TO THE READER

Virginia Woolf's work is being read today with a new energy, intensity and sympathy. There exists a growing demand for information about her life and work from the common reader as well as the scholar. The Virginia Woolf Miscellany will attempt to answer some of these needs. In doing so, we hope to involve readers in what are usually termed "editorial" decisions. The questionnaire included in this first issue is designed to elicit your particular needs so that future issues can be shaped by your responses. In this way, the Miscellany should help put Woolf readers in touch with one another.

Among other services, we would like to note the location and availability of Woolf manuscripts and papers; to inform readers of publication dates for forthcoming work; to summarize and in some cases review the latest books and articles on her work and life; to inform our readers about various conferences, exhibitions and other public events of interest; to air the controversies that are the healthy consequence of the new directions in Woolf criticism; to provide a forum for all varieties of Woolf readers, many of whom may lack the opportunity to be heard.

There is no subscription charge for the Miscellany. As the existence and value of this venture depend upon your involvement, please give your attention to our questionnaire printed on the mail-back insert.

Sincerely,

Peggy Comstock, Rebecca Davison, Ellen Rogat, Lucio Ruotolo, J.J. Wilson

There are plans afoot for a symposium on Woolf, to be held at the University of California, Santa Cruz this Spring. Anyone interested in participating, should write Professor Madeline Hummel there, at Kresge College.

Dorothy Strachey Bussy wrote a novel called Olivia (under the pseudonym, Olivia), William Shane Associates, Publishers, New York, 1949. There is a reference to the book in Lash's Eleanor and Franklin, as it is the story of Dorothy's passion for Mme Sylvestre, the remarkable woman who was Eleanor Roosevelt's teacher too. The title rang a bell. Remembering Woolf's wish expressed in A Room of One's Own for more books about how Chloe liked Olivia, I was charmed when I finally found a copy of the book, to see it dedicated "To the Beloved Memory of V.W."

VISITING THE BERG COLLECTION

by Ellen Hawkes Rogat

I have just spent the last two months reading Virginia Woolf's diaries and letters in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. Perhaps my impressions may help you plan your own visit, or evoke some pleasurable memories if you have already gone, or even give you a vicarious sense of such a pilgrimage.

I call it a pilgrimage, because I went as a devoted reader of Woolf. I had cleared a space in my own life to become totally immersed in hers. Not surprisingly, the journey was wonderful, strange, and sometimes even comic. Because note-taking from the diaries is prohibited, I had to focus exclusively, almost obsessively, on the pages of Woolf's angular handwriting. In a sense, I was spinning out a Woolfian filament, a bond that was not easily broken. Images from the diaries would burst into my dreams, a friend's remark would echo something I had read that day, an occurrence in the street would evoke Woolf's thoughts about a similar scene. In a strange way, her experiences and mine began to reverberate. Not only did her thoughts structure mine, not only were my feelings so often filtered through hers, but I also began to understand, almost vicariously, her responses to experience. I knew what she meant when, missing the person to whom she was closest, Leonard, she felt that she had no boundaries or circumference to her personality. How often I identified with her conflicting desires to work very hard, to meet deadlines, but also to spend time with friends. But even more often I remembered Woolf's antagonism toward the world's egotistical fanatics who think that everyone should be badgered into submissive conversion. Each day the Forty-second Street entrance to the library was surrounded by annoying, proselytizing fundamentalists, who cornered passers-by to demand, "Don't you have time for Jesus?" I wondered how Woolf would have handled her anger at this contemporary example of those who stamp their feet on others' souls. But my irritation would disappear when I read Woolf's comic descriptions of embarrassing incidents at parties; in fact, it was even more difficult to control my laughter when I remembered my comparable social blunders, committed perhaps only the evening before. I must admit, however, that I have never secretly discarded an anchovy hors-d'oeuvre in a purse, only to retrieve it minutes later, thinking it a cigarette lighter. And finally, since I was working specifically on Woolf's feminism, I could imagine Woolf's reaction to the scholar across the table who berated his wife, in a strained library whisper, for copying a manuscript much too slowly. But these incidents are only a small part of my total impression. Although I found nothing startling or surprising in the diaries, I developed a more complex sense of Woolf's life and personality. Woolf's unrelenting honesty helped to fill in the background for many of the facts presented by
Quentin Bell's biography. She seemed to do a verbal doubletake of everything she wrote in her notebooks. She refused either to censor her thoughts or to let a careless statement stand unchallenged or unaugmented. If she sensed a hidden depth beneath a remark, she pulled back the cover of inadvertently conventional phrases. The diaries thus record her insistent exploration of ambivalent feelings, conflicting opinions, and judgments which in others she would consider limited, nigging, or even cruel. For this reason, her feelings about herself, about Leonard, about Vanessa and Clive Bell, about women friends, about other writers and, in particular, other women writers, (specifically Katherine Mansfield), deserve more complex interpretations than those offered by the biography. Unfortunately, such interpretations cannot yet cite supporting evidence from the diaries. At this time we can only hope that Professor Bell will publish all the notebooks as soon as possible so that Woolf's honesty and perceptiveness can be used to best advantage.

