TO THE READERS:

Most of VWM's news this Spring is about publication opportunities and about upcoming conferences, which seems meet and right for our newsletter format.

There were some irascible letters back and forth about matters of fact and of interpretation in last Fall's VWM #44 on Woolf and Fascism, but I am asking the editor of that issue, Merry Pawlowski, Cal State Univ., Bakersfield, to compile them into a report for an upcoming issue rather than including them in this already overfull issue.

How glad we are to be able to welcome the WOOLF STUDIES ANNUAL, published by Pace University Press, which promises to "represent the breadth and eclecticism in critical approaches... new perspectives...book reviews." Mark Hussey is editing the first issue, along with a distinguished list of consultants, and it is due out this Spring (ISBN 0-944473-21-0 (paper) ISBN 0-944473-20-2 (cloth). The ANNUAL, it is hoped, will take some of the pressure off the MISCELLANY, leaving us free to be more miscellaneous than ever...

There are two calls for thematic essays, follow-ups to MLA sessions on Woolf: 1) Virginia Woolf: Renaissance Woman (write Sally Greene, Dept. of English, CB 3520, Greenlaw Hall, Univ. of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3520, or sally_greene@unc.edu); 2) Woolf and Fascism (write Merry Pawlowski, Dept. of English and Communications, Cal State Univ., Bakersfield, Bakersfield, CA 93311-1099).

Marilyn Zucker at 509 West Olympic Place, Suite 3, Seattle, WA 98119 (tel #206 282-3235) is inviting papers for an anthology of critical essays on THE WAVES that explore and interrogate the enigmatic text from a variety of critical perspectives. Please send papers of 23-30 pages by June 1, 1995; proposals and letters of inquiry are welcome.

MOSAIC, A JOURNAL FOR THE INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF LITERATURE invites submissions for a special issue on "Literature, Love and Androgyny." Deadline, September 15, 1995. FM, Dr. Evelyn J. Hinz, Room 208 Tier Bldg., University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA R3T 2N2. Phone (204) 474-9763; FAX (204) 261-9086.

And a related item, from Angelica Garnett and Quentin Bell: Scholars seeking copyright permission from the Virginia Woolf Estate please note that they should address: Chatto and Windus, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SWIV 2SA for the use of published material. For dramatic and film rights, or for quotations from unpublished sources write to The Society of Authors, 84 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SB.

VWM has heard from C. Curry of what she calls "an unprecedented opportunity" to purchase a major Virginia Woolf Collection, virtually complete. All first English editions, some rare, many in scarce dust-wrappers. Owner anxious to have collection stay together. Ideal for institution where it can be looked after and made available to Woolf readers. Includes magazines, biographies, critical works. Please call or write for further information on this irreplaceable collection to: Louise Ross, Mulberry House, 8, Mount Road, Lansdown, BATH, U.K. BAM 5PN (O) 1225 448786.

Peter Stanksy wants us to know that the B A I SPN (O) 1225 448786.

Peter Stanksy wants us to know that the Book Club of California at 312 Sutter St. in San Francisco is holding an exhibit entitled enticingly "Bloomsbury and Psychology" during the month of August. He invites you to call him for further details, if you wish (tel #415 347-0941).

I learn from S.F. Rosenbaum's useful column "Did You Know?" in Spring/Summer 95 THE CHARLESTON MAGAZINE that the papers of Desmond and Molly MacCarthy have been acquired by the Lilly Library at Indiana University in Bloomington.

Am I the last to know, by the way, that there is a film in the making about Carrington? and one on Lytton Strachey? or are they one and the same film? Please keep your VWM "in the loop" by sending us news and gossip. Our rotating editorship, our appearing only twice a year (thank heavens!), and our not being on the East Coast puts us in danger of missing such "hotopical" info. Thanks!

And now, the next issue of the VWM will be edited by Georgia Johnston at the Dept. of English, St. Louis Univ., 221 N. Grand Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63103. Her theme is autobiography and biography, and she welcomes any approach—archival, psychoanalytical, new historical, cultural, etc. Submissions should be, brief, 600-800 words and for easy scanning by our Reprographics, please avoid dot matrix printers. The deadline for copy is Sept. 1, 1995.

Hope to see many of you at the 5th Annual VW Conference (about which much info inside). Again, VWM will be there with back issues for sale, plus all the indexes to issues 1-40, plus a suggestion box for ideas for future issues. Thanks for your attention to all of this detail. On to the letters from readers, the absolutely last word on Asheham House, the Book Review section edited by Pat Laurence, and some fascinating "travel" articles.

J.J. Wilson
Sonoma State University

FROM THE READERS:

Dear VWM:

May we say a few words on the destruction of Asheham House referred to in your last issue, not to condone it, but by way of explanation of its near inevitability?

The enchantment of Asheham to the Woolfs and their circle, as anyone familiar with their recorded impressions will be aware, lay in the overall beauty of the house in its setting (suggested in Carrington's sketch). Situated in a fold of the downs facing the Ouse Valley on the Lewes-Seaford road, backed by the bare rising slopes of the hills behind, it faced westwards towards the road...
across a long open meadow flanked on either side by rows of great elms, with a clear view over the river valley to the downs above Rodmell on the far side.

When the house and surrounding lands were taken over by a cement company in the 1930's, chalk was excavated from the hills behind and beside the house, and the spoil from these extensive operations was dumped on the meadow between the house and the road, forming a huge high barrier which in time became thickly covered with self-seeded scrub and trees, effectively imprisoning Asheham House, blocking its outlook, and entirely destroying its ambience.

