

Domestic Bloomsbury: “Just rooms again, where friends might shelter”¹

Morag Shiach, Queen Mary University of London

This chapter is concerned with rooms, friendships, and the historical conditions of artistic and literary creativity. While focusing on the domestic spaces that were created and inhabited by members of the Bloomsbury Group, it will also advance a more general argument about the extent to which the cultural imagination of the Modernist period was shaped by the physical spaces in which it found its expression. The contention of this chapter is that modern domestic spaces are closely connected to modern subjectivity, and also to historical understandings of the nature of “home”.²

Methodologically this chapter offers a materialist history of the Bloomsbury Group and their relation to domestic space, exploring the conditions and environments within which the Group’s cultural innovations took place, and paying particular attention to the ways in which specific domestic spaces enabled or constrained social and cultural ways (or moments) of being. Understanding the historical interaction of specific places and individual or collective identities will require some initial reflections on the broader social meaning and nature of “place”.³ The chapter will thus begin with a brief analysis of some important philosophical and geographical answers to the question of why certain spaces or places might matter to us, looking particularly the spaces and places of modernity. It will then consider the ways in which the domestic lives of the middle classes in early twentieth-century England, exemplified by members of the Bloomsbury Group, were modified in important ways by specific technological innovations. This will lead to a reading of the ways in which specific domestic environments constructed social and individual identities, with particular reference to a selection of Bloomsbury memoirs and fictions. Finally,

the chapter will conclude with a close reading of E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910): a novel in which rooms and houses are used both as a powerful metaphor for key social and cultural changes and as a formal framework for the analysis of these changes. *Howards End* will be analyzed as an exemplar of domestic Bloomsbury, and Forster's representation of it within the novel will be considered in relation to the broader aesthetic and literary styles of the Bloomsbury Group.

*"Space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value."*⁴

The extent to which particular spaces become meaningful for human subjects and thus contribute to the construction of individual and collective identities has long been of interest to philosophers, social theorists and human geographers. The social, cultural and economic processes that were combined in what we have come to understand as the history of global modernization have identifiable and important spatial aspects, including the growth of cities, the increasing scale and frequency of global migrations, and the intensification and divisions of labor. These fundamentally spatial changes have underpinned and shaped a range of philosophical investigations and re-evaluations of the conditions of modern human subjectivity, focused on the question of how can we be human, or be as humans, in the face of such spatial dislocations. The answers to these philosophical questions about the contours of modern subjectivity contribute also to a broader understanding of what is at stake in the "domestic" both generally in the modern period and specifically in relation to this chapter's focus on the literary and cultural projects of Bloomsbury. The significance of domestic space, I will argue, is closely connected to the ways in which subjectivity is constructed and understood in the modern period.

In the early years of the twentieth century, European philosophy was particularly concerned by questions of being and time, questions that also were to dominate the literary field in the same period. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), for example, was an extensive investigation of the way that human beings negotiate and come to understand their embodied, and therefore temporally bounded, Being within the modern world. Heidegger's account of Being relates it to human mortality, to the sensation of *angst*, to the ethics of care for others, and to the possibility of authenticity. But his thinking is also characterized by a strong commitment to locatedness, which shapes the otherwise abstract qualities of his thinking in important ways. Heidegger, as is well known, wrote many of his philosophical texts while living in a small cabin in the Black Forest, and the material conditions of his life there enter repeatedly into his philosophical thinking.⁵ For example, Heidegger drew within his thinking on the concept of "dwelling" and this concept of dwelling became for him a kind of hinge between the natural and human worlds, as well as an answer to the uncertainties and anxieties associated with the human experience of time. In 1951, nearly twenty-five years after writing *Being and Time*, Heidegger gave a lecture entitled "Building Dwelling Thinking", where he argued that: "building and thinking belong to dwelling, if they remain within their limits and realize that one as much as the other comes from the workshop of long experience and incessant practice."⁶ Heidegger thus connects quite fundamentally creativity, intellectual life, and the concrete experience of "dwelling." What Heidegger seeks to capture is the extent to which human being in the modern world is framed by purposeful, and precisely located, forms of activity that are, he reminds us, underpinned by "experience" and by "practice". These words imply both the concrete and the located nature of such Being for Heidegger, stressing a practical kind of

