

Virginia Woolf Miscellany

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This rich double issue of the VWM comes to you through the kind offices of guest editor, Professor John F. Hulcoop of the University of British Columbia. Deadline for material submitted for the next Miscellany is set at November 15; all copy should be sent to Professor Margaret Comstock, Dept. of English, New York University, 19 University Place, New York 10003, who will be editing this next issue. [1000 words or less is our usual maximum.]

All address information--and, of course, the donations which help to make the Miscellany possible--should continue to be sent directly to Professor J.J. Wilson, Sonoma State College, Rohnert Park, CA 94928.

Thank you.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOMENTS OF BEING

Review of Moments of Being: Unpublished autobiographical writings of Virginia Woolf, Edited with an introduction and notes by Jeanne Schulkind (Sussex University Press, 1976)

When she died in 1941, Woolf had published nine novels (Orlando and Flush included), two books of criticism, two polemical books, one biography and a collection of short fictions: fifteen major items (to which Kew Gardens and Letter to a Young Poet, printed separately, might be added). This number has doubled in the 35 years since her death, a new addition to the Woolf canon having appeared (if we average it out) every 2-1/3 years. Another novel (Between the Acts), five more books of criticism, a new collection of short fictions plus a volume containing two examples of Woolf's juvenilia ("A Cockney's Farming Experience" and "The Experience of a Paterfamilias"), two additional Dalloway sketches ("Ancestors" and "The Introduction" in Mrs Dalloway's Party), a children's story (Nurse Lugton's Needle), a play (Freshwater) two volumes of letters, A Writer's Diary and now Moments of Being: Unpublished autobiographical writings of Virginia Woolf: fifteen more volumes, bringing the total to thirty. When publication of the letters and diaries is complete this number will be forty. And, since more articles, essays, reviews and story-sketches are already available in type- and manuscript at the Berg and Sussex; and, since more seem likely to be identified in the pages of various newspapers and periodicals, the Collected Works of Virginia Woolf may consist finally of close to 50 volumes! An extraordinary achievement (as Leonard Woolf pointed out long before the true scope of the achievement became apparent), particularly for a woman who suffered "the psychological handicaps and difficulties" her husband chronicles in his autobiography.

Moments of Being, unobtrusively edited with a good introduction by Jeanne Schulkind, is the most important and exciting book of Woolf's writings to appear since A Writer's Diary (1953). This statement risks critical refutation on the grounds of

exaggeration and super-subjectivity; but about Moments of Being I can speak only for myself if I am to do what I must: and that is, try to dramatize in order to share the sense of excitement this book generated in me as I read it for the first time (even though I knew some of the pieces, having seen them in manuscript) and to convey the profound feeling of importance with which it leaves me.

Woolf's reputation as writer is currently under going radical re-evaluation. This fact is confirmed by the large number of new and original critical approaches to her work to appear in the last five years: Leaska, Love and Richter in 1970; Bazin, Heilbrun, Kelley, McLaurin and Naremore in 1973; Alexander in 1974 and Novak in 1975. In spite of its obvious and self-declared limitations, the Bell biography has contributed significantly to the process of re-evaluation; so has the first volume of the collected letters, and the rapid succession of Woolf conferences, at Harvard, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, New York, Princeton, Cerisy and (next year) Stony Brook. The growing interest in and recognition of Woolf as social commentator and sexual politician has--and it needs to be acknowledged in public--been accelerated by the new school of feminist critics whose careful research and imaginative insights have compelled scholars to confess the inadequacy of many of the established attitudes toward Woolf's work, as well as the necessity for a conscientious revision of these attitudes. "The attempt of genuine criticism"--Northrop Frye remarks--"is to bring literature to 'life' by annihilating stock responses," and it is precisely this process in which so many Woolf scholars are so passionately engaged at present; the annihilation of stock responses in order to see Woolf's work steadily and to see it whole, cleared of the preconceptions of previous criticism, the "stiff and stubborn, man-locked set" (the words are Wallace Stevens').

Moments of Being is important and exciting because it provides, in a vigorous, out-of-the-whirlwind voice, reassuring answers to those busy questioning the clichés of critics with iron-maiden minds who say (because they do not see) that Woolf is an asexual, asocial, amoral aesthete, of exquisite but empty sensibility, all style and no substance. Thinking back on the early days of Bloomsbury, Woolf bluntly observes that she was "intolerably bored" by the abstractness of both the relationships and the intellectual discussions: "Why, I asked, had we nothing to say to each other?" Why were the most gifted people also the most barren? Why were the most stimulating friendships also the most deadening? Why was it all so negative? . . . The answer to all my questions was, obviously . . . that there was no physical attraction between us" (MoB, 172). It was Strachey, in the perhaps uncharacteristic role of Prince Charming, who broke the spell under which the sleeping Bloomsbury lay by introducing sex as a subject of real interest and concern. Then, says Woolf, "a flood of light" poured in compelling Bloomsbury to awake and see itself anew: "the old sentimental views of marriage...were revolutionized... Indeed the future of Bloomsbury was to prove that many variations can be played on the theme of sex" (174/5). Wittily, wickedly (and she was, after all, talking to and about her best friends), Woolf implies that the discovery of sex as a worthy

subject of conversation led naturally to the discovery of sex as a way of life, "and with such happy results that my father himself might have hesitated before he thundered out the one word which he thought fit to apply to a bugger or an adulterer; which was Blackguard!" (175). Duncan Grant's love-affairs with Maynard Keynes and Vanessa Bell, Vanessa's marriage to Clive Bell and her long love-affair with Grant, C.Bell's succession of female lovers and Strachey's of male lovers, Carrington's marriage to Partridge, her affairs with Strachey and Brennan and her feelings for Henrietta Bingham, Virginia's own affairs with Clive Bell and Vita Sackville-West, as well as her marriage to Leonard Woolf, illustrate nicely some of the "many variations" that can be and were played by Bloomsbury on "the theme of sex."