Blue Circle Cement Company's workings ceased in the mid-60's and the now divided but "listed" Asheham House was vacated by its employees. The company subsequently applied to the County Council for licence to fill in the cruelly despoiled landscape with East Sussex's rubbish, offering as "public benefit" the eventual restoration of the downland to its former contours. The licence was granted, and for about the past 15 years the gaping craters have been slowly filling up with garbage, distributed and shed into place by gigantic earth-moving machines. By 1990 it was apparent to Blue Circle, and indeed to East Sussex County Council, that it would be profitable to the former and advantageous to the latter were it possible to extend the infilling operations over the site of Asheham House itself. To this end Blue Circle asked for authority to demolish the house, proposing to reconstruct it nearer the road, recreating, in a foreshortened form, the open landscape and view that it had formerly enjoyed. This laudable compromise, very well researched by the company, was turned down by the authorities on the grounds that it would constitute a new building in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and would involve the destruction of natural woodland (i.e.: the wholly artificial mound covered with incongruous sycamores which blocked the view from the house).

In the circumstances it became a straight issue: to permit demolition of a listed (protected) building at the price of appropriate compensation; or to insist on its preservation. In the latter case, this would entail the preservation by Blue Circle of an already vandalised, dilapidated, and inaccessible building in the middle of an infestinal charnel-house of garbage manipulation for at least 25 years, until the toxicity of the landfilling materials had subsided and it was safe to restore it. And even then the setting would be lost.

In the event, the desolating but realistic alternative was approved by the authorities. Asheham House has been demolished. Careful records and actual features of the house have been preserved, and the very considerable sum obtained in compensation is to be distributed among a number of causes regarded as related to the loss sustained by the locality—not all of which have our support.

(QB): I am now the only person who lived at and remembers Asheham when Leonard and Virginia were its tenants. The place lost almost all its charm and beauty when its environment was destroyed. Much might have been saved if the first proposal had been accepted, but when that hope was extinguished there was practically nothing left worth fighting for.

Quentin and Olivier Bell
81 Heighton Street, Firle Leues, Sussex, UK

Dear VWM:

It might interest your readers to know that Ida Graves whose book The China cupboard (1929) was No.5 in the Hogarth Living Poets series is, at 92, still writing vigorous poetry. Oxford University Press has just brought out a collection of her poems called A Kind Husband (£5.99 & 0-19-282395-7, September 1994) 65 years after her first collection!

In the interim she has written adult and children's novels for Faber, and a long poem 'Mother and child' was published by the Fortune Press on V.E. day.

Her early friendships included Mark Gertler, Epstein, the Lawrence's and Dylan Thomas. With the engraver and graphic designer Blair Hughes Stanton she bought and restored a mid 16th century weavers house in which she still lives surrounded by paneling and walls decorated by her and as featured in Country Life (Sep. 28th 1945). During the war she had worked on sets for the ballet in London. An article giving an impression of her life and personality was published in the Independent on Sunday 14th August 1994.

Peter Wallis
22 Britannia Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR 1 4HP, UK

FROM THE BOOK REVIEW EDITOR:

In this spring's issue, two new directions are suggested for our book review section. Professor Qi Shi-jing's report on "Woolfian Publications in China" introduces a new section on "Translations of Woolf." The theoretical and pragmatic issues of translating Woolf is of interest not only in the intertwining of politics and literature in China, but also in France, Italy, Spain, Russia, Japan . . . .

If you are a translator of Woolf or have compared various versions of Woolf in a foreign language, we would like to hear from you.

In addition, we would like to present reviews of the new array of editions of Woolf from Penguin, Oxford, Vintage, Hogarth Press and Blackwell/Shakespeare Head. What are the differences between these new competing editions, most of which are only available in England? If you own some of these British/Canadian editions and would like to comment or compare, send a letter outlining what you would like to write; we want to present many points of view. Reviews that deal with the differences among the editions, and the value of various editions for us as teachers and scholars are welcome—as well as discussions of the effect of copyright laws in England and America (and the laws to be established as part of the European Common Market) on the quality of Woolf texts.

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PROFESSOR QU SHI-JING ON WOOLFIAN PUBLICATIONS IN CHINA

Qu Shi-jing, known to us in the Virginia Woolf Society as Frank Chu, is the foremost expert on Virginia Woolf in China. He is both a translator of Woolf, and the first PRC critic to draw attention to her works beginning in the 1980's.

His first book, The Selected Essays of Virginia Woolf (Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 1986) was sold out in a few weeks in the bookstores of Shanghai, and was republished in Taiwan in 1990. His collection of twenty-one of Woolf's essays translated into Chinese includes "Modern Fiction," "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," "The Narrow Bridge of Art"

To the Lighthouse (Shanghai Translation Publishing House) — part of it had been translated in the 30's. In the same year, he gathered a collection of critical essays on Woolf, Studies on Virginia Woolf (Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House) written by British, American, French, German and Russian authors and critics. Those included are E.M. Forster, Arnold Bennett, T.S. Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, Andre Maurois, Andre Roussseau, Monique Nathan, Ghislaine Dunant, Eric Auerbauch, Wilhem Fuger, N. Selosyova, and our own American critics, Lucio Ruotolo, Harvena Richter, James Hafley, Robert Collings, and Marin Dibattista. Professor Qu reports that this anthology of essays has become a very important reference book for graduate students pursuing Woolf studies in Chinese universities.

In 1989, Qu's monograph "Virginia Woolf and Her Art of Fiction" (Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House) was acclaimed by academics at a Woolf symposium organized by Shanghai literary circles. With the growing interest in modernism, Qu published in the same year, The Theory of Stream of Consciousness Novels (Setzuan), an anthology of critical essays by Henry James, Marcel Proust, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Following this came Qu's sixth book, an interdisciplinary study of western music, painting, philosophy and literature, Music, Art, and Literature: A Comparative Study of Stream of Consciousness Novels (Xue Lin Publishing House, 1991). In 1991, Professor Qu, rewarded for his years of dedicated work in Woolf studies, was given the Shanghai Municipal Prize for Art and Literature and the National Book Prize.

