EMINENT POST-VICTORIANS: THE BLOOMSBURY CIRCLE AND THE VISUAL ARTS

by

PATRICIA WRIGHT

B.A., University of Oregon, 1976

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

History in Art

ACCEPTED

[redacted]

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

[redacted]

Professor Alan Gowans

[redacted]

Professor Siri Gunashinghe

[redacted]

Professor David Stafford

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

November 1978

Supervisor: Professor Alan Gowans

ABSTRACT

The thesis proceeds from the twin assumptions that, much critical history to the contrary, neither "Bloomsbury" nor "Victorian" is properly a pejorative term. It suggests that the ideas, work and lives of the art critics and painters among the highly creative, much admired and much maligned "Bloomsbury circle" of friends may be a valuable source of understanding of the Victorian-rooted, upper-middle class milieu they shared in the England of the early 20th century. The body of the essay, then, addresses the subject of the Bloomsbury circle and the visual arts from theoretical, practical, and biographical points of view. It examines in turn the formalist theory and criticism of Roger Fry and Clive Bell; the applied arts practice and patronage of Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell; and the life of Vanessa Bell as revealed in her painting, correspondence and memoirs. Although these artists and critics, as did their literary friends, related themselves to the modern movement in conscious rejection of the Victorian past, their ideological connections with that past--the elitism of Clive Bell and the religiosity of Roger Fry; the additive, humanistic, and non-doctrinaire practice of the

Bloomsbury decorators; and the view of women offered to and internalized by Vanessa Bell--are seen throughout this thesis as crucial to an understanding of these figures and their period.

Examining committee:

[redacted]

Alan Gowans

[redacted]

Siri Gunasinghe

[redacted]

David Stafford

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND SOURCES

Except in the one instance noted, source references to "Shone" indicate Richard Shone's Bloomsbury Portraits. Source references without figure numbers are unnumbered in the original. "Bell" refers to Vanessa Bell.

Figure — Page

Figure | Page

Figure — Page

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This thesis has benefited from the attentions of those patient enough to read it and generous enough to remark on it: my committee members Alan Gowans, Siri Gunasinghe, and David Stafford, and my friends Lise Folkman, Elizabeth Harbaugh, Lisa Reitzes and J. Meredith Neil. The thesis could not have been undertaken without the example, ideas and long leash provided by my supervisor, Dr. Gowans. The interests which prompted it could not have been pursued very far without the kind permission to read and quote unpublished materials granted by Angelica Garnett. It would have been less pleasant to research without the forbearance of many librarians, especially in the British, Victoria and Albert, Witt and King's College libraries; and it would be less handsome and less correct but for the skill and attentiveness of Linda Baird, who typed the final draft.

I. INTRODUCTION

From our title it seems as well to proceed to a disclaimer or two. Bloomsbury is really just a district in London, an innocent accumulation of streets and squares that is in several senses an urban answer to the Cambridge backs, lying as it does behind and between the University of London and the British Museum. But--I imply it already by my reference to Cambridge--"Bloomsbury" has also entered the language as a catchword. It stands for a circle of friends, Cambridge-educated in the case of the men, well-rooted in every case in upper-middle-class Victorian England, who lived in one or another of those pleasant squares during the first third of this century, and most of whom became very well-known. As is pretty well known by now, they began to gather when the eldest son of Sir Leslie Stephen began entertaining his college friends at the Gordon Square house he shared with his sisters and brother. The limited expansion that took place after Thoby Stephen's death was effected as friends brought along friends of very like background. The circle so formed between 1904 and the first world war was made up, mostly and to modern ears most impressively, of writers, critics, painters, and a couple of social thinkers.

They make quite a parade: the writers Virginia

Woolf, Lytton Strachey, David Garnett and more occasionally E. M. Forster; the art critics Roger Fry and Clive Bell and the literary critic Desmond McCarthy; the painters, well-known in England between the wars, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant; the Cambridge economist and Treasury official John Maynard Keynes, and the publisher and political writer Leonard Woolf. As these last two were instrumental in revising the laissez-faire economic principles of Victorian England, so the writers of To the Lighthouse and Eminent Victorians were instrumental in reversing the focus of Victorian novel and biography; and so the art critics and painters who are the matter of this essay are inextricably connected with the introduction of the Post-Impressionist style in England.

So Bloomsbury is a catchword for these eminent people, and what they did; and not only professionally, but personally, for their sexually unconventional private lives excite at least as much interest as their work. Like many a catchword it cuts several ways. Whether Bloomsbury connotes approval, sometimes to the point of adulation, or disapproval, sometimes to the point of bile, depends upon one's attitude toward the work and the lives of figures who in a variety of ways represented a privileged and influential sector of the English avant-garde of their time. Bloomsbury has been uttered in approving tones often enough in the last decade or two; it has been called a nucleus

from which civilization has spread outward, by J. K. Johnstone;[1] the first example of the androgynous life in practice, by Carolyn Heilbrun;[2] a group of ur-hippies by Clive James, who may have been kidding but meant it as a compliment.[3] However, less friendly remarks are not too far back to find. "The Bloomsburys" were "malicious scribblers of the left," to John Jewkes;[4] a "ruthless and businesslike gang" of self-advertisers to John Rothenstein;[5] and to Wyndham Lewis "a small group of people of almost entirely eminent Victorian origins, saturated with William Morris' prettiness and fervour, 'Art for Art's sake,' late Victorianism, the direct descendants of Victorian England--I refer to the Bloomsbury painters."[6]

Such passionate flotsam in the literature that spreads ever more widely round the Bloomsbury circle has led a number of recent writers to call attention to the pejorative usages of the term, and to disclaim them. I add my voice. I add it not only becamse some effort to be dispassionate is seemly, but because everyone has a point of view; what it is, is important, and might as well be stated in the lines as read between them. My bias toward this circle is generally positive.

Generally, I say; for the Bloomsbury circle sheltered a range of opinion, particularly political opinion, and some of it is personally distasteful; particularly the elitist implications of Clive Bell's critical and social

thought. Again, Clive Bell and Roger Fry advanced formalist theories which are about equally stimulating to the appreciation of art and obfuscating to its history, which they did not hesitate to include within their province; moreover, some parts of their criticism are recipes for a dichotomy between art and life which I think very unfortunate. And as concerns ordinary life, as a formalist critic might say, it has been with no pleasant thrill of discovery that I have come to different conclusions than did Carolyn Heilbrun regarding the degree to which these sexually liberated figures were liberated from traditional, and I consider oppressive, sex stereotypes.

Finally, the Bloomsbury circle as a circle excites an irritation to which I have not been immune in the course of studying it. Perhaps success itself is rather irritating, as Quentin Bell remarks;[7] at least (as he does not remark) in the eyes of the obscure. Certainly it is irritating in conjunction with exclusiveness. And I do not think that the exclusiveness of these friends can really be denied. For despite internal differences and indifferences, and despite a great many external interests and attachments, many within this circle maintained over a remarkable length of time a remarkable sense of themselves not only as important but as something together and set apart, very much as a family is together and set apart: "A collectivity and separate from the rest," Keynes wrote in the thirties.[8] It

is just this family feeling, criss-crossed as it was by bonds of kinship and marriage and love, that has led me to refer to a circle rather than a group. A group suggests something one might join; a circle something one is either within or without.

And this human issue of cliquishness was exacerbated by the more specifically English one of class. ". . . People of almost entirely eminent Victorian origin . . . the direct descendants of Victorian England . . ."--what kinds of experiences and perceptions would be behind Wyndham Lewis' choice of sputters in the passage quoted above? Well, here is a specimen. In 1913 Lewis and several others who would become the English Vorticists made a noisy exit from the Omega Workshops--a design studio and gallery Roger Fry had established to employ struggling artists and popularize the Post-Impressionist style in England. "Mr. Fry's curtain and pincushion factory in Fitzroy Square,"[9] the almost professionally irritating Lewis called it afterwards. On their way out he and his colleagues made in pretty much the same tone public charges of mismanagement and unethical behaviour. The response was most illuminating. None at all was made in public. Privately, Clive Bell urged Fry not to "wrangle with four grubby little ill-bred painters"; Vanessa Bell counseled him to expect nothing better from "human beings of this worm-like type, with no tradition of decent behaviour behind them."[10] These

remarks would not have been made in public, or to the people who inspired them; when Clive Bell encountered Wyndham Lewis face to face, he called him not ill-bred but suburban. But the class-consciousness of which they are an angry manifestation would not have been imperceptible, or I think unresented.

So class and the coterie spirit may go far to explain the irritation the Bloomsbury circle provoked while it was a living issue. Oddly enough it may explain some of the current eager nostalgia for it as well--it looks so warm in there, and so comfortable up there--along with such curious features of the literature as the preoccupation with who "belonged." At any rate, this spirit is not, unless one projects oneself within the glow, an entirely attractive quality.

If, nonetheless, "Bloomsbury" appears in these pages as other than an epithet, it is because I believe there is much in it that is not only interesting and suggestive and worthy of study, but much that is admirable as well. The tolerance, humanistic culture, and regard for reason and the individual that characterize this group--indeed, Quentin Bell maintains that this constellation of virtues is about its only common characteristic[11]--have been a good deal discussed with regard to the literary production of some members and the left-liberal politics of some others. They express themselves in visual art as well, as

cultural values always do, and express themselves indeed with particular vividness.

Since these are not particularly revolutionary virtues, the painters of Bloomsbury have been criticized, as has modern English painting generally, as but marginally and derivatively within the modern movement. They worried about it themselves. Roger Fry's Reflections on British Painting has been called a capital example of the English sense of aesthetic inferiority;[12] as a painter, Fry fretted when a portrait was turning too like or a landscape too picturesque. "I try to turn my back on the medieval castle and the distant towers of Avignon," he once wrote to Duncan Grant, "but the beastly things will get into my compositions somehow or another."[13] Vanessa Bell thought the Omega designers would "have to be careful, especially in England where it seems one can never get away from all this fatal prettiness. Can't we design stuffs etc. that won't be gay and pretty?"[14] And certainly much of the recent praise these painters have received has been for the degree to which in their most experimental decade, the 1910s, they disassociated themselves from English prettiness and allied themselves with the fauve palette and the figurative liberties of the French avant-garde.

Nevertheless, try as he might Roger Fry went on painting the very pleasant landscapes of which he was fond. The Omega workshops produced some very pretty stuffs, and

by the 30s Vanessa Bell was wishing one could get pretty things in England.[15] Even in 1913 she could not find wholly sympathetic a Vorticist painting that "seemed bent on being ugly and distorted without much reason."[16] Duncan Grant, who may have worried less about such things anyway, continued to express with peculiar charm his literary, or at least, extra-formal, concerns: an Indian elephant and rider on an Omega tray, a Venus and Adonis or a pair of circus performers in an easel painting, are not atypical essays of the 1910s.

And so on. At the dawn of the era in which Picasso would declare that paintings were not made to decorate apartments, the Omega Workshops were offering to lift the face of the upperclass London flat. At the same time they were producing the fully abstract easel paintings which are considered particularly important by historians concerned with avant-garde credentials, Bell and Grant were also making copies of Piero and Sassoferrato to hang at the Omega, and enlarging a Fra Angelico reproduction onto her bedroom wall. "Ingratiating even when most inventive,"[17] Alan Clutton-Brock said of these painters; and in the happy conjunction of those unequally-appreciated qualities, I fancy, lies one path to a positive art.

These rather old-fashioned remarks about the possibilities of an art of continuity and delight may make obvious before it is offered a second disclaimer: if

"Bloomsbury" is not herein a pejorative, neither is "Victorian."

This may bear some elaboration. It is still a truism of much critical history that Victorian English taste represents a mini-Dark Age, that it was a period of rootless philistinism and unparalleled vulgarity. If that is so three-quarters of a century past the death of Victoria, how much more potent the word in the early years of this century, for people who were, as they felt, just getting free. "We are not yet clear of the Victorian Slough," Clive Bell warned in characteristic style. "The spent dip stinks into the dawn."[18] I do not think any of his friends would have disagreed, although most of them expressed themselves less pungently. Bloomsbury memoirs seem always to sag in spots under clumps of bleak metaphor about aspects of the Victorian social climate. It was stuffy, it was suffocating, it was damp, it was dank, it was dark. What is more it was mawkish and insular, and its visual art was to match. "How perfectly awful and provincial those Victorians were," Vanessa Bell was moved to say upon reading a biography of Burne-Jones. It may be added that she excepted Morris and Rosetti, "and I'm not sure Ruskin wasn't better than most . . . [but] Burne-Jones simply turned into a machine I think . . . . His incredibly sentimental owl-in-an-ivy-bush view of himself and his holy mission, completely ignorant of the whole French art of his time."[19]

So Wyndham Lewis had a mind to be taken ill, when he used the word Victorian three times in a single sentence about the Bloomsbury painters. It can certainly be claimed that the elitism to which he was in part reacting was a legacy of the eminent Victorian origins to which he referred. So perhaps was the curious secular religiosity with which art could be choir-screened off from life in Bloomsbury aesthetics. But nothing is entirely good or bad, as Leonard Woolf remarked when praising as a son the human values of Victorian bourgeois family life, the class effects of which he deplored as a socialist. Just so, the Victorian past, with all its quirks and constrictions, could and did provide its inheritors with traditions of effort and excellence which are surely not reprehensible. It also provided a material and emotional security which were proof against at least the more exclamatory forms of arrogance. So that, while the Vorticist artist was writing 40-odd pages of manifesto for Blast, or inviting people to "penetrate, deferentially, with him into a transposed universe,"[20] the Bloomsbury artist was painting pots for a Christmas sale and apparently not worrying much about the doctrines floating freely without and within. "I've had to pay attention to many theories, but I don't believe I've adopted any," Duncan Grant was quoted as saying in the 50s. "With me it's been rather a question of picking one's way through theories. I couldn't help being interested, but my

interest doesn't go very deep."[21] One of the many things the word Victorian may suggest is practicality, a certain level-headedness, and I suggest that that is what we are hearing here.

Now, the Vorticists were a highly self-conscious group of English painters--and writers, for they included Ezra Pound and drew ideas from T. E. Hulme--who were strongly stimulated by the continental developments of French Cubism and Italian Futurism: particularly the latter, for the machine aesthetic, the masculinism, and the braggadocio Mr. Marinetti brought to London with his drum in 1913 apparently appealed to them very much. The affinity is apparent in the style and substance of their periodical Blast, which ran to two numbers before the war, and from which this is as representative a salvo as any.

> As to the lean belated Impressionism at present attempting to eke out an existence in these islands;
> Our Vortex is fed up with your dispersals, reasonable chicken-men.
> Our Vortex is proud of its polished sides.
> Our Vortex will not hear of anything but its disastrous polished dance.
> Our Vortex desires the immobile rhythm of its swiftness.
> Our Vortex rushes out like an angry dog at your Impressionist fuss.
> Our Vortex is white and abstract with its red-hot swiftness.[22]

The affinity with Futurism is also apparent in their painting. Soon after leaving the Omega the Vorticists pushed their concerns with speed and industrial forms to the point of pure abstraction. This phase was about as

short-lived as the roughly contemporary one of the Bloomsbury painters: it resolved itself, as did theirs, into a modified figurative art. But at every stage the contrast in values is evident, so that while Frederick Etchells was ruling in the hard edges of his jagged diagonal shafts, Vanessa Bell was balancing rectangles, circles and squares. Later when Lewis and Nevinson were creating a robot race of soldiers and workmen, Duncan Grant was painting a god and goddess in pinks and greens.

This contrast concerns those who see Vorticism as a sort of lost last chance, the movement that could have put modern England on the art historical map: "the one basis," Walter Michel has said, "on which a notable English school of 20th century painting might have been established."[23] Elsewhere Michel has written that

> On the continent the 20s brought the development of those characteristic 20th century phenomena, Dadaism and Surrealism. If there was no such livliness in England, the cause may have been a complex interaction of two factors, Lewis' increasing preoccupation with his writing, and the undue influence of Bloomsbury . . . .[24]

Or again:

> Lewis observed in 1937 that if people somewhat more like Yeats and Pound could have pushed themselves into power, instead of the 'really malefic Bloomsburies' the writing and painting of London might have been less like the afternoon tea party of a perverse spinster.[25]

Well. The contrast is a decided one, and whatever one may conclude from it, instructive; and we could contrive no

better summation of the characteristics of the circle with which we are concerning ourselves than a comparison of a Bloomsbury and a Vorticist memento.

