TO THE READERS:

After 15 years of publishing, perhaps it is time Virginia Woolf Miscellany admits that it is here to stay and had best make explicit the policy on subscriptions and submissions. We charge no set subscription fee, but welcome (and needed) small donations from our regular readers. Checks should be made out to the SSU Academic Foundation and sent to our return address. Institutional subscriptions are invoiced at $10 for each two years, you might want to see if your library presently carries VWM. Laura Moss Gottlieb's exemplary Index to the first 20 issues of VWM is still available upon request (and receipt of $5); we are glad to announce that her new Supplement for issues 20 through 30 will be available by December, at our cost of $3.50.

New and old VWM readers will benefit from this recapitulation of our articles since 1973. And yes, we do still have actual back issues, though some are available in Xerox only. For a complete set of back issues, we charge libraries $30, individuals $15; for just the odd back issue with an article you need, no fee. The truth is that we hate bookkeeping even more than we love money, so we have developed this low maintenance approach . . .

Mind you, we are quite conscientious about keeping our mailing list up to date and ask you to be the same — do send us any changes of address (VWM readers are, apparently, a peripatetic lot). All Virginia Woolf Society members are automatically added to the VWM mailing list as part of their membership perks (and for directions on how and how much to join the Virginia Woolf Society, see the Society column by its secretary/treasurer extraordinaire, Karen Levenback, on the back page of this VWM). The Society is more select than the Miscellany which has over 1300 readers, with new names trickling in all year long. There are, however, still many Virginia Woolf readers and scholars who do use the information available through these two services; do tell anyone who should know about us.

VWM has an uncommon number of common readers, Woolf would be glad to know, readers like Lorie Levinger, an artist from Amherst, who sighs and shudders as she reads such sentences as this lulu culled from our Spring 1988 issues: “In this matrix, which I have recently described elsewhere, three aspects combine to constitute (in the phenomenological sense of the term) the human realm.” Such sensitive readers should help to keep us from speaking in the tongues.

We also have retired professors like Anthony Netboy (Box 1249, Ganges, B.C., Canada) who has sent us a refreshing and curmudgeonly article criticizing Virginia Woolf’s “distorted, angry and unfetting picture of a great Victorian in his old age,” i.e., her father. Prof. Netboy bases his essay on the pieces published in Moments of Being and he finds Woolf lacking in appreciation of Leslie Stephen’s record-making achievements as a mountaineer. He recommends to those interested Stephen’s 1871 classic, The Playground of Europe. I hope those of you who have worked on this father/daughter relationship will write directly to Prof. Netboy if you have any other evidence he should consider; were not her notes on her father used extensively by Mailand for his biography!

Another emeritus, Libby Steele, writes to tell us of the April-June 1988, Vol. 12, #2, History of Photography journal article about the genealogy of Virginia Woolf’s great aunt, Julia Margaret Cameron, the famous photographer. Apparently she, and therefore Virginia Woolf, was descended from a “Bengali beauty” named Marie Monita, who had married Claude Brunet in 1703 at Pondicherry, India. It was not until 1783 that the de l’Etang name Woolf so cherished entered the family tree, and before that there were some Italian origins too, with the Guerres. Fascinating!

Among our farflung contributors, we may now count Bill Handley’s father who caught sight of a billboard in Ithaca, New York, advertising a musical adaptation of The Waves at the Hanger Theatre last July. With some trepidation, Bill Handley attended and found it “a kind of prose poem, polyphonic, with wonderful transitions, sung and acted on a bare stage, funny, moving, rather Sondheim like.” It was, by the way, sold out — wouldn’t Woolf, author of Freshwater and other charades, have been delighted? Lisa Peterson directed the production from a script by Lisa Peterson, David Bucknam, and Helen Gregory. VWM would love to know more about its genesis and any possible future productions.