Quentin Bell, in his biography of Woolf, casts George Duckworth in the role of sexual sea-monster to Virginia Stephen's Andromeda. Bell's view of Duckworth and the damage he did to Virginia's psyche has been repeated by several critics and reviewers (including David Garnett in his review of Moments of Being) who appear to like the myth of Virginia as Artemis: frigid, impotent, asexual. Such a view is not only unfair to George Duckworth; it is also characteristic of the pre-Bloomsbury world, a world untransformed by the sexual revolution for which Woolf and her group of "loving friends" were in part clearly responsible. David Gadd is quite right to assert "that Bloomsbury's habit of applying rational processes to emotional questions has been of particular importance in shaping present day society" (The Loving Friends, 198). The sexual attitudes of present day society are, in part, the "happy results" of the variations on the theme of sex played by a group of loving friends that included Virginia Woolf. Her attitudes towards and evaluation of George Duckworth are much more compassionate and complex than Quentin Bell's, more those of an imaginative human being than of a clinical lay-psychologist.

When Maynard Keynes called the character study of her step-brother which Woolf included in her memoir, "22 Hyde Park Gate," the "best thing [she] ever did," Woolf was "dashed": "if George is my climax I'm a mere scribbler" (AWD, 35). Her reaction is understandable; Keynes exaggerated. And yet Keynes may be forgiven if we put together with the Hyde Park Gate memoir those passages from "Reminiscences" and "A Sketch of the Past" in which Woolf describes and analyzes the character of George. The composite picture is very fine; a comprehensive and penetrating portrait of a man who was much more than a mere child molester (and it is only fair to note, as Woolf does but Bell does not, that Gerald as well as George made sexual overtures to her when she was a child). Woolf's attempt to recreate in imagination her mother's first ecstatic marriage to Herbert Duckworth forms an important part of the picture she paints of George since, Woolf tells us, all Julia Stephen's "devotion was given to George who was like his father" (MoB, 96). The descriptions of Herbert Duckworth (89-90) must, therefore, give the reader pause when he comes to consider George. A selfish and brainless brute George may well have been (57-58, 131-33); but he was also a "good-natured young man, of profuse, volatile affections . . . with abundant animal vigour," able to learn "the rules of that game ['society'] so well" and to obey so unquestioningly "the laws of patriarchal society" which "stamped and moulded" him that, at 60 he emerged with "a knighthood, an aristocratic wife, a sinecure, a country house, and three sons" (MoB, 132). Her autobiographical writings, and the diary she kept in 1903, make it clear that, though she rejected the kind of society George was a pillar of, though she despised "the patriarchal machinery" and disapproved "the spectacle of George flying through those invisible [social] hoops" (MoB, 133), Woolf was also "fascinated" by it. In addition, she really admired those able to achieve what she herself was incapable of-- "social

success." The essay entitled "Thoughts upon Social Success," dated July 15th in the "1903?" diary in the Berg Collection, put this fact beyond dispute. Doubtless Woolf suffered at her step-brother's hands, but she does not simply condemn and dismiss him. On the contrary, she admits that, after their mother's death, George Duckworth became "and was to remain, a very important figure" in her life (MoB, 57).

It was George who, for all practical purposes, became the head of the family after Julia Stephen died: "he was father and mother, sister and brother in one" (146). And it was George, with his "curious inborn reverence for the British aristocracy" and his "secret dreams. . . of marrying a wife with diamonds. . . and having the entree at court" (147) who devoted himself to doing, as he said, "what he knew [their] mother would have wished him to do" (150)--and that was bringing out his sisters, Vanessa and Virginia, and introducing them into society (133). Here, certainly, is one of the reasons he remained an important figure for Woolf; although she recoiled from the kind of society in which George sought success, she nevertheless acknowledges its appeal: "the excitement of clothes, of lights, of society, in short" (134). Woolf confesses to "a thrill in the unreality" of being alone "for a moment, with some complete stranger: he in white waistcoat and gloves, I in white satin and gloves." Returning to the safety and solitude of her own bedroom, she recalls: "I would ride the waves of the party still. . . And next morning I would still be thinking, as I read my Sophocles, of the party." Not only did Woolf reluctantly share her step-brother's reverence for the British aristocracy, she also understood because of her own feelings on the subject (and the fact they were different from his is not immediately relevant) that, to George, "a party was a very serious matter" (134). Society was important for Woolf, which is why she is so powerful a social commentator, and so were parties: "I'm always coming back to it. The party consciousness. . . Sybil's consciousness. You must not break it. It is something real" (AWD, 75). Moments of Being makes it clear just how important society was to Woolf, both positively and negatively. No one who has read with intelligence any of the novels, not to mention A Room of One's Own, Three Guineas and a great many of her critical essays, has ever doubted this fact. But those whose intelligence has been blocked and blinded by stock responses and critical clichés must, after reading Moments of Being, look again at her work as a whole, must hear her vehement social protests and the consistent social criticism implicit in so much of what she wrote. Only after looking and listening anew, with the veil of critical familiarity torn away from eyes and ears, can Woolf's work be properly understood, justly re-evaluated and appreciated.