Woolf's letters, more than the diaries, portray the playful, high-spirited woman whom her friends remember. She is affectionate, warm, and capable of imaginatively identifying with a friend's experience. Reading the letters was not as intense an experience as reading the diaries, since there are no restrictions on note-taking, except from those letters to Vita Sackville-West. Of course, Quentin Bell must grant permission for any quotations. I read the letters to Vanessa Bell and Violet Dickinson. The Berg also possesses Vanessa's letters, and taken together, the two collections depict the complex relationship between the two sisters—a relationship based on deep affection, mutual support, and a persistent teasing which sometimes turned into open hostility. I was also struck by the obviously deep affection of Woolf for Violet Dickinson; I was puzzled, however, by its abrupt decline and would, therefore, like to see Violet Dickinson's letters to Woolf. I do not know whether or where they exist. Does anyone know? (I might add that this is the kind of question the Miscellany hopes to answer in the future.)

To describe the atmosphere of the Berg reading room, I must start on the most literal level: it was like a steam bath in a wind tunnel. When a record-breaking heat wave hit New York, the air conditioning was shut off to avoid an anticipated catastrophe in the system. But the Berg is on the third floor, directly under the scorching roof, it has no windows, and its only door to the hall is usually closed. The room grew hotter and hotter until the thermometer on the front desk reached the high 90's. Huge fans, installed as emergency measures, circulated only perspiration and papers, not air. Luckily, the heat wave finally broke, and Dr. Lola Szladits returned from her vacation to take matters into her own hands. I had known her only by reputation as the knowledgeable curator of the Berg, but I met her first in the roles of structural engineer and tight-rope walker. She pushed and pulled the fans, opened the one door and the roof vents, and explored various alternatives for cooling the room. She even crawled in the attic and inspected pipes to help design a solution to the problem. And one morning she could be seen balancing on the ledges of the third-floor hall windows which she was trying to pry open for more air. When I left, Dr. Szladits had returned to her usual tasks, and the Berg had been promised a new heating and cooling system so that readers and, more importantly, books and manuscripts, can exist in reasonable and stable atmospheric conditions.

But on a less literal level, the atmosphere of the Berg reading room makes it a wonderful place to work. Dr. Szladits has helped create this atmosphere as well. She is the guardian of the Woolf papers, knows what they contain, and takes Woolf and work on Woolf very seriously. She can answer questions, suggest sources, and help guide research. Nevertheless, she is an extremely busy person and should not be bothered by questions the answers to which can be found in the catalogue or in secondary sources. If the Miscellany can help lighten her burden, she will have more time for the specialized tasks of studying and organizing the Woolf material, some of which is still uncatalogued. In addition to being a wonderful place to work, the Berg is also a real meeting ground for those of us interested in Woolf. During my visit I became acquainted with many people who are working on Woolf, and I realized once again how important it is to be able to share ideas and interests. Hopefully, the Miscellany can recreate this atmosphere outside the Berg reading room so that those of us around the country can communicate thoughts, information, and our mutual excitement about Woolf.