The limited format of the VVM, along with our other limitations of staff, time, funding, and method, keep it from fulfilling all of the functions of a “real” journal, but even in our restricted space, interesting ideas can be raised (for example, see Bill Handley on Woolf and Dostoevsky) and good reviews given (see Lynn Rogers on Mark Hussey’s fine book). We are always behind in our reviewing though, and would like to solicit inquiries from any VWM readers interested in reviewing, say, Diane Gillespie’s The Sisters’ Arts, which compares Woolf’s writings and Vanessa Bell’s paintings, or Jane Marcus’s new collection of her essays on Woolf under the title Art and Anger. Evelyn Haller has promised a review of Jean Morocroft Wilson’s Virginia Woolf Life & London: A Biography of Place, recently published here by Norton. What others? I would also like to see us institute the practice of reviewing journal articles, as well as full length books. For example, Thomas Caramagno’s article in the Jan. 1988, Vol. 103, #1 MLA entitled “Manic-Depressive Psychosis and Critical Approaches on Virginia Woolf’s Life and Work.” We need discussions of all of these important contributions and the MLA meetings are not enough (though they promise to be very stimulating, as you will see from the schedule in the Society column on our back page here). If you have an idea for a brief review, or note, or article for the next VWM, please write directly to our Spring editor, Prof. Lucia Ruotolo, Dept. of English, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305 well before his deadline for copy, March 1, 1989. 1989—that’s the first time I have written that date: A Happy New Year to all VWM readers on this our 15th birthday.

J.J. Wilson
Sonoma State University
In the fifty years that followed her memorable afternoon visit to Virginia Woolf, Marguerite Yourcenar (1903-1987) published the two masterpieces that earned her a deserved widespread recognition as a literary artist, an international reputation that has now become as unshakable as Woolf's. While Woolf's merit had already been recognized and some of her works were becoming bestsellers, Yourcenar was, in 1937, still an obscure young French writer of Flemish descent whose short novels and poems had passed by almost unnoticed. Her years of freedom and financial independence — Yourcenar had inherited some money which enabled her to travel extensively after her father's death — had come to an end by the time she met Woolf. She now had to provide for herself to enable her to continue writing. Translation, although it did not pay much, was one way of earning a living. It is noteworthy that her first job as a translator was a novel by the woman who had argued that a room of one's own and a small income was a necessity for a woman to write in freedom and independence.

On the advice of the influential critic Edmond Jaloux, an early admirer of Woolf's and Yourcenar's works, she accepted the translation of The Waves. That was the start of a remarkably diversified career: later she tackled Henry James, Constantin Cavafy, Negro spirituals, Hertsele Flexner, an anthology of Greek poetry, James Baldwin, Yukio Mishima, Blues et Gospels and Indian fairy tales. Even though her primary aim was to make some money, Yourcenar proved a conscientious translator. She was convinced that translations can never be perfect; one has to accept that grey takes the place of the resplendent. She believed that a translator is like "quelqu'un qui fait sa vaisselle. Elle est ouverte devant lui; il y met un objet, et puis il se dit qu'un autre serait peut-être plus utile, alors il enlève l'objet puis le remet, parce que, réflexion faite, on ne peut pas s'en passer." ["someone packing a suitcase. It is open in front of you; you put something in and then you say to yourself something else might be more useful, and then you take it out, put it back in, because, upon consideration, you cannot do without it."]

Still, in the case of The Waves Yourcenar was determined to pack the bags as well as she could. Therefore, she approached Woolf to ask her 'how' she wanted her novel to be translated and to discuss some parts which were difficult to translate into French. She would not run the risk of misinterpreting. Yourcenar was delighted to be in Woolf's company for two short hours. They met at Tavistock Square late in the afternoon (4.30 p.m.) on Monday the 22nd of February 1937, "dans une chambre enavie par le crépuscule." Woolf was not really interested in the quality of the translation — "Faites ce que vous voulez" ["Do as you wish"] she said — and Yourcenar's niggling questions — "What does 'See here he comes' mean & so on?" — bored her.