Professor Qu in outlining the history of Woolf publications in China for the Virginia Woolf Society reports that,
In the 30’s and 40’s of this century, three of Virginia Woolf’s books were translated into Chinese. They were "Flush" (trans. Shi Po), "A Room of One’s Own" (trans. Wang Huan) and a loose and partial translation of "To the Lighthouse". After 1949, no one in China dared to study or translate the works of Virginia Woolf for nearly thirty years because modern western culture was considered imperialist. In 1979, the open-door policy encouraged Chinese scholars to study modernism again, and "The Mark on the Wall" was one of the first stories to be translated into Chinese. Within two years there were three Chinese versions of this piece. In 1981, "Modern Fiction" and "Kew Gardens" appeared in Foreign Literature and Art, a Shanghai literary magazine. Not much attention, however, was given to these Woolf translations in the early 80’s.

Translations of Woolf continued nevertheless. In 1982, Wu Jun Xi’s translation of "The Waves" (Foreign Literature Quarterly, 1982, No.4) was acclaimed for its beauty in academic circles. In 1986, Night and Day (trans. Tang Zai-Long and Yin Jian-Xin, Hu-nan People’s Publishing House), and Qu Shi-jing’s "The Selected Essays of Virginia Woolf" (Shanghai Translation Publishing House) were published in 1988. Mrs. Dalloway (trans. Sun Liang and Yu Su-Mei, Shanghai Translation Publishing House 1988), and the first full translation of "To the Lighthouse" by Qu Shi-jing (Shanghai Translation Publishing House) at the present time, there is much interest in Orlando and Professor Zhu Nai-Chang is in the process of translating it and will publish it in Taiwan. This short outline of Woolf translations and critical studies reveals the challenge to translators and critics to convey Woolf’s words, image, flow of sentences and narrative experiments and their appreciations of her style in the Chinese language.

Professor Qu Shi-jing
Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences


The 1994 Woolf conference at Bard College witnessed the beginning of a promising series of publications for students of Bloomsbury’s versatile writers. Modeling this series on those of Leonid and Virginia Woolf’s The Hogarth Essays (actually two series between 1924 and 1928 to which thirty-one authors contributed thirty-five titles), the couple’s nephew, Cecil Woolf, renews the spirit of such precedents although re-dedicated to the “Life, Works and Times of the Bloomsbury Group” itself (the cover bears an evocative design by Robert Campling strongly reminiscent of Vanessa Bell’s decorations for the jackets of her sister’s books). Under the general editorship of Jean Moorcroft Wilson, the new monographic series is appropriately the product of an enterprising "writing couple" who give us (intelligent common readers) both rare texts to relish and a savory dash of scholarship.

What better way to launch such an enterprise than with two unwritten works by Virginia Wool? The first is drawn from the handwritten newsletter “The Hyde Park Gate News,” which the Stephen children wrote between Virginia’s ninth and fourteenth years. “A Cockney’s Farming Experiences,” begun when she was ten and, initially, in partnership with her brother Thoby, accompanies an unfinished sequel called “The Experiences of a Pater-familias.” These juvenile narratives are Woolf’s first sustained effort to write a novel, Henig argues (with too much summary for the slight chapters she faithfully transcribes). Similarly, we are glad (though perhaps unsettled by unusual annotations for deletions and indecipherables) to have work Diane Gillespie has retrieved from Woolf’s manuscripts, much aided by a vigorous, proportionally succinct introduction on the “impressions” of Roger Fry that Woolf “dashed off . . . rapidly at the typewriter” (3) before beginning her full-length biography.

Biographical essays by Wilson and Caws entertain questions about Bloomsbury persons and places without insisting that determinate answers exist. Thus, Leonard Woolf is both, in one sense, central to the group and, in another, an “outsider” to it. Likewise, the French port of Cassis, for a time a holiday favorite of the Woolfs and their friends, possibly contributed atmosphere (and a lightstreak), tempering images of a remembered St. Ives without contesting the primacy of the place “background in the underlying setting of To the Lighthouse.” From a reader’s standpoint, these essays and recovered Virginia Woolf texts make reason for celebrating the arrival of the Bloomsbury Heritage series as evident as each booklet is affordable (when orders are directed to the publisher at the following address: 1 Mornington Place, London NW1 7RP.)

Wayne K. Chapman
Clemson University


Jan Morris was admittedly set a difficult task in editing the travel writings of Virginia Woolf. After she began work, the title was changed from The Travel Writings of Virginia Woolf, because, as Morris explains, “Nobody was ever less of a travel writer, in the usual sense of the phrase, than Virginia Woolf.” Such a title would have been, Morris argues in the Introduction, almost “tautological, because so much of Virginia Woolf’s writing is travel writing in her own kind.” Few writers have ever been more powerfully inspired by the sense of place. Morris warns that the volume should never be placed “on a travel shelf” and that the “carefree extracts” are intended only to convey the overall influence of that sense of place on Woolf’s work as a whole. Although Woolf’s conventional travel writing was confined to a few essays (she never wrote a travel book), Morris has culled descriptions of places from her letters, journals, and diaries, and has included portions of the travel sketches she did write. Woolf feared becoming a “travel bore” and felt no obligation to describe noted sights.

Even so, certain compromises have been made, and at times the reader may wish the collection were more straightforward, along the lines of Alexander Kinglake’s Eothen or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East, which Morris also edited, at least to the extent of providing a clear Table of Contents. The Contents in Travels with Virginia Woolf is as enigmatic as Woolf’s travel writings are elusive. There are two major sections, “Home,” and “Away,” corresponding roughly (but not precisely) to the British Isles (except that Wales is in “Away”) and the Continent (including Greece and Turkey). Addenda to “Home” labeled “Gazetteer” and “Anglicisms,” and to “Away” called “Exotica,” contain fragmentary extracts too brief to fit in elsewhere, such as “Cheddar,” “Brighton,” “English Hotels,” “Culture Shocks,” “Religion,” and “Foreign Ways.” The reader must decipher the contents by scanning the pages or by consulting the index, arranged by country and, in the British Isles, county, rather than by place-name.