What is so beautiful about Moments of Being is the way in which Woolf reveals herself, her artistic method and achievement, with cruel and therefore characteristic candour. She does this by providing us with brilliantly accurate and honest descriptions and profound analyses of the crucial because self-defining contexts of her existence. She places herself where she always was and must always be, at the centre of things-- socially, morally, emotionally, sexually, intellectually, aesthetically. Whether she is writing in 1907 ("Reminiscences") when she was relatively young and before she had even started working on her first novel; or in the period 1921-26 (to which belong the three "memoirs" published in Moments of Being) when she was in her prime as a woman and embarking on her most productive period as a writer; or in 1939-40 ("A Sketch of the Past") when she was close to the end of her fictional and non-fictional life, she writes out of the centre of intense involvement, becoming (as she writes) like Orlando, "the cynosure of all eyes." She writes with a ravenous hunger for truth, envisioning and re-envisioning moments, scenes and characters, until she feels what she calls the "complete rapture of pleasure" (and even here she is revising: "It was rapture rather

than ecstasy" [MoB, 66-67]) in making things come right, in touching the quick of the moment of being and so rescuing it from non-being, from the cloud of "cotton wool" that obscures and muffles the greater part of everyday life. After recreating three of these "exceptional moments," remembered in terms of the "sudden violent shock" they delivered like a "sledge-hammer" to her system (71-72), Woolf states:

I feel that I have had a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I can make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together. Perhaps this is the strongest pleasure known to me. It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right; making a character come together. From this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we--I mean all human beings--are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. (72)

Rarely, rarely, her spirit comes to such a point of rest. This is one of the few occasions in Woolf's writing (apart from two or three tentative entries in her diary) where she dares what she might call "a philosophy... a constant idea" that is acknowledged as informing or having "given its scale to [her] life ever since [she] first saw the flower in the bed by the front door at St Ives" (72). All artists, she blithely assumes, "feel something like this. It is one of the obscure elements in life that has never been much discussed. It is left out in almost all biographies and autobiographies, even of artists" (73). How sad that, with these writings available to both of them, neither Leonard Woolf nor Quentin Bell (nor, indeed, any of her friends, relations or disciples) has been brave enough to attempt to say something intelligent about this "constant idea," this "unseizable force" by which Woolf who was, after all, "one of us," lived. "It is thus that we live, they say, driven by an unseizable force. They say that novelists never catch it; that it goes hurtling through their nets and leaves them [note the superbly ambiguous pronoun reference] torn to ribbons. This, they say, is what we live by-- this unseizable force" (Jacob's Room, Uniform Edition, 155). Perhaps with the prospect behind them strewn with the rags, ribbons and tatters of novelists torn to shreds in the terrifying attempt to seize the unseizable, biographers and autobiographers are wise not to try. And yet...and yet with the audacious example of Virginia Woolf, novelist, biographer and autobiographer, before them, how could they, how can any of us--even the critics--dare less than she has dared, make ourselves less vulnerable than she has?

For me, the ultimate importance and extreme beauty of Moments of Being centers in the imaginative vitality and amazing courage of Woolf caught and revealed in the act of pitting herself against what she acknowledges as the impossible. This book of autobiographical writings moves, excites and pleases me so deeply because it articulates with the candid simplicity of genius an aesthetic I have been trying for nearly 20 years to formulate and communicate. Now, having read it, I am encouraged and prepared to rewrite once again my own book on Woolf. With utmost clarity, she explains what I have intuited, guessed at and groped for half a life-time: that synesthesia is the central and synecdochic structural principle of all her work. No one--or so I

feel every time I re-read any part of Moments of Being--no one will ever be able to look at or listen to Woolf's work in the same old way again. No one, I am convinced, will ever be satisfied after reading it with what they have so far tried to say. It is a book that simply and humbly commands one to try again.

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THE VOYAGE OUT: Two More Notes on a Textual Variant

Since the publication of my article "A Textual Variant in The Voyage Out" (VWM, Spring 1975) I have had the good fortune to examine the F.B. Adams, Jr. copy of the novel described in B.J.Kirkpatrick's Bibliography. Although a complete discussion of this copy takes a full chapter of my work-in-progress on the composition of the novel, I would like to respond to Professor James Hafley's comments printed in the Fall 1975 issue of VWM.

Virginia Woolf has altered the Opus 112 to read Opus 111 by crossing out the "2" in the text and entering a "1" in the margin. It should be noted, however, that Opus 112 is not in error in the first edition as Professor Hafley suggests. It appears as Opus 112 on at least three typescript pages of Virginia Woolf's MSS now at the Berg Collection.

Sam Bullen's query regarding what happened to the text of To the Lighthouse echoes, I think, a burgeoning interest in the purity or lack thereof of Woolf's texts, and the differences between the English and American editions. Perhaps a short summary of my findings on The Voyage Out would direct Professor Bullen and his group to the kind of work which needs to be done. In the case of Voyage, it took about three months of research to determine 1) the differences between the first English and the first American edition - and the only library which I found owning the first American of Voyage was the Library of Congress! (This was accomplished by the tedious process of collating the texts.) 2) any extant letters in either the Monk's House Collection or the Berg which described the revision or published or unpublished diary entries or correspondence with the publishers involved; 3) examination of the Adams copy. The process was time-consuming but incredibly rewarding. I argue that the differences between the American and English edition of Voyage are so great that one can properly speak of them as two versions of the same novel.