However, both women were clearly fascinated by each other. Almost a year later Yourcenar ranked Woolf, in a short piece for the Communist magazine Impressions, "parmi les quatre ou cinq grands virtuoses de la langue anglaise et entre les rares romanciers contemporains dont elle avons quelques chances de durer plus de dix ans." ["among the four or five great virtuosos of the English language and among the rare contemporary novelists whose work has some chance of lasting more than ten years."]

Woolf gave the impression of being scintillating with wit, but also of being insecure and fragile; as an artist, Yourcenar believed, she was of a unique calibre: "quand je pense tout à la fois au martyr qu'est le travail de la creation pour tout grand artiste, et à l'admirable quantité d'images nouvelles que la litterature anglaise doit à Virginia Woolf, je ne puis m'empecher de penser à Sainte Lucie de Syracuse, faisant don aux aveugles de son ile natale de ses deux admirable joyaux: ses yeux."] ["when I think back over what a martyrdom the work of creation is for all great artists and the wonderful quantity of new images which English literature owes to VW, I cannot stop myself from thinking of St. Lucia of Syracuse, who gave as a gift to the blind people of her native island her two wonderful jewels: her eyes."]

Although, understandably, Woolf does not seem to have appreciated the intrusion and the unavoidable nip-picking, she was certainly intrigued by "the translator" whose name she had not quite understood. In a letter to Ethel Smyth she adopted her habitual condescending attitude to strangers: Yourcenar was "some intolerable necessity for ( ... ) who's wasted one of my rare solitary evenings." Yourcenar's diary, however, reveals that she had awaited the encounter with some trepidation, even though thoughts about Julian Fry's visit and his stories about his father and his cattle occupied her mind.

The short, appreciative entry she devoted to "Mlle Yourcenar (9)" shows that her appearance and personality stimulated Woolf's imagination and curiosity: "she wore some nice gold leaves on her black dress; is a woman I suppose with a past; amorous; intellectual; lives half the year in Athens; ( ... ) red lipped, strenuous; a working Fchwoman; ( ... ) matter of fact; intellectual." Being amorous, gifted with a practical intellect and having a past are genuine compliments when they come from Virginia Woolf; they remind one of her comments on Vita Sackville-West.

Les Vagues was eventually published at the end of the year by Stock in Paris; and the critics agreed that the translation had been wonderfully done. Many years later Marguerite Yourcenar repeated to Matthieu Galey what she had confided to Impressions: the strongest souvenir of her work on Les Vagues was the brief encounter with its author. Although Woolf had not been very cooperative, Yourcenar felt that the lifelong pleasure of remembering that visit to Bloomsbury was a sufficient reward for ten months of hard work. "J'ai toujours été contente de connaître ceux que j'ai rencontrés." ["I have always been glad to know those whom I met."]

Peter Jacobs
Dendermonde, Belgium

Note: Rough translations of French quotations in the text provided by VWM editor.

NOTE: We especially welcome contributions from VWM's international readers and would like to mention also that Alexandra Lavizzi at EDA Kierkegaard section, 3003 Bern, Switzerland has written to VWM to invite contributions from published scholars to a book she is editing for the German publishing house, Suhkamp in Frankfurt. Topics of late last Spring still seeking authors included discussions of each major novel, an historical discussion of stream of consciousness, Woolf's innovations and her influence, the influence of Bloomsbury on her, VW and the visual arts, etc.
VIRGINIA WOOLF AND FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY: Can Modernism Have “Soul”?

One of the few literary judgments that Virginia Woolf shared with Arnold Bennett was high praise for the novels of Dostoevsky, a curious fact if one considers the extent to which Dostoevsky became a major influence on Woolf's modernism. Bennett called The Brothers Karamazov "one of the supreme marvels of the world," and Woolf wrote of Dostoevsky that "Out of Shakespeare there is no more exciting reading." (CR 182) Like many continental cultural events, the works of Dostoevsky appeared late in England. Except for five volumes of Dostoevsky translated in the 1880s that soon went out of print, his novels did not become available in England until the 1910s, through Constance Garnett's translations. The Brothers Karamazov appeared in 1912, over thirty years after its Russian publication, and Dostoevsky became something of a cult author for younger writers, including Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield.