The Vorticists at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel: Spring 1915 (figure 1) was painted by one of their number, William Roberts, in 1961; it is owned by the Tate Gallery. Vanessa Bell painted the oil sketch of The Memoir Club (figure 2) in the 1940s; it is owned by her daughter. These facts of ownership alone take us far, for the one is in every way a public, the other a private event. The Vorticists shown here are a heterogeneous collection of individuals, united by a doctrine. They are a company of men but for two female colleagues who stand in the doorway --one holding a purse as though in token of the fact that, though both Blast and the Rebel Art Center were largely financed by a Miss Lechmere, a rule against women members in the Camden Town group, to which these men also belonged, was relaxed only when it was necessary to double the membership to secure use of a gallery. The men are seated in a French restaurant, albeit in Percy Street, where Wyndham Lewis had decorated a Vorticist Room. The decorations may be read as a public statement of the dedication "of all revolutionary painting today" to the "rigid reflections of steel and stone in the spirit of the artist"[26] (note the painting at upper right, behind the deferential head of Rudolf Stulik, the proprietor); and perhaps to the heroic

Parisian scene (consider the cafe atmosphere, and see the fictive Seine behind the hat which Lewis, in center, has not taken off).

The Memoir Club, by contrast, is a domestic gathering. "Homogenous" is not exactly the right word for the people in it, for doctrinally there were probably more differences among the members of the Memoir Club during the 30-odd years of its existence than among the Vorticists in the spring of 1915. But the memoirists are related; they are together not in a common cause, but in various degrees of personal affection and attachment. Consider: Vanessa Bell has here made images of ten people then living, besides herself; and among them are her son, her husband, her brother-in-law, and the man who was her companion for almost 50 years.* Of the other six old friends, one would become her son-in-law;** one who entered late and whom she did not like--Lydia Lopokova Keynes--is placed outside the circle. The paintings within this painting are, but for their flash of fauve colour within the prevailing middle-aged blue, souvenirs not of a movement but of individuals, the three deceased members of the Memoir Club. They are another old friend, Lytton Strachey; and two of the most important people in Vanessa Bell's life,

---

*Quentin Bell, Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Duncan Grant.

**David Garnett.

her sister Virginia Woolf, and Roger Fry, who had been Bell's lover and became her best friend.

So we have on the one hand the bright light, the publicity and impersonality, the hard wooden chairs and male bonding of the Tour Eiffel; and on the other the dim interior, the sofas and easy chairs, the web of private relationship between the men and women of the Memoir Club. On the one hand a group, eyes averted to be sure but in no way unaware of us--on the contrary presenting itself to us, stage front, labelled Blast. On the other a circle of old friends, reading to each other, about themselves; and the circle is closed.

The late styles of both of these artists retain the essential characteristics that tended to distinguish their several approaches earlier in the century. The Roberts painting retains the harshness of line and surface, the diagonalization and taste for movement, the topical references to the machine. The Bell painting retains the relative softness, the verticals and horizontals and taste for balance, the preference for personal rather than industrial values. And so, the comparison can perhaps do more than we have asked of it: which was to throw into relief those characteristics of exclusivity, humanism, and a sort of moderation in experiment--a moderation, to be sure, which is most apparent in retrospect and in comparison with more extreme examples--that we will be considering in

subsequent sections of this essay. Perhaps our comparison can also presage the method of some passages and the ultimate rationale for the whole; can demonstrate the way one reads history in art.

Art is both surface and symbol: Oscar Wilde said that, and whatever complex of things he may have meant by his phrase perhaps we may appropriate it to express the truth that expression is indivisible from idea. There is much to learn as well as much to enjoy in art. Quentin Bell provides an example of what I mean.

> Looking at the Duncan Grant Lemon Gatherers in the Tate and considering its quietly lyrical quality, the calm precision of its design, its tacit sensuality, who could doubt that in 1914 he would be a conscientious objector? The answer of course is that anyone could doubt it, and that paintings do not have such clear diagnostic value as that, but I let the statement stand because, overstatement that it is, it contains a measure of truth. Bloomsbury painting, like Bloomsbury writing and Bloomsbury politics, is pacific even when it is not pacifist.[27]

Similarly, there is no small community of feeling between the "iconoclastic shafts" of Vorticist painting, as Richard Cork has called them,[28] and Lewis' hymn to the artist's "desire for stability, as though a machine were being built to fly or kill with."[29] And--though anyone might doubt--who would be surprised, who had looked at and thought about the differences in form and content between The Memoir Club and The Vorticists at the Tour Eiffel, to know that while Duncan Grant was working as a farm labourer to avoid

conscription, Wyndham Lewis "made a marvelous 'bombadier' . . . I had had a great deal of practice!"[30]

This is a great value for us in the visual arts; not diagnostic, surely, no single source can be that: but intensely suggestive and illustrative. And because the visual arts are not simply artifacts--but rather result from ideas and assumptions, and exist in functional contexts, and are produced by actual and often very interesting people--their broad historic value can be perceived in various ways: through theory, through a study of form in use, through biography. And in the chapters that follow we will make just that movement from the abstract to the particular, from ideology to experience, as we consider the theory and criticism of fine art, and the practice and patronage of applied art, in the Bloomsbury circle, and finally the life and work of a woman in whose development a number of that circle's achievements and inconsistencies may be seen, and seen freshly.

To try in this way to come close to what was talked about art, and how art was made to work, and how an artist actually lived her life, should be to better understand not only a particular circle in a particular time and place, but the time and place itself. For in their snugness, and their humanism, and their enthusiasms, and their compromises, the Bloomsbury circle were, as Nicholas Pevsner said about Samuel Johnson, massively English.

That is no more to be sniffed at than their eminence, their fondness for each other and those central London squares, or their Victorian pedigrees; really, it is a compliment, although their native quality is one of the last things the Bloomsbury critics, and at least two of the Bloomsbury painters, would have cared to hear remarked.

II. THEORY AND CRITICISM

The formalist approach to criticism is Bloomsbury's best-known contribution in the field of visual art. Whether it was the most typical is arguable, for there were some odd disjunctions between theory and practice, and whether it is the most valuable is a matter of opinion. But certainly it has been the most influential. After all it is not uncommon for what is said to be more influential than what is done; if only because the printed word is more portable, reproducible, durable than the painted image. For example, a good deal of what may be called Bloomsbury decoration went down in the London blitz, but Bloomsbury criticism survives intact in libraries all over the world. And both Roger Fry and Clive Bell were unusuallly effective writers, and prolific ones as well; so that, at least outside England, there must be substantial numbers of people who have never heard of Vanessa Bell or Duncan Grant, but have heard more than once of Clive Bell and significant form; or who are unaware that Roger Fry thought of himself first and foremost as a painter, but do know that he was an ardent and articulate champion of formalism.

Well,then, what is formalism? Despite the very great deal that has been written and argued about it in practice, the underlying principle is not complex, and should be

approachable in not very many words. Formalism is the appreciation of art not for what it says, if anything, but for how it is done. That is, the focus in looking at a picture, say, is not upon illustration, anecdote, association, message, moral: content; but rather upon line, mass, colour, tone, interval: form. Fry would refine this generalization further to say that it is not even these forms themselves that are of value, but our perception of satisfying relations between them. They are then significant form. Kenneth Clark once expressed the idea succinctly: "Certain forms agree, and our joy is not in the forms themselves, but in their agreement."[1]

"Our joy": for, in this view, the ultimate value of a work of art, that which makes it an end in itself and not a means to some other end, such as edification or escape, is its production in the sensitive amateur of an aesthetic emotion, or rather--the distinction is important --the aesthetic emotion.

Now "the aesthetic emotion" was the subject of a great deal of debate in critical quarters earlier in this century. I am aware--one need only glance at any issue of The British Journal of Aesthetics to become aware--that discussion of this concept is still a matter of interest. Like everything else unmeasurable under the sun, it probably always will be of interest to a certain number of persons possessed of speculative turns of mind and

interests in the arts. But my impression is that the quarters in which it is debated with rigour are now somewhat more arcane than in the days when it was a subject for cartoons in the dailies; when Clive Bell's Art was a best-seller, I. A. Richards was thought to have taken the formalists to pieces in Principles of Literary Criticism, and Roger Fry felt called upon to respond in Transformations. If there are still critics addressing the public who are concerned to analyze and evaluate the aesthetic qualities of art, I think there is not now much argument that a response to form is possible, and desirable.

That in itself may be evidence of "the feat of demolition," as John Russell calls it,[2] performed by the formalist critics. For while they did not invent the concern with form or the idea that art is an objective rather than a device, they did much to popularize it. Roger Fry was very frequently referred to as the greatest influence on English taste since John Ruskin. That is, neither Matthew Arnold's call for a Hellenism to match the Hebraism of a utilitarian age,[3] nor Walter Pater's exquisite expositions of the self-sufficient value of art in our "short day of frost and sun"[4]--to name two of the Victorian critics to whom the post-Victorian formalists seem to be indebted--had, apparently, much flustered the general art-loving public. That public remained comfortably Ruskinian in the decade after that critic's death,

at least insofar as it applauded a fine finish and a grandeur or homeliness of anecdote in its Royal Academicians; and it was little troubled by the anticlimatic impressionist coxcombs of the New English Art Club.

To a certain degree, even, Impressionism was becoming respectable. After all, a species of it was being practiced in high places by John Singer Sargent. Tastes change; but this could be a matter of taste, of gradual acclimatization to new conventions, partly because the Impressionists at their most ambitious had not gone so far from the traditional methods and concerns of painting that the public could not catch up. It could catch up as changed attitudes about nature and objectivity became conventional in an increasing secular and materialist society; and, it could catch up by such well-trodden paths as the old familiar love of a pretty scene in paint.

But with Post-Impressionism the old roads were closed. To be sure all the bridges were not burned, for there was not much completely non-representational painting around in 1910. Still, the public who visited the first Post-Impressionist Exhibition Roger Fry organized at the Grafton Galleries in the winter of 1910-11 found itself sufficiently disoriented. The liberties of form and colour taken by Van Gogh and Gaugin, still more by Picasso and Matisse, seemed so extreme, were so divorced not only from familiar models but from common experience, that they

demanded a new kind of appreciation if they were to be appreciated at all. This the formalist critics offered.

"The Post-Impressionists," Clive Bell wrote in Art, "by employing forms sufficiently distorted to disconcert and baffle human interest and curiosity, yet sufficiently representation to call immediate attention to the nature of the design, have found a short way to our aesthetic emotions."[5] Baffle, disconcert; these terms are in the same corner with "feat of demolition," indeed with Lewis' proposal that a deferential public enter a universe of his transposing. "In one and all, cubist, futurist or post-impressionist, there was an element of aggression," the critic Frank Rutter once generalized. Too broadly, I think, for he added darkly, "There was something sinister in these novelties";[6] and surely we need not see Cézanne and Matisse as sinister. But there is a grain of truth in Rutter's judgment. The Post-Impressionist exhibitions of 1910 and 1912 were not organized as attacks on the public sensibility, but the fact that they were so received seems to have given at least as much pleasure as pain. "The fuming and storming of the elders added to the fun of course," Vanessa Bell said, to the Memoir Club, years later. She described

> . . . the great excitement of the Post-Impressionist exhibition in 1910-11 which caused even more dismay and disapproval than Bloomsbury itself. How full of life those days seemed. Everything was brim full of

> interest and ideas and certainly was for many of us 'very heaven' to be alive.[7]

This was not just mellow reminiscence. "It has been a great success," she wrote a friend after the opening of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1912. "I am longing to show you all the latest explosions."[8] A few months earlier Fry had written his mother, "The British public has dozed off again since my last show and needs an electric shock. I hope I shall be able to give it to them."[9]

So the "anxiety to be among the first to epater le bourgeois," which David Garnett thought crackled rather unpleasantly among T. E. Hulme and his friends,[10] was not without echoes, less anxious perhaps, in the Bloomsbury circle. But the central point, I think, is not that the public was being tweaked, but that it was being asked to do something quite difficult, because quite new. It was being asked to assume a wholly new function for art. The historic functions of art which Alan Gowans reviews in such terms as beautification and illustration were to the uninitiated English public of 1910, one imagines, still the things that painting did. Whether it did them well or ill was another, and the more sophisticated might have said an aesthetic, matter. But if the best modern artists sought to disconcert and baffle customary interests in order to make short the way to aesthetic emotions, it must mean that the destination had changed. Art and everything in

it must be a means to those emotions which had formerly been a particular measure of quality. Content was either dismissed as impedimentia or tolerated as an expedient, the days of which might very well be numbered. So Clive Bell wrote that

> It remains for someone who is an artist, a psychologist, and an expert in human limitations to tell us how far the unessential is a necessary means to the essential--to tell us whether it is easy or difficult or impossible for the artist to destroy every rung in the ladder by which he has climbed to the stars.[11]

This insistent distinction between the essential and the unessential, or at best between ends and means, stars and ladders, is an informing principle in the aesthetics of Clive Bell and Roger Fry, a veritable leitmotif of their writing. And the ladders take the hindmost. "I venture to say," said Fry in the early 20s, "that no one who has a real understanding of the art of painting attaches any importance whatever to what we call the subject of a picture."[12] This hierarchy of values is perhaps what most distinguishes these critics from a predecessor such as Walter Pater. Pater, after all, contended in a single breath against "the stupidity which is dead to substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form,"[13] and took as a criterion of artistic quality "the absolute correspondence of the term to its import."[14] The formalist contempt for import may have made it difficult for those who found themselves interested one way or another in

content to perceive formal analysis as the fruitful tool that it is; to make it a dimension--who knows? maybe the primary one in some cases--of their own appreciations. For surely most people respond to form at some level. In one of the most--indeed one of the few--engaging statements in Blast #1, Wyndham Lewis held that

> In a painting certain forms MUST be so, in the same meticulous profound manner that your pen or a book must lie on the table at a certain angle, your clothes at night be arranged in a set personal symmetry . . . a set of railings tapped with your hand as you pass, without missing one.[15]

I should think a good many people could recognize themselves in that, if not bullied about it, and I should be surprised if it were not in 1910 about as recognizable a description of a queer and endearing human impulse to order as it is now. Similarly, a good many art lovers who had not thought in these terms before might have followed, if a little more nervously, Roger Fry in an appreciation like this one of a Velasquez painting:

> I have no method of analysis which will enable me to say just why these objects, placed just so, stir the imagination so deeply. Just those intervals of space, just that disposition of three or four dull white patches on the prevailing dark warmth of the general tone, just that peculiarly sober and yet intensely plastic modeling, in fact, just this particular sequence of relations have the effect on one of a profoundly significant harmony.[16]

And they might have followed with profit. Obviously many did, or Fry would not be termed the most influential critic

to follow Ruskin. No doubt it helped that he was by most accounts a most charming and persuasive man, not at all, in person, abusive or off-putting. Still, some people were put off, and it seems improbable it is because they were all unsalvable. Hard feelings and, more importantly in the long run, confusion might have been avoided, if the formalist critics had really confined themselves to seeking, analyzing, even promoting what Fry called "that particular pleasure which I look for from pictures"--the emphasis is of course mine--"namely the delight in certain visual relations regarded in and for themselves."[17]

Neither Fry nor Bell so confined themselves. Rather, their particular pleasure before particular works of art was identified absolutely with aesthetic emotion. Hence the distinction we marked earlier. A pleasure in form was not an aesthetic emotion, but the aesthetic emotion. No other pleasures or combinations thereof qualified. Aesthetic emotion was frequently preceded by the adjective "pure," since the other sorts of emotions from which it was to be not only disengaged but, in a sense, rescued, were impure. Stated so baldly, this seems a curiously narrow-minded approach, almost priggish. Indeed Victorian. But it was a vivid issue in England in the 'teens and 'twenties. ". . . Our poor old friend the 'pure aesthetic sensation,'" Kenneth Clark reminisces; that "concept which would now dare scarcely to show its head in a provincial discussion

group," was once "received in the highest intellectual society."[18]

There it might remain, an historic drawing room dispute over semantics and value. But formalist criticism assumes a peculiar importance in the history of art because it went a step further even than sorting out emotions and giving full approval only to certain of them. It further maintained that only things producing the approved, aesthetic emotion, were art. "I have no right," wrote Bell, "to consider anything a work of art to which I cannot react emotionally."[19]

Observe that he does not say that his reaction is his criterion for <u>good</u> art--fair enough, in criticism--but for art, period. The corollary to this remarkable equation was, that to produce aesthetic emotion, by producing significant form, was the function of art. ". . . The first commandment of art--" (he wrote) "Thou shalt create form."[20] And, not only that the production of aesthetic emotion, via significant form, <u>should be</u> the function of all present and future art; but--and here the theory really begins to go bananas--since there has been art in the past (demonstrably, for there are things in the museums and churches which move us), then, the production of aesthetic emotion via significant form always <u>has been</u> the function of art. On the basis of these beliefs some very curious art history was written.