Morris retraced many of Woolf’s travels in 1992, and after most selections has supplied historical and logical notes. As a result, there is a continuing sub-text of Morris’ own travels and a duality of voices that, at times, sound a dissonant note. The literal-minded may appreciate the factual updates about what has decayed and what has endured, but those to whom Woolf’s discourse is itself evocative, on many levels, will not welcome the insistent disclosures about latter-day ravages of the landscapes she loved, speculations about trains and footpaths she might have taken, or corrections to her recall (Morris has it on good authority that the Godrevy Lighthouse cannot be seen from any window of the hotel in which Virginia stayed in 1909).

Morris’ observations sometimes illuminate Woolf’s travels, but at other times oppose and even compete with them. A graveyard at
Warboys in the Fenlands still heaves with anonymous burial bumps." Morris states, and she digresses into descriptions of a Finnish folk song she heard while revisiting Epidaurus and gangs of young ruffians at Haworth. Had these comments and the "Gazetteer," "Anglicisms," and "Exotica" been shortened, there would perhaps have been room for the full texts of "Haworth" (Woolf's first published essay, The Guardian, 1904) and "To Spain" (Nation and Athenaeum, 1923) instead of truncated versions beginning in mid-paragraph. The deletion in the first instance deprives us of a key statement suggesting Woolf's fundamental ambivalence about mental journeys. In the case of "To Spain," her reflections on leaving the "precipice" of one civilization, launched upon another are omitted, as well as a confession of the difficulty she felt in describing the enlarging countryside outside Bordeaux when words "turn tail at the first approach of visual beauty."

In the final section of the volume, "Envoi," Morris concedes that although, initially, she had not been among Woolf's greatest admirers, in the course of her journeys in Woolf's footsteps around Europe, she came to know and enjoy another Virginia who "made me laugh, captivated me with the pithiness of her judgments, disarmed me by her taste for fun, moved me by her affinity with pathos and her way with animals and children." That Virginia is present on every page.

But, finally, it is Woolf's acute sense of place that the selections convey, and for their gathering-up Morris is much to be commended. Woolf's journal entry about the "purlieus" of Constantinople, where "a great deal of the Gorgeous East still runs warm; a vine was laced across the road, & a various torrent of red fezes, turbans, yashmaks, & European respectability came pouring down it, like a turbulent Highland water" (229); her complaint on a postcard to Duncan Grant that staying at Skye was "like living in a jelly fish lit up with green light" (138); her diary entry about the Cathedral at Chartres, with "the blue windows blazing in the cold grey night... like seeing the skeleton & eyes of the cathedral glowing there. Mere bones, & the blue red eyes" (168). These passages, along with dozens of others, make it highly regrettable that Woolf did not turn more often to travel writing.

Sarah Bird Wright
College of William and Mary

TRAVELING TO THE LIGHTHOUSE WITH WOOLF AND JOHNSON

As most of the critics of Woolf's To the Lighthouse have noted, the novel's setting is based upon St. Ives in Cornwall, where the author spent many of the happiest summers of her childhood. Woolf chose, however, to transplant that setting north, to the Isles of Skye off the western coast of Scotland. Why did Woolf choose this place for a setting—a place she was not to visit until almost ten years after the composition of her novel? Perhaps this question can be answered by a reading of Samuel Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands (1775), a narrative account of a tour Johnson took with his friend and biographer James Boswell. A large part of this tour was spent in the Isles of Skye, and of particular interest in this context is Johnson's description of his stay on the Isle of Raasay, just to the northeast of Skye proper.

Raasay has little that can detain a traveller, except the Laird and his family; but their powers want no auxiliaries. Such a seat of hospitality, amidst the winds and the waters, fills the imagination with a delightful contrariety of images. Without is the rough ocean and the rocky land, the beating billows and the howling storm: within is plenty and elegance, beauty and gaiety, the song and the dance. In Raasay, if I could have found a Ulysses, I had fancied a Phoebe. (49)

In comparing this passage with Woolf's Lighthouse, we discover some striking parallels. In both cases, a wind-swept isle is the setting; in both, a family is the main attraction of the place; in both, this family is celebrated for its hospitality. On the basis of these parallels alone, one might suggest that Woolf was drawing upon Johnson's Journey for details of her setting (which details, as one liter-minded reader pointed out to Woolf, were highly inaccurate). Johnson's allusion to Ulysses, also, may have attracted Woolf, for another intertext in Lighthouse is William Browne of Tavistock's Circe and Ulysses: The Inner Temple Masque (1614), a line of which is reproduced near the end of "The Window": "Steer, hither steer your winged pines, all beaten Mariners" (179). In Woolf's vision, Mr. Ramsay is also at once Johnson's Raasay (as the Laird of the Isle was called) and Browne's Ulysses, Mrs. Ramsay the Laird's hospitable wife and Circe/Penelope. Such is the allusive richness of her text.

An important theme in all of Woolf's novels, as Betty Kushner has demonstrated at book length, is that of communion—E. M. Forster's "only connect." This is an important theme for Johnson as well; in his journey he describes a dinner party on Raasay:

The general air of festivity, which predominated in this place, so far remote from all those regions which the mind has been used to contemplate as the mansions of pleasure, struck the imagination with a delightful surprise, analogous to that which is felt at an unexpected emersion from darkness into light. (44)

Woolf, of course, also presents her reader with a dinner party: Now all the candles were lit up, and the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candle light, and composed, as they had not been in the twilight, into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, waterily.

Some change at once went through them all, as if this had really happened, and they were all conscious of making a party together in a hollow, on an island; had their common cause against that fluidity out there. (146-47)

Johnson's contrasts are clearly echoed here: outside and inside, ocean and earth, darkness and light. Woolf, however, elaborates upon Johnson's vision of communion, takes his moment of "delightful surprise" and makes of it a "moment of being": "There it was, all round them. It partook, [Mrs. Ramsay] felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity... of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures" (158).