Woolf chronicled in book reviews and essays, some of which have only recently been collected, the appearance of Garnett's translations and the influence they had on English literary consciousness. In a 1917 review entitled "More Dostoevsky," she writes that with each new translation "we feel a little better able to measure what the existence of this great genius who is beginning to permeate our lives so curiously means to us." His books, she claims, "belong for good to the furniture of our minds." One finishes his books, she writes in the same year in "A Minor Dostoevsky," feeling that "the range is so vast that some new conception of the novelist's art remains with us in the end." (II VW Essays 167) The new conception she describes is that stress on the inner consciousness as opposed to external description which became central to her modernist practice. In the earlier version of her argument with Bennett, she writes, "After reading Crime and Punishment and The Idiot, how could any young novelist believe in 'characters' as the Victorians had painted them?"

Dostoevsky's accomplishment, according to Woolf, was to portray the depth of the "soul." His novels, she writes in "The Russian Point of View," "are composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul." In the end, the setting is "unimportant," for it is "the soul that matters . . ." (CR 182, 183) When Woolf examines the "labyrinth" of Velchianova's soul in Dostoevsky's The Eternal Husband, she describes the modernist technique she was to elaborate upon in "Modern Fiction." (1919) "From the crowd of objects pressing upon our attention," she writes in "More Dostoevsky," "we select now this one, now that one, weaving them inconsequently into our thought," (II VW Essays 85) a comment which echoes her evaluation of Joyce in "Modern Fiction." Alone among writers, she claims, Dostoevsky "has the power of reconstructing those most swift and complicated states of mind, of rereathering the whole train of thought in all its speed, now as it flashes into light, now as it lapses into darkness." Dostoevsky is able to "suggest the dim and populous underworld of the mind's consciousness where desires and impulses are moving blindly beneath the sod." (II VW Essays 85) The implications of this narrative technique for her national literature can be read as a description of the aesthetic which she will develop in the coming decade:

This is the exact opposite of the method adopted, parforce, by most of our novelists. They reproduce all the external appearances, but very rarely, and only for an instant, penetrate to the tumult of thought which rages within his own mind. But the whole fabric of a book by Dostoevsky is made out of such material. (II VW Essays 85)

"Soul" becomes in many of Woolf's essays a semi-mystical catchword to describe the new focus of the modern novel: the interior life. Woolf writes that the spirituality of the Russians "confounds us with a feeling of our own religious triviality." (CR 157-158) A curious remark at the end of a modernist manifesto. Despite its vague connotations, Woolf effectively seeks this "spirituality" in her own fiction, for in addition to her satirical powers, Woolf has a concurrent understanding of what Dostoevsky calls man's holy of holies. One of her major aesthetic concerns is to create characters whose souls are at once given expression and understanding but are not finalized. In discussing Dostoevsky's literary revolt, Mikhail Bakhtin describes conventional character portrayal as "something totally quantified, measured, and defined to the last detail: all of you is here, there is nothing more in you, and nothing more to be said about you." His words might well describe the tyrannical aesthetic against which Woolf reacted so strongly in order to free "Mrs. Brown" from facile summation. To sum up, for Woolf, is not to understand. Clarissa Dalloway, like Woolf, does not believe in summing people up. Men like the doctor, Bradshaw, Clarissa imagines, are "capable of some indescribable outrage — forcing your soul, that was it . . ." (MD 281)

Interestingly, Dostoevsky felt an antipathy toward psychologists and doctors similar to Woolf's. In a letter Dostoevsky writes: "Listen, I don't like spies and psychologists, at least those who poke into my soul." Late in his life he described his task: "With utter realism to find the man in man . . . They call me a psychologist; this is not true. I am merely a realist in the higher sense, that is, I portray all the depths of the human soul." (MD 1919) "Reality in the higher sense" was also Woolf's aim.