Now, neither Roger Fry nor Clive Bell would have described themselves as art historians. That is only fair to say. In his earlier writing Bell placed high priority on rescuing art "from the tyranny of erudition."[21] And Fry stressed that his efforts were ever "to make clear to myself the principles involved in exercising the critical faculty on works of art."[22] Still, earlier in this century the distinction between the historical and critical functions was even less clear than it is now, and that is saying much for its unclarity. At the beginning of Fry's career as a champion of Post-Impressionism, he was midway through a career in the richest vineyards of art history. He was an established connoisseur of early Italian painting, he had just left a position as European advisor to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, he was an editor of the Burlington Magazine. He was offered the directorships of both the National Gallery and the Tate and he lectured on the historic arts all his life. Clive Bell was an altogether less institutional spirit, but he discussed the historic arts about as unceasingly in print. And their discussions were not confined to their own reactions.

This had two sorts of effect. One was that a good many arts and artists were dismissed from consideration--or at least discussion of them centered upon why they did not deserve to be considered. The banishment of the 19th century academicians--"a race new in the history of the

world, the pseudo-artists"[23]--was the most wholesale example. The other and more pernicious effect was the reading of that historic art which was allowed to be art, in formal terms alone, and the tendency to assume that it had always been so read. Because Roger Fry tried harder to maintain the distinction between what art did for him and what it might have been doing in its original context, Clive Bell can best illustrate the pitfalls of the approach. As when he reveals the mind of Giotto.

> Giotto could be intentionally second rate. He was capable of sacrificing form to drama and anecdote . . . . He was always more interested in art than in St. Francis, but he did not always remember that St. Francis had nothing whatever to do with art.

"In theory that is right enough," he added. "The Byzantines had believed that they were more interested in dogmatic theology than form . . . almost every great artist has had some notion of that sort."[24] Hence, the idea of art's purpose that was apparent to the formalist critic was proof not only against the recalcitrance of the public, but against the muddled thinking, recovered apparently by divination, of historic artists. And of historic art historians; for the approach could cover even those awkward instances where the primacy of significant form and aesthetic emotion is called into question by documents. Bell often did not have the documents at hand as he wrote, but they tugged at his memory and he met them head on.

> Reading the incomparable Vasari, one is not more struck by his sensibility and enthusiasm than by the extreme improbability of his having liked the pictures that he did for the childish reasons he is apt to allege. Could anyone have been struck by the verisimilitude of Ucello? I forget whether that is what Vasari commends, what I am sure of is that he was moved by the same beauties that move us . . . . If we can understand that Giotto, with his legends, and Picasso, with his cubes are after the same thing, surely we can understand that when Vasari talks of "Truth to Nature," or "nobility of sentiment," and Mr. Roger Fry of "planes" and "relations," both are about the same business.[25]

If it is tempting to multiply these examples (and it is; I cannot resist what the "sensitive Athenian" felt about the sculptures of the Parthenon; which was, not surprisingly, "very much what we feel; only, he expressed his admiration, and thus provoked the admiration of others, by calling these grand, distorted, or 'idealized' figures 'life-like'"[26]), it is tempting only because Clive Bell was such a very good writer, and such an extreme case. John Russell contends that this extremity was "calculated overstatement," and necessary: "If he was outrageous, it was because only outrage would penetrate at all deeply."[27] Possibly that is right. If it be argued that Fry expressed himself more circumspectly and yet was apparently the more influential critic, well, I always remember an old reformer attesting to the value of extremists in preparing establishments to consider change: "After they've been shaken up by the crazies, they can't wait to talk to somebody reasonable!"

Still, it may be argued whether the change in question was a very progressive one where our sense of history is concerned. Fry did not usually refuse to call art, that art which he did not like (the pseudo-artists are his, but they are exceptional): and, particularly later in his life he did take care to emphasize that his primary concern was with "the value of the form for us."[28] But even in the late lecture from which that proviso is quoted he would go on to say, for example, of the Hindus:

> A great deal of their art, even their religious art, is definitely pornographic, and although I have no moral prejudices against that form of expression, it generally interferes with aesthetic considerations by interposing a strong irrelevant interest, which tends to distract both the artist and the spectator from the essential purposes of a work of art.[29]

Fry was lecturing as a Slade Professor of Fine Art. But his equation of "aesthetic considerations" and "the essential purposes of a work of art," particularly since aesthetic apprehension was for him "a preeminently spiritual function"[30] and the artist, ergo, "prophet and priest,"[31] is fully continuous with what Linda Nochlin has described as the whole hero-worshipping, monograph-producing enterprise of art history today. It made a notable contribution to it.

Now, what motivated people to make the contributions they made when they made them is a fascinating avenue of speculation, and often a fruitful one as well. One wants to be wary; one thinks of Clive Bell and his sensitive

Athenians; still, as a device for separating several strands of feeling and motive in the Bloomsbury circle, and thus in the society of which it was a part, I believe it is worthwhile hazarding and trying to defend the generalization that Roger Fry's formalism was, as much as anything, religious, and Clive Bell's formalism was, as much as anything, elitist.

The distinction, I may add, is not only convenient; it is based on my own emotions (three can play at this game) before the works of these writers. Clive Bell and Roger Fry leave a very different impression. Of course the tendency of this chapter has been to treat their ideas as much of a piece, except in matters of, as it were, temperance, style almost. And substantively there really is not a great deal to separate them. We have seen that they shared with each other, their circle and a number of their contemporaries and predecessors a belief in art as an end in itself and in the value of aesthetic emotion.* They

---

*These ideas are among those which have led some writers to suppose the Bloomsbury circle a sort of sect, gathered under what Richard Shone has aptly styled the rather drab mantle of George Moore's Principia Ethica. Keynes in a late memoir planted the seeds of this supposition; J. K. Johnstone in particular has propagated it. It is not misleading to remark the importance of the Cambridge Apostles, of which Moore was the guiding professorial light when J. M. Keynes, Leonard Woolf and Lytton Strachey were undergraduate members. In a key and frequently-quoted passage Moore stated that the greatest goods are those states of mind produced by the pleasures of human intercourse and the contemplation of beautiful objects; that love and art, in other words, are the ends to which the

were further united in their insistence that one need, indeed ought, bring nothing in "outside life" to bear upon one's apprehension of a work of art, and in their assumption that the priorities of historic artists were closely similar to their own. To these basic correspondences we may add, that it is not impossible to find very self-satisfied passages in the writings of Fry. He was quite capable of asserting that the meaning of formal relations "is apprehended by a comparatively few people in each generation";[32] or, to put the matter in more conventionally snobbish terms, of finding

> . . . to the philosopher something pathetic in the Plutocrat's worship of patine. It is, as it were, a compensation for his own want of it. On himself the thumb and chisel marks of his maker--and he is self-made--stand as yet unpolished and raw; but his furniture, at least, shall have the distinction of age-long acquaintance with good manners.**[33]

If one can find what looks to be elitist in Fry, one cannot avoid what looks to be religious in Bell. It is not just his language--the aesthetic beatitudes, the divine daemons,

---

rest of human existence is a means. Probably most members of the Bloomsbury circle believed something along these lines. But most were not Apostles; indeed none were among the visual arts contingent, although Clive Bell had wished to be. So we are dealing with a micro-climate of philosophic opinion that was substantially more amorphous than that of a sect with a text; and one which had other sources than G. E. Moore.

**This description is almost certainly informed by Fry's trying acquaintance with J. P. Morgan during his tenure with the Metropolitan Museum.

the martyrs, the missionaries, the kingdoms not of this world, the first commandments of art. These I suppose could be metaphorical, even satirical; but no, the religious idea is explicit:

> . . . for art is a religion. It is an expression of and a means to states of mind as holy as any that men are capable of experiencing; and it is towards art that modern minds turn not only for the most perfect expression of transcendent emotion, but for an inspiration by which to live . . . . Art then, may satisfy the religious needs of an age grown too acute for dogmatic religion.[34]

Very interestingly, both critics suggest that the reason for the special response they feel to art may lie in purposiveness. "I have admitted that there is beauty in Nature," said Fry, "but . . . in objects created to arouse the aesthetic emotion we have the added consciousness of purpose on the part of the creator."[35] In almost exact parallel, Bell would say that the wing of a butterfly is beautiful form but not significant form; that significant form perhaps "moves us so profoundly because it expresses the emotion of its creator."[36] What a perfect surrogate for the lost faith of the Victorian skeptics! A muscular Christian on a walking tour might exercise his faith by discerning the hand of his creator--he would have capitalized those nouns--in a butterfly wing; his children might, as did Roger Fry in his monograph on his favorite artist, call Cézanne their tribal deity and their totem. The fallen children of the Evangelicals, Noel Annan

observed in a comparable context, kept up the old standards.[37]

But despite this community of faith in humanly-created form, despite the biblical language, despite even his greater explicitness about art as a substitute for supernatural religion, the prevailing tone of Clive Bell's writing on art is not spiritual. Perhaps the religiosity is just not very convincing: in such lines as "the austere and thrilling raptures of those who have climbed the cold, white peaks of art," there is a sort of excess; but there is something else, too. There is a metaphor of elevation, of superiority. Let us quote the whole passage, a not atypical one in Art, and--to wax biblical ourselves--take it as our text.

> I have tumbled from the superb peaks of aesthetic exhaltation to the snug foothills of warm humanity. It is a jolly country. No one need be ashamed of enjoying himself there. Only no one who has ever been on the heights can help feeling a little crestfallen in the cosy valleys. And let no one imagine that because he has made merry in the warm tilth and quaint nooks of romance, that he can even guess at the austere and thrilling raptures of those who have climbed the cold, white peaks of art.

"About music," Clive Bell continued--for he had begun by describing how briefly he sustained aesthetic apprehension in a concert hall--"About music most people are willing to be as humble as I am."[38] This remark is much to our point, for as it happens a recurring theme of Clive Bell's writing is humility. Not, however, his own. To be sure he has

here professed humility in matters musical; but as he does so only to wonder that in matters of painting people will not "defer to their aesthetic superiors," the effect is to say the least rather mixed. Again, he will say that "those who achieve ecstasy are those who have freed themselves from the arrogance of humanity. He who would feel the significance of form must make himself humble before it."[39] But even if we can imagine Clive Bell freed of arrogance and humble before anything, which for me is not easy, his terms retain their exclusivity. What is excluded is humanity. It is such a humble baggage, or should be, that it ought not imagine that it can even guess what it is missing. Whatever Bell's posture in the presence of significant form, in the presence of humanity he preens.

A kind of generosity might be discerned in this attitude if it could be shown that Bell was in his way recruiting for what he was later pleased to call the cognoscenti. There is some evidence for this. Toward the end of Art, hard by the calls to the religion of art which we have already remarked, he would speak of "the middle-class masses, so patient and so pathetic in their quest";[40] of the children of sensibility "ruined by conscientious parents";[41] of a society leavened and perhaps redeemed by art; of the need for "more popular art . . . that art which is unimportant to the universe but important to the individual, for art can be second-rate and yet genuine."[42]

But the desire to share seems to have been less strong than the desire to sort, for these somewhat patronizing passages are the closest things I have come upon in Bell's writing to the "schemes for social reconstruction" in which he announced he took no further interest as of the end of World War I. Most typically, his attitudes toward his Philistine fellows is dismissive; he is perhaps in his happiest form when he dismisses them to their quaint nooks and warm tilth with, as it were, a chuckle; but it may be observed that he dismisses them over and over again. The vulgar; the provincial; the suburban; those who give him occasion to allow that his heart "will not beat in unison with the great heart of the season-ticket holders, nor yet with the even greater of the football fans";[43] from Art to Enjoying Pictures, they serve their maker well, for we meet them again and again; there they go, round and round in "the world of human interests, and feel emotions, good no doubt, but inferior."[44]

What I am trying to isolate and illustrate here I have called motive--the elitist motive; I think it is clear that Clive Bell was for some reason powerfully attracted by prospects of conspicuous specialness, and that the attraction surfaces in a characteristic insistence upon sorting and grading not only emotions, but people. It will immediately be seen how serviceable to such a motive is the promotion of an unfamiliar and abstruse mode of art

appreciation as the one pure article. One also detects in this connection a certain ignoble advantage of non-representational painting. "It is the prevalence of the representative element, I suppose," Bell wrote, "that makes the man in the street so sure that he knows a good picture when he sees one."[45] This is not to suggest that the sole attraction of abstract tendencies in art, for Clive Bell or anybody else, was the semi-secret desire to make the gallery-visiting man in the street feel that he ought maybe to have stayed out there. But it is to suggest that Bell relished the way the new painting distinguished between those who were in every sense "with it" and those who were not; else why keep emphasizing the distinction?

There is evidence for this in the development of his theory over time. In Art, in 1914, as we have seen, the emphasis was upon significant form, the insistence was that

> . . . the representational element in art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exhaltation.[46]

Twenty years later, in Enjoying Pictures, the emphasis was quite different; it was now upon what he called, attractively enough, enthusiastic analysis.

> One thing leads to another; a visual start may produce an historical excursion or a bit of hagiography or a venture into comparative criticism. This I call enthusiastic analysis. It gives me happiness; but my happiness, you see, is composed of strange ingredients: aesthetic emotion primarily, but eked out with historical curiosity, mild connoisseurship and general culture.[47]

Now, there are several possible explanations for this retreat, if it is that, from what Bell in much later years called "my impetuous doctrine--Significant form first and last, alone and always."[48] I think they are all likely as far as they go. One explanation is that by 1934 he was less impetuous. True enough no doubt, for not only emphasis but tone have changed. Another explanation is that he was adapting his theory in light of criticisms of it advanced in the previous decade. Surely this also is true, for throughout Enjoying Pictures there are such phrases, hitherto unimaginable in his writing, as "I admit that . . ." or, ". . . not, as I formerly supposed . . . ." Also, in the first pages he allows that "since Mr. Richards stepped down from the heights of psychology to bring light into the dark place of aesthetics, belief in the mere existence [of the aesthetic emotion] has gone entirely out of fashion."[49] Still, only a few years before Bell had felt able to make short work of I. A. Richards by discovering that they were talking about two different things --what Bell felt, and what Richards felt; and that "I was arguing about what I felt for pictures with an infinitely

intelligent and cultivated gentleman who has the misfortune to be blind."[50] That may not seem an entirely satisfactory argument, but it was a more or less unanswerable one if he cared to hold his ground.

Nor had he really abandoned it. "The visual start" in the passage quoted above is none other than our old acquaintance the pure aesthetic emotion. In fact, he would make explicit further on what he had implied in the past, that the ability to feel that emotion is inborn; that "the wings of art . . . sprout only on those who have been born with a peculiar sensibility, without which neither general education nor intensive culture will make them grow an inch."[51] This new theory of an aesthetic elect represents, if anything, a hardening of the terms. So that when he says ". . . but I also believe . . . that my sudden reaction to the essential is not the whole of my experience, that unessentials, the overtones of a work contribute largely to that happiness which is not a momentary thrill but an enduring state of mind";[52] and when he defines access to the overtones in terms of culture and education--what has he done? It seems to me he has extended the grounds on which the insider may be with it, and increased the likelihood that the outsider will not. To perceive significant form one must be born with the knack; he's got that; and to carry out enthusiastic analysis one needs historical curiosity, mild connoisseurship and general

culture. Got that too.