knowledge, that might be thought of as a kind of apprenticeship in Being. Heidegger insists in this same essay that he is not expressing any kind of nostalgia for the pre-modern world within his philosophical writing, and stresses also that his references to the Black Forest farmhouse in *Being and Time* “in no way means that we should or could go back to building such houses.” (362) But he does, nonetheless, make a powerful argument against dislocated, or disembodied, thinking, and he also develops a sustained critique across his philosophical writings of what would come to be seen as some of the characteristic qualities of modernity: speed, displacement, and the alienated experience of the crowd. Heidegger’s philosophical project thus brings with it a powerful argument in favor of the human necessity of a sense of place, and a central recognition of the existential importance of “dwelling.”

This concept of dwelling intersects in interesting ways also with the idea of “privacy” as it developed in the modern period. Wendy Gan has argued in *Women, Privacy and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century British Writing* that “privacy was one of the ways for the middle-class domestic woman to claim a modern subjectivity for herself,” and that it was also “a means for a woman to process the upheavals of modernity”.⁷ Gan’s study draws richly on writings by a range of Bloomsbury authors, and she interestingly connects the enhanced potential for privacy within the modern home to “the changed spatial sensibilities emerging in the early twentieth century ... represented by Woolf and her Bloomsbury colleagues.” (28) Both dwelling and privacy then need to be read not simply in relation to a history of modernity, but also in terms of new kinds of “spatial sensibilities” they might have enabled for modern writers, and specifically for members of the Bloomsbury Group. The home here becomes a way of mapping and of imagining different kinds of modern subjectivity.

Such rich associations between the structural and the metaphorical or poetic dimensions of the home had also been of interest to the philosopher Gaston Bachelard, who published his very influential study, *The Poetics of Space*, in 1958.¹⁰ Bachelard considered the ways in which the basic structural organization of the home, its attics, basement and staircases, had entered the literary imagination and the unconscious. He argued that specific kinds of domestic space had the power to focus particular aspects of human subjectivity, so for example “every corner in a house, every angle in a room ... is a symbol of solitude for the imagination.” (36) For Bachelard, these kind of intellectual and affective associations are neither random nor abstract: he sees a close connection between the built environment and the poetic imagination that, though both subtle and mediated, is never arbitrary: “this coexistence of things in a space to which we add consciousness of our own existence is a very concrete thing.” (203)

The kind of close relation between space and the creative imagination theorized here by Bachelard will be the focus of the rest of this chapter, which will analyze the connections between the Bloomsbury Group and the domestic environments they created and inhabited. This discussion will be informed by the larger philosophical questions outlined above, in relation to the human need for dwelling, the modern development of privacy as a fundamental aspect of subjectivity, and the capacity of physical spaces to structure the poetic imagination. To leave the final word in this section of the chapter to a Human Geographer: “the kinds of places we inhabit – favorite rooms, neighbourhoods, nations – are all analyzable as social products ... but perhaps these places are all instances or examples of a deeper sense that humanity has to exist in place. ... It is impossible, after all, to think of a world without place.”¹¹

“Comfort didn't rank high in most Bloomsbury houses”.¹²

Domestic places are profoundly and significantly historical, despite the fact that the idea of “home” so readily provokes in us thoughts of the timeless and even of the natural. The modern period was one of particularly rapid transformation in the technologies that underpin domestic living. As Lucy Worsley has argued in her recent study, *If Walls Could Talk: An Intimate History of the Home* (2011), every aspect of the domestic interior from bedroom to bathroom and from living room to kitchen has undergone substantial transformation throughout history as new materials and methods of manufacture have created new technical possibilities. Technological innovations have always impacted on the ways that human beings live in domestic spaces, and thus on the framework within which they have created their individual and social identities. In Britain in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the domestic environment changed particularly rapidly in response to a range of technological and economic developments that created different possibilities for domestic living. Worsley points out, for example, that “separate rooms for washing were not standard in people's homes until at least the middle of the twentieth century” (105) and she also foregrounds the importance of the extensive provision of sewers in London in the late nineteenth century that would “allow the water closet to become standard in most homes.” (163) Bloomsbury Group members were far from indifferent to the impact of such changes to the fabric of their lives.