I have been unable to ascertain precisely when Woolf read Johnson's text; that she had read it prior to her 1938 trip to the Hebrides, however, is clear from a letter she wrote to her sister Vanessa while staying at the Fiddigarry Hotel in Partree, Isle of Skye: "Flora Macdonald lived in this house. The sea is beneath the window. Here came Prince Charlie dressed as a Peggar. Possibly Dr Johnson and Boswell—but don't take this for a fact and boast of it" (Letters VI 295). Regardless, what is important to recognize is that Woolf's allusive technique reflects her vision of communion; at twenty-one she wrote to herself:

I seem to feel Napoleons influence our quiet evenings in the garden for instance—I think I see for a moment how our minds are all threaded together—how any live mind
today is ... of the very same stuff as Plato’s & Euripides. It is only a continuation and development of the same thing—It is this common mind that binds the whole world together; & all the world is mind ... . I feel as though I had grasped the central meaning of the world, & all these poets & historians & philosophers were only following out paths branching from that centre in which I stand. (cited in Silver, 5)

This vision of connectedness is also a vision of love. Woolf could forgive Dr. Johnson his unkind comparison of preaching women to dancing dogs—at least long enough to borrow from him the title for her book of literary essays, The Common Reader—and at least long enough to offer him the following (perhaps somewhat ambivalent) tribute: “But with what humility did he [Bosswell] not abuse himself before the great rolling shadow, who now rose to its full height and rocking somewhat as he stood there rolled out the most magnificent ...” (Orlando 223).

The Great Cham was a great stylist, for which Virginia Woolf—a formidable stylist herself—could forgive a multitude of sins.

Kelly Anspach
Ohio State University, Lima

Notes
1. Woolf to her sister Vanessa: “Lord Olivier writes that my horticulture and natural history is in every instance wrong; there are no rocks, elms, or dahlias in the Hebrides; my sparrows are wrong; so are my carnations ...” (Letters 379).

2. The original context for “common reader” is Johnson’s life of Grey: “In the character of his Essay I rejoice to concur with the common reader: for by the common sense of readers uncorrupted by literary prejudices, after all the refinements and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claims to poetical honors” (Lives 392). Woolf also wrote a number of essays on the Johnson circle, including “A Friend of Johnson” (on Baretti), “Dr. Burney’s Evening Party,” “Fanny Burney’s Half Sister,” and “Mrs. Thrale” (all in Essays III 127-62).

Works Cited


... The Common Reader. New York: Harcourt, 1925.


... Orlando. New York: Harcourt, 1929.

... To The Lighthouse. New York: Harcourt, 1927.

VWM Editor’s Note: And this is surely the appropriate place to mention Beth Rosenberg’s new book, VIRGINIA WOOLF AND SAMUEL JOHNSON ISBN 0-312-10741-2, from St. Martin’s Press, 257 Park Ave. S., New York, NY 10010, ATTN: JF.

YET ANOTHER SORT OF TRAVELING WITH WOOLF

Having recently come back to graduate school in English literature at Sonoma State University (after a 30 year hiatus), I was thoroughly enjoying J.J. Wilson’s class in Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury, so much so that when I scheduled of trip to Boston with a my daughter to visit colleges at the end of September, I made sure I would miss none of the Monday night classes. The book I took to read on the plane was Orlando, the novel I had chosen as the focus for my first paper. As I dealt with the time change by reading far into the night, I couldn’t believe that in all my years of reading, I had somehow missed this literary tour de force. For the next several days, while Sarah and I toured colleges in the Boston and Amherst area, Virginia Woolf was never far from my side or my thoughts. Towards the end of the week, while having dinner at my cousin’s house, I happened to mention the Virginia Woolf course. She immediately whipped out a copy of that day’s Boston Globe. “Well then,” she said, “You would probably be interested in this.”

There on the front page was an article about a red marble bench that had mysteriously appeared in an out of the way corner of a Cambridge park, engraved with a quotation from Virginia Woolf’s Orlando. Police estimated that the bench weighed at least a ton, and were mystified as to how it had been transported to the area, a hilly glen surrounded by tall pines, accessible only by a narrow footpath. The words engraved on the bench were excerpted from Chapter 5 and read as follows:

... she (Orlando) lay content, The scent of the bog myrtle and the meadowsweet was in her nostrils. The rooks’ house laughter was in her ears. I have found my mate, she murmured. It is the moon ... She whispered, giving herself in rapture to the cold embrace of the grass as she lay folded in her cloak in the hollow by the pool. Here will I lie. (A feather fell upon her brow) I have found a greener laurel than the bay. My forehead will be cool always. These are wild birds’ feathers—the owls, the nightjars. I shall dream wild dreams ... I should lie at peace here with only the sky above me ... as the gypsy told me years ago. Indeed she was falling asleep, with the wet feathers on her face and her ear pressed to the ground, when she heard deep within, some hammer on an anvil or was it a heart beating? Tick-tock, Tick-tock so it hammered, so it beat, the anvil, or the heart in the middle of the earth."

Oddly enough, the bench had been discovered when police were chasing a man who reportedly was exposing himself in the park! As the Globe article noted: “The man was caught, but the secret benefactor remains at large.”

The next day, however, the anonymous donor’s lawyer held a press conference at the bench, duly reported in the Globe under the catchy headline, “Who’s a fan of Virginia Woolf?” The attorney told reporters that her client was a man who enjoyed spending time at the Fresh Pond Reservation and wanted to provide a place for others to sit and rest or meditate in one of his favorite spots.

“The donor wishes to remain anonymous,” she said, not offering any further information about him or any explanation as to why he had chosen to engrave the bench with a quote from Woolf: “He is a modest man.” She said the bench actually weighed about 400 pounds and had been installed by her client and some friends “in daylight.” City bureaucrats, who had originally said they would need to “investigate” before they could determine what to do with the bench, decided to waive the usual procedures and simply accept it as a gift.