Now these last are not usually considered plebian qualities, and I suspect that one reason for Bell's greatly increased emphasis upon them, by the early 30s, had to do with the claim of a good many plebian people, during the 20s, to something that looked to themselves anyhow perilously like the aesthetic thrill. If content was irrelevant and erudition tyrannous, if one needed nothing but emotion, why not? The non-intellectual, non-historical, non-rational possibilities of the new painting were becoming clearer by the year with successive developments of expressionism, dada, surrealism, automatic art, primitivism of all kinds. There was an unintended loophole in the doctrine of emotional response to pure form which, to mix the metaphor completely, might make for muddy feet in the chapel of culture. Bell had already been worried about this by the early 20s. His concern was very vividly stated in an extraordinary article called "Plus de Jazz," in which he attacks the "impudence" and "determination to surprise" of a movement, not solely musical, "which bounced into the world somewhere about the year 1911 . . . headed by a Jazz band, and a troupe of niggers, dancing."[53] So vividly, that I think it is worth quoting several long excerpts which will speak clearly for themselves.

> . . . Their instincts might be trusted; so, no more classical concerts and music lessons; no more getting Lycidas by heart; no more

> Baedeker; no more cricking one's neck in the Sistine Chapel: unless the coloured gentleman who leads the band at the Savoy has a natural leaning towards these things you may depend upon it they are noble, pompous, and fraudulent . . . .[54]

> What the pick of the new generation in France, and in England too, I fancy, is beginning to feel is that though it need never be solemn art must always be serious; that it is a matter of profound emotion and of intense and passionate thought; and that these things rarely are found in dancing places and hotel lounges. Even to understand art a man must make a great intellectual effort . . . .[55]

> The age of easy access to the first thing that comes is closing. Thought rather than spirits is required, quality rather than colour, knowledge rather than irreticience, intellect rather than singularity, wit rather than romps, precision rather than surprise, dignity rather than impudence and lucidity above all things: plus de Jazz.[56]

The wider social effects of the jazz mentality must have seemed onerous indeed to Clive Bell; they were becoming apparent, he said, to "many intelligent and sensitive people. They see that it encourages thousands of the stupid and the vulgar to fancy that they can understand art, and hundreds of the conceited to imagine that they can create it."[57] Muddy feet. No more jazz.

I am spending enough time and space on the operation of the elitist motive in Clive Bell's writing that it seems important to stress again that I do not think these attitudes were peculiar to him; he is simply a very good example of them. If Clive Bell represented the far right fringe of the Bloomsbury circle in many ways, still it is

true that Roger Fry spoke dismissively of "the untrained instincts of the gross public,"[58] that Virginia Woolf could be to say the least ungenerous and J. M. Keynes paternalistic about "the lower classes"; that perhaps the most politically generous of them, Leonard Woolf, would speak of writing advisory reports to the Labour party "intellectually in words of one syllable."[59] This aspect of Clive Bell's thought is interesting precisely because it is not an aberration but an extreme manifestation of a common way of thinking among upper-middle class English people of his time, and probably of our own.

However its very extremity cannot but make me, at least, curious as to the motive behind the motive: as to why a reputedly likeable and certainly gifted man, well-placed in every way, should have wanted or needed to assert and reassert so strenuously a sense of superiority which one would think he might simply have assumed. That is certainly harder to demonstrate than is the simple recurrence and operation of elitist ideas in his writing. But if the pains he took to distinguish himself from his Philistine fellows may be seen as compensation for something, perhaps it was for the fact that by birth and upbringing he was really a fellow Philistine. He came of a wealthy Wiltshire family "which drew its wealth from Welsh mines and expended it upon the destruction of wild animals."[60] He was said to have barely opened a book until

he went up to Cambridge. Leonard Woolf first saw him crossing Trinity Great Court in full hunting dress. If the passion for literature and the friendships he developed at Cambridge took him into an entirely new world and a far more intellectual one, there is little evidence that he was in any simple way ashamed of his background. Indeed a sort of hunt-breakfast heartiness--he was apparently extremely loud --and a love of sporting metaphor were relics of Wiltshire so cherished as to appear cultivated. But there is perhaps a suggestion of bravado in this, of keeping one foot in the warm tilth by choice; of making free of both worlds. There is never any question with which monde it was important to him to associate himself, and which he was fond of declaring had associated itself with him.

> The Knowing ones--the ones, I mean, who are always invited to music after tea, and often to supper after ballet--seem now to agree that in art, significant form is the thing . . . . It is years since I met anyone, careful of his reputation, so bold as to deny that the literary or anecdotic content of a work of art, however charming and lively it might be, was mere surplusage. The significance of a picture, according to the cognoscenti, must be implicit in its forms.[61]

This is a long way from Wiltshire, and it may be that he did not always feel quite far away enough. His wife and sister-in-law for example were party by birth to an intellectual tradition Bell admired; they had a low opinion of the one to which his birth made him party. After Clive and Vanessa Bell's son Julian was killed in Spain, Virginia Woolf wrote a little ruefully how she had not liked Bell to

compare his son to her brother: "I have always been foolish about that. I did not like any Bell to be like Thoby, partly through snobbishness I think."[62] Twenty-six years before, in one of many miserable letters from Seend, Vanessa Bell had written ". . . Then which of course is absurd, I resent the fact that the children will have this as their family and not what my parents might have given them."[63] Virginia Woolf wrote to her diary, Vanessa Bell to Roger Fry; surely neither of them would have said these things to Clive Bell; but private opinions are rarely entirely private. Just as it would most likely have come as no surprise to Wyndham Lewis that Clive Bell had called him a grubby little ill-bred painter, so Clive Bell was probably not unconscious of what was thought of the "awful rich fox-hunting self-complacency"[64] that bred him. The burden of these remarks is to suggest, very tentatively, the possibility that these two responses--feeling a bit despised, and playing to the hilt the role of despiser--may have connected at some level in Clive Bell's personality.

Whatever the cause, the effect, and it has its political implications, was a hearty Edwardian self-absorption; which, though it is concerned to stand within the great tradition--to state its kinship, as Clive Bell does in Civilization, with "fifth and fourth century Athens, Renaissance Italy, and France from Fronde to revolution . . . our paragons"[65]--is not inclined to dwell upon the

intimate tradition of the Wiltshire country house, nor, certainly, the Welsh mines behind it. So he would write as a young man:

> I was made with eyes to see
> And taste to choose fastidiously
> And ears to hear, enough of brain
> To make most matters fairly plain,
> Enough of health for work or play
> Of wealth enough to pick my way,
> Sense to enjoy, and arts to bring
> Soft nothings off a softer thing,
> A turn of wit, a taste for ease . . . .[66]

Compare this with some fragments of his son Julian's poem "Autobiography." Julian Bell begins

> I stay myself--the product made
> by several hundred English years
> Of harried labourers underpaid
> Of Venns who plied the parson's trade,
> Of regicides, of Clapham Sects,
> Of high Victorian intellects,
> Leslie, Fitzjames.

and in the next stanza, after recalling a brigand,

> . . . and there were worse
> Who built a country house from iron and coal;
> Hard-bitten capitalists, if on the whole,
> They kept the general average of their class.[67]

Now, Julian Bell was evidently very much a Bell in many ways: impulsive, extrovert, noisy, sporting; "anti-anti-vivisectionist"[68] as he put it. But he was quite different from his father in some others, which I think emerge in these verses. Of course he was part of another generation, and a highly politicized one; that is important, but it is not the whole difference. There is also in the younger Bell a positive pride at being half-Stephen; half

made of "Clapham Sects . . . High Victorian intellects: Leslie, Fitzjames." Perhaps it is part of the reason he made less point of pride in himself. At any rate, Julian Bell was inclined to place himself in a social and historical context which involved human values, and not only his own or those of his class or type. In the worried ambivalence of lines like these

> . . . I cannot quite admit that world's decay
> Or undespairing wish it on its way
>
> For here was good, built though it was no doubt
> On poverty I could not live without . . .[69]

there is a humane concern for the means by which good ends, in this case his own very happy childhood, are achieved.

That sort of concern is conspicuously weak in Clive Bell's writing. Not absent: in his (suppressed) pamphlet Peace at Once there is clearly anguish at the human waste of the first world war; in On British Freedom he expressed concern that the English workingman could no more than Bell himself buy a drink after certain hours or before certain other ones--nor choose with perfect freedom the books he would read or films he would see, nor conduct his sexual life as he would--because of the interfering efforts of what Bell described with great passion as "the goody-goody gang." But one suspects that the overriding concern here was with the freedoms of the better sort. Apart from pub-goers, the victims of the intellectual and moral discriminations against which Bell argued would more likely

have shown their heads in Bloomsbury than in Brixton.

So it is at his 1928 Civilization that we had best look for Clive Bell's mature and considered level of concern for the non-elite. It comes down, I am afraid, to a hope that they will be willing rather than unwilling to serve. He is frank about it:

> To be completely civilized, thought the Athenians, a man must be free from material care. And as he must have ample leisure in which to enjoy whatever good things the intellect, the emotions or the senses put before him, there must be slaves.[70]

For Bell civilization was equated with a highly cultivated leisure class, its members free not only from material care but from any responsibility to do anything but "enjoy whatever good things the intellect, the emotions or the senses," and presumably their servants, put before them. He did believe that civilization was characterized by, and hence the class vital to it would foster, "a Sense of Values and Reason Enthroned."[71] He thought the civilized nucleus would be civilizing as well, and improve community life--promote skepticism, for example, which he does not seem to have worried might eventually be extended to skepticism about the privileges of the elite--by their passive example. And, he clearly hoped it would not be necessary to strong-arm anyone. "Before plumping for barbarism, let the philanthropist remember that there are such things as willing servants."[72] However, these last

considerations were secondary. The indices and ends of civilization were the states of mind achieved by those whose lives "contain the maximum of vivid experience."[73] What we have to do to get that, and hence avoid barbarism, we have to do. "If despotism and its correlative slavery are, or at some moment happen to be, the means to the greatest good--to the maximum of good states of mind--I should suppose that only bad men would be averse to employing them."[74]

As may be imagined, this did not go over very well in the 30s. Any aversion would have been mutual, however. The priorities revealed in Civilization clarify not only why English radicalism of the 30s was as unattractive to Clive Bell as he was to it, but also his marked hostility toward the Fabian Society. This is on the face of it rather mysterious. Bell seems to have enjoyed reminiscing about the old days when "we were mostly socialists."[75] He was careful to say that civilization was not incompatible with socialism--nobody need be any richer than Clive Bell was already, and couldn't future generations of the elite be chosen by examination? or lot? --And, one would have thought that if any socialism were going to be acceptable to him, that of the Fabians, with the gradualism and paternalism that drove more radical and proletarian souls crazy, would have been it. But in fact, in the fulminations in On British Freedom against "the goody-goody

gang" which was turning "what was once merry England into a place of proverbial gloom,"[76] Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, "with all the boards they rig and the wires they pull,"[77] are the only named offenders. This seems odd considering that the liberties which Clive Bell set out to defend in this book do not seem to have been particularly threatened by the Fabians; but it is less odd when we consider that the Fabians did threaten to effect, if ever they got the chance, "the taxation, to extinction, of unearned income."[78] Had they succeeded in Clive Bell's lifetime it would have meant not only the death of civilization as he knew it but a radical reverse of personal fortune.

One more characteristic of Bell's goody-goody image may be mentioned in conclusion. It points up another variation on the theme of exclusion, one which is quite as important as the more commonly recognized forms of intellectual and political elitism: not only in absolute terms but also in relation to the interest we will be p r ing in the life and work of Vanessa Bell. That is sexism. The "petty tyrants" who "swarm on every committee"[79] tend to be visualized as women. The goody-goody diatribe fills a longish section of On British Freedom; one begins to notice, as one reads along, that committeewomen, policewomen, and female home visitors keep looming up; finally it all comes pouring out.

> In justice it should be added that the tyrant's temper, the passion to dominate and interfere, which is the steam that drives the goody-goody roller, is supplemented not only by the coxcomb's disappointed vanity, but much more by the old-maid's envy and the acquired spitefulness of a certain class of barren women . . . .[80]

It gets even worse: Mr. Sidney Webb is not, apparently, a contemptible enough figure, as he stands, to serve as the generic he of the goody-goody left; when Clive Bell wishes to warn that goody-goody tyranny may lurk behind any political label, only female figures can convey the full horror of it: "Their superficial differences catch the eye, fundamentally they agree . . . Lady Astor is kissed all over by Mrs. Webb."[81] In an updated version (in Enjoying Pictures) of his "pet theory . . . [about] the pests of society, busy-bodies, world-reshapers and universal tidiers-up," we will get "little Hitlers, Mrs. Webbs and Lady Astors."[82]

This is an astonishing choice of tyrants. It reflects a restricted and restrictive view of women and their place that shows its positive side, if one likes to call it that, in the combination of nunnery and harem Bell adopted for his long comic poem The Legend of Monte Sibilla.

> It was an Abbey of Theleme
> Compounded with Arabian Nights,
> Where every sort of pretty game
> And wit and wine and all delights
> Where shared with pretty, clever girls
> Who never dreamed of being pals;
> But were what girls should always be,
> In manner prim, in fancy free.[83]

The effects of Clive Bell's sexism upon his criticism are several, and pervasive; in particular it surfaces as a tendency, perhaps unconscious, to image up the valued activity of art as male--exactly, of course, as he had imaged the despised activity of "do-gooding" as female. As:

> They do not admire the austere determination of these young men to make their work independent and self-supporting and unbeholden to adventitious dainties. They cannot understand this passion for works that are admirable as wholes, this fierce insistence on design, this willingness to leave bare the construction if by so doing the spectators of the Impressionist age are vexed by the naked bones and muscles of Post-Impressionist art.[84]

Like Virginia Woolf blushing at the capital letters of Kipling ("his Sowers who sow the Seed; and his Men who are alone with their Work; and the Flag--"),[85] one feels one has been eavesdropping at a purely masculine orgy. If Bell introduces women into the image at all, he likes to do so in such a way as to suggest in a single sentence that artists are male and that women should be--well, listen: ". . . If I am trying to account for the deterioration of his art, I shall be helped by knowing . . . that he has married a wife who insists upon his boiling her pot."[86] And the same masculinism, the same view of women--here rather more attractive but quite as cabinned in completely conventional roles--permeates a passage like this one, from an appreciation of Renoir.

> Here is the France of the young man's fancy and the old man's envious dreams. Here, if you please, you may smell again that friture that ate so well, one Sunday at Argenteuil, twenty years ago, in company of a young poet who must have had genius and two models who were certainly divine. And that group with the fat, young mother suckling her baby--there is all French frankness and French tenderness and family feeling.[87]

Let us notice something else in this bit of appreciation besides the impoverished model-and-mama conception of women that Clive Bell brought to his criticism and presumably to other things in his life. Let us notice also that he was perfectly conscious of content, when he happened to like what he saw. And so, to turn to the second luminary of this chapter, was Roger Fry.

Abundant examples of sensitivity to content may be found in Fry's own art. For example, in 1921 he published Twelve Original Woodcuts. As his publishers were Leonard and Virginia Woolf, it seems reasonable to assume that he had control over whether titles were affixed to his prints, and what the titles would be. Affixed titles were, though all the prints would stand alone as formal compositions and, from his criticism, one would expect Fry to want them to. Nor are the titles neutral tags such as Composition or Still Life; they are evocative. As, a figure of a man reading in lamplight, called The Novel; or, an arrangement of fruit and a wine-glass, called Dessert.

Revelations of pleasure in content by these critics seem to be more or less accidental. Three years after Fry

published his woodcuts he would still be making statements so sweeping as the one quoted earlier, that no one who understood painting attached any importance whatever to subject. Similarly, Bell wrote the Renoir paragraph early enough for it to be included in Since Cézanne in 1923, though it was not until the 1930s and Enjoying Pictures that he admitted very directly to interesting himself in content. And certainly concern with matter is not often so explicit as the digression Clive Bell allowed himself upon the friture et femmes of Renoir. More often it is tacit, as in Roger Fry's resonant titles or pleasant landscapes, or in the undeclared but persistent preference both critics showed for art and artists concerned with attractive and pacific subjects. "After all, beauty is a kind of reasonableness, you know," Roger Fry wrote to Vanessa Bell;[88] he was speaking of what he found in her, but it is what he wanted in painting as well: a reasonableness, harmony, resolution as much in subjects as in the forms which were, after all, appropriate to them. This goes far to explain why Roger Fry distrusted as much as Clive Bell post-war developments in modern art, and why in fact he treated the work of Paul Cézanne as the high-water mark of the modern movement.