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**REVIEW:** ALLEN MCLAURIN'S VIRGINIA WOOLF:
THE ECHOES ENSLAVED
by Lucio Ruotolo

Criticizing Blake for claiming "to be able to lay hands upon 'the inmost form,'" Lytton Strachey suggests that to do so "one must achieve the impossible; one must be inside the crystal cabinet at the same time."

Allen Mclaurin's new book on Virginia Woolf confronts and challenges Strachey's assumption. Indeed, it is precisely that "fruitful tension" between the inner and the outer world, he argues, that characterizes the basis of art and, more particularly for the book he has written, the aesthetics of three representative modern writers: Samuel Butler, Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf.

Mclaurin outlines to what extent the thinking of Butler and Fry affected Woolf's treatment of reality. For both men an exposure to contradiction is bound up with experiencing reality for oneself. Butler's "anti-professionalism" like Fry's "anti-Academicism," calls each person to encounter the thing itself, be it a politician, a painting, or a tree.

To probe "the inmost form," however, leads each of these writers to a frustrating impasse, namely that the ultimate essence of each experienced reality is, in Butler's words, "as ungrippable as shadow." Those who cannot live with such unresolved tension often seek through arbitrary and dogmatic forms of assertiveness to empty experience of its existential ambiguity. For art this means an inevitable mechanization of form and an accompanying loss of depth. "The danger of craft," Mclaurin writes, "is that it leads to mechanical repetition which crushes human vitality and the free openness to the scraping and grasping of the world of sensation and intuition." (69) When Woolf speaks, as she so often does, of that "silence at the heart of art," she would seek to cultivate in herself and in her reader the capacity to live in a world (interpenetrated with life and death) where nothing is immutably fixed. In the idiom of Fry and Butler this involves the ability to live with "antitheses."

But the artist seems called upon to translate the opaque, be it a mark on the wall or a no less obscure political event, into more tangible terms. While Butler confesses that "our knowledge is really founded upon something which we do not know," he does not confuse
this intuition with the structured aspect of experience. Such intuitions, he argues, are converted into intelligibility by memory. Art, and for that matter the embodiment that occurs with any process of mind, leads McLaurin consistently to the question of repetition.

The major portion of his book deals with "repetition" as an aspect of Woolf's work and more generally as an aspect of modern consciousness. McLaurin asks what the idea of repetition holds for the artist. Quoting Gertrude Stein from a volume published by Virginia and Leonard Woolf in 1926, he goes on to suggest the proximity of these two authors. (Woolf and Stein had a mutual friend in Roger Fry.) Stein "believed that a writer must 'begin again and again' to 'maintain a continuous present." " Like still another woman writer of the time, Dorothy Richardson, the effort to fuse past and present in the reader's mind represents for McLaurin "a fundamental process of consciousness." Through repetition the modern artist seeks an alternative to those scientific, religious and heroic structures whose chief failure is that they no longer bring people together.

Discussing plot, history and memory in an analysis of The Years, McLaurin illustrates how Woolf sought to avoid a reductive and static representation of world and of character. "The clouds, like the weather, are unique and formless. The problem of trying to place them into a pattern without falsification is that problem of transmuting repetition into rhythm which we have seen as the basis of Virginia Woolf's art." (161) For McLaurin this rhythm signifies the heart of Woolf's humanism as well as of her art. Man's capacity to create structure expresses his transcendence over what Butler termed "the tyranny of Immediacy." Paradoxically, art, while uniquely different from sensation, remains dependent upon that common ground from which all human structures emerge.