In both Woolf and Dostoevsky, narrative exploration of the inner consciousness is a liberating rather than a reifying enterprise; narrative understanding permits characters like Clarissa and Septimus freely to communicate. Bakhtin observes of Dostoevsky that his concern is not the relationship of a judging "I" to the world as its object, but rather the interrelationship of subjects to one another. Within the polyphonic, oppositional structure of his novels, characters are free from finalizing secondhand definitions and are instead in openended dialogue with each other. Woolf observes this structural effect in Dostoevsky when she writes that he strikes out a character or scene by the use of "glaring oppositions which are left unbridged" and thus his characters "are free." (CR 126) This dialogic form preserves the freedom of the "soul" always to prove itself other than, say, a singular omniscient narrator or authoritarian psychologist might have it.

For Woolf, the soul becomes, in Bakhtin's words, "the gift of my spirit to the other," the thing "that mattered" which Septimus gives to Clarissa, the only person who understands his soul precisely because it is communicated to her. Woolf develops such a dialogic form in The Waves, in which interior lives are in dialogue with each other. I would argue that its multi-voiced structure constitutes an anti-authoritarian aesthetic akin to what Bakhtin calls Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel; indeed, it can be argued that Dostoevsky's liberating treatment of the un governable soul has a formal relationship to Woolf's feminist form.

Bakhtin observes that Dostoevsky's egalitarian aesthetic originates in his power to give voice to widely diverse characters. Such egalitarianism exists in Woolf's oft-stated preference for sympathy over judgment. In her essay discussing Dostoevsky's novel, The Idiot, she writes: "Dostoevsky's character is such that, like Mr. Loway, Miss Lovelace, or La Trobe's pageant art, can become a communal rather than an egotistic enterprise. To achieve such an aesthetic, however, required the kind of psychological realism she found in Dostoevsky. To allow a subject to speak in all its complexity rather than to speak for it summarily was Woolf's goal and the Edwardsians' failing.

That Woolf's innovative aesthetic was inspired less by her own national literature than by the Russians, Proust, and others, may help to explain the often cool, if not overtly hostile reception of her writing in her own land. For the English reader, she observes in "The Russian Point of View," "the 'soul' is alien to him. It is even antipathetic." (CR 182) It is thus difficult, she claims, for an English reader to feel at ease reading Dostoevsky, for "the process to which he is accustomed in his own literature is reversed." The English reader "is invited to satire rather than to compassion, to scrutiny of society rather than understanding of individuals." Woolf overcame these English inclinations and combined in her art satire and compassion, scrutiny and understanding, the social and the individual. "No such restrained was laid on Dostoevsky," she writes. "It is all the same to him whether you are noble or simple, a tramp or a great lady. The soul is not restrained by barriers. It overflows, it floods, it mingle with the souls of others." (CR 184) In reading him, therefore, she writes six years before "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," "we are often bewildered because we find ourselves observing men and women from a different point of view from that to which we are accustomed. We have to get rid of the old tune which runs so persistently in our ears, and to realize how little of our humanity is expressed in that old tune." (II VW Essays 86) As an encouragement to change that tune,
Dostoevsky helped to inspire Woolf's humanitarian, though profoundly anti-humanistic, aesthetic, an aesthetic which liberates the plural self. By exploring the depths of "souls" outside her own, she overcame the solipsism of omniscience and the limitations of her nation's aesthetic assumptions.

Bill Handley
St. John's College, Oxford

2. Hynes 378.
7. Bakhtin 60.
8. Bakhtin 63.

References in the text are to Harcourt Brace Jovanovich paperbacks, except for VV Essays II, cited in Notes.

Note on the TATLER in MRS. DALLOWAY

In the midst of a heat wave the mysterious car with the dove-grey upholstery passes down St. James Street in front of the bow window of White's where "the white busts and the little tables in the background covered with copies of the Tatler and syphons of water seemed to approve." The fact that in the American edition "White's" persists as "Brook's" somewhat blunts the reference for advocates of the historical imperative, since it is White's (among others and not including Brook's) that saw the birth of Addison and Steele's journal of the 18th century. The hidden joke would have been clear, however, for Woolf's contemporaries who would have known its 20th century reincarnation under the same name.