This demonstrable sensitivity to content may justify the supposition that an important impulse behind the formalist imperative lay in particular attitudes toward

the subject matter of which pre-abstract art is made. That most of that matter is of social or conventionally religious significance, and that many of the attitudes of Clive Bell and Roger Fry towards society and religion were negative, must have made the more attractive a preoccupation with form. Their most characteristic antipathies point up the differences between them to which I have been trying to call attention. Bell found especially repugnant "the irrelevant self-assertion of some heroic pig-minder" in Millet;[89] in Manet "something common";[90] in Rousseau "something plebian."[91] Fry, on the other hand, was more likely to urge that the value of Giotto's art is not bound up with recognition of his "dramatic idea";[92] that a reader of Pilgrim's Progress may relish the aesthetic bait "without so much as a scratch from Bunyan's hook,"[93] that we can before a Renaissance Madonna and Child "disregard more or less completely the distracting impertinences of Raphael's psychology."[94] That Fry should wish to think of the tradition in and for which these artists worked as dispensible drama, as a snare to be avoided, as distracting, indeed impertinent psychology, implies an almost protestant revulsion against conventional religious belief; and the protestant, we should be reminded, is a co-religionist.

For Roger Fry really was religious about art. He could most likely be snobbish, he could certainly be

sexist,* but one does not feel in his critical writing the desire to exclude anybody. To the contrary, one feels the desire to profess, to convince, to include the reader within the fold of his faith in form. In person the force of Fry's desire to share and convert could become oppressive now and again. His dearest friends felt the need to fortify themselves on occasion against his enthusiasms. Someone has recorded that although Fry's wife Helen had strong tastes of her own and in a picture gallery went straight to what she wanted to see, "Then Roger would try to make her look at other pictures . . . to like works of art in the way that he liked them, and he would become quite sad when he failed."[95] Or even quite grouchy. "Most of it seems to me very tiresome," Vanessa Bell said of a show of Persian objects about which Fry was enthusiastic one month in the 30s. "However Roger is very cross when one abuses them at all and I see I shall have to pay a Sunday visit with him."[96]

Expressing this evangelical spirit was a tendency to use religious metaphor, if metaphor it really was, which

---

*"Women," Virginia Woolf of all people quoted Roger Fry as saying, "seldom learn . . . . But if they have good taste they seldom sophisticate it . . . they have an instinct, a certainty and rapidity of judgment, which not even the most gifted men can emulate." Fry's obtuse assumption that this was a compliment is attested by his addendum that it was based "not on chivalrous grounds, but from experience" (in Roger Fry: A Biography, p. 121).

is quite as marked as Clive Bell's. Fry evoked "the great period of this religion, the epoch of its saints and martyrs" (he was speaking of French non-academic art 1930-70);[97] spoke of an artistic "band of heroic Ishmaelites;"[98] and in describing Cézanne found himself "like a medieval mystic before the divine reality, reduced to negative terms."[99] But extravagant as this phraseology sounds in isolation, it fits rather than flashes in the overall texture of his writing. The preoccupation with spiritual values is altogether characteristic. Let us proceed as we did with Clive Bell, and take a passage for our text. This is from a letter to the poet Robert Bridges, written in 1913.

> I very early became convinced that our emotions before works of art were of many kinds and that we failed as a rule to distinguish the nature of the mixture and I set to work by introspection to discover what the different elements might be and try to get at the most constant, unchanged and therefore, I supposed, fundamental emotion. I found that this 'constant' had always to do with the contemplation of form . . . . It also seemed to me that the emotions resulting from the contemplation of form were more universal (less particularized and coloured by the individual history) more profound and more significant spiritually than any of the emotions which had to do with life . . . . I therefore assume that the contemplation of form is a peculiarly important spiritual exercise.[100]

Constancy, fundamentality, profundity, universality, in a word spirituality: these sorts of values, expressed directly and with no suggestion of self-conscious elevation,

underlay a mode of appreciation which seems to have amounted to devotion. In a less specifically spiritualist context Fry would speak of aesthetic apprehension as "a special orientation of the consciousness . . . above all a special focussing of the attention . . . an attentive passivity";[101] in short, I think we may say, as a state of meditation.

And again: ". . . as a rule we failed . . . so I set to work . . . to discover what the different elements might be." In such phrases we may hear a high 19th century rectitude, industry, respect for objective analysis. That the objective analysis in this case proceeded by the subjective means of introspection does not obviate the fact that Fry considered it an experimental method. Perhaps we might go so far as to call it, though I am not sure he did, a scientific method. And regard for science, as we shall see, is an important element in his thought. In any case the moral tone of these phrases points up the oddly puritan flavour of his preferences. Though as a mature critic Fry consistently argued against any connection between art and morality, the severance was not so easily made in practice. As a student he had been repelled by the "chaos" of modern (I gather Impressionist) art,[102] and came away from a Watts exhibition averring that the artist was "not only the greatest modern painter but one of the greatest men."[103] As an older critic he was repelled by

"romanticism" and revered not only the paintings but the apparent procedure, almost the personality, of Cézanne: who, he thought, "approached the ultimate synthesis of a design with infinite precautions, stalking it, as it were, now from one point of view and now from another, always in fear lest a premature definition deprive it of its total complexity."[104] At every stage we can see the same regard for seriousness and dedication, the same distrust of the facile and the colourful.

If that sounds odd with regard to the man who cast over England what Virginia Woolf called the variegated bunch of lights of Post-Impressionism,[105] it may be remembered that, particularly in the long run, that to which Roger Fry most responded in the new painting was not its colour, nor yet its appearance of freedom; it was an ideal of construction. Pains had to be taken, by artist and by appreciator. One of the problems with Caravaggio and the realistic tradition was that they provided "a slope down which the imagination glides without effort."[106] But the pains had to be of a particular kind. Those taken by Caravaggio or the Victorian academicians, or indeed by the Impressionists to record the surfaces of experience--what the grocer thinks he sees, as Clive Bell had it, or even what the grocer actually, optically sees--did not suffice. For Fry art and artists had a more ambitious order to fill, and that was the creation of form. "In fact, they aim not

at illusion but reality," he said of the Post-Impressionists. "They do not seek to imitate form, but to create form, not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life."[107]

Now, theoretically one would suppose that created form might as well be linear as plastic: but that is not how God created the world, and it is not what Roger Fry was after in art. The fact that he most responded to painting which suggested "realized" form in space was related to what he saw as his major theoretical difference with Clive Bell--at least, one which he reiterated several times over the years. Bell's isolation of significant form went too far, Fry thought, because any suggestion of the third dimension in a painting must be due to some element of representation: that is, to some response to the real, the visible world.[108] Herein may lie a key to the curious fact that Fry never really went over, in his criticism or in his painting, to the idea of a fully abstract easel painting. His resolute representativeness seems anomalous when we consider his stated indifference to subject and his longing for a "visual music":[109] unless we remember his attachment to plasticity and, ultimately, to reality. Whereas Bell tended in his critical writings either to ignore the real world or to treat it with some contempt, except in those digressions wherein he exhibited his pleasure in certain of its social or sensual aspects, Fry

was several times to say that a basic reason artists must invent rather than imitate was that imitation could, after all, be but a pale reflection of nature.[110] The regard for nature is retained.

There is our key I think: the regard for nature. Fry's earliest inclination, insofar as his published letters show, was to the natural sciences, and the bulk of his formal education followed that course. His childhood letters are sprinkled with references to botanizing, a family passion. At Cambridge he took a first in Natural Science. His desire to be a painter was by then leading him in other directions, but he took the interest in science--or perhaps better the feeling for it--with him. It was probably that feeling that attracted him as a budding connoisseur to the close observation, the totting up of types of ears and toes, the aspirations to objectivity of Giovanni Morelli's morphological method of attribution. Certainly Fry never lost his Victorian intellectual reverence for the more conventional sorts of science he associated with pure, disinterested enquiry. Herschel, Darwin, Hooker: when Fry came in the 20s to comment upon the portraits of them by the Stephens' maternal aunt, the great Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, what he saw was a "supreme unselfconsciousness and simplicity . . . an unwavering faith which looked for no external support or approval."[111] This,

interestingly, was in contrast to the posturing of the artists and writers among Mrs. Cameron's sitters. In an observation which reflects his aversion to the romantic sentiment of the 19th century, Fry described the artists as "on show . . . [and] how anxious they are to keep up the pitch."[112] At any rate, the virtues that he saw in the scientific method appear to have been those he wished to bring to his own method of formal analysis. So he would write of aesthetic experience that

> . . . the problem is too complicated, for me at any rate, to approach it by any other than an experimental method. The experiment will have to be made on the inquirer, and mainly on himself, by watching with such honesty and detachment as he can command, his own reactions.[113]

Fry went on to observe that such honesty is hard to come by: "We are all extremely auto-suggestible, and apt to discover, with suspicious facility, whatever our predisposition of mind may have led us to desire and anticipate." I imagine that he would have been the first to recognize that, whether or not he saw it where it wasn't, what he most desired to see was plastic construction in space. Since, as he thought, that would always involve a degree of representation of nature, his attachment to representational art becomes quite comprehensible. As for pure visual music: well, let us look at one of the instances where he heard it. Here is a comment on a Corot View of Honfleur:

> And that harmony is found by such subtle, infinite, and unconscious adjustments of the ordinary accepted facts of appearance that, to one who missed Corot's real meaning it would have the non-aesthetic meaning, such as it is, of an exact reproduction of the scene. What concerns us here is that the realism, complete as it is, is so entirely transmuted into plastic values that to say before it, 'How like Honfleur!' would be felt to be totally irrelevant to the mood it evokes--a mood as detached from any actual experience as that of the purest music.[114]

We are at least as justified in suspecting that the mood of a French landscape was not for Roger Fry entirely detached from actual experience, as he was in finding behind "unconscious adjustments" the "real meaning" of Corot. For, as I have already suggested, the experiences Fry cared to see entirely transmuted into plastic values have a predictability about them. The pacific landscapes of Corot are an example. So are those of Roger Fry. Similarly with still-life: it is all very well for Fry to recommend still-life because the subject was so "unimportant" that it would not intrude upon the design;[115] but why did he paint food and flowers instead of skulls and wrenches? A still life called Dessert, a landscape called View on the Cote d'Azur: most of what Fry painted has beneath it the same sort of attachment to actual experience that one hears here:

> My dear I am a queer Pagan creature . . . . When one gets over into France and the sun is shining on little towns, all grey-brown roofs and grey walls and the poplars are golden in the autumn light, I must be rather happy at the mere sight.[116]

That was written to Vanessa Bell in 1911, and says nothing directly about painting. But later in his life Fry was less reticent about relating "outside" visual experience to art, and doing so in his public writing. So in Reflections on British Painting (1934) he would say that while the painter van de Velde was no great genius, "you can feel your way among his clouds and across his great grey expanses of water with a certain exhilaration. Everything has been seen and felt by the artist."[117] Or of Gainsborough, in whom along with Constable and a few others, he found the best of the English tradition:

> . . . but what is remarkable is that he feels everywhere the structure. In imagination he feels all the movements of the terrain--just how the bank slopes down to the pool--he follows the undulations right out into the distance, and his tree stands free in the air--it is no scenic tree silhouetted against the sky.[118]

The scenic silhouette: there is the reference to the alternate and to Fry's mind unfortunate English tradition: the "extraordinary linear conception" which produced the "empty and insignificant forms" of Blake;[119] the lack of plastic imagination that, not coincidentally, he associated with the literary, the romantic, the rhetorical as well. With, for example, the "Golden Vision, but only visions" (Constable's judgment) or "tinted steam" (Hazlitt's) of J. M. Turner.[120] "Indeed," Fry would add, "I doubt whether Turner ever did have any distinct experience in front of nature . . . . He never saw things with

a really disinterested passion."[121]

It will begin to become obvious, I hope, that these various values are very complementary. The passion of the "man of science" for "new causal harmonies in nature"[122] is analogized to the disinterested passion of the artist able to see and feel plastic form; the ability to see and feel plastic form is taken as a measure of the power to "free oneself from the interests of ordinary life and attain to that detachment in which the spiritual significance of formal relations becomes apparent";[123] formal harmonies reveal themselves not in the "shocks of wonder"[124] provided by artists like Blake but rather "gradually to your prolonged gaze . . . reveal themselves, little by little."[125] So Fry's predispositions intertwine, and come at last to embrace certain kinds of art--what seemed to him the natural or the observed, the calm, harmonious and universal--and reject certain others--what seemed to him the artificial or mannered, the agitated, the histrionic and anecdotal. What his devotions really required, after all, was nature seen through a temperment, and a temperment of a peculiarly sober, searching sort; one sees why he became so attached to the stolid architectonic landscapes and still lives of Cézanne.

What is perhaps not so obvious is why Fry was so strongly inclined to circumscribe his apprehension of even the most spatially resolved and formally harmonious

compositions, when the subject of them suggested that the artist's experience was not just plastically significant but conventionally religious. After all, what he called the self-revelation of the artist was of great importance to Fry; one point of formal analysis was to retrace the process of composition and execution so as to feel what the artist felt. But while he liked to think about Gainsborough thinking about topography, he did not like to think about Giotto thinking about God. If this is difficult to understand it is because such aversions are rooted in more intimate biography than we can attempt in any detail. To talk about what Fry studied in school is one thing, to talk about why he, in good Victorian fashion,"lost his faith," is another. No doubt for a complex of reasons, but apparently the rather rigid Quaker environment that formed him--and which, it should be clear by now, lent a strong moral cast to his mind--did not make Christianity nearly as attractive as Giotto does. "It is impossible to exaggerate the want of simple humanity in which we were brought up," Virginia Woolf quotes Fry as saying, "or to explain how that was closely associated with the duty of philanthropy."[126] Fry's father was an eminent judge, but a disappointed one, for he had wished to go to Cambridge and become a scientist, and in his youth that was not a course open to Quakers. Sir Edward Fry's air of--if one may judge by his photograph--slightly sour austerity set

the tone for a household in which, perhaps, consciousness of religious non-conformity further straitened the usual conventions of Victorian family life and thought. Denys Sutton has said that

> It was characteristic of the attitude of Fry's parents that although the eldest daughter was allowed to train as a nurse, she was not allowed to marry the man she loved, a doctor, for, after half an hour's interview with her father, he was never seen in the house again. Agnes, who spoke three languages and was well versed in astronomy and botany, asked to be allowed to go up to Cambridge; her parents told her it was out of the question.[127]

Fry himself spoke of the "absolute conviction" in which the children were raised, that "anyone not in receipt of regular employment and a fairly high salary was morally reprehensible, that in fact the world was so arranged that wealth and virtue almost exactly corresponded."[128]

This is the background against which we should see Fry's adult aversion to the usual forms of faith: privileged, certainly, but certainly ungenerous by the standards of many in the next generation. "I have read all I can of Sir Edward and am filled with blank despair," Vanessa Bell wrote Fry in the 20s. "How <u>did</u> you emerge?"[129] As promptly as possible, apparently. I do not know when Fry discarded that Christianity which, he had assured his mother in a letter from public school, was "not so weak a structure as not to stand the proximity of doubt."[130] But by the time he got to Cambridge, his biographer tells

us, he was making friends who "submitted not merely mosses and plants to their scrutiny, but politics, religion, philosophy";[131] and from then on it was all up with at least the explicit ideas of Sir Edward Fry.