Naturally, I had to go and see this bench for myself. The next day, armed with a map of Cambridge, my aunt and I set out for Fresh Pond Reservation, a lovely park, frequented by walker, joggers, and their dogs. It didn’t take us long to find “THE BENCH”; everyone seemed to know where it was. The path to the grove of pines trees was indeed narrow and somewhat steep; the spot the anonymous donor had chosen was truly secluded.

As we approached the bench, a cool breeze blew throughout the grove and (believe it or not) a feather suddenly appeared at my foot. I held it as we took photographs of the bench and talked with other visitors, who that day included a middle-aged couple in jogging suits, an older man walking his dog, and a young man holding his baby girl. All of us seemed delighted to be in this beautiful spot, which had suddenly been invested with a kind of magic. As far as I know, the bench is still there. In January, my cousin sent me another clipping from the Boston Globe describing how a young man proposed to his lady love there recently. They had gone to the bench for a “sunrise picnic” before going to work. In keeping with the spirit of the bench, they described the coming upon it that morning to find that someone had placed two golden leaves on it with a rock to hold them together.

Meanwhile, the donor of the bench continues to remain anonymous, which is probably as it should be. In California, we would call it “random acts of kindness.” Or maybe a “senseless act of beauty.” For me, it was a wonderfully synchronistic adventure—and a great story to bring back to my Virginia Woolf class.

Elizabeth Carlson
Sonoma State University

VWM Editors note: And thanks to all of you who sent us news of “THE BENCH.”

5
IS THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE IMMORTAL?

Woolf's "Professions for Women" was originally a speech given on 21 January 1931 to the London/National Society for Women's Service and later included in a shortened version in her posthumously published The Death of the Moth (1942). "Professions" has made the Victorian "angel in the house" a familiar figure, yet many readers seem to have missed the sly humor with which Woolf utilizes Coventry Patmore's honorific image for womanhood. A mistake made early and repeated thereafter has been the assumption that Woolf succeeds in killing the angel in the house, as she claims to have done, whereas her actual point is that she is indelibly immortal. Barrett in Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing says, "Virginia Woolf finally slays the Angel by throwing her Inkpot at her, only to encounter the second problem, that of sexuality" (Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing, San Diego and NY: Harcourt, Brace; Jovanovich, 1980),p.13), she illustrates the problem nicely. But one could also see, for a few more examples, Jane Marcus and Ellen Hawkes in New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf, ed. Marcus (1981); Mark Spilka, Virginia Woolf's Quarrel with Grieving (1980); Phyllis Rose, Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf (1978); and James Naremore, The World Without a Self, Virginia Woolf and the Novel. (1973).

In "Professions" Woolf recounts her discovery that, being a woman writer, she must do battle with an inhibiting phantom—"The Angel in the House"—whom she defines as both self-abnegating and chaste minded. She was intensely sympathetic. . . . She was utterly unselfish . . . . She sacrificed herself daily . . . in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all—I need not say it—she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty—her blushes, her great grace. (59. All quotations from "Professions" in Michele Barrett, ed. Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing.)

The Angel, in short, is fully angelic both unegotistically without pride and selflessly without bodily desires or awareness. The Angel inhibits by reminding a writer to maintain the approved feminine image: 'Never let any body guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure' (59). Yet "as I found, directly I put pen to paper, you cannot review even a novel without having a mind of your own, without expressing what you think to be the truth about human relations, morality, sex" (59). Thus the Angel must be killed. But she "died hard. It is far harder to kill a phantom than a woman" (60). And so it proves in the remainder of the essay, where, insisting that she has vanquished the Angel, Woolf discovers her creativity still inhibited: she still cannot let "imagination sweep unchecked in the depths of our unconscious being" because the imagination dashes against something hard, matters having to do with "something about the body, about the passions . . . unfitting for . . . a woman to say. Men . . . would be shocked" (61). Or, as she has insisted earlier, a woman must above all, be pure.

Woolf summarizes solemnly, "The Angel in the House—"I think I solved. She died. But the second, telling the truth about my own experiences as a body, I do not think I solved." (62)

Phantoms die hard indeed; the Angel lives on. When Woolf concludes drily that even in the present day the woman writer's task is more difficult than the man's because "she still has many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome" (62), the alert reader concurs, for Woolf has shown that the constraining image of Victorian femininity remains with her to the end. Those who believe that she killed the Angel in the House overlook the smile with which she says it and thereby undervalue both Woolf's skill and her self-awareness. Woolf's verbal jests in Orlando have been praised, but so should her jests in "Professions" be admired—or, at least, acknowledged—too.

Harriet Blodgett, Associate Professor of English Department of English, California State University Stanislaus, Turlock, CA 95382

OTHER MANIFESTATIONS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF: IN PERFORMANCE

For at least the last twenty years, Virginia Woolf's works have been finding their way to theaters, movie screens, musicals, television (from "Masterpiece Theatre" to "MTV"), recordings, and, of course, to performance pieces at Virginia Woolf conferences. When, in 1935, for her Bloomsbury friends, she had experimented with Them for television, Woolf's novels, letters, essays, and diaries have been transformed—sometimes in combination—into performance pieces for various media: Mrs. Dalloway, an opera; The Waves, a musical; Orlando and A Room of One's Own, staged drama and film; and To the Lighthouse, a film for television. Along with these productions, there have been readings, recordings of readings, and the rock lyrics of several groups such as the Indigo Girls' song, "Virginia Woolf." Anything but "afraid of Virginia Woolf," today's audiences are clearly interested in Woolf's life and works, and the inextricable connections between them. And even those unfamiliar with her writings seem drawn to Woolf as icon. Woolf writings, in performance, have become a significant part of the so-called "Woolf industry."