The Tatler: Illustrated Journal of Society and Stage, whose numbers can be found at London's Colindale Newspaper Library, was founded by Clement King Shorter in 1901 and continued weekly until 1940, fourteen years after his death. In the privately printed CKS: An Autobiography, A Fragment of Himself of 1927, Shorter expresses pride in having borrowed the title, Tatler, as well as having made his product "the most successful illustrated newspaper in the world," although admittedly designed on more frivolous lines than its predecessor, the Sphere (107). In 1923 this journalistic property of an earlier type of Rupert Murdoch, who claims to have written, edited, and prefaced more than a hundred books and booklets, includes society photographs, gossipy columns, cartoons, pages devoted to jokes, sports, debutantes, and short fiction as well as a fixture entitled "Ladies Kennel Association Notes." The June issues document the society balls and parties like that of Clarissa Dallaway associated with the London season.

There are in addition some forty pages of advertising in each issue. Among their slogans there are such claims as "Glaxo — the super milk 'Builds Bonnie Babies': Ask your doctor"; and the insistent "Whenever you see a pillar box think of Onoto, the [fountain] pen," Goodrich asserts. " 'Life' in tyres should be something more than mere length of life," while Dent's offers their gauntlet gloves in pastel and French grey.

It is, rather, the matter of the written articles, somewhat tinsely in comparison with the moral stance of Isaac Bickerstaff (while also stiffly anticipating the glittering and tinsely lifestyles of the rich and famous in, say, a People magazine), that raises the question of the referent. Our first thought is that we must choose between Steele and Shorter. Unless one is willing to imagine that the original Tatler, even in his familiares, is displayed at White's club for regular perusal by its membership, then the referent must be that Tatler's modern namesake.

That this is more probable does not efface the presence of the original, however, because the attribution necessarily implies them both, coexistent, and uniquely evoked under the same nomenclature. It is as though a 200 year span has suddenly shrunk to an instant, relative to the space of White's Club/Chocolate House, in a verbal imposition of time: "Everything had come to a standstill?" Clearly the referent is both Tatlers simultaneously.

The ludic quality of this detail permits us to have it both ways, and the pleasure is doubled. Happily, we are in the position of the Bell children whom their father quotes: "Virginia is coming, what fun we shall have." The same was true for Clive Bell himself; he says, "We knew it would be exciting, we knew that we were going to laugh and be surprised and made to feel that the temperature of life was several degrees higher than we had supposed."

Molly Holt
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2. Woolf, 17.

WOOLF'S SWALLOWS

At the heart of Between the Acts is the tea-time interval held in the ancient barn. The scene occurs at the book's mid-point and is the only scene that is literally "between the acts" of the pageant. In it, Woolf brings together her most powerful images of the stark dichotomy between human community and the inhuman natural world. We see this dichotomy imaged not only in the description of the empty barn before its silence is filled with the noise of society, but also in the treatment of the swooping swallows that command Lucy Swinnen's attention. Swallows fly throughout the day's narrative, twice danc­ ing in droves through the pageant, and Lucy is clearly associated with them. Her first words of the day are "How these birds sing!" and her brother's repetition of "Swallow, my sister, o sister swallow" reinforces the association. Bart's musings points to a clear referent for Woolf's allusion: the myth of Proence and Philomela as treated by Swinburne and Eliot (with perhaps a hint of Tennyson's "O, Swallow, Swallow"). Nancy Bazin in Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision and Mitchell Leaska in Pointz Hall have explicated these allusions thoroughly and convincingly. I'd like to suggest another resonance that I think enriches the swallow image, particularly as it appears in the interval scene — the metaphor of Bede's swallow.