Not that Fry emerged as completely from his upbringing as probably he felt he did. Implicitly he remained in many ways his father's son. We see the religiosity in his ideas about art; he was never so attached to the romantic hero vision of the artist--the Gaugin/Van Gogh model--as to the contemplative creator model exemplified by Cézanne. Benedict Nicholson has made a most interesting distinction in this connection between the first Post-Impressionist Exhibition, which featured no fewer than 37 Gaugins and the fauve Vlaminck as the best-represented living artist, and the second, in which "Cubists and near-Cubists played a distinguished if not a predominant part . . . . Whereas the first had popularized the notion that artists were romantic geniuses, the second gave birth to the much more rigid notion of significant form."[132] The peculiar attraction to Fry in 1911 of "expressionism" in Nicholson's sense may have been that, as Quentin Bell points out, he was at a crossroads in his personal and professional life.[133] He was 44 years old in 1910; his relationship with the Metropolitan Museum had just ended; his wife was mad and he had written his mother "I have given up all hope of

happiness."[134] His subsequent feeling of expansiveness and excitement about "all the people in this new movement . . . whatever they do has life and that's new,"[135] seems strikingly similar to that experienced by Vanessa Bell; with whom he fell in love in 1911 and who remembered him telling her "how some of his friends wondered what had happened, why he had changed and become so young and alive suddenly."[136] Like Bell's his excitement was moderated by time and the war and, I think, the more considered demands of his own temperment; pure expression came to receive less stress. Clive Bell came to believe that Fry was willing to reduce "all that signified" in poetry to "clean, bare bones"--that is, form--because "the charm, the romance, the imagery, the glamour, the magic, offended the Quaker that was in him."[137] (Bell did not extend this observation to the similar operation attempted by the formalists upon visual art.) Apparently too there was in Fry a certain authoritarianism, a tendency to equate his own desires and preferences with the right and the good. So we find in the 20s Vanessa Bell writing to J. M. Keynes, whom Fry had evidently been lobbying to keep an artist whose work he did not "believe in" out of the London Artists' Association:

> Yes Roger has talked to me about Paul Nash. I quite agree with him theoretically, that is if the guarantors would be willing to support only artists we think good and be content to risk their money, I think

> naturally it would be much better from our point of view. Roger may be right, Quakers generally are, in thinking it would eventually pay better to have only artists one believes in . . . .[138]

This is not to say that Fry's only response to those who would not see the light was to try to eliminate them; he could also be unexpectedly generous, as when he said he thought Herbert Read was the best choice for Burlington editor "in spite of my great distaste for his writings and his general weltanschauung."[139] But there are enough examples of ungenerous responses to suggest a streak of assertive self-righteousness in Fry similar to that to which he objected in his parents. Finally, to mention the area in which Fry most overtly, though never I think flamboyantly, departed from familial standards, we may add that he did not observe anything like Victorian Quaker sexual conventions; but, one has the feeling he might have approximated them more closely had the circumstances of his life encouraged it. As it was they discouraged it. His wife was mentally ill after 1898 and institutionalized after 1910; the laws at that time were such that he might not remarry; he seems often to have been searching for a kind of domestic happiness which he did not find until the last years of his life. He never liked what he called "rampant bohemianism," Virginia Woolf tells us.[140] And Clive Bell thought that the paganism of which Roger Fry was rather proud, was rather protestant: "à protest

against puritanism.. . . . He made one aware of a slight wrench, the ghost of a struggle, when he freed his mind to accept or condone what his forbears would have called 'vile pleasures.'"[141]

There is then this paradox, or perhaps only duality, in Fry's character. He was both conventional and unconventional, puritan and libertine, religious and a-theist. Like many a first-generation unbeliever of his class and country, he seems to have felt particularly the need for a faith: one which would, as he believed of the scientists', need no external support. On the other hand, his early experience of the co-existence of what was judged to be sanctity with what he judged to be lack of humanity, predisposed him to hear claims of sanctity, especially elaborate ones, as sanctimonious. So we find him, within the space of a few pages and with no apparent irony, speaking after his own style of "the artist, in whose breast the divine flame is kindled,"[142] and mocking the style of the late critic of the Daily Telegraph, the unction of which

> was as oil to feed the undying flame in the temple and the savour of whose epithets rose like incense before its altars . . . . Surely Sir Claude Phillips was a great High Priest in that religion of culture which is so adapted to the needs of polite societies.[143]

Or Fry would speak of his own pantheon of saints and martyrs and dieties and divines as staffing what he was not shy to call a religion of art; but would speak as well of

"the religions that have afflicted mankind (and they are its most terrible afflictions)."[144]

In short, although Fry had the kind of feeling for both art and religion that induced him to suggest they sprang from the same emotion, he harboured a profound suspicion of what is usually meant by the latter. Surely this is one of the attitudes that led him to divide those people of whom "the word artist is used" into "two distinct groups of men."[145] One group, of course, is concerned with form. The other group is concerned with "creating a fantasy-world in which the fulfillment of wishes is realized."[146] When the two types were indubitably mixed, as even Fry was bound occasionally to recognize that they are in historic art--though the historic artists would not have agreed with his characterization of their beliefs as fantasy--well, then he did his best to free himself from the distractions of historic psychology. Both the desire to make a religion of something, which led him to separate "pure art" from "ordinary life," and the antipathy for supernatural religion, which led him to delimit and in some cases distort the historic arts he was considering, may be plausibly related to values in his Quaker upbringing which he either internalized or reacted rather sharply against.

It will be clear enough by now that I do not think either of these outcomes quite fortunate. But there is another green shoot from the Quaker root which is rather

another matter. That is Fry's not entirely consistent, but certainly productive, attraction to the practical, the useful, the socially significant. Given his special interests and his suspicion of philanthropy, this did not mean jurisprudence, arms limitation, penal reform or war victim relief, which is the sort of thing it meant to others of his energetic family. But it did mean the applied arts.

Now the distinction between pure and applied arts is surely an artificial one. When one stops to think about the contexts in which the arts that have come down to us have been created and used, it becomes very hard to think of any that were not "applied." But given that Roger Fry did make, indeed insist upon, the distinction, it is a pleasant surprise to find him putting so much energy into the impure arts of decoration. Not a few leading lights of 20th century art would have considered it beneath them. But as it happened Fry did not stay behind the choir-screen, shunning this world of illusion, creating and contemplating form; he came out and painted screens himself, and decorated chairs and designed stuffs and threw pots; and what is more he created structures encouraging other artists to put the modern idiom to use in the same way. The earliest example of this of which I am aware is his securing a commission for himself and some friends to decorate the student refectory of the London Borough

Polytechnic in 1911. But the most important example, of course, is the subsequent opening in 1913 of the Omega Workshops.

It would be easy to overemphasize the socio-political implications, or at least intentions, of the Omega: particularly in the context of English art, where one thinks immediately of the workshops of Morris, Marshall and Faulkner, which were certainly not unconnected in intent with the socialism of William Morris. But Roger Fry was not a socialist. His distaste for thinking politically may have been yet another reason why Cézanne, most unrevolutionary of modern artists, so nicely fit Fry's notion of the pure article. He once called himself "an individualist anarchist,"[147] and Donald Egbert in his Social Radicalism and the Arts seems to attach some significance to the statement;[148] but I am not sure it meant much more than that Fry did not know what to call himself, distrusted authority, and wanted to be left alone. "It's the question whether people are allowed a clear space around them," he said, "or whether society squeezes them all into hexagons like a honeycomb."[149] Despite the impersonal pronouns, his concern was not very general; he was concerned with the clear space around himself. While I think that Fry had liberal impulses, while it is difficult to imagine him saying with Clive Bell that "the fate of a million coolies is, to [artists and aesthetes],

as nothing compared with the fate of one creative artist,"[150] still it would be stretching it to say that Fry was much concerned with the question of those squeezed into hexagons or rowhouses or slums by the system of which he was a beneficiary. Indeed it would be stretching it to think of him as anything so minimally radical as a democrat. In lamenting the change in English civilization in the age of Victoria--when the English became "slaves to Philistinism, Puritanism and gross sentimentality"--he would add, "And as to the cause--the Reform Bill and democracy--the industrial revolution? I do not know enough to give an answer . . . ."[151] He had such distaste for the effect--"What a subject for a tragic history"--that it is not surprising his primary candidates for the cause were not among his motivations in forming the Omega or in anything else. The century of increasing democracy was not the century for him; it was "impossible that the artist should work for the plutocrat";[152] the undemocratic 18th had been better. At least its art had been, instead of coarse and clumsy, flattering but fine; because "the aristocrat, by his taste, by his feelings for the accidentals of beauty, did manage to get to some kind of terms with the artist."[153] And in fact the Omega, with its literary and fringe-aristocracy and society patronage, seems to have chinked out just such a funny sort of fauve-rococo niche for itself as these values would anticipate. Fry probably

hoped, or wished, that good Post-Impressionist taste would spread outward from the Workshops like civilization from Gordon Square. But he no doubt preferred the culture to which he was appealing--which was after all pretty much his own--to the "culture of the Sixpenny Magazine"[154] which he associated with the plutocratic painting of the hard-dying English 19th century.

So it is important to remember that the Omega was never established to foster a Morris-style art by or for "the people." It was established because Roger Fry wanted to make work for artists: for his friends. Supposedly the idea came to him after Duncan Grant failed to show up for a meeting with prospective buyers which Fry had arranged for him, and failed for want of a train fare. Thirty shillings a week to provide bread and train fare and keep the artist free to do "serious" work is by no means a utopian scheme to revive joy in work. In particular it by no means places decorative or applied art on an equal footing with "pure" art, which most always meant easel painting. But, given the nature of Fry's unearthly demands upon pure painting, it may have been just this differentiation, this relaxation, which made it possible for him to come down off what in William Hogarth he called a moral high horse, and apply art to living. Anyhow he did come down. He came down in practice; he even came down on occasion in theory. As in Art and Commerce in 1926.

> Perhaps we could save ourselves a good deal of painful and unnecessary emotion if we were less exacting in our ideals, if we recognized that the real and pressing demands of society are not even in what are called works of art concerned with the higher spiritual adventures. It is as well occasionally, even for the sake of the temper, to take a cold douche.[155]

Actually the Omega itself had been a bit of a cold douche, financially speaking, and by the time Art and Commerce was written Fry was emphasizing that the artist had been driven out of the design of textiles and ceramics and might find better pickings in the growth field of advertising. But earlier, in fact on the very eve of the opening of the Omega, he had while making his usual distinction between the fine and applied arts held out somewhat more ambitious hopes for the latter.

> . . . we are perhaps emphasizing too much the idea of the artist as a creator of purely ideal and abstract works, as the mediator of inspiration and the source of revelation. It is the artist as prophet and priest that we have been considering, the artist who is the articulate soul of mankind. But . . . suppose a state in which all the objects of daily life --our chairs and tables, our carpets and pottery--express something of this reasonableness . . . .[156]

And so it came to pass that, despite Clive Bell's enthusiasm for those "superbly religious" young artist-heroes who "quite possibly would have killed or wounded anyone who suggested a compromise with the market,"[157] the Omega was shortly after the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition busy marketing chairs and tables and carpets and pottery; despite Roger Fry's religious passion for pure form

entirely detached from ordinary life, the enhancement of ordinary life came to have a prominent place in the visual arts produced in and around the Bloomsbury circle. Perhaps in Fry's case this happy paradox was born of his desire to include rather than exclude, the same desire that led him to lecture not only in Cambridge but at the Queen's Hall. Or perhaps it was because he was a working painter as well as a critic; so that while Clive Bell insisted that art had no connection with craft, and wished to "hear no more about its being a good thing for artists to work for their living,"[158] Fry would imagine that in a rational society artists would turn naturally to the applied arts for their livelihood, "and we should get the artist coming out of the bottega as he did in 15th century Florence."[159] With Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant the apparent contradiction is perhaps apparent only, is perhaps born as much as anything of a non-intellectualizing approach to their work which really saw no contradiction between art and life at all.* "There is an unconscious sanity in art which protects it in the end from detrimental doctrines," John Rothenstein wrote--in one of his several

---

*Although Vanessa Bell would probably have agreed with Clive Bell about craft; anyway she believed that technical skill is generally a hindrance to art in that it seduces the artist into facile and unconscious ways. This reminds us, does it not, of Fry's concern that art be in a sense painstaking; we shall come to this resemblance again in the chapter on Vanessa Bell.

fulminations against Bloomsbury, as it happens. "Art may follow logic to the edge of the abyss, but not beyond."[160] One may question how well his generalization holds up to the 20th century, but happily it works out that way sometimes. I believe the applied arts practice of the Bloomsbury painters is an example of it. From theory to practice and patronage we now turn.

III. PRACTICE AND PATRONAGE

Again as it happened, none of the Bloomsbury painters really needed to turn to the applied arts for a livelihood. All had some degree of financial independence; a circumstance which no doubt had its relationship to the style of life to which they chose to apply their skills. It should be said that they were not rich; that particularly as her family grew Vanessa Bell wanted very much to make some money, that before Duncan Grant started selling he had become a charming legend in Bloomsbury with his gift for "living on air"[1] and a small allowance from his family. Their roots were not in the aristocracy or in wealthy society but in the middle class; but they were sufficiently well-watered to provide freedom. It was never a question of anyone actually taking a job, full- or part-time, sympathetic or unsympathetic, to get along. The domestic demands upon Vanessa Bell were, it seems to me, the closest thing to the kind of day-to-day, unavoidable obligation which is what it means to most people to work for a living.

Also, most of the painting they did--and there is quite a lot of it, especially from the hand of Duncan Grant--is rather in Fry's category of "purely ideal and abstract works" than in that of the arts of use. That is,

simply, it was not made either to order, or to fill any prospective function. As one would expect from the considerations of the previous chapter, it tends to be pleasant, in both matter and means. But not because it was deliberately intended to please anybody, either a specific patron or a general public. These painters accepted implicitly the modern notion of the painter's role: that it is first and foremost creative and self-expressive; and probably that, as Clive Bell put it, "however wicked it may be to try to shock the public, it is not as wicked as trying to please it."[2] So most of their work--still-life, landscape, figure composition, uncommissioned portraiture--was produced in the modern manner, on speculation, as it were; and found its patronage, too, if not bought up by friends, in the usual modern way, the way that has produced such curious love-hate relationships between artists, critics, dealers and public: it was sent out to show.

But obviously these two factors of economic independence and aesthetic independence are not related in any simple way. Especially not in modern times, when the portrait of the artist as an heroic Ishmaelite has itself become a compensation almost good enough to eat. Material insecurity does not necessarily encourage an artist to know or care what people want: as late as 1937, an apparently needy Wyndham Lewis sent a show to the Leicester Galleries which a friendly critic describes as

"surely one of the most important shows in London of the between the wars period";[3] by the end of the first week only one painting had been sold.* And, material security does not preclude a degree of responsiveness to what people want. Witness, not only the easel painting, which seems to have found a market even in the 30s, but, and more to our present point, the applied art of the Bloomsbury painters. Their relative lack of need to do so makes it all the more remarkable that they so readily turned their hands to decoration.

The crystallization of that inclination can to a significant extent be ascribed to Roger Fry and the events already mentioned, the Borough Polytechnic murals of 1911 and the opening of the Omega Workshops in 1913. Not entirely: Duncan Grant had attempted at least one decorative scheme prior to 1911, a mural project commissioned, typically as we shall see, by his friend Maynard Keynes for his rooms in King's College Cambridge. But the critical factor seems to have been the organizing energy of Fry--"L'Animatore," Nikolaus Pevsner calls him in an enthusiastic moment[4]--and above all the opportunity, almost the platform, for applied design offered by the Omega.

---

*Within the next few years, however, Lewis was arguing for a "return to nature" in painting, for renewed attention to "the great human functions" of art; with what effect on his sales, I do not know ("After Abstract Art," 1940, Collected Writings, p. 334).

The bulk of that sort of design that Fry himself was to do, he did upon that platform, though he had executed decorations and designed some furniture for friends as early as 1890, and in 1910 had undertaken the design of his own house. For the Omega he designed furniture, fabric patterns and above all pottery forms which to many people are more appealing than his paintings. But after the demise of the Workshops in 1919 he seems to have done little along these lines, at least for sale or show.

With Bell and Grant it was different. The decade in which they were nominal co-directors of the Omega Workshops was the beginning of a sustained and happy dabbling in the decorative arts that continued alongside their easel painting throughout their long careers, some shifts in their style mirroring most interestingly some shifts in their lives and values. They worked not only in rooms of their own, though their farmhouse Charleston became in the course of half-a-century of occupation one of the best surviving examples of their accomplishment; nor yet only in rooms of their friends, though the majority of their domestic commissions could be characterized in that way. Grant designed scenery and costumes for a Jacques Copeau production of Twelfth Night in 1913, and continued to design for the theatre and ballet intermittently over the next 40 years; particularly in the 20s and early 30s, when Bell worked on several productions as well. Both did

book illustrations, for the Hogarth Press and others; designed textiles for Walton, china for Foley, posters for Shell-Mex Ltd.; even, in a parish church in Sussex, murals for the Church of England.