In his concluding chapter, "To The Lighthouse," McLaurin shows how "human repetitions modify the monotonous fall of the waves." Where there is no human rhythm in counterpoint with this basic natural repetition then it becomes terrifying; we see only the remorseless repetition of death which makes life seem hollow." (178) For the modern artist there can be no single 'correct' view" (184) but only a dialectical posture toward each and every experience. He is destined to remain in a state of perpetual tension because he is destined to remain both inside and outside that natural world which surrounds and engulfs him. This explains why Woolf, avoiding realism (psychological or otherwise) in her portrayal of character, attempts rather to convey a sense of "relation." As a consequence, "space" becomes one of her central concerns and images. "Space is formidable," McLaurin writes, "because it is 'empty,' like the middle section of the novel. There, we hear the repeated shock of guns and remember perhaps the artilleryman's sense of 'bracketing.' Silence, space, 'emptiness,' give us a sense of freedom. They are full of every possibility, as Mrs. Ramsay realizes when she becomes a 'wedge-shaped core of darkness' (the purple triangle of Lilly's picture)." (200)

Quoting from Flemish Art (a book published in the same year as To The Lighthouse), McLaurin sees Woolf's effort to free character from the tyranny of single vision as one of Fry's central intentions: "The 'free circulation of air' which Roger Fry often admired in paintings gives us a sense of space and freedom and Virginia Woolf tries to achieve a similar effect in the novel." (200) Only in free space can we hope "to see all round a person." (202)

Space and movement illuminate the concept of freedom. Citing Roger Shattuck's words about the composer Satie, McLaurin conveys a sense of movement defined, as Kierkegaard defined freedom, in relation to itself:

Satie challenges us not to be impressed but to be bored. He says in effect: Here are the naked features of our world. If they provoke you or bore, you will have reacted constructively, for either way you will be forced to move.... "Experience is one of the forms of paralysis." If experience is a form of paralysis, satisfaction is a form of death. In his hands music never became an exercise in self-contentment. It was a means of upholding our freedom. (124)

Virginia Woolf, like Satie, saw the consequences of an age obsessed with a need for permanence. McLaurin's fine book helps us better to understand the context as well as the centrality of that humanism she advocated to the end of her life.

PHOTOGRAPH EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENT

by Anita Ventura Mozley

Mrs. Cameron's Photographs from the Life, an exhibition to be held at the Stanford University Museum of Art from 22 January to 8 March, 1974, will bring together some sixty photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), Virginia Woolf's great-aunt. Among the portraits of poets, scholars, scientists, relatives and housemaids will be several of Virginia Woolf's mother, the daughter of Mrs. Cameron's sister Maria, Julia Jackson, she who, as Mrs. Cameron inscribed the print, "Walks in Beauty."

Virginia Woolf celebrated Mrs. Cameron as a family legend in an introductory essay to Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women (with an introduction also by Roger Fry, New York, Harcourt, n.d., c. 1928) and in her play, in three acts, "Freshwater" (manuscript, Sussex University Library). In the play she presents Julia Cameron as an imperious eccentric who commands the maid to fetch turkey wings for Ellen Terry as she sits on Tennyson's knee for a photograph of "The Adoration of the Muse," and who mistakes a braying donkey for John Craig. To researchers in the history of photography, this mistaken identity suggests nearsightedness, and may be a clue to the cause of what some 19th century journalists called Mrs. Cameron's "solvent manipulation," which produced images of extremely soft focus. Julia Cameron, however, knew what she was after: a portrayal of the soul, and its special radiance. Virginia Woolf's essay on her in Victorian Photographs ends: "...Mrs. Cameron saw the stars shining, breathed the one word 'Beautiful,' and so died."