Bloomsbury houses were not on the whole particularly well provided in terms of modern domestic technologies. As Anna Snaith has pointed out, in the early-twentieth century Bloomsbury was known as “an area in which single, independent women could find accommodation in flats, rooms or bedsits,” and it was not

considered a fashionable or desirable part of London.¹³ Duncan Grant's characterization of Fitzroy Square, adjacent to Bloomsbury, to which Virginia and Adrian Stephen moved in 1907 makes this clear: "it was a derelict square. The houses of the great had gradually decayed and were taken as offices, lodgings, nursing homes and small artisans' workshops."¹⁴ Similarly, Marjorie Strachey noted in a radio program broadcast in 1962 that when the Stephen family first moved to Bloomsbury it was "anything but fashionable" and was indeed thought so unfashionable that friends and relations told them it was "quite an impossible place to live in" and that nobody would ever go and see them there.¹⁵ Of course, such social ostracism did not in fact result from their decision to move to Bloomsbury. On the contrary, as Leonard Woolf noted in a radio interview he gave in 1964, of the core group of thirteen friends and colleagues who constituted the original Bloomsbury Group "it so happened ... in 1911 we all went to live in Bloomsbury."¹⁶

By 1911, certain patterns of sociability had already been established in Bloomsbury, focused on the homes of various members of the Group. In an account from 1975, Duncan Grant remembered that the Group's members always met at each other's homes and studios: their forms of sociability were thus entirely domestic. Grant describes the ways in which these friends interacted with each other within the confined spaces of their homes, mentioning in particular the parties that were held every Thursday evening by Adrian and Virginia Stephen in Fitzroy Square, in Adrian's room.¹⁷ It was, Grant says, a small room, and was typically very full. Friends arrived after dinner, around 9 or 10 o'clock and did not leave until around 3 am. Little was served by way of refreshments, but conversation was animated, and sometimes heated. Grant describes these conversations as typically rather intimate in scale, involving two or three people rather than being shared with the whole room. A

vivid picture emerges from his account, of a group defined by friendship and committed to intimate forms of intellectual exchange, shaped by the scale and style of social possibilities and privacies offered by their Bloomsbury houses.

The members of the Bloomsbury Group were aware of the fact that their domestic environments could enable or constrain ways of being. The absence of modern conveniences in their homes, for example, was something on which they frequently commented in their diaries and memoirs. E. M. Forster wrote a memoir about his childhood home, Rooksnest, which was the model for the house he would later make the emotional centre of his novel, *Howards End*.¹⁸ In this memoir he dwells at length on the fact that “we lived for six years without water,” the landlord having declined to provide a well because “waterworks would soon be made in the valley and he would then pay to have water pumped up to our house.” (339) The lack of a well meant that Forster’s household had to survive on rainwater and a small quantity of drinking water bought from a neighboring farm, while the arrival of the pumped water meant the imposition of a new contraption that “spoiled the views for miles around being of an aggressive sea-green hue.” (339) The impact of this on the family’s ablutions is not mentioned, but it must have been significant, particularly for the household servants.

Lottie Hope, who worked as a servant for Leonard and Virginia Woolf at Monk’s House, Rodmell, was certainly aware of the inconvenience of minimal plumbing. Describing life with the Woolfs, she commented at length on the fact that Monk’s House had no bathroom, and that Leonard and Virginia had to bathe in the kitchen, their privacy protected only by a curtain.¹⁹ The time involved in boiling water and preparing both baths meant that the activity took up quite a bit of the morning. The impact of this on Virginia Woolf’s life was sufficiently adverse that she

noted in her diary on April 19, 1925 her determination that, "I'm out to make £300 this summer by writing, & build a bath & hot water range at Rodmell."²⁰ Woolf's interest in the material circumstances of her domestic life had not diminished by the mid-1930s, when she undertook significant alterations in her house in Tavistock Square. Her diary from early 1934 records her literary struggles with the text that would eventually become *The Years*, her physical experience of headaches and exhaustion, and her many social commitments and engagements, but it also finds time to record the fact that "the house rings with the clamour of electricians: the new bath water engine being inserted," and four days later, "the new electric boiler in & boiling our bath water this morning."²¹