The undertaking of commissioned work of this kind would seem to imply at least a minimal willingness to enter into a relationship with a client, to express not only oneself, but a comprehension of needs external to oneself. An unusually clear example of this is Vanessa Bell's third-prize entry in an Architecture Review competition to decorate the apartment of a patron who could hardly have been less a soul-mate, a wealthy Scots shipbuilder and sportsman named Lord Benbow. "She did not go as far as Paul Nash (the second prize winner) in emphasizing the tastes of the client," Richard Shone assures us, as though such an emphasis were somehow unsavoury.[5] But surely it could be argued that her positive expression of the tastes of the person who would, after all, be living in the room, in terms of a design which was as the assessor said extremely beautiful, is a rather high type of art. At any rate it has a non-doctrinaire quality about it, and there is something to be said for that. It is a quality that would have been required even in dealing with clients of more like mind. "We have had to change the two smaller ovals as Ethel thought the figures too overwhelming," Bell wrote Roger Fry while she and Grant were decorating a garden room in the

house of an old acquaintance in the 20s. "Perhaps she was right, anyhow we have had to do landscapes or rather gardens instead. I think it is better."[6]

At the same time that one commends their ability to be flexible, however, it is important to realize that, as this last example implies, the Bloomsbury painters enjoyed with most of their patrons a community of values which made consideration of their needs constructive, rather than in a negative sense compromising. To be sure the artists liked to distinguish themselves from their fluffier and fancier clients. "I'm cultivating her while the fit of art patronage lasts," Fry remarked craftily of Lady Ian Hamilton in 1912.[7] Proposing a Parisian revival of the Omega 10 years later, Vanessa Bell about as craftily suggested that "if one could get hold of all the best painters who are now on the point of starvation it might have an appeal to snobs."[8] But in retrospect it appears, to me at least, that the appeal was possible because painters and patrons really liked many of the same things. If it was, as Richard Shone says, "easy to cater for the taste of the premature Bright Young Things . . . the theatricals and parties . . . the upper classes having fun"[9]--why was that? Could it not be because, if we suspend for both parties the derogatory ring of his first phrase, his description fits the directors of the Omega about as well as the customers? Whatever else may be said of Fry, Bell

and Grant, they were certainly not the working classes having a grim time of it.

Having fun is in fact a good unpretentious way of putting one of the common values that cemented this particular patronage situation. "It is time the spirit of fun was reintroduced into furniture and into fabrics," Fry is said to have said. "We have suffered too long from the dull and the stupidly serious . . . ."[10] That's Victoriana he's talking about; and the people who patronized the Omega were just as interested as he was in shaking off the constrictions of that age. Having fun was thus inseparable from not just the experience but the consciousness, the assertion, of freedom; and that of course fit beautifully with the vision of art as free expression, artist as free spirit, that the Post-Impressionist exhibitions had done so much to impress upon an impressionable sector of the English public.

The formal correlatives of that vision were figural experiment, high colour, and an affinity with primitive art that bespoke freedom from inhibition. The affinity with primitivism was attested in a number of the non-Omega items offered for sale: rough African pottery, India-weave spreads, Algerian water-coolers. Primitivism, and the other qualities too, although under present circumstances we shall have to imagine the colour, were attested as well in the astonishing wilderness of elaborated motif,

of what Fry in a witty moment called significant deformity, with which the London Daily News provoked its readers in a photograph of the Omega showroom published in August 1913 (figure 3). "I must say I'm not surprised people were shocked by the Omega products," Duncan Grant told Richard Shone upon seeing one of these old photographs;[11] and certainly the effect of radical divergence from Victorian taste must have been quite as great as could have been hoped.

The social correlative of the new vision of art and artists was a tantalizing Bohemianism. Now, the artists themselves were in it, I am sure, for the fun of it. As Vanessa Bell wrote her husband when she planned to turn her studio

> into a tropical forest with great red figures on the walls--a blue ceiling with birds of paradise floating from it (my idea) and curtains each one different . . . Duncan also wants a bath let into the floor but I told him that was à la Leighton House . . .[12]

the idea was to cheer her through the London winter. She wasn't selling sun tours. Still, there was definitely a market. "We should get all your disreputable and some of your aristocratic friends to come," she wrote Roger Fry in planning the opening of the Omega,

> . . . and after dinner we should all repair to Fitzroy Square where would be decorated furniture, painted walls etc. Then we should all get drunk and dance and kiss. Orders would flow in and the aristocrats would feel sure they were really in the thick of things.[13]

Things were suitably and successfully thick around the Omega for a while; helped along by publicity like the confused and confusing Daily News photograph, it made its splash, and the various people who took notice enjoyed the shower in their various ways: from a journalist who reported immoral furniture, to titillated friends, to friendly skeptics like Arnold Bennett who left carrying parcels of stuffs; to the fashionable women who became more or less important patrons and in an important sense advertisers of the Omega. Lady Ottoline Morrell, Lady Hamilton, Lady Tree, Lady Cunard, Lady Desborough; Princess Litchnowski, Madame Vandervelde, the Countess of Drogheda; these names are a good part of what led me to refer in the last chapter to the Omega's fauve-rococco niche. This series of titles and what we know of at least some of the people who possessed them is suggestive of nothing so much as the salon.* One thinks of Clive Bell writing in 1919 that "In 1914 what in England is called 'Society' gave promise of becoming what it had not been since the French Revolution."[14] Open-minded, he said; clever, inquisitive, eager to be amused; and open to reform. One imagines that he had in mind such people as

---

*A politically heterogeneous salon it would be: for example Lady Ian Hamilton was the wife of a British general and Princess Litchnowski was the German Ambassadoress. But the climate was in the broad sense liberal.

the by now legendary hostess and collector of artists Ottoline Morrell, that "fantastic baroque flamingo," Quentin Bell has called her,[15] shelterer of conscientious objectors during World War I, member with her anti-war M.P. husband Philip of Leonard Woolf's dependable "stage army of British progressives";[16] or Lalla Vandervelde, a passionate feminist and supporter of twentieth-century art and wife of a Belgian socialist minister; these were two of the Omega's most valuable patrons. They exemplify a particularly interesting category of people to whom the image of freedom presented by the new art was sympathetic. They were among those people of position who for one reason or another are moved to help shake the tree whose upper branches they occupy.

That is not to say they wanted to bring the tree down, and themselves with it. I should think that Clive Bell went too far, as he so often so wittily did, in expecting that "the trades-union class" would "perhaps in the end have had our heads off--but not, I think, until they had got some ideas into their own."[17] At least he went too far if we are left with the impression that the salon liberals of whom he was speaking had any self-sacrificial intentions. What they appear to have wanted, as liberals generally do, was to free things up, if possible to even things up, without giving things up.

And here perhaps was a subliminal appeal of the Omega approach to applied design. In it the Post-Impressionist style was very literally applied to familiar forms; despite its radical vivification of surface, the substance is very often conservative. It is precisely because in fabric design the substance may be more or less disregarded that Omega stuffs are among the most attractive of its efforts to modern eyes. As Pevsner puts it, textile design is entirely a matter of surface; but furniture design "should be shaping as well as decorating."[18] It is true that Fry did evolve some more thorough, as it were three-dimensional, designs of his own. These included pottery, as we have seen, and also several chair-types which to post-Bauhaus taste are more satisfactory than the ready-made, Omega-decorated objects. These latter seem to Richard Shone among others "in comparison . . . tiresomely fussy."[19] But they made up a substantial part of the Omega production, and not just early on. With the Omega's last breath in 1919 Fry was telling a friend that he was "buying up a lot of rather common and amusing stuff at dealers in the country and painting it up to suit modern sitting rooms."[20] Can anyone imagine that coming from the director of the Bauhaus? I really think not, any more than we can imagine artists under Walter Gropius feeling encouraged to design chair-covers or firescreens to be done up at home in cross-

stitch by the sister of one of the designers or the mother of another.* Fry wished to come to terms with machine production, as William Morris pointedly had not; but he never embraced it, as Walter Gropius pointedly did.

The comparison with the Bauhaus is in fact particularly apt in the context of reform versus revolution that we are touching upon here. The Bauhaus designers and the modern movement they helped to parent were designing for a new world, out of a revulsion for the old one--which not incidentally had made the war--much greater, I think, than anything felt by Roger Fry. The new world needed to look as different from the old one as possible, and that could not be accomplished by simply painting the old one up in bright colours. The operative principle was subtraction: as against Victorian elaboration and embellishment, modern bareness and severity: less is more.** A British admirer of modernism, Wyndham Lewis--so helpful for these comparisons not only because he differed so strikingly from his Bloomsbury acquaintances, but because he wrote his

---

*Virginia Woolf occasionally, and Ethel Grant regularly, executed needlework designs by Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant.

**For this distinction between the modern and Victorian aesthetics and their relationship with political attitudes, which as will be seen is of great importance to this chapter, I am indebted to a book which does not appear in the bibliography: Alan Gowans' Images of American Living: Four Centuries of Architecture and Furniture as Cultural Expression.

differences down, said in the 30s that, as your average person is what 'bourgeois' civilization has made him and has no taste at all, a perfectly blank wall is for him the only decent solution. "He should put himself humbly in the hand of a competent modernist designer and cubist bungalow designer, and allow them to ration him very strictly indeed, in the matter of everything barring strict necessities."[21] Later Lewis would recall that he "was manufacturing fresh eyes for people, and fresh souls to go with the eyes. That was the feeling."[22]

That is not a feeling that everyone enjoys, particularly when one is on the rationed or manufactured end of it; more particularly when things have been going pretty well for one back in bourgeois civilization. Just such ones were the patrons of the Omega in the still-optimistic pre-war period that spawned it and to which its additive, swinging Victorian aesthetic was perfectly appropriate. To be sure, if we look from the showroom photograph to a more deliberately arranged Omega display such as the one in figure 4, we can see that it is simplified in comparison with an archetypic Victorian interior, especially in the lines of the furniture. And to be sure it came in for its share of abuse from those who did not think Victoriana needed to swing. But in comparison with what was to come, with, say, the archetypic cubist bungalow, we can see that this interior is not at all severe: no more than would

be the post-war interiors of the Bloomsbury decorators. There is an accumulation of texture and object, as well as, we must imagine, colour, which are at root Victorian.

So at the Omega the Post-Impressionist style was applied often to familiar objects and in an essentially familiar, additive way; which was far less true of the non-applied art at the shows at the Grafton Galleries. The use of distortion and abstraction in a decorative context, upon objects asking to be bought, taken home, used, enjoyed and specifically not to be taken seriously, was probably in any event less threatening than even lesser degrees of abstraction in paintings hung in a gallery and introduced as "not illusion but reality." And so, again with more facility than the pure article, the decorative art could become palatable even to some of those to whose ideas it was not so well adapted. For instance in late 1911 Roger Fry included Clive Bell's father among those he solicited for funds to establish the Omega. The reply was that, had the elder Bell not seen the first Post-Impressionist exhibition he'd have been very much interested; as it was he could have nothing to do with it. By the next Christmas, when he had actually seen some of the Workshops' goods, Vanessa Bell could report to Fry that

> The Omega presents I think were a success. Mr. B. didn't know where the beasts came from but admired them very much--Then said he

> supposed they were French . . . Lorna and Dorothy are bent upon coming to the O. when next they're in London.[23]

Mr. Bell's response to the beasts on his Omega what-not points up another palatable aspect of at least some Omega design: its imagery. Of course positive comment upon the Omega usually emphasizes its break with the figurative image. Certainly some of the abstract designs for rugs and stuffs were very handsome. And, more to the point of the positive comment, it seems almost certain that it was experiments in applied design that led the Bloomsbury painters and the proto-Vorticists directly to the fully abstract easel painting which, coming as it did in 1913 and 1914, makes something more of a place for them in the history of European avant-garde painting than they otherwise would have. But as often as not even in the applied art, some sort of recognizable image was retained, and provided an additional level on which the Mr. Bells could relate to the work. Now it is interesting to note that recognizable images were part and parcel of the criticism made by the ex-Omega worker and pro-Vorticist sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska of the "Omega Lounge" shown in an exhibition in June 1914 and illustrated in our figure 4. Gaudier-Brzeska wrote that

> . . . the chairs, the cushions, and especially a screen with two natural swans and the hangings of patch work irritate me--there is too much prettiness . . . . Happily the Rebel Art Stand shows that the new painting

> is capable of great strength and manliness in decoration.[24]

The special aversion to natural swans suggests that the prettiness Gaudier-Brzeska deplored, and which far friendly critics than he have seen as frittering away Omegan claims to revolutionary design after the early exit of the proto-Vorticist faction, is by no means unconnected with images, and the varying effects they have upon us even when we are agreeing that they are completely irrelevant. For, after 1914 one hears of little so provocative as Wyndham Lewis' "candleshade designs on the theme of prostitution ingeniously disguised";[25] and while there probably continued to be some figures as unappetizing as the simian Adam in Henri Doucet's curtain to the left of figure 4--Doucet was a painter much admired by the Omega directors--there was also an abundance of flowers and birds and ladies whose arms folded wittily upon fans; as well as appealing beasts (figures 5 through 7).

To notice these preponderances is to adopt a different perspective than that used or at any rate articulated by the makers of the art, and as we observed with regard to Clive Bell and his ancient Athenians, that has its pitfalls. But not to notice them seems to me to constrict our understanding. Surely the limitations of a purely stylistic analysis are demonstrated by William Lipke's unelaborated inclusion of both Gaudier-Brzeska's Wrestlers Tray and Duncan Grant's Elephant Tray (figures

8 and 9) under his term "stick-style." Without quibbling over whether this term describes them, we may agree at once that there are close stylistic affinities in the, as Lipke says, rather literal cubing of the figures.[26] But there are also some significant disparities in their disposition. Gaudier-Brzeska has produced a markedly active and tumultuous image, Duncan Grant an absolutely stable and restful one. And beyond this, the associated ideas, as Roger Fry would call them, which are it seems to me irresistably called up by these two images, are of very different sorts. It happens that the Elephant Tray was one of the most popular items the Omega offered; and indeed looking at it one gets an inkling of why the Omega, adversely affected by the war as it could not help but be, managed to survive until 1919; while the production of the Rebel Art Center, set up by the Vorticists as a rival concern, could not make it viable even before those associated with it were scattered by the war: or in the especially sad case of Gaudier-Brzeska, eliminated by it. Is this differential appeal surprising if we consider which of these trays would have been most at home on a Georgian sideboard? The one is an image of human conflict, the other an image of peace, and perhaps of a primitive harmony between human and beast; and, the Elephant Tray evokes something which had a rosier glow in England in 1914

than it could be expected to have today, and that is British India.

As it happens Duncan Grant spent his early childhood in British India, and Burma, where his father Major Grant had been in the 8th Hussars. Rangoon and Burmese elephants, a cascade of roofs in a Maltese port, himself in a blue-striped jersey sitting on a fence in the Himalayas: these he has recalled as his earliest memories. So, I think we may without too much fear of error fancy that Grant was bringing to his choice and treatment of this motif some personal history, and with it some visual associations connected with an identifiable, communicable, sharable human tradition. And consequently it is a motif with which his audience could involve itself, and which it could enjoy on a number of levels, including social-historical ones.* This is substantially less true of the restless anonymity of Gaudier's wrestlers, though they are certainly as worthy of admiration on strictly formal grounds. It is less true still of the machine imagery to which the Vorticist style was peculiarly appropriate and which it increasingly served.

---

*Of the "social-historical emotions" Roger Fry once said: "That the historical images they conjure up are in all probability false has very little to do with it; the point is that they exist for us, and exist for most people, far more poignantly and vividly than any possible aesthetic emotion" (in "The Ottoman and the Whatnot," Vision and Design, p. 41).