In retelling the conversion of King Eadwine to Christianity, Bede recounts the image of a swallow flitting in and out of a warm banquet hall on a night of bone-chilling cold and blizzard: "While he is inside, he is safe from the winter storms; but after a few moments of comfort he vanishes from sight into the darkness whence he came. Similarly, man appears on earth for a little while, but we know nothing of what went before this life, and what follows" (Leo Sherley-Price translation). Bede's parable means to direct us from the warmth of this life to the eternity of wintry blasts — and to provide a Christian alternative to this harrowing vision. Woolf echoes the image by placing the swallows in the midst of an ancient, "noble" barn filled with feasting revelers, but she reverses the emphasis. In Bede's image, human life dwindles beside the great void; in Woolf's narrative of betweenness, the liminal moment of human life is the magnified center. Life is lived between the acts of birth and death, and the cold night of the unknown intensifies our attention to the human hearth. Lucy Swinnen sees in the swallows not a brief passing through the great Barn, but the series of returns of the migratory species, a natural history that outlives civilization, as with Keats's nightingale that "wast not born for death": "Year after year they came. Before there was a channel, when the earth, upon which the Windsor chair was planted, was a riot of rhododendrons... ."

As the presence of the swallows suggests to Lucy their recurrent pattern of flight extended over the centuries, so too does the community gathered in the barn suggest the repeated revivals of the human clan through celebration and art, the forces joined in the pageant. That desire for "company, sweet company" that resounds throughout Between the Acts and repeatedly fills the silences with sounds is embodied in Woolf's subtle trope on Bede's image, a turning in tune with her focus on the ancient voices of art and community in Between the Acts and Anon.

Christopher Ames
Agnes Scott College
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Edna O'Brien's stunning play, Virginia, has recently been brought to life by the Chamber Theater, a San Francisco-based acting ensemble under the direction of Frank Reilly. O'Brien, an Irish writer of short stories and novels, is known for her tales of young women who escape the confinement of country homes or convent schools for the crowds and glitter of Dublin and London, heroines who risk security and court notoriety for the sake of experience. The theme of Virginia, a dramatic work based upon the novels, letters and diaries of Virginia Woolf, to a degree parallels the concerns of O'Brien's fiction. Here, the risk comes in the form of Vita Sackville-West whom Woolf characterized as "brown as a satyr and very beautiful." The action of the play compresses the major events of Virginia Woolf's life in a masterly way, fusing time and intersecting past and present much as Woolf herself did in her novels.

The play opens with Virginia sitting at her desk while her father, Leslie Stephen, stands in the background shrouded in shadow. They do not speak to one another, but as Woolf reminisces on the past, on her mother's death, her siblings, and her father's difficult character, his voice is heard moaning in grief and guilt as he cries out, "I was not as bad as Carlyle, was I?" An extraordinary psychological atmosphere is thus sustained throughout the piece. The figure of Leslie Stephen then transforms into that of young Leonard Woolf who comes to ask for Virginia's hand. In this scene, as elsewhere, the strain of her madness is never far away, but it is counterpoised with the force of love — that of Leonard and Vita for Virginia, and Vita's for them.

Again and again one hears those incandescent phrases, clipped by Edna O'Brien from their original contexts and skillfully rewoven to evoke a visceral sense of Woolf's inner world. For instance, when Virginia leaves to join her diplomat husband in Persia, Woolf stands in sorrow, then suddenly recovers by imagining the happy scene: "Now you are arriving, driving into the gates of Teheran. There's Harold coming out to meet you. There you sit proud as a peacock. Now you are stopping at some place for figs and wine, you are very excited, all in a whirl, like a flock of birds flying about. Yes, you are an agile animal — no doubt about it . . . heart you have none."