The advent of electricity within the domestic environment not only allowed new arrangements for heating water, but perhaps more importantly it transformed the quality of light within the home. In terms of sustaining the kinds of intellectual and artistic work members of the Bloomsbury group aspired to, and enabling the kinds of nocturnal sociability they craved, affordable and reliable lighting was key. Gas lighting had begun to appear in the home in the 1850s, providing a very significant improvement in the levels of lighting that had been provided for centuries by candles, but electric lighting also became a technical and economic possibility by the early years of the twentieth century. The entry of electricity into the home was relatively slow in Britain and even after the end of the First World War only six per cent of houses in Britain were wired for electricity.²² It was indeed only with the passing of the *Electricity (Supply) Act* in 1926 that it became possible to establish a national standard for the generation of electricity, and to create the National Grid that would allow for a much more substantial penetration of electricity into the British home.

Much of the inconvenience associated with this relatively slow introduction of electricity into the home fell, like the inconveniences associated with primitive plumbing, on the servants whose efforts sustained the economy of middle-class and aristocratic homes in this period. As Alison Light has noted, “at the beginning of the twentieth century domestic service was still the largest single female occupation” and the domestic lives of the Bloomsbury Group relied absolutely on the labor of their servants.²³ For example, Grace Higgens worked as a servant for Vanessa Bell from 1920, and “when she started work there was no electricity [at Charleston] ... and the water was pumped by hand.”²⁴ The pumping of water was done by a local man, but the lighting of the house by candles entailed substantial work and inconvenience for Grace herself. Despite the absence of electricity at Charleston in 1920, Vanessa Bell was clearly aware of its benefits: in a 1951 memoir of her childhood home, 22 Hyde Park Gate, she notes that “many of the rooms were pitch dark” and that “not until quite a short time before my father’s death [Leslie Stephen died in 1904] did we have electric light, and even then not everywhere.”²⁵ The arrival of electricity at 22 Hyde Park Gate was clearly, for Vanessa Bell, some respite from its oppressive and stifling gloom. Isabelle Anscombe has argued that as a visual artist Vanessa was particularly sensitive to the negative impact of a home with insufficient light: “Vanessa’s reaction to dingy houses was ... a feeling of being stifled by all the connections with Victorian conventions. ... This hatred of Victorian interiors, representing claustrophobic family life, was an important binding factor among Vanessa’s friends.”²⁶

The domestic inconveniences of Charleston compete for prominence in a range of Bloomsbury memoirs with the strong sense that it was a domestic space that enabled significant cultural and social innovations. Quentin Bell writes with feeling of Charleston that “in the house there was of course no telephone, no radio, no central

heating”, noting also that by the end of the Great War “there was no coal, little wood, no butter, no meat, and no hope”.²⁷ But the importance of Charleston as a space of artistic innovation is equally striking in Bell’s memoir. He refers with enthusiasm to the “golden age” of Charleston, when a wide range of artists and writers were regular visitors, and notes the energy and determination with which Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant set about transforming the physical fabric of the house through their art.

The massive project of transforming the physical appearance of Charleston began in 1916. Bell and Grant had moved there with David Garnett, so that Grant and Garnett could undertake farm labor in the Sussex countryside, and thus avoid imprisonment as conscientious objectors. The house was initially almost derelict, having been recently used to accommodate farm animals. Bell and Grant’s artistic transformation of the house, involved large and colorful murals, furniture painting, and the aestheticization of a wide range of domestic objects. Such artistic transformation of a home was by no means new for Bell and Grant: as Quentin Bell noted in his memoir, “Whenever Duncan and Vanessa entered a house there was a fifty-fifty chance that they would cover the walls with decorations”. (14) Vanessa Bell acknowledges this in her 1951 memoir, where she described her move to 46 Gordon Square in 1904 and remembered that, “Duncan ... came in and lay on the floor and talked in a desultory way of ... how we are to turn my studio into a tropical forest with great red figures on the walls, a blue ceiling with birds of paradise floating from it.”²⁸

Many houses belonging to the Bloomsbury Group were thus decorated with brightly colored murals, hung with paintings by members of the Group, and filled with a range of decorative domestic objects that embodied the Group’s aesthetic values. Roger Fry’s described his own house, Durbins, as “a genuine and honest piece

of domestic architecture,"²⁹ while Virginia Woolf noted in her biography of Fry that "he had designed the house himself, and he was proud of its proportions and of its labour-saving devices".³⁰ Christopher Reed has argued in his recent study of Bloomsbury rooms that "it was in this house that the Bloomsbury artists produced their first collaborative domestic decorations."³¹ Durbins was thus more than simply an "honest piece of domestic architecture": it was an important experiment in modern domestic living, designed to facilitate sociability while maintaining and embodying key elements of the Bloomsbury aesthetic in its furnishing and decorations.

The experiment in domestic architecture and decoration that Fry began at Durbins in 1909 was to find fuller expression in the activities of the Omega Workshops, which he founded in 1913. Fry had by then achieved significant prominence as the organizer of the exhibition, "Manet and the Post-Impressionists" held at the Grafton Galleries in 1910. The Omega Workshops were created by him in response to the impact of this exhibition, as a space for artists with an interest in Post-Impressionism to display and sell works of art intended for the home, including furniture, toys, stained glass, lampshades, carpets, and textiles.³² As Virginia Woolf writes of Omega, "the young artists were to make chairs and tables, carpets and pots that people liked to look at." (*RF*, 189) Reed argues in *Bloomsbury Rooms* that the output of the Omega Workshops can best be understood as a fundamentally domestic response to the aesthetic innovations of Post-Impressionism:

The group's first response to modern French paintings was to imagine them as places to inhabit ... Far from trivializing modernist aesthetics through interior decoration, Bloomsbury's aspired to make modernism the look of modern life. ... Dedicated to the application of modernist

aesthetics to domestic designs, the Omega, more broadly, aimed to revolutionize the look – and thus the values – of the British home. (110)

Such “revolutionizing” of course took many forms. In the hands of Omega and its artists it involved creating aesthetic objects for the home that were assertively modern in style and also blurred the distinctions between the studio and the home, and thus between work and the domestic. More broadly, however, Bloomsbury Group members “revolutionized” throughout their lives by exploring the many and varied possible relations between the domestic, the sexual, and the familial.

The network of sexual relationships between members of the Group is complex, and notions of the familial were re-invented through and in these relationships. Members of the Group saw their various domestic spaces as providing opportunities to develop and sustain the network of personal and intimate relationships that fed their creativity. Commenting on her family’s decision to move from 22 Hyde Park Gate to Gordon Square on the death of their father, Virginia Woolf noted that, “we were full of experiments and reforms.”³³ Reflecting on responses to the fact that in 1911 she “had taken a house in Brunswick Square and had asked young men to share it” (*MB*, 201), Woolf is clearly aware of the challenge she is making to social mores. Her sister Vanessa, however, sees in the arrangement only good economic sense, and a clear sense of the conditions necessary to sustain her sister’s work:

In 1911 Virginia and Adrian decided to give up the house in Fitzroy Square and move to a large house in Brunswick Square which they proposed to share with friends of whom Leonard Woolf was one. Each member of the household was to have their own room, carrying up their

own meals to it and so living completely separate existences, with the advantage of shared expenses.³⁴

The domestic arrangement Woolf put in place created both the solitude and the sociability necessary for creative work, underpinned by economic relations that could make this work more sustainable. The revolutionary nature of this does not lie in the moral challenge it posed for some of her friends and relations, but rather in its contribution to the achievement of the many advantages for her of what she saw as the creative, subjective, and economic requirement for “a room of one’s own.”³⁵

“That shallow makeshift note that is so often heard in the modern dwelling-place.”³⁶

E. M. Forster’s novel, *Howards End* is centrally concerned with this very dynamic between the conditions of creativity and the possibility of economic sustainability, particularly as expressed through and in the choice of a home. Its formal and thematic concerns thus provide a rich resource for understanding how the literary imagination of the Bloomsbury Group drew on the issues with which this chapter is centrally concerned: the domestic, the modern, sociability, and privacy.

In *Howards End*, Forster develops an account of the key forces that underpin and over-determine what he saw as the distinctive features of modern society. The novel is set in London, home to the cultured and educated Schlegel family, and in the home counties, specifically Howards End, the family home of the more worldly Wilcoxes. The novel opens with a description of this house -- “It is old and little, and altogether delightful” (19) -- by Helen Schlegel but then moves quickly towards the first of the various dramatic (and sometimes melodramatic) episodes that demonstrate what is at stake in the very different world views adopted by these two families.

