we occupy a world of words or images (Freud's 'word presentations' or the 'thing presentations' that he believed to be older than words); in this connection, see especially Ellen J. Esrock, *The Reader's Eye* (Baltimore, 1994), for a fascinating corrective to the idea that, when we read, we live in a world of words rather than images.
- 63 'On Vivacity', 3.
- 64 Ibid. 12, 14.
- 65 Ibid. 6; Scarry quotes Locke on perception (to Locke the idea of solidity 'hinders our further sinking downwards'). The thought-experiment Scarry con-ducts with her own readers involves, both predictably and appropriately, a scene of reading: 'If one looks at the surface on which this book is held—perhaps your hands, or a lamp-lit table, one will find that

now ... seven seconds later ... the thing still sustains itself. If one instead imagines a lamp-lit table in some distant room, it is probably now ... seven seconds later ... already becoming lost to you ...' (ibid. 19). Seven seconds is apparently the length of time the impression of an object seen remains on the retinal nerves. But here, which lamp-lit scene occupies the more 'projective' space? Which book weighs heavier in our hands? Scarry illustrates the effect that Woolf sustains throughout 'Reading', that of using 'one in-itself-weightless image to calibrate and confirm the weightedness of a second in-itself-weightless image' (ibid. 16), while also introducing the 'visual' effects of a light-source.

66 Ibid. 17.

67 Woolf's original description of 'the Sugar campaign' is recorded in Aug. 1899 in Huntingdonshire, in *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals of Virginia Woolf* ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (London, 1990), 144–5: 'By the faint glow we could see the huge moth— his wings open, as though in ecstasy, so that the splendid crimson of the underwing could be seen— his eyes burning red, his proboscis plunged into a flowing stream of treacle. We gazed one moment on his splendor, & then uncorked the bottle. I think the whole procession felt some unprofessional regret when, with a last gleam of scarlet eye & scarlet wing, the grand old moth vanished'. Woolf's account reveals that she was 'the lantern-bearer' (Thoby Stephen was 'the leader') 'who lights the paths fitfully with a Bicycle lamp of brilliant but uncertain powers of illumination' (ibid. 144).

68 For the quivering wings, cf. 'Negation' (1923), where Freud writes of 'the post-ponement due to thought' as 'a motor palpating, with small expenditure of discharge. Let us consider where the ego has used a similar kind of palpating before, at what place it learned the technique which it now applies in its processes of thought. It happened at the sensory end of the mental apparatus, in connection with sense perception' (SE xix. 238). See also Freud's earlier account of thinking in 'Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning' (1911), SE xii. 221.

69 In 'The Aesthetic Moment and the Search for Transformation', Christopher Bollas writes that 'The aesthetic experience occurs as a *moment*.' He describes such a 'moment' as a kind of trap, or 'A spell that holds self and other in symmetry and solitude, time crystallizes into space, providing a rendez-vous of self and other (text, composition, painting) that actualizes deep rapport between subject and object, and provides the person with a generative illusion of fitting with an object ... Such moments ... are registered through an experience of being, rather than mind'; Bollas links this experience of rapport between subject and object with the infant's experience of the maternal environment, but the aesthetic moment as he describes it is strikingly consonant, not only with Winnicott, but with the aesthetic of Woolf's modernism. See Peter Rudnytsky (ed.), *Transitional Objects and Potential Spaces* (New York, 1993), 40–1.

70 See Bowlby (ed.), *The Crowded Dance of Modern Life*, 181: The struggle was over. The insignificant little creature now knew death. As I looked at the dead moth, this minute triumph of so great a force over so mean an antagonist filled me with wonder. Just as life had been strange five minutes before, so death was now as strange. The moth having righted himself now lay most decendy and uncomplainingly composed. O yes, he seemed to say, death is stronger than I am.'

71 For one of the comparatively few critical discussions of Stevens's poem, see Charles Altieri, 'Why Stevens Must Be Abstract, or What a Poet Can Learn from Painting', in Albert Gelpi (ed.), *Wallace Stevens: The Poetics of Modernism* (Cambridge, 1985), 114–16. Altieri points to 'the brilliant syntactic shifts of the closing lines' where 'repetitions of single words (as opposed to the poem's earlier refrain effects) produce a sharp break with the dominant pattern of end-stopped lines. Syntax is suspended, only to speed up in very brief clauses. Then, as time turns back against itself, as reading self-consciously repeats its world and decides that it is good, it finds its culminating expression in a series of present participles transforming all that calm into a pure state for which the reading stands as its perfection. Confronting such a present, the sympathetic reader becomes absorbed in a corresponding activity. "There" and "here," the scene and the projected reader, become dialectical functions of one another, all as exponents of this single figure who proleptically represents one hundred eyes seeing at once, and finding that we must lean further into this enchanting site.'

72 'Negation' was translated by Joan Riviere in 1925.

73 Freud's earlier remark that 'The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it' provides a gloss on the nature of this lost object (ultimately, the mother's breast); see SE xix. 238 n.