In October of 1994, San Francisco's four-hundred seat Cowell Theatre provided the setting for Claire Bloom's reading from Mrs. Dalloway. Sandwiched between two evening's Bloom reading from "Shakespeare's Women," only Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway filled the theater. Bloom, who has also recorded a reading of A Room of One's Own, captivated her audience for more than two hours without an intermission. Her particular selections from Mrs. Dalloway conveyed enough of the work's complex characterizations and themes to maintain the involvement of her spirited audience. After the reading, many in this audience remained as Madeline Moore courageously took to the stage (following Bloom is no easy task) and moderated a very informative discussion.

Back in New York in November, Vita and Virginia with Vanessa Redgrave and Eileen Atkins, began its limited run at the Union Square Theatre. Eileen Atkins, known for her splendid portrayal of Virginia Woolf in her adaptation of A Room of One's Own, utilized the correspondence between Woolf and Sackville-West, along with some material from Woolf's diaries and essays, and provided her audience with a staged conversation. The sparsely-furnished stage held a small desk and chair and a chaise lounge; a painted pastoral scene of the English countryside served as a backdrop with a semi-circular hedgerow at its base.

Vita, in riding pants, lace-up boots, a long elegant coat, and pearls was in stark contrast to Virginia's soft flowing purple print dress, and set the tone for the evening. As Virginia, she utilized all the body-language of her friend's suicide, as the audience experiences the loss of the sounds and rhythms that had been giving them such joy.

As I write this, Claire Bloom is reading Woolf again at the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan, this time focussing on letters, essays and novels of the late twenties which culminate with The Waves. With the success of these performances, one can expect them to multiply; and most fortunately, they seem to lead audiences back to Woolf's words.

Judith Allen
646 Washington Lane, Jen Kins Town, PA 19046
FURTHER MANIFESTATIONS OF WOOLF:
IN OTHER MEDIA

Poems by American poet, Alan Seabury, entitled 52 TAVISTOCK SQUARE, dwell with the Woolfs in his imagination; the book is available from The Anne Miniver Press, P.O. Box 381364, Cambridge, MA 02238 ($19) or in England from The Bloomsbury Workshop, 12 Galen Place, off Bury Place, London WCIA 2JR (£10).

Stephen Barkway writes that Alan Bennett parodies Bloomsbury (affectionately) in his play FORTY YEARS ON and in his television play ME, I'M AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF... where a literature teacher unrolls the familiar Beresford photo-portrait of Woolf, only to find that it has been 'blasphemously' decorated with a large pair of tis." Stephen Barkway goes on to comment "No, as proven by the Burger's menu reproduced in VWM 41, nothing is sacred.

There has been a wonderful T.O. Sylvester cartoon sent VWM (published first in 1980) showing Virginia Woolf standing in an empty room complaining to the landlady that she just naturally assumed there would be a bed of one’s own, a desk of one’s own, a rug, etc.

Even my beloved "POGO" gets involved in the confusion between the comic strip "Doonesbury" and Bloomsbury, having the intellectual Owl lament that he didn’t work for a “hotopical intelligenstial comical strip like this here Bloomsbury.”

Our thanks to Tom McAnany who sends VWM the cartoon printed below: it appeared as part of an exhibit at Barnes and Noble in Albany, NY called "Literary Lites,” consisting of 25 parodies of authors. Mr. McAnany’s address is 28 Dana Ave., Albany, NY 12208 for those interested.

YES VIRGINIA, THERE IS A SUBJUNCTIVE CLAUSE

“The Voyage out to the lighthouse by Mrs. Dalloway led her passed Jacob’s room and that of Orlando who too had a room of one’s own… a room of his own… er, her own… (their own?) … I better flush this…”

CONFERENCE NEWS FROM OHIO:

Otterbein College is excited about hosting the 5th Annual Virginia Woolf Conference, Virginia Woolf: Texts and Contexts, on June 15-18, 1995 in Westerville Ohio, a small town right outside Columbus, and hopes you’ll plan to attend. The conference will officially begin at 2 p.m. on Thursday and end at 4 p.m. on Sunday. Those who plan to arrive early can register for a Thursday morning guided tour of Columbus; one tour will include long stops at Thurber House and the Wexner Arts Center and the other will include long stops at the Columbus Metropolitan Library and the Columbus Arts Museum. (more on all the amenities in the Society Column, p. 6)

The conference program is taking shape around panels in nine time slots. Also planned: a special event on Woolf's autobiographical writing, with readings by contemporary women memoirists; talks by featured speakers Mark Hussey, Louise DeSalvo, Edward Bishop, Madeline Moore, and Christine Froula; a roundtable discussion by 60’s and 70’s Woolf scholars; a session by local book club members on being common readers; responses to Woolf by creative writers; and film, music, and the inimitable Woolf Society Players! The American Association of University Presses will have a book exhibit, Fan the Flames Feminist Bookstore will sell books, including the Proceedings of the 4th Annual Conference, and Krystyna Colburn will hold a silent auction. Of course, T-shirts and other Woolf memorabilia will be on sale.

Registration information will be mailed soon, and a graduated registration fee will be charged: up to May 15, $175; after May 15, $200; on-site, $235. Graduate student rate is $95 up to May 15; $115 after May 15, and $140 on-site. Lower rates for retired persons, the under/unemployed, and undergraduates are available. Fees include all meals: 3 continental breakfasts, 3 lunches, 2 dinners and 1 banquet, 6 coffee breaks and 4 receptions (vegetarian options available). Call Signature Inn at (614) 908-8111 or (800) 822-5252 by June 1 to reserve a room at the Woolf Conference reduced rate of $49.99 a night, plus tax (for either single or double occupancy).

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Rooms on campus cost from $41.60 to $74.40 for the entire stay. United Airlines and America West are offering reduced airfares for conference registrants.