The Wilcox family, or at least its male representatives, is worldly, wealthy, and frequently crass. Margaret Schlegel sees in the Wilcox family both “panic and emptiness” and “telegrams and anger,” associating them with an attitude to the modern world that is in sharp contrast to the Schlegel’s own values: “personal relations, that we think supreme, are not supreme there.” (40-1) The contrast between the values and perspectives of these two families forms the core of the novel, which seeks famously to find novelistic devices to embody the aspirations expressed in its epigraph, “only connect.” The connections that need to be forged include those between the economy of a society and its culture, between men and women, and between past and future. *Howards End* seeks to build a “rainbow bridge that should connect the prose in us with the passion” (187), and the building of that bridge relies crucially on the metaphorical potential of a rather different architectural structure, the home.

The most significant home in the novel is, of course, Howards End itself. This is the house in which the action of the novel begins and ends, and is the primary space in which the potential for connection is explored. The house is initially associated most strongly with Mrs. Wilcox, who has a powerful sense of beauty and a strong sense of history, both of which are apparently lacking in the rest of her family. Talking to Margaret Schlegel about the fact that the Schlegels will soon have to move out of their London home because their landlord plans to demolish it and build mansion flats, Mrs. Wilcox says: “To be parted from your house, your father’s house – it oughtn’t to be allowed. It is worse than dying. I would rather die.” (93) Margaret Schlegel counters with a reflection that this kind of passion is inappropriate for a modern London dweller. Conceding that one might feel this sort of existential connection to a house like Howard’s End (prefiguring the passion she will in fact bring to Howard’s End later in the novel when it becomes hers), Margaret says “we

are fond of ours, but there is nothing distinctive about it. As you saw, it is an ordinary London house.” (93)

But this ordinary London house is actually made to do quite a lot of symbolic and narrative work in the novel. The first description of it makes its symbolic potential clear:

Their house was in Wickham Place, and fairly quiet, for a lofty promontory of buildings separated it from the main thoroughfare. One had the sense of a backwater, or rather of an estuary, whose waters flowed in from the invisible sea, and ebbed into a profound silence while the waves without were still beating. Though the promontory consisted of flats – expensive, with cavernous halls full of concierges and palms -- it fulfilled its purpose and gained for the older houses opposite a certain measure of peace. (23)

Despite being in London, the house's associations are rural: it is quiet, peaceful, a backwater. In this unusual kind of urban place it is possible for the Schlegels to be both rooted and cosmopolitan, to espouse the central importance of human relationships while knowing and experiencing the modern impersonal economic forces that drive the growth and development of London as a major European city.

These economic forces eventually lead to the destruction of their home and its replacement by more expensive flats.. When the Wilcox family moves to London after the sudden death of Mrs. Wilcox, their choice to live in just such a flat is a further expression of their association with the forces of inhuman modernization. The Schlegels' aunt reads into the Wilcox's move a simple form of social climbing: “coming up, no doubt, in the hope of getting into London society.” (68) But the novel finds a more vivid form in which to capture what these expensive flats and their

inhabitants might mean for the values of cultured privacy embodied in the Schlegels. The existence of such flats constitutes a threat to the intact domestic spaces that have framed the Schlegels' intimate conversations. Their aunt conjures the experience of living so close to the Wilcoxes in one of these flats: "Turn the electric light on here or there, and it's almost the same room. One evening they may forget to draw their blinds down, and you'll see them; and the next you yours, and they'll see you. Impossible to sit out on the balconies. Impossible to water the plants, or even speak." (71) The proximity generated by this kind of modern urban dwelling, and the associated intrusion of electric lighting, combine to render speech "impossible": a serious charge in a novel that sets so much store by the role of language in human relationships.

Yet the most "impossible" space in this novel is inhabited neither by the Schlegels nor the Wilcoxes. It is the South London flat lived in by Leonard Bast, a poor clerk with cultural ambitions who is ultimately destroyed by the heartless single-mindedness of the Wilcoxes and the unthinking cultural elitism of the Schlegels in equal measure. Leonard is condemned to live in a "modern dwelling house": "a block of flats, constructed with extreme cheapness." (59) His life here is uncomfortable and precarious, like the flat itself: "it had been too easily gained and could be relinquished too easily." (60) The flat, however, proves more resilient than Leonard, who is dispatched by Forster with almost indecent haste towards the end of the novel. The broader significance of this for the modern domestic dwelling can surely be glimpsed in the following conversation between the Schlegel sisters, with its uncanny echo of Heidegger:

"It is sad to suppose that places may ever be more important than people,"
continued Margaret.

“Why, Meg? They’re so much nicer generally. I’d rather think of that forester’s house in Pomerania than of the fat Herr Förstmeister who lived in it.”

“I believe we shall come to care about people less and less, Helen. The more people one knows the easier it becomes to replace them. It’s one of the curses of London. I quite expect to end my life caring most for a place.”

(136-7)

And so she does.

One crucial innovation of the Bloomsbury Group, we might conclude, was to resist this alienation between humanity and its dwellings in favor of an attempted integration of domestic, economic and cultural life. As Virginia Woolf put it so powerfully, “These old houses are only brick and wood, soaked in human sweat, grained with human dirt.”³⁷

¹ E. M. Forster, *Howards End*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 201.

² Among the many recent works devoted to the idea of home, see particularly Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (London: Yale University Press, 2010); Lucy Worsley, *If Walls Could Talk: An Intimate History of the Home* (London: Faber and Faber 2011); and Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home: Key Concepts in Geography* (New York, Routledge, 2006).

³ Tim Creswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

⁴ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.

⁵ See Adam Sharr, *Heidegger's Hut* (MIT Press, 2006).

⁶ Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Basic Writings* ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), 344-363 (p. 362).

⁷ Wendy Gan, *Women, Privacy and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century British Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 15 and 10.

¹⁰ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1994).

¹¹ Cresswell, *Place*, 50.

¹² Frances Partridge, 'Bloomsbury and their Houses' in *The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*, ed. S. P Rosenbaum (University of Toronto Press, 1995), 416-30 (418).

¹³ Anna Snaith, *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 26.

¹⁴ Duncan Grant, "Virginia Woolf and the beginnings of Bloomsbury" in Rosenbaum (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Group*, 97-101 (98).

¹⁵ Marjorie Strachey's contribution to this radio program can be found on Disc 2 of the British Library's CD: *The Spoken Word: The Bloomsbury Group* (2009).

¹⁶ *The Spoken Word*, Disc 1.

¹⁷ Both accounts by Grant can be found on *The Spoken Word*, Disc 1.

¹⁸ This memoir can be found as an appendix to *Howard's End*, 333-343.

¹⁹ *The Spoken Word*, Disc 2.

²⁰ *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: vol. 3, 1925-1930*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 9.

²¹ *The Diary of Virginia Woolf; vol. 4, 1931-1935*, edited by Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 201 and 203.

²² Caroline Davidson, *A Woman's Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles, 1650-1950* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1986), 38.

²³ Alison Light, *Mrs. Woolf and the Servants: An Intimate History of Domestic Life in Bloomsbury* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), xv.

²⁴ Isabelle Anscombe, *Omega and After: Bloomsbury and the Decorative Arts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), p. 141.

²⁵ Vanessa Bell, "Notes on Bloomsbury" in Rosenbaum (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Group*, 102-113 (104).

²⁶ Anscombe, *Omega and After*, 66.

²⁷ Quentin Bell, "A Vanished World", in Quentin Bell and Virginia Nicholson, *Charleston: A Bloomsbury House and Gardens* (London: Frances Lincoln, 1997), 12-23 (16-17).

²⁸ Letter from Vanessa Bell to Clive Bell, December 27, 1912, in *Selected Letters of Vanessa Bell*, ed. Regina Marler (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 131.

²⁹ Roger Fry, "A Possible Domestic Architecture", in *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920), 180.

³⁰ Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry* (London: Vintage, 2003), 163.

³¹ Christopher Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture and Domesticity* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 38.

³² See Anscombe, *Omega and After* and Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms*, particularly Section III, 'On to Omega: The Workshops' Origins and Objects', 109-163.

³³ Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Grafton, 1989), 84.

³⁴ Bell, "Notes on Bloomsbury," 110.

³⁵ For further discussion of this see Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

³⁶ Forster, *Howards End*, 60.

³⁷ Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 124.