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VOYAGE OUT VARIANT NO 2

The textual variant in The Voyage Out noted by Louise DeSalvo in the Spring 1975, issue of the Virginia Woolf Miscellany appears to have a simple explanation. In the first English edition of the novel Rachel falls asleep, her state of mind being described in part as follows: "Inextricably mixed in dreamy confusion, her mind seemed to enter into communion, to be delightfully expanded and combined, with the spirit of the whitish boards on deck, with the spirit of the sea, with the spirit of Beethoven Opus 112, even with the spirit of poor William Cowper there at Olney." The revised first American edition changes Beethoven's music to "Opus III". Subsequent American and English reprintings of these editions perpetuate the variants.

DeSalvo argues that the Beethoven cantata Op. 112 makes more sense than Op. 3, a string trio, because of the Goethe poems 'Meeresstille' and 'Glückliche Fahrt' that the cantata uses.

A letter from Virginia Woolf to Saxon Sydney-Turner, written at the time *The Voyage Out* was being reissued in England in 1920, indicates, however, that she wished to allude to a Beethoven piano sonata that Rachel played. In her letter, preserved at the University of Sussex, Virginia Woolf asked Sydney-Turner to tell her again what the number is because the copy already corrected for the American edition has been mailed and she wants to change the forthcoming English issue; she has put Op. 112 again but knows that cannot be right.

On the basis of this evidence it appears that Opus 112 is incorrect and that a piano sonata is being referred to in the novel. The simplest explanation of the inconsistency is that Virginia Woolf meant to change Opus 112 to Opus 111 but that she or her publishers changed it to Opus III instead. She wished, that is, to change the reference from Opus Number One Hundred and Twelve to Opus Number One Hundred and Eleven, but she or her publishers used Roman instead of Arabic numerals and therefore converted the change into Opus Number Three instead.

Beethoven's sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111, is the last sonata he wrote for piano. It makes much more sense that Rachel would be dreaming of a sonata she has been practicing aboard the *Euphrosyne*, where no other form of music is available; her thoughts of the spirit of the sonata blend with thoughts of the spirits of the ship, the sea, and Cowper, whose letters she has also been reading. But what is the spirit of this very great and complex sonata? The first movement is marked Maestoso-Allegro con brio ed appassionata and the last movement Arietta: Adagio molto, semplice e cantabile. Eric Blom describes the difference between them as a "contrast between the stormy first movement and the world-removed variation finale." The sonata ends very quietly, simply. Perhaps that, together with memories of its storminess, is the spirit of the sonata for Rachel and of *The Voyage Out* for Virginia Woolf.

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MIDDLEBROW MARXISM: MRS DALLOWAY AND THE MASSES

Review of Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway: A study in Alienation,
Jeremy Hawthorn (Sussex University Press, 1975)

Common readers as well as Marxists and feminists will be disappointed in this book, demonstrating as it does (more than any single flaw in Hawthorn's reading) the pernicious influence of the Leavises on generations of British readers. Woolf's novels have been sacrificed as scapegoats for so long in this school that they hardly have any life of their own--except as examples of the kind of fiction D.H. Lawrence did not write. Forced to choose sides like schoolchildren, readers have had the enemy marked out for them as an elitist snob on the grounds of her birth and sex, and have been urged to cheer for Lawrence, the underdog with the correct class credentials in a largely mythical battle in which Woolf's radical and Lawrence's reactionary ideas are ignored. Those of us taught to trust the text alone (and those of us who have escaped the stamp of the "liberal imagination" of the Leavises' American counterparts) have learned to grasp the radical nature of Woolf's political ideas and her ethical imperative simply by reading her writings. The official biography and her role as scapegoat and unsocial stylist have impinged on our consciousnesses only as afterthoughts to our perception of the form and formidable themes of her fiction.

Jeremy Hawthorn's struggle to escape from critical preconceptions is admirable, but he is ill-equipped for the task since he seems not to have read Woolf's essays and reviews, her piece in *The Daily Worker*, her introduction to Margaret Llewelyn-Davies' *Life as We Have Known It*, "The Niece of an Earl" and *Three*

Guineas. His "pro-proletarian spectacles" (words Woolf uses to describe the vision of the Thirties poets) are clouded by an a priori assumption that a "lady" is scarcely capable of correct class-consciousness, and by too great a reliance on the Bell biography as a primary source when, in matters concerning Woolf's politics, it is clearly a secondary source, made so by Bell's own opposition to some of Woolf's opinions. Hawthorn is hampered by what, in kindness, one might call a blank spot in regard to feminism itself and by a failure to understand that Woolf's socialism was part of a serious intellectual stance which incorporated pacifism as well as feminism. Woolf writes in the tradition of Wollstonecraft, Olive Schreiner and Sylvia Pankhurst, so her tripartite philosophy is hardly an alien development in British social thought. Hawthorn's avoidance of the feminist element in Woolf's socialism recalls Graham Greene's review of *Three Guineas*: he was genuinely mystified that any respectable woman could openly reject physical chastity as woman's highest achievement.

Hawthorn begins by studying alienation in *Mrs Dalloway* but before long we realize that it is not Marx's concept of alienation which urges him on, but R.D. Laing's. Woolf's equation of the psychiatric establishment with a repressive social ideology well before Laing's has been remarked upon elsewhere. What Hawthorn does not see is that the famous slip into authorial abuse contains an interesting and even more personal slip about psychiatrists "preventing childbirth." Actually, they are encouraging childbirth. In the novel, Septimus' social sin is that he will not make love to Rezia, will not father a child. Holmes and Bradshaw regard his denial of the male's patriarchal duty as a social sin of the first order. It was Virginia Woolf herself who was prevented from childbearing by the psychiatrists. In *Mrs Dalloway*, as in *A Doll's House*, plot and subplot show us a double standard as the patriarchy punishes its offenders: men suffer more than middle-class women. (Krogstad goes to jail for forging to save his family; Nora commits the same crime but expects her husband's chivalry to excuse her ignorance.) Only male insubordination really matters in a patriarchy. Septimus, the male who refuses fatherhood, is hounded to death; only her guilt for failing Richard at Constantinople follows Clarissa to her narrow bed of sexual withdrawal, and does not prevent her vicarious pleasure in reading biographies.

Mrs Dalloway is a profoundly radical novel in what it says and how it says it. Anti-war and anti-establishment, it attacks English institutions mercilessly and brilliantly, best perhaps in the "figure" of Big Ben (clock time is male time in Woolf's novels, opposed to natural time, "moments of being" associated with women, poets and mad-men) which dominates and bullies the characters' lives, while the Lady Margaret clock trails behind "her lap full of odds and ends." The circle which shapes the novel around this phallic bully in Westminster is broken by Elizabeth's bus-trip, a vision of a more adventurous life for Mrs Dalloway's daughter, and by the airplane's flight from London to Greenwich. There, male dominance of time is matched by a parallel dominance of space by a reminder from a former instrument of war, trailing its message of mock togetherness, one postwar sign of British accord, a message ("toffee") to the national sweet-tooth.

Ever since Forster claimed that Woolf's novels were not great because "she had no great cause at heart" and awarded her the generous token of the British public schoolboy imagination --- "a row of little silver cups"--was her prize for daring to enter the competition (in the public school and Cambridge view, even writing fiction is a competition), certain critics have declared that Woolf had no political views at all, though she did have a snobbish distaste for the working class. The evidence for this widely held opinion generally boils down to something like Miss Kilman's dirty mackintosh. No matter that the reader perceives

Miss Kilman through Clarissa Dalloway who recognizes and acknowledges a kinship distanced by both class and Kilman's superior education. The writer may snipe away at the upper class as much as she likes--so runs the argument of critics who see themselves as socially aware--but that same admirable cold eye which casts aspersions on the rich must warm with sympathy when it lights on the poor. What nonsense! That the temperature of Woolf's eye remains constant, whatever the class origins of the character she regards may be, is the reason the reader knows that Woolf's vision can be trusted. That permanent chorus of the singing poor, organ grinders and sellers of violets, cripples and charladies, functions in Woolf's novels like the chorus in Sophocles and Wagner. If she were more "sympathetic" than realistic, those same critics who condemn her as apolitical and unsocial, would call her patronizing. And if Mrs Dempster were rendered with more pity and less honesty than Hugh Whitbread we would suspect their author of being more of a propagandist than an artist. Although Woolf relished being called the best English pamphleteer by the TLS, Mrs Dalloway is not a pamphlet.

Hawthorn touches briefly on that most complex subject, Marx and alienation, ending with a remark that "there are few members of the industrial proletariat in Mrs Dalloway." He ignores all those interesting questions which Woolf and other leftist artists have asked about the relationship between art and work. He says: "It is probable that very little that Marx wrote would have interested Virginia Woolf directly..." . Nor does he seem to realize that one can be a Marxist critic and value form as well as content. There is such a thing as a Marxist aesthetic. When Christopher Caudwell said the revolutionary artists, was revolutionary in form, he was not wrong. What Hawthorn's muddled sense of Marx contributes to his analysis of this novel is limited to looking at working class characters, some odd remarks about "the restrictiveness of Virginia Woolf's social and political vision," the comment that "Mrs Dalloway is not Waiting for Lefty," and the conclusion that "it would be absurd to interpret it as a developed Marxist analysis of Virginia Woolf's society." He asserts, "I want it to be clear that I am not arguing for an interpretation of Mrs. Dalloway in terms of an overt, consistent political message." This is the crux of the matter. Since the novel does have an overt, consistent political message (and Hawthorn wishes it did but cannot find it as he trips over the trappings of messy methodology and latches on to Laing as a life-saver), he undermines his own arguments. A look at Lukacs would perhaps have brightened his perceptions and helped him to find what he was looking for.

Oddest of all is his reading of the novel with Richard Dalloway as hero because Richard cares for Armenians and roses. He also assumes that Clarissa's views are her author's, which allows him to find in her a "partly culpable blindness" about the Armenians; he cites for support Quentin Bell's "revealing anecdote" about Woolf's only realizing the seriousness of unemployment when a fainting girl asks her for a glass of water. Hawthorn's "admiration for Mrs Dalloway is one that is hedged around with a number of reservations," as he says, and this monograph is an exercise in hedging. Everyone from Dickens to Leavis is cited to show her up. So why write the book? If Defoe and Dickens wrote better "London novels," why read Mrs Dalloway? "A Writer's language cannot give more than it has received, and one often feels that because no man has anything to give Woolf after the arrival of her £500 a year, her language has correspondingly less to give to any man or woman." It is her "upper middle-class speech habit" which grieves Hawthorn. He finds "class condescension" in "The mothers of Pimlico gave suck to their young" -- a sentence I have always read as giving mothers the status of classic nobility. For nobility Hawthorn reads "animality." And he thinks Woolf's class prevented her "from making any real contact with a character such as Mrs Dempster." . ". . . -life, alas, escapes" is his final

estimate of a novel, which, for me, fairly leaps with life, internal/external, city/country, personal/political. It seems to me he has read another novel altogether. He finds the language dead that I find so vivid; the use of "one" so suggestive of community, he finds false; the use of "for" so logical and rational a prose movement to me, he suggests is fake.

While the U.S. bombed Cambodia, I objected to a lecture by a well-meaning professor who did not take into account the radical political message of Mrs Dalloway and was given the next class hour to explain. Three hundred students in a midwestern university gave this rebuttal a standing ovation. None of us had any stake in preserving British upper-class speech habits. We were common readers all. Mr Hawthorn's ear is off; too much Leavis in his Woolf. North Americans like Woolf straight.

Septimus is indeed alienated, from a patriarchal as well as imperialist and capitalist state. He is alienated because of his class. Because he cannot conform to that state's concept of masculinity, money and power, he, like many scapegoats, punishes himself. He is not a homosexual but a repressed homosexual. It is the repression of his love for Evans which causes his guilt at his failure to feel. (In The Years Woolf contrasts Nicholas, the heroic open homosexual, with Edward Pargiter, the dried-up repressed homosexual.) Clarissa Dalloway is a repressed lesbian, but patriarchal society does not pursue and punish her, because her class and sex exempt her once she has borne a child. Hawthorn's socialism is narrow and niggling. Virginia Woolf's political vision was internationalist, feminist and pacifist; her socialism transcended a simple sentimental view of the working class. Septimus is alienated as a man, as an artist, as a soldier, as a citizen, as a husband, as well as alienated as a worker. When Clarissa feels he dies for her, he does as scapegoat, die for all those oppressed by patriarchal (as well as capitalist and imperialist) Britain. A male member of the class Woolf criticized may be excused for squirming in discomfort at the body blows dealt by this powerful novel. But misreading is another matter. In identifying Richard Dalloway as his hero, Jeremy Hawthorn has disqualified himself as a common reader, and given us only a reading biased by class and sex and betrayed by his own alienation from the idea that a middle class woman could possibly be the best British writer representing the Marxist-humanist tradition in the 20th Century.

Jane Marcus
1016 Wesley Ave., Evanston, Illinois 60202



the VIRGINIA WOOLF society

A REPORT

In the Fall of 1975, a letter signed by Morris Beja, Madeline Hummel and James Naremore was sent to a couple of dozen people asking their reactions to the idea of forming a society devoted to Virginia Woolf or the Bloomsbury Group in general -- an idea which, to be sure, was in itself hardly new. The letter indicated that "the purpose of this organization would be to enable scholars, critics, teachers, students, and general readers to meet together and contact one another more easily," and that "eventually, it would sponsor conferences or symposia." A major stress in the letter was that the organization would not presume to "take over" the so-called Woolf "industry," or to usurp the functions of Woolf periodicals, MLA seminars, and so on, and that indeed it might be of some help to such activities, and that "it should be open to any and all critical approaches."

The responses to the letter were sufficiently positive for an exploratory meeting to be scheduled at the MLA convention in San Francisco, and that meeting was held on December 27, 1975. Naturally, the attendance was unrepresentative insofar as it could consist only of those who were able to attend the convention (and not all of them, since there are always inevitable time conflicts at MLA). But the discussion was lively and enthusiastic and seemed to encourage our going ahead.

Several people expressed a preference for a society that would encompass the entire Bloomsbury Group, but the consensus of most people in the room was that while all of Bloomsbury would inevitably figure in the interests and activities of such a society, Virginia Woolf has too long been connected to a single coterie in a particular time and place, rather than to the widest of literary worlds where she belongs. Moreover, it was felt that if men like Joyce, Conrad, and Lawrence "deserve" their own societies, a woman of Woolf's stature need not be considered part of a wider group in order to rate such attention.

Much of our time at the meeting was devoted to discussing the functions and activities of such an organization, and there was a general emphasis on its potential role as a sponsor and co-ordinator of symposia on Woolf and her work. Such conferences might be regional, national, or international: the desirability of a meeting in Bloomsbury immediately came up, for example. But it was also recognized that, given realities, less ambitious endeavors might be more helpful and successful at this stage. So we are especially interested in the possibility of a conference that might be hosted by an academic institution within the United States, for two or three days.

We now have a "Steering Committee" consisting, with a couple of exceptions of people who were at the MLA meeting: Morris Beja, Margaret Comstock, Alice Goode, Suzanne Henig, John F. Hulcoop, Madeline Hummel, Edward Hungerford, Jane Marcus, Grace Radin, Sally Ruddick, Lucio P. Ruotolo, Beverly Schlack, Sallie Sears, Grace Studley, and J.J. Wilson. For the time being, I'm coordinating its activities, which involves looking into such questions as incorporation, funding, cooperation with existing entities such as the Miscellany and Quarterly, and coming up with a permanent sort of structure. One of our first tasks will, of course, be an invitation for membership, and once we have all our "founding members," we'll distribute to all of them a list of all their names and addresses. VWM has kindly agreed to enclose membership forms in this mailing.

The first official meeting of the Society is planned again for the MLA Convention, 4:5:15 p.m. on December 27, 1976, in New York at the Americana Hotel, Malmaison 7, at which time there will be election of officers and discussion of the goals and activities of the Society. All are welcome to attend, and to come to the party immediately afterward--place to be announced. At last December's meeting, a number of us wondered aloud at how Virginia Woolf would have reacted to all of this. Perhaps that's irrelevant (or perhaps it doesn't bear thinking), but then again she understood and did not entirely disapprove, surely, of Clarissa Dalloway's desire to have people gather. That's what we do it for.

Morris Beja

*Department of English, Ohio State University
164 W. 17th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210
[Tel: 614/442-6065]*

The following notice from the University of Sussex:

"Anybody wishing to rent Monk's House should write to R.E. Bailey, Assistant Estates Manager, Estates Building, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9RJ, England."

- ANNOUNCEMENTS -

Virginia Woolf's farce Freshwater, edited by Lucio Ruotolo, has been published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich and has already received a number of amusing reviews. Perhaps someone would like to review this play for the next issue of VWM.

The entire issue of the Bulletin of the New York Public Library for Winter 1977 will be devoted to Virginia Woolf's novel The Years. It will include major articles by Margaret Comstock, Mitchell Leaska (who, in working with the manuscripts has made important discoveries regarding the genesis of The Years) and Jane Marcus.

The Women's Studies (Vol. 4, No. 2), also due in the Winter of 1976-77, will be entirely devoted to Virginia Woolf. It will consist of papers originally given at the Woolf conference organized by Madeline Hummel at Kresge College, the University of California, Santa Cruz, in November 1974. (See VWM, No. 3, Spring 1975, 2)

A welcome book on the Hogarth Press itself has just arrived: A Checklist of the Hogarth Press, 1917-1938 by J. Howard Woolmer with A Short History of the Press by Mary E. Gaither, Andes, N.Y.: Wolmer-Brotherson, 1976. It will come out in England under the Hogarth Press imprint.

In a letter to VWM, Jean Guiguet announces the forthcoming publication of the proceedings of the 1974 "Decade" held on "Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury" at the Centre Culturel International de Cerisy (10/18 Series, Union Generale D'Editions, Paris):

"Apart from the introductory and concluding chapters, the volume includes nine papers by David Diaches, David Garnett, A.A.H. Inglis, Peter Fawcett, Robert Merle, Marie-Paule Vigne, Vivienne Forrester and myself. The discussions following the lectures are reproduced in their entirety. As hinted by Lucio P. Ruotolo in VWM No. 4, this shows Virginia Woolf is also a Franco-English phenomenon."

*Jean Guiguet
Universite de Nice*

"THE MISCELLANY"

MEETINGS PAST AND FUTURE

MLA, San Francisco, December 1975

The MLA Virginia Woolf Seminar, although rather disorganized, was great fun. Papers on The Years and Three Guineas were read by Sallie Sears, Madeline Hummel, Grace Radin, Joanna Lipking, Carol Rudman and Beverly Schlack. Several of these papers will appear in the Fall 1976 issue of The Bulletin of the New York Public Library. Morris Beja, Madeline Hummel and James Naremore, who are organizing a Virginia Woolf Society, kindly gave the seminar some of their meeting time, as we were being drowned out by the clinking of glasses in the adjoining rooms. The lesson for next year's chairpeople is that papers must be xeroxed and the seminar time should be used for discussion. The seminar is too large for intimate discussion. Perhaps it is time for organization as a "Discussion Group" in MLA parlance, which would allow for several small seminars and discussions.

Jane Marcus

Princeton, April 1975

"Virginia Woolf in her Cultural Context" was the title of an informal day-and-a-half conference held April 9 and 10 at Princeton University under the sponsorship of an undergraduate residential college, the English Department, the Woman's Center, and the Clark Foundation lectures. Visitors from Rutgers, New York City and New England joined Princeton faculty, students, and townspeople for a varied program and a great deal of the cordial, openhanded shoptalk that seems to characterize Woolf meetings.

The program was framed by two formal lectures. The first was by Ellen Hawkes of Boston University, "Literary Sisters and Women Friends." Rich in biographical data and sensitive in its readings, it built a picture of the importance and special qualities of Woolf's friendships with women and her sense of herself as a woman writer. Marilyn French of Holy Cross gave the closing lecture, "Femina Victrix: The Triumph of the Feminism Principle in the Work of Virginia Woolf," forcefully contrasting feminine and masculine principles in Woolf's fiction, especially in some highly charged passages in Mrs. Dalloway. It is part of a work in progress on changing values in the novels of Woolf, Joyce, and Lawrence.

Friday evening brought a concert performance of Dominick Argento's From the Diary of Virginia Woolf, a song cycle for soprano and piano based on eight extracts from A Writer's Diary. Not yet issued on record--though the music has been published by Boosey & Hawkes--the piece won a Pulitzer Prize and had its New York premiere this past winter. Woolf scholars will find it an extremely intelligent and eminently listenable-to adaptation of the diary materials. Beginning with a 1919 entry in which Woolf describes her diary as a mass of scraps and fragments that might, in time, mysteriously coalesce, it runs through a variety of moods--mischievous observations of the clergy at Hardy's funeral, a particularly moving and melodic song about her parents ("How beautiful they were, those old people"), the dislocations of wartime--to the famous final entry about haddock and sausage, finally doubling back upon its opening theme. The work was performed by Judith Nicosia and William Cheadle, faculty members at the Westminster Choir College in Princeton.

The following morning discussion sessions were opened by Jane Marcus with a brief, candid reconsideration of the issue of Woolf's politics. Laying out information, new to many of her hearers, that Woolf had a sustained, active, thoughtful political

life, she offered a number of suggestions about what can and cannot be claimed for this neglected aspect of Woolf's career and about the neglect itself. The very full and lively discussion that followed reached down to touch on particular choices--about socialism, pacifism, Spain--and out, to larger contextual questions of the Thirties, the British class system, Woolf's feminism, the worlds of her different generations of readers. The underlying questions about her personality and her art linked up neatly with the subsequent workshop on Woolf's anger, led by Kate Ellis of Livingston College, Rutgers. After a little delay, for those who didn't want to choose between sessions, part of the group broke off to attend a second workshop on Between the Acts led by Maria Di Battista of Princeton.

Some scraps and fragments: Judith Wilt's description of the older classroom view that held up Woolf as an apolitical writer, in contrast, say, to Orwell or Upton Sinclair; Jane Lilienfeld on the complication of Woolf's final messages of praise to her family; Ralph Freedman helping to fix the context with recollections of prewar London; a writer in attendance spurred to begin an article on "the Woolf phenomenon;" Carol Kay on the direction set by women academics of some political experience, finding through the reading of Woolf a sense of fresh critical topics; a senior professor of skeptical bent impressed by the seriousness and friendliness of the scholarly atmosphere.

Joanna Lipking

Princeton Inn College, Princeton

AND FUTURE

MLA, New York, December 1976

Last December, participants in the Woolf seminar at MLA in San Francisco supported the idea of going forward from the 1975 topic to a consideration of Woolf's final work. The topic for 1976, therefore, will be "The Late Years," and the discussion will center on Between the Acts. To allow time to talk, only three short papers have been accepted, which are: Diane F. Gillespie (Washington State University), "Miss LaTrobe: The Artist's Last Struggle against Masculine Values"; Judy Little (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale), "Festive Comedy in Between the Acts"; and Alex Zwerdling (University of California at Berkeley), "Between the Acts and the Coming of War."

At this meeting we also plan to decide whether the Virginia Woolf Seminar, which has now met for the requisite five years, should apply for Discussion Group status. The advantages of doing so are that the seminar does not have to be reconvened specially each year, and the officers will be elected. If seminar members decide in favor of becoming a Discussion Group, nominations will be taken from the floor and officers will be elected, so please plan to attend.

A further note: in order to announce the 1976 topic via the MLA newsletter, it had to be chosen by mid-January, and suggestions coming in after that time could not be taken into account for the coming session. But this doesn't mean that suggestions are without effect. Last year, a number of people expressed interest in a consideration of Leonard Woolf and, as a result, a special Leonard Woolf session has been convened for 1976. This year considerable interest has been shown by a number of people in Virginia Woolf's criticism, and in the status of Jacob's Room, both topics to be kept in mind for future meetings, and not only at MLA.

Margaret Comstock

New York University.

MLA, New York, 1976

Papers to be discussed at the 1976 MLA Special Session, "Leonard Woolf: An Overview," will be available for general circulation in early November. They are:

1. "The Jungle as the 'Other' in Leonard Woolf's The Village in the Jungle," L.L. Lee, Western Washington State College
2. "Reciprocal Illumination: Leonard Woolf as Literary Essayist," Beverly Ann Schlack, New School
3. "Leonard Woolf's Perspective on Communal Psychology and War," Selma Meyerowitz, Palo Alto
4. "Leonard Woolf and European Imperialism: An Historian's View," Wm. Roger Louis, University of Texas, Austin

Those interested in attending the session and/or receiving the papers should send their names-addresses to the discussion leader, Elizabeth Heine, Division of English, University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas 78285. Contributions of a dollar or two to help cover the costs of duplication and postage will be most welcome.

A second seminar concentrating on Contemporary Estimates of Virginia Woolf has been planned by Professor P.S. Chauhan for this same day. Indeed with the three seminars, the Society meeting, and the party—all carefully scheduled not to conflict with one another—December 27 will be Woolf Day at MLA! The full schedule will be published in the Christmas issue of VWM, which will be available at MLA.

(*The conference on Woolf at SUNY, Stony Brook has been postponed due to funding problems... Any ideas on funding should be sent to Professor Sallie Sears there.*)

VIRGINIA WOOLF MISCELLANY
c/o Department of English
California State College, Sonoma
1801 East Cotati Avenue
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— LETTERS —

Dear VWM,

I am writing a biography of Virginia Woolf's friend, Elizabeth Robins, who was mentioned by Lucio Ruotolo in the last issue of the Miscellany. She was an American, an Ibsen actress in London, novelist, playwright and feminist. I'd be grateful for any information readers may have about her.

Jane Marcus

1016 Wesley Ave., Evanston, Ill. 60202

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

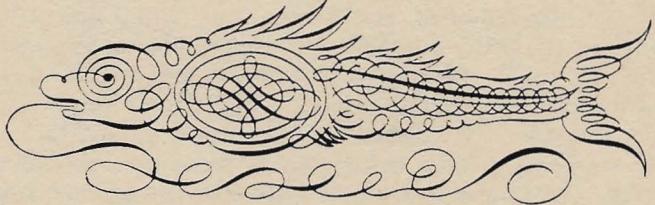
Dear VWM,

Here is a query for the VWM. What could Bertrand Russell have meant by describing the writings of Virginia Woolf as being "Like incandescent death"? He was reported to have done so in a lecture on "Literary Style and Social Psychology" given in Chicago in 1929. In this lecture (the report of which is reprinted in Russell, No. 14 Summer 1974, 16-18), he also remarked that Virginia Woolf's work "was the best the British have." "It is so finished that there is nothing left for it to grow into. Lytton Strachey is the same."

Kenneth Blackwell, Archivist

The Bertrand Russell Archives

McMaster University - Hamilton, Ontario



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