According to an advertisement in the TLS of Oct. 12, 1973, Victoria Photographs is being reissued this year by Hogarth Press, in a "revised and enlarged edition," with the introductions by Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry, and a preface by Tristan Powell.
Lola Szladits is doing a fascinating book out of the Berg Collection titled Other People's Mail: Letters of Men and Women of Letters, and one of the letters will be Woolf's to Barbara Bagenal. Pub. date Dec. 1, softbound, $7.50. Maggie Smith may be cast in the role of Virginia Woolf in a movie being made about her life in England.

The Modern Language Association meets in Chicago this Christmas and yes, there will be a Virginia Woolf Seminar, concentrating on the timely topic chosen for us by Professor Jane Novak: The Work and the Biography. We will start with an informal panel, but will expect everyone to join in on such interesting questions as how the biography affects the criticism at the present time? what questions of re-interpretation it sparks? in what ways it confuses criticism? etc. If there is an overflow crowd, we will try to break into smaller groups with the panelists for part of the time at least. See the MLA Bulletin for time and place, or write J.J. Wilson, Dept. of Eng., Sonoma State College, Rohnert Park, Calif. 94928 for further details. We will try to keep minutes of the meeting, and a list of the participants, and make both available to all who could not be there through the next issue of the Miscellany.

ON "PORTRAIT OF A MARRIAGE"
by J.J. Wilson

We are now all reading Nigel Nicolson's Portrait of a Marriage (Atheneum) either because of or despite the rash of reviews which have been appearing in TLS, New York Review of Books, Time, Atlantic and others. I understand Sybille Bedford has done a review for The Listener, and look forward to seeing what that superb novelist has to say in response to the book's melange of biography and autobiography. She might well speculate that the material would lend itself better to treatment in a novel, rather than to this high-class gossip provided by, and this is part of the peculiarity of Portrait, the heroine's son. Nigel Nicolson's editorial skills, already demonstrated in his father's published diaries, here seem less necessary. Though his tenderness, tact, and tolerance are admirable, it still seems a curious phenomenon, the younger generation commenting on the passions and peccadillos of their parents.

Woolf readers should certainly be grateful to him, however, for publishing these "confessions" of Vita Sackville-West, as they add immensely to our understanding of Orlando, and to our appreciation of the gift Virginia Woolf gave her in the writing of it. That book must have seemed a kind of ultimate justification by art of what Vita describes so painfully as "a morass, my life, a bog, a swamp, a deceitful country." (p.3) Woolf gives full credit to passion and to love in the book, and space for all of Vita's selves to move around in (other than Knole's 365 rooms, which one gathers gave hardly room enough for the individuals of that family!). An interesting by-the-way here is the importance of domestic architecture to the unusual life style that Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West and their sons were developing (see Sissinghurst description, pp. 222-224). As many unconventional families are finding now, and as the Stephens found too when they first moved to Bloomsbury after the death of the patriarch, we need new forms for new contents. "A house that fits us all."

The accounts given of Virginia Woolf by the Nicolson sons are treasures which I am also grateful to them for sharing. One of the most satisfying portions of the whole book for me came in the following incident reported between Virginia Woolf and Ben Nicolson. When he told her that Lady Sackville had whiled away a weary afternoon by recounting to him, then a boy of eighteen, in lurid detail the love affairs his mother had had with ladies and those his father had with gentlemen, Woolf's instant response was: "The old woman ought to be shot." (p. 185)

I want more time to think about Vita's revelations in Portrait (and the Miscellany would welcome others' brief comments on the book), but on first reading, it seems to me a valuable addition to the all too small literature on lesbian relationships, and in the even smaller literature on that difficult quest described by Carolyn Heilbrun as toward androgyny. As Vita Sackville-West herself says: I advance, therefore, the perfectly accepted theory that cases of dual personality do exist, in which the feminine and the masculine elements alternately preponderate. I advance this in an impersonal and scientific spirit, and claim that I am qualified to speak with the intimacy a professional scientist could acquire only after years of study and indirect information, because I have the object of study always to hand, in my own heart... (p. 106)