Travel costs for international participants, graduate students, and independent scholars can be prohibitive. To help defray a portion of those costs, Beth Daugherty is asking Miscellany readers to contribute to a travel scholarship fund for the conference. Any size donation helps! To contribute, please write a check to Otterbein College/VWC # 5 and note “travel fund” on the memo line. Contributors’ names will be listed in the Conference Program, and all monies in the fund will be distributed. Send contributions to Beth Daugherty, English Dept. Otterbein College, Westerville, OH 43081.

For inquiries about Virginia Woolf: Texts and Contexts or about the 3-quarter hour undergraduate/graduate course on Reading Teaching Virginia Woolf to be offered June 14-24, please contact Beth Daugherty at the address above, call (614) 823-1659, or Fax (614) 823-1315.

CONFERENCE NEWS FROM ENGLAND:

For those fortunate enough to be in England 26-29 May, THE CHARLESTON FESTIVAL at the Charleston Farmhouse will be offering a wonderful sounding program of modern writers and painters, a premiere performance in aid of Charleston of a dramatised reading based on the letters of Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West, Frances Parkridge’s memoirs, and such luminaries as Iris Murdoch, John Bayley, and Victoria Glendening. Tickets available from: Dome Box Office: 29 New Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 IUC, telephone 01273 709709.

ERRATUM: Miranda Seymour’s biography of Ottoline Morrell, reviewed by Karen Levenback in #44, sells for approximately $30, rather than $7 as we somehow printed it.

SOCIETY MLA SESSIONS IN CHICAGO

Virginia Woolf in the Twenties

Papers are invited which consider Woolf and the twenties from a variety of critical approaches: cultural studies, feminist historicism, history of the everyday, popular culture, readers in the twenties, the press and society, modernist intertexts, Bloomsbury contexts, material culture, and so on. Sally Jacobson, (36 Edwards Court, Ft. Thomas KY 41075) is presiding.

Virginia Woolf and the Multicultural Reader

Proposals are invited for topics including but not limited to teaching Woolf in a multicultural society, Woolf in relation to world feminisms, common readings and readers in a global context, cross cultural international reception of Woolf, and others. The chair is Theresa Thompson, English Dept. Washington State U., Pullman WA 99164-5020.
Greetings and Salutations from the north country. Welcome to all new members: at latest count we are now about 400 strong. And, as I write this, Wruch Otterbein in Westerville, Ohio is in effect a suburb of Columbus, practically that the registration fee include all food and so I repeat that at her request.

University, a Society Museum which emphasizes the Native Americans and material culture. Columbus also houses a small but world class zoo where white tigers, mountain gorillas, and several species of lesser pandas share the park. Columbus boasts a series bookstores and restaurants. Near each other in the downtown area are the Columbus Art Museum a hands-on science museum and Thurber House.

Columbus is a city of many neighborhoods, at least three of which have been under continuous restoration: the Factory district, Victorian Village, and German Village. All have fine eateries and pleasant walks. German Village is perhaps the most well-established of these villages within the city, and a warren of early 19th century brick houses, cobble walkways, small shops, and a 32 room discount bookstore. Bibliophiles—Beware! Ohio is a state of artists and Columbus supports them in a variety of ways, but you can see their work on display at a shop called "A Show of Hands", and in the many small shops in the villages. I recommend the pottery in particular. Snaking through the downtown is the Olentangy River, the site of a summer festival and another pleasant park/walkway. Perhaps one most endearing quality about this city is that it has discovered the art of the afternoon and has a number of pleasant idling spots in which to dawdle with a pot of good tea or coffee, an afternoon treat in hand.

Finally Westerville is itself a walkable town, and the Otterbein campus a friendly meander of greenwards shaded by magnificent old trees. The town is pleasant and close by, and the college facilities lend themselves to the congenial interaction that is a hallmark of the Conference. I plan to be on hand early to help Beth with details and last minute liaison. She will have truly just finished her semester, so she may need to have some helpful minions. There is a great deal more to this small city and Otterbein's campus; if you have particular questions, please send them along and I'll get back to you. And yes, the Woolf Players will be presenting again this year. See you June 15.

In case anyone needs to contact Beth, and has a filing system that is less than perfection, Beth Daugherty is at the English Dept., Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio 43081. Office ph. (614) 823-1659; fax (614) 823-1218. She does have voice mail, but messages must be short and swift.

The Virginia Woolf Society of Japan sends greetings and assurances that though they were in the area of the devastating quake, they are safe and whole. And they also send us four new members. A complete listing of papers and topics for MLA will appear in the Fall 1995 VWM, along with an invitation to the annual VWS gathering. Our last Chicago soiree was superb; is there anyone in the Chicago area who has any ideas for the '96 VWS social? Drop me a line or phone at (315) 947-6603.

As I mentioned in the newsletter, The Sixth Annual (96) conference is still slated for Clemson in South Carolina, under the aegis of Wayne Chapman, but Diane Gillespie will not be able to host the 97 conference at Washington State in Pullman. Thus at this moment, Virginia Woolf 97 needs a home and a theme.

DUES: Please send in dues if you haven't yet. I am receiving dues regularly, but I usually wait until I have several to make a deposit, and I am going to begin updating the list for current members and reluctantly dropping some persons. Dues are $15 for regular members, $7.50 is for students, the retired, and the unemployed. Several people have requested either mailing lists or mailing labels. Currently I aim at a log jam on these but will meet all requests on deadline. We need to discuss fees, and the nature of the information sharing. Finally, I have a MAC with System 7, upgraded WORD, and will soon have CLARISWORKS. I can send out materials on disk in WORKPERFECT,RTF, Word for Windows, Word for MS-DOS, WriteNow, and TEXT only.

Please continue to send me items for the Annual Bibliography. On a more personal note, thank all of you for the notes of approval and suggestion, as well as information. Thank you for your continued support and good will. I hope to see you all at Otterbein.

Denise M. Marshall, Secretary/Treasurer, SUNY-Oswego