The portrait of Leonard Woolf is slightly less successful, though O'Brien is just in her characterization of their relationship. He is seen at once as Virginia's loving caretaker and also as the stern restricter of her pleasures. His own ardent personality which combined a rigorous code of integrity with an acute artistic sensibility is here somewhat diminished, though not distorted. This is, all in all, a fairly minor work - a two dimensional phenomena? One has to rely on the reader's own merging with the text to establish the ultimate meaning of any work of art. The artist is merely the guide who grapples with "this formidable ancient enemy . . . this other thing, this truth, this reality . . . emerged stark at the back of appearances." (39) Throughout SINGING, Hussey circles back to these "strange notions" of Woolf's — her attempts to describe being and nothingness, her definition of reality as the abstract, the unspoken, unseen, unheard yet somehow sensed thread of the web of life.

In her fiction, Woolf constantly addressed her deepest concerns — individual identity, relationship, time, reality. These topics are each examined separately yet holistically by Hussey. Since, for Woolf, "artistic creation is connected with transcendence of the actual and revelation of the soul" (77), Hussey is continually struggling with the same basic problem Woolf faced. How does the writer use a two dimensional medium — words on paper — to express multidimensional phenomena? One has to rely on the reader's own merging with the text to establish the ultimate meaning of any work of art. The artist is merely the guide who grapples with "this formidable ancient enemy . . . this other thing, this truth, this reality . . . emerged stark at the back of appearances." (TTL, 244-45). As she says later in BETWEEN THE ACTS, Woolf felt that "A vision imparted is relief from agony." (117).

Wisely, Mark Hussey makes no attempt to make definitive conclusions about Woolf's philosophy, her description of that reality behind the "cotton wool:" As he states in his introduction, his goal is to ask "more searching questions than have yet been asked of that (Woolf's) art. . . . To be left with questions rather than answers seems to me indicative of a new and needed honesty, which might have appealed to the restless searcher in Woolf." (xiv).

The largest question left in the mind of this reviewer concerns the incredible inner strength of Woolf's soul that Hussey indirectly portrays. How does a person maintain the wonderful excitement — that joy of pure being Woolf over and over describes so beautifully in her work — in the sharp certainty of the total despair, the total absence of objective meaning, she describes with equal beauty? And yet — she does.

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NOTE FROM VWS PRESIDENT ON MLA CONVENTION:
28 Dec., 5:15-6:30 p.m. Burgundy Hilton
VIRGINIA WOOLF SOCIETY BUSINESS MEETING (all members urged to attend)
VIRGINIA WOOLF SOCIETY PROGRAMS, plus a Special Session
28 Dec., 8:30-9:45 a.m., Melrose, Hilton
DISMEMBERING AND REMEMBERING VIRGINIA WOOLF’S FAMILY OF ORIGIN, OF WRITINGS, OF FICTIONS, AND OF FRIENDSHIPS
Presiding: Jane Lilienfield
In Memoriam: Alice Fox
1. “A Daughter Remembers” by Louise de Salvo, Hunter College, NYC
2. “The Family Album: Fact and Fantasy” by Diane Gillespie, Univ. of Washington, Pullman
3. “Virginia Woolf’s Matrarchal Family of Origins in Between the Acts” by Patricia Cramer, Xavier College, Cincinnati
4. “Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Early Novels: The Narrative Interwoven” by Mark Hussey, Pace Univ., NYC
29 Dec., 12:00 noon - 1:15 p.m., Elmwood, Hilton
VIRGINIA WOOLF’S CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS
Presiding: Judith L. Johnston
1. “Class Consciousness and Its (Dis)Contents” by Ronald Thomas Foster, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison
2. “Reading between the Class Lines: The Women’s Cooperative Guild” by Camille Colotosti, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor
3. “On the Outside Looking Down: Life as We Have Known It and Three Guineas” by Mary M. Childers, Oberlin Coll.
Respondent: Tillie Olsen, San Francisco, CA
For copies of papers, send $3 to Judith L. Johnston by 2 December.
29 Dec., 3:30 - 4:45 p.m., Versailles Ballroom, Hilton
THREE GUINEAS: FIFTY YEARS LATER (Special Session)
Presiding: Brenda Silver
Papers by Grace Paley, Sarah Lawrence; Sally Ruddick, New School of Social Research; Naomi Black, York University; Susan Squier, SUNY, Stonybrook.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED.