ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our first announcement may already be a fait accompli by the time you read this: The Annual MLA Virginia Woolf Seminar will be held at the Continental 2, Hilton, December 27, 4:5-15 p.m. It is listed in the MLA program as Seminar No. 134 and will concentrate on the connections between The Years and Three Guineas. All participants should have written in advance to Chairperson Jane Marcus [University of Illinois at Chicago Circle].

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Our next announcement may seem premature, but as the MLA convention program goes to press earlier each year, Peggy Comstock, chairperson for next year's Woolf Seminar, has asked that you send suggestions for topics to her as soon as possible: Prof, Margaret Comstock, Department of English, New York University, 19 University Place, New York, N.Y. 10003.

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At the MLA Convention this year, shortly after the Woolf Seminar itself, a meeting will be held in Rosewood Room B. at the Hilton, December 27, 6:30-8:30 p.m. to discuss the possibilities of setting up a scholarly "foundation" devoted to Virginia Woolf, or perhaps to the Bloomsbury Group in general. The meeting has been scheduled by Profs. Morris Beja, Ohio State University; Madeline Hummel, UC Santa Cruz; James Naremore, Indiana University; and all interested persons are encouraged to attend. For those unable to be at this first meeting, "rest assured we will let you know of our progress," the organizers promise. You could write either to VWM or directly to any of the organizers.

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Activity in Virginia Woolf scholarship certainly abounds and everyone will be glad to know that the Virginia Woolf Quarterly is back in business again, with the same editorial staff, to be published by a feminist press and book publisher, Aeolian Press, 6762 Cibola Rd., San Diego, CA 92120. They will have a booth at MLA and urge all previous or would-be subscribers to contact them there or by mail to clarify their subscription status. They also welcome articles and creative writing for future issues. Volume II, issue 1 will be ready as of December 20, and will be available at MLA.

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Virginia Woolf Miscellany's fall issue will be distributed at MLA also, with copies being mailed later to all on our mailing list who are not marked as receiving them first-hand--an attempt to cut postage costs. The Spring Issue of VWM will be edited by Professor John Hulcoop at the University of British Columbia and all submissions should be sent directly to him.

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Matters of mailing, donations, etc., should continue to be directed to Prof. J.J. Wilson, Dept. of English, California State College, Sonoma, Rohnert Park, CA 94928, however. We hope others of you will volunteer to edit an issue of VWM. It is not a difficult task now that the format is set up; in fact, it is a most rewarding experience. Do write to any of our editors if you are interested in taking on such a project. To remind you, we are: Profs., Lucio Ruotolo, Stanford University, now at Monk's House!; Ellen Hawkes, Boston University; Peggy Comstock, New York University; and J.J. Wilson, California State College, Sonoma -- editor for this issue.

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Last in this long list of announcements: as you will remember, the VWM staff decided early on not to request official subscriptions from its readers, but rather to operate on the basis of donations from sponsoring English Departments, libraries, publishers, bookstores, and best of all, individuals such as yourselves. We are proud to announce that we have received donations from over 25 Common Readers, usually accompanied by heartwarming notes like Karen Gleiter's from Chapel Hill: "The enclosed check is a contribution to your production costs. Let me congratulate you on an elegant publication." Needless to say, further donations are needed from all of you, but this is a good beginning and shows that alternative ways of receiving support can sometimes work. Someday, when other copy is sparse -- if that should ever happen, we will publish a VWM financial report, modeled on Leonard Woolf's records of the transactions of Hogarth Press, and along with that an Honor Roll of donors. Many thanks to you all.

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LIVING IN MONK'S HOUSE

Let no one tell you that interest in Virginia Woolf is essentially an American phenomenon. When in early July we first drove down the narrow street of Rodmell village to take residence in Monk's House (having responded to a rental ad in the New York Review of Books), we found a French teacher of English standing at the gate. Since she had come all the way from Dijon, we asked her to stay for lunch. (She informed me, incidentally, that Three Guineas was shortly to be published in France by Editions de Femme.) The next day three women from Argentina appeared, followed that week by visitors from Hungary, Canada and Wales. I'm afraid we learned early to ration hospitality. In the summer alone over 150 persons (not
convictions. Unaware of the intricacies of Labor
scowl. A local M.D. answering our
suicide notes or of the
to Monk's House lives a woman over ninety, proud of her Tory
devoutly religious octogenarian who is a master spinner and
that her suicide was an accident. He will hear nothing of
became prime minister. The old woman still remembers his
smell; at high tide a dark, deep river, moving with channeled
about the final decision of her life. A tidal river, it is in fact
valley to prevent flooding, is not visible from either the garden
Monk's House (there are two main footpaths) takes about
Omega furniture and shelves of pottery decorated by Vanessa
acquired Monk's House.

When eating in the dining room we sit on chairs backed
with needle point designs by Vanessa Bell, each of a slightly
different floral pattern. The downstairs sitting room (cool in
the summer, cold in the winter) contains some excellent
Omega furniture and shelves of pottery decorated by Vanessa
Bell and Duncan Grant. Upstairs one finds Leslie Stephen's
armchair and a chair whose seatcover was designed by Angelica
Garnett and executed by Virginia herself. In many respects the
center of the house is the kitchen with its oil burning
"cooker" which runs 24 hours, day and night, to provide hot
water as well. By the kitchen door hangs a striking primitive
painting of the children of former owners, one of three such
paintings Leonard and Virginia purchased at the time they
acquired Monk's House. It is one of E.M. Forster's favorites
and hung in his Cambridge rooms for many years.

Perhaps the chief attraction remains the Monk's House
garden with its tall elms, flintstone walls, goldfish ponds and
an expansive view of the surrounding downs. The sound of
birds is everywhere. Virginia's study, which stands at the
farthest end of the garden, looks out over the Ouse Valley. In
this bare room stands what is apparently one of her writing
desks. The river, now diked on both banks throughout the
valley to prevent flooding, is not visible from either the garden
or the house.

Aesthetically, the Ouse itself is somewhat of a disappoint-
ment. I say this as a fisherman who loves all fishable rivers,
and there is an abundance of fish in the Ouse ranging from sea
tROUT and bass to grey mullet and eel. To reach it from
Monk's House (there are two main footpaths) takes about
fifteen minutes. Virginia clearly had some time to speculate
about the final decision of her life. A tidal river, it is in fact
two different bodies of water: at low tide a relatively shallow
stream, whose steep banks are muddy and unpleasant to the
smell; at high tide a dark, deep river, moving with channeled
force. While I have not checked its height on the day of
Virginia's death, one cannot help but speculate whether her
suicide was determined, at least in part on that day, by the
tides. Did she have a tide chart, I wonder?

Anecdotes about the Woolfs still abound in Rodmell. A
devoutly religious octogenarian who is a master spinner and
weaver will tell you that Virginia's hands were transparent and
that her suicide was an accident. He will hear nothing of
suicide notes or of the rocks found in her pockets. Next door
to Monk's House lives a woman over ninety, proud of her Tory
convictions. Unaware of the intricacies of Labor Party politics,
she recalls congratulating Leonard the day Ramsay Macdonald
became prime minister. The old woman still remembers his
scowl. A local M.D. answering our call (National Health is
impressive as ever) turned out to be Leonard's last doctor. His
story concerned a visit to Monk's House when Leonard,
shortly before his death, complained about spells of dizziness.
After a full examination, the doctor found nothing wrong and
suggested no hard work for two days. He would check back at
that time. Unexpectedly detained, he returned in three days'
time to find his patient on a ladder in the garden busily
pruning apple trees. For the first time in the doctor's memory,
Leonard appeared both "caught" and "sheepish." Then after a
few seconds his expression changed dramatically and he
demanded: "Why were you a day late?" The doctor needed no
clearer sign of his recovery; Leonard was himself again.

Leonard understandably dominates local recollections.
The few neighbors here old enough to remember Virginia seem
reticent to speak about her; when they do, it is usually with
guarded apprehension about her aloofness. One exception is a
retired architect who lives in an adjoining hamlet and whose
first wife was close to Virginia. He described a tea at Monk's
House shortly before the suicide. He and his wife were taken
by Leonard to an upstairs room and left there alone with
Virginia. In the course of the next three hours, she questioned
them about every aspect of their marriage. The man confessed
to me that he told her personal facts he had never openly
discussed before. Walking home they wondered how she could
have disarmed and emptied them so completely. He felt at
once like someone whose pocket had been picked and yet in such
a way that the victim was fully implicated in the theft. What
remained of this recollection was not irritation but awe at
Virginia's capacity to draw them out so completely.

Octavia Wilberforce (her letters to Elizabeth Robins
about Virginia are among the most interesting of the Sussex
collection), the M.D. who had agreed to sit for a character
sketch by Virginia shortly before she committed suicide,
discusses this rare capacity to bring people out of themselves.
Through Dr. Wilberforce's eyes one sees Virginia's probing as a
continuing effort to realize and touch a reality other than her
own.

One distinguished English scholar and friend of the
Woolfs remarked when visiting here this summer that he could
never understand why they bought such an unattractive house.
Since they lived there for over five years without an indoor
toilet, bath, or, for that matter, running hot water, one can
only speculate that the sympathetic vibrations they acknowl-
dge from the first were strong indeed. We have been lucky to
share this enthusiasm for Monk's House. If it is not in fact an
architectural delight, the house is warm and friendly to adults
and children alike. It is indeed a favorite gathering spot for
village children, although on one occasion I angrily interrupted
a local boy and girl happily spitting mud balls through a
pea-shooter at the Stephen Tomlin bust of Virginia in the
garden. Somehow I feel Virginia, at least, would not altogether
have approved of my austere intervention. As for our
experience of warmth, we have yet to face the British winter
armed, I should mention in closing, with central heating as
well as the fine bathtub Virginia bought with money she
earned in the summer of 1925.)

Lucio P. Ruotolo
Monk's House - November 1975
The process of canonization seems to be beginning. Mr. Fleishman has carved a niche for Virginia Woolf next to Eliot, Joyce, Pound and Yeats. It is her style which is sainted; her place is won by practice of the "network of allusion" which he feels characterizes the dominant mode in modern British literature as "encyclopedic." He reminds us that Virginia Woolf was a learned woman. And this is his most original contribution to a "critical reading" which is largely a very intelligent summary of work already done on her method. Fleishman calls for a serious study of Woolf's sources, quotations and references. Oddly enough, he seems to care more about how her mind worked than what she thought. Her radical socialism and feminism form a yawning gulf between her values and those of her peers. Their use of the past was a rear-guard action to stave off the future. Virginia Woolf was riding the crest of the wave and she chose very carefully (from Sophocles to Sydney Smith, Ibsen and Samuel Butler) those works which would help humanity to make and endure the consequences of the revolution. Mr. Fleishman ignores Woolf's stature as an intellectual; his halo is for a head full of scholarly seriousness. This is a new view, and a nice one. But it fails to take into account her radical differences, by sex and politics, from Eliot, Pound, Joyce and Yeats. When those saints come marching in, she will not want to be in their number.

Sydney Kaplan has placed Virginia Woolf at the center of her work on the development of feminine consciousness in the novel. Surrounded by Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair, Rosamond Lehmann and Doris Lessing, Virginia Woolf seems more at home. Her own view of thinking back through our mothers is part of Kaplan's logic. Her essays are fascinating, particularly on the lesser known writers. Her historical view of the development of feminine consciousness fills in the spaces around Woolf, placing her firmly in a tradition, answering those critics who see the novels in a vacuum as startling works of genius out of time and history. Kaplan has caught Woolf's characters swimming in the same motherly waters as the heroines of Richardson, Sinclair, Lehmann and Lessing. Some are out of their depth in the stream of consciousness; some have a surer stroke than others. But the similarities are greater than the differences; as Kaplan points out, they are all in the same element. It is instructive to see Woolf from this point of view. Sydney Kaplan is especially good on relations between women. Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Dalloway and Sally Seton, the woman artist searching for a mother, the shy, reserved heroine who falls in love with a bold and dashing young woman -- common themes, Kaplan shows us, all part of the exploration of feminine consciousness by experimental women writers. This is a valuable book.

"Throughout my reading of these novels I have been struck by the ingenuity with which these women have been able to define themselves as 'feminine' according to concepts of femininity set down by men, at the same time as they rebel against the implications of such conceptions" (p. 174). Kaplan writes. Their notions of "feminine consciousness" cause them to cast their intellects in feminine form. "It calls for some trickery, some self-deception, but they manage to do it" (p. 175). The result, in Kaplan's words, is that "feminine consciousness is itself a defensive construction." Kaplan makes us see how similar is the ordering of the perception of space in women writers' rooms of their own, their "profound radicalism" in the stylistic altering of time, and their assertion of inner reality as more important than outer reality. She makes me think that these rooms of one's own have one common characteristic; they have no clocks.

While Kaplan sees that feminine consciousness in these experimental styles for women is profoundly radical and anti-authoritarian, one is intrigued with a comparison to their male counterparts whose vision is essentially conservative. This is a question worth exploring, why does the female version of twentieth century fictional form seem so revolutionary and the male version so reactionary?

As the author of The English Historical Novel, Mr. Fleishman might be expected to raise these questions. He doesn't. He places Woolf among the twentieth century great, less for content than for form, as most of his predecessors have done, but why quibble. Fleishman satisfies Woolf's own demands of the critic. He is a good reader and he sends us rushing back to the novels to see if he is right. He reads the nine novels (he calls them "fictions") well, thoroughly relying on the most recent scholarship, carefully noting the sources of his ideas, and his critical terms as well. Pious as he is about the "nine major works," his book is no novena. He tells his beads
differently from me, for one, who would prefer a treatment of
Woolf as an intellectual, a critic of her country's literature,
history and politics. But that book is yet to come.

Fleishman seeks to establish a critical line from Jean
Guiget to James Hafley to James Naremore to himself and
Allen McLaurin, with some heavy reliance on the mythological
work of Harvena Ritcher. He is rather judgmental about the
uselessness of other critics' work, a little overearnest about his
own importance.

However, Fleishman's book, one suspects, will be one
of the survivors of the current wave of Woolf criticism because
it will be very useful to students. It is for their benefit I
assume that he explains at great length "epiphanies" and
"leitmotifs," terms useful in the classroom. I am a little
troubled about his tables of symbols, afraid that while they are
great fun to do, they should be published like good puzzles,
without the answers. I fear that these monuments to the
critic's ingenuity may alienate the reader from the novels, as in
the case of Joyce.

Once the creed is established, the dissenting readers are
heretics, not the voyagers we are now, sharing our own
epiphanies in the classroom. Canon law can make things rather
uncomfortable for the common reader.

ANOTHER NOTE ON RACHEL AND BEETHOVEN IN
"THE VOYAGE OUT"

James Hafley, Department of English
St. John's University
New York 11439

Louise A. DeSalvo's "A Textual Variant in The Voyage
Out" [VWM 3] calls interesting and helpful attention to the
change from "Op. 112" to Op. III" in Chapter II of that novel,
and speculates rewardingly about it. She omits, however, to
consider an additional possibility that seems to me extra-
ordinarily persuasive. Opus numbers are almost invariably
written in Arabic rather than Roman numerals (Prof. DeSalvo
also, Rachel is of course a pianist. Is it not reasonable, then,
that as she falls asleep she is thinking neither of Op. 3, the
routine little string trio in E-flat, nor of Op. 112, the
exceptionally obscure cantata, but rather of Op. 111, the
celebrated last of the piano sonatas, and that "Op. III" was a
printer's misreading of a correction for the understandably
erroneous "Op. 112" of the Ms and the first edition? One
might see this sonata as especially appropriate because of its
truncated structure—in two movements rather than the usual
three—and because of its passage from violent conflict to quiet
resignation; more simply, it is a demanding and famous piece
that Rachel, like any young pianist, would yearn to play well
and would have in mind.

LETTERS TO THE

Dear VWM:

When I read over my essay on "The Story of the Woolf
Letters" [Spring 1975], I was disturbed to see that I had
neglected to mention the work done by Olivier Bell. This was
a major oversight. Though many people know that Mrs. Bell
contributed profoundly to what I call the "remarkable
accuracy" of her husband's biography, I want to take this
opportunity to pay tribute to her valuable work with the
letters in particular, for her dating of many of them has guided
Mr. Nicolson and me in establishing our own chronology.

Joanne Trautmann, The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
The Pennsylvania State University

Dear VWM:

Please add our names to your mailing list - we are great
fans of Woolf's, and of yours also - copies of the Miscellany that
I've seen are intelligent & insightful, but maintain a healthy
respect for the original material.

Thank you for being!

Susan Simmons
996 De Haro Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

Léonie Guyer
266 Missouri Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

Dear VWM:

I have been teaching a course on the Bloomsbury Group
[mainly EMF and VW] for many years I have been
teaching courses in Biography. I am in fact, preparing a
Handbook on Life-Writing. There is much that can be done in
studying VW's interest in biography.

Perhaps some day I can send you an item on my very
pleasant afternoon visit at Rodmell with Leonard Woolf in
1961; I also had a brief talk with E.M Forster at Cambridge in
1967.

Keep up the good work. It is such a help to have one
source for information on current study of Virginia Woolf. As
with Professor Clifford's Johnsonian Newsletter [for so many
years], so with the VW Miscellany, I devour each publication
when it arrives.

Donald J. Winslow, Professor of English
Stanford University

Dear VWM:

Thank you very much for the high quality of your
Miscellany. It is very refreshing in the midst of so much
mediocrity. Long may you wave!

Mildred Bissing
Box 205, Kentfield, CA 94905

A Reminder: all manuscript submissions for the Spring
1976 issue of VWM should be sent directly to Prof. John
Hulcoop, University of British Columbia, Vancouver 8,
B.C., Canada. Any business correspondence [i.e. add-
resses, and/or donations], should be sent to Prof. J. J.
Wilson, California State College, Sonoma, Rohnert Park,
California 94928.