The use of humanistic motif turned out to be one of the most distinctive and positive qualities of the "Bloomsbury style" of decoration developed by Grant and Bell after the war. In the Omega period the regard for historic tradition is blurred by the strong infusion of interest in primitive art and in individual expression. So that when Shone maintains that a series of pictures by Grant are "anti-historical" because influences as diverse as Picasso, newspaper photographs, Byzantium and the Bible are "all equally suitable and suggestive as catalysts to work . . . . Everything and anything could be used for immediate and pressing expression,"[27] he is no doubt coming close to the feeling the artists themselves had about the way they were working. Still, not everything was used. A street scene depicting an accident with a fallen cabhorse, painted on a wall in J. M. Keynes' sitting-room in Brunswick Square, or a picture of a man with a greyhound inspired by "a visit to London's East End,"[28] are among the few examples which come to mind in which contemporary working class life pressed for expression. Nor were the machines or structures of industrial England as suitable or suggestive to the Bloomsbury painters as was material from literature and art history, and people and objects from their own immediate environments. In the clientele and content of the domestic decorations that succeeded Grant's very early one with the

cabhorse, these twin concerns with cultured people and the imagery of culture were conjoined; and the predisposition to iconography that is civilized, allusive, and expressive of a sort of restrained sensuality is no longer blurred but clear.

It seems a good idea to begin a consideration of this phase and aspect of Bloomsbury art with some attention to Charleston in Sussex. The decorations there began several years after the beginning of the war, and show clearly the effect of it upon the blithe spirits of 1914. When Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell and her two sons and another friend David Garnett moved to Sussex in 1916, it was their second attempt to find a more or less stable situation in the country, near a source of the agricultural employment Grant and Garnett had agreed to undertake as a condition of their military exemptions. The labour provided to a local farmer turned out to be satisfactory to the committee overseeing the two men, and the farmhouse rented from Lord Gage of Firle turned out to be a haven for the duration of the war; and then, as lease followed lease and amenities were added--though not many, for the house was not electrified until the 1930s--a permanent home. Vanessa Bell died there in 1961 and Duncan Grant lives there still. There are decorations from all periods, but the look and feel of the house was established in the late 'teens and 20s.

It is very much, in the sense in which we have been using the term, a Victorian look and feel. I think that is one reason why visitors are often so affected by this nest, this "oasis which is Charleston" as Denys Sutton has described it.[29] Part of the effect is simply that of an extraordinary physical situation: the compact, snug-roofed, thick-walled old inn with its steep stairs and narrow halls and unexpected rooms; windows opening onto downs running up and away in one direction, open fields in the others, a pond and a walled garden close in on two sides; the distance from the highway which leaves unmolested a quiet almost incredible in the mid-20th century. And, part of the effect is the awareness that the house has been inhabited for so long by people whom most visitors to it admire. But much of it depends upon the treatment of the interior. Even more than an Omega room, it is the opposite of austere. There is a very 19th century warmth, variousness, sense of accumulation about Charleston. The additive principle is certainly operating: the bringing together of hand-stencilled wall-papers and patterned fabrics and carpets and needlework cushions and covers, and painted pottery, furniture and areas of wall, with books, pictures and numbers of small objects and easy chairs, has an overall effect which manages to stop short of confusion at a sort of cozy amplitude. The paintings reproduced in figures 10 and 11 can perhaps supplement the

photographs in figures 12 and 13 in conveying something of the feeling. It feels 19th century, it also feels free; that so many of the objects in what Stephen Spender called this "interior vision of things collected from outside"[30] are not just physically collected but mentally collected, designed or transformed with decorative motif, is what gives these rooms their remarkable originality.

This easy experimentation with a very wide range of materials is a legacy of the artists' Omega experience. So is their characteristic, all-over, happy-doodling approach; perhaps also the sort of "wilful clumsiness" that John Rothenstein remarked in the work of Duncan Grant and connected with Roger Fry's distrust of either academic or mechanical finish.[31] But the aesthetic here is no longer what one would call swinging Victoriana; in a sense it has retreated from that, turned back, I should think, by the sobering experience of the war. It is by now something more like liberated Victoriana. The colour is often surprising--as, a grey and yellow pattern on a black ground making an improbably attractive wallpaper in the dining room--but it is seldom startling. The boldness and scale of Omega-style patterns gives over to smaller, more delicate ones. And, what I have called humanist motif becomes clearly ascendant. Not only are the sometimes jagged and jazzy strips of Omega design superceded as in Vanessa Bell's bedroom decorations (figure 13) by calmly

disposed geometric shapes and series of hatches and lines, conjoined with the omnipresent still lives of vases and flowers; but the figures, for which Grant was mainly responsible, reflect the fact that as Spender further observed the "things collected" are in a sense places: continental places mostly; and times: generally renaissance to pre-industrial-revolutionary times. So an angel plays a lute on a logbox, nudes turn and present a painted tray on an overmantle, women carry loads in mediterranean fashion in baskets upon their heads. If Grant's figures are athletic the emphasis is not upon conflict but on grace: swimmers, dancers, bearers.

The cumulative character of these images suggests as surely as would a conscious program a heightened concern with civility, a lessened one with unimpeded instinct. Spontaneity is still very much valued, but it is a civilized spontaneity; a spontaneity that does not go too far. Stephen Spender, who made many perceptive observations about the Bloomsbury circle, saw in decorations like these a fusion of "mediterranean release with a certain restraint."[32] He connected the restraint to Victorian upbringing. I should be inclined to connect it as well, to the extent that it is more noticeable after the war than before it, to a settling in the lives of the painters and to a spirit of wounded liberal rationalism which had just watched instinct go far too far for its taste. "I

think hardly anyone who didn't live through the last war when grown up," Vanessa Bell wrote Clive Bell when another war was looming and their son was for and they were against involvement in it, "can realize that war is always an end to all reason."[33]

At any rate in late and post-war Bloomsbury decorative schemes a sensuous sort of reason is what seems to be enthroned. Aptly for this line of argument, the first of these commissions was for J. M. Keynes' rooms in King's College, and had as its chief feature eight nearly life-size figures representing the arts and sciences: "law, science, history etc. . . . in fact we're always changing their arts and their sciences," Vanessa Bell wrote Roger Fry while the work was in progress.[34] The fact that panels on this theme completed and installed between 1919 and 1921 (figure 14), cover a mural of grape-pickers Grant had begun in the same room a decade before (figure 15), could perhaps be taken as illustrative of the shift of emphasis we are noticing here; except that, as is in fact as usual as not with these painters, the earlier subject is hardly what one would call primitive; nor would it appear out of place in their later work, as would for example Grant's 1912 Tub or Bell's Painted Screen (figures 16 and 39). Still the concern with erudition rather than pastoral simplicity may be indicative in a general way, and certainly there is a much greater sophistication not only of

matter but of means in the later work which would be apparent even had the earlier one been completed. The colour we cannot compare; that of the earlier work is unlikely to have been very bright, as the Bloomsbury palette did not really bloom until closer to the war; but, compared with one of those more pyrotechnic essays--say, Grant's brilliant green, yellow, red and black Pond Lily Screen for the Omega--the Arts and Sciences "in naples yellow . . . dull green, vermillion, prussian blue and white,"[35] on marbled grounds of reds or burnt sienna and black, hedged by flat bands of yellow ochre, must have been fairly unshocking. So in fact they seemed to contemporaries. "Somewhat austere and melancholy figures representing the Tripos examinations," a Professor Pigou is said to have called them."[36] To an excited freshman writing home to Toronto about his supervisor Professor Keynes the decorations appeared less austere (". . . most amazing rooms--white and orange ceilings, extraordinary drapings, modernistic sort of frescoes, semi-futuristic pictures and so forth") but by no means alarming ("He is a very interesting person . . . I hope to study them at greater length in the future!").[37]

Despite the particular convenience to our argument of their iconography--for which we are probably safe in assuming the artists were largely responsible*--the Arts

---

*The issue of artistic independence in matters

and Sciences panels are not the best or happiest example of the Bloomsbury style of decoration which expressed itself in the 20s, following in a generally more elegant and studied way the sort of free harmonic pattern that had developed at Charleston. As far as patronage is concerned it is quite a good example; it was undertaken for a friend so close as to be almost a family member, and family members figure prominently in the list of commissioners of decorative work during that decade: Adrian and Karin Stephen, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Clive Bell; along with Grant's cousin Mary Hutchinson, a sort of tangential member of the circle Raymond Mortimer, and four or five less intimate friends and acquaintances. But as far as handling is concerned, the Arts and Sciences have a mannered unease about them which may perhaps be attributed to the fact that, though Grant and Bell were intelligent people who valued what they thought of as rationalism, they were not intellectuals in their particular element in the college rooms of a don. The rooms of a private house or flat, and images evoking rather more of civilized sensuality than that sort of rationality which could be empanelled into academic disciplines, seemed better suited to their talents. It was these situations and types which stimulated the rhythmic handling that characterizes the

---

iconographic is discussed later in this chapter, in the section on the murals in Berwick Church.

painted cupboard in figure 17 or the mural decoration in figure 18. Musicians and instruments, flowers and fruits and nudes in the European tradition, set off by fictive architecture and drapery, marbled papers, dispositions and repetitions of geometric form: it is an iconography as Richard Shone says

> . . . of civilized generality, a harmonious background to lives that were comfortable, informal, conversational, and for people familiar with the fruit and flowers of Provence, with Italian gardens, Greek myths, the Commedia del Arte, and the decorative conventions of the past.[38]

But if this imagery is as Shone concludes "only in this sense . . . psychological in appeal"--for certainly there are, as he observes, no "crashingly obvious allusions to the character of the room's owner"--still, the sense in which they do appeal to and express the character of the inhabitant is a large and important one. A life of harmony, informality, comfort, above all easy and wide-ranging familiarity with the landscape and literature and art history of Europe: what sort of person lives that? Is it not the very sort who, armed not only with emotion but with erudition, might enter into enthusiastic analysis in a picture gallery? -- or enjoy the company and the privileges of a civilized and civilizing elite? In fact these rooms could be seen as the perfect illustration of Clive Bell's "Plus de Jazz." In the decade after the Omega's explosion of high spirits and colour and sponta-

neity--which was now finding a rather alarming parallel in the explosion of extravagant decorative approach that would appear in Exhibition de l'Art Decorative in Paris in 1925 and be promptly brought back to England to be mass-produced--we may remember Clive Bell crying out that

> Thought rather than spirits is required, quality rather than colour, knowledge rather than irreticence, intellect rather than singularity, wit rather than romps, precision rather than surprise, dignity rather than impudence and lucidity above all things: plus de Jazz.[39]

The family resemblance is unmistakable, and illustrative. If I do not argue that these expressions are perfectly coterminous--if not to mince words, I have characterized the literary statement as offended exclusiveness, the visual one as a withdrawal to safer ground after the shock of war--it is not because I do not think they overlap; I think they do. But it seems worth noticing that the literary expression is largely negative, the visual one largely positive. This might be thought a simple matter of medium. Certainly visual art is both articulate as to its values and capable of subtle distinctions, but--particularly when it is subtle--we are less accustomed to read in a single work overt ayes and overt nayes. But it is certainly possible to do so. Polemics in paint are about as common as polemics in print. A familiar historical example is the encounter between Pope Leo III and Attila the Hun which Raphael staged in one of

the Vatican stanze; there are any number of other art historical expulsions, victories, triumphs, and trouncings which would illustrate the point equally well. A modern English example, the published account of which I find quite captivating--alas, I know of no illustration--was described in The Studio in October 1939. It was given as an example of "the influence of modern art movements" on mural painting in the private dwelling; and as it was done in the private dwelling of John Lehmann, then a young writer and friend of Julian Bell and sometime worker at the Hogarth Press, it is even more related than it would otherwise be to our present subject. The description is long but hardly dull.

> Mr. [John] Banting's painting is entitled the Human Sundial. A naked man in the foreground is intended by the artist to symbolize a worker reading the time from a sundial of which he is the pointer. Significant features in the painting are the "castle wall" and the facade of a "palace of justice"--both propped up by tree trunks which have begun to burn. The ivy on the wall has grown into the shape of a huge fat man holding in one hand the end of a rope which is round the neck of the man's shadow and taking with the other money from the shadow's outstretched hand. According to the artist the human sundial is thinking: "Our years cannot await the working of evolution. In our day we must know freedom and justice through revolution."[40]

Perhaps these examples will clarify by opposition why Bloomsbury decoration seems to me characteristically non-polemical. Clearly it stands for some things--harmony, sensuality, "culture," continentalism--and so by

implication against others--the disharmonious, the unsensuous, the untutored, even the English. Still it does not like Mssrs. Banting and Lehmann make explicit these oppositions, or like Clive Bell or Pope Leo X, publish them. The expression is essentially positive and private.

The Banting mural, of course, is a phenomenon of the 30s, and the late 30s at that, by which time the idea of a positive art or life of private withdrawal seemed to many people a contradiction in terms: so that the young radical John Lehmann, whom the sunny humanism of Charleston had inspired to reflect "how easily life could be restored to a paradise of the senses,"[41] felt compelled to spend his at-home evenings beneath a mural in which (to continue the description of "The Human Sundial"):

> . . . the sunset sky is in a scheme of blue, brown, lavender and primrose which sharpens to greenish lemon yellow where it meets the hot brick colour of the desert. There is a group of figures behind the castle wall--"dowagers of prime weight and generals whose faces match their scarlet uniforms" who are destined to be crushed by its fall. They are painted in violent discordant coloring.[42]

The surely more sensuous Bloomsbury decorations date mainly from the 20s, when self-cultivation, particularly a refined self-cultivation which could be seen in contrast to the flashy self-indulgence draping the halls of the Paris Exposition or springing up in the London suburbs, seemed more justified. At least it was less on the defensive.

But the decorative approach which expresses a desire to withdraw and consolidate its inheritance and its gains did not need to wait till the 30s to be challenged by a revolutionary alternative. The 20s had already brought to maturity on the continent a new vision of social engineering through functional design and architecture. We have spoken of the Bauhaus, and how its commitment to clearing the detritus of the past to permit total machine-conscious design contrasted with the non-doctrinaire additive decorativeness of the Omega. All the more clear is the contrast, not only of course of the Bauhaus but of the whole emerging International Style, fed by currents from Dutch De Stijl and French purism and lent authority by the demoralizing experience of the war, with the 1920s Bloomsbury style of decoration: the historical sentiment of which represents if anything a retreat from the ambivalence toward European tradition inherent in the Omega aesthetic. The briefest of comparisons between the Grant-Bell interior in Figure 18 and the Le Corbusier interior in figure 19 will render the contrast graphic. The one adds and embellishes, the other clears and simplifies. The one is replete with references to the past and to pleasure, and implies at least in a general way the individual character and preferences of the occupant. The other is militantly contemporary and austere, and, the original caption would have told us, provides what

the architect considered "a complete furnishing equipment for any reasonable man or woman."[43]

That the contrast was sufficiently marked as to seem to call for some explanation by anyone applying the term modern to both, was perceived by Raymond Mortimer, the co-author with Dorothy Todd of the volume on The New Interior Decoration in which these pictures originally appeared. Mortimer, as we have remarked, was close to the Bloomsbury circle, especially to Clive Bell, and was quite at one with many of the ideas current in and around it. Not only do many of those ideas appear in The New Interior Decoration, but the flat represented in figure 18 is Mortimer's own. Now it appears that there was some effort in the heart of the circle to respond to the revolutionary currents of thought then making themselves felt regarding architecture and interior design. Vanessa Bell, having visited the new Theatre Pigalle in Paris because she wished to see some Chardins that were hanging in it, sounded dubious:

> The Theatre itself is said to be the last word in new arrangements. There's a great deal of steel--steel bars everywhere. Everything is very bare indeed and the general criticism is that its like an operating theatre. I think these modern architects might well introduce a little colour.

but game:

> If they did I should like the bareness in itself.[44]

Clive Bell, much earlier and with his characteristic unreserve, articulated in Art some of the ideas behind the bars and the bareness--although, again characteristically, he stressed their aesthetic and expressive and not their social correlatives.

> We shall have no more architecture in Europe till architects understand that all these tawdry excrescences have got to be simplified away, till they make up their minds to express themselves in the materials of the age--steel, concrete and glass--and to create in those admirable media vast, simple and significant forms.[45]

And he continued to say things along that general line occasionally, without however radically simplifying the interiors in which he lived, or introducing steel and glass structures--vaster than an auto--into his own life.

So it is interesting to see how Mortimer and his co-author cope with the contrast that asserts itself so forcefully in the illustrations for his book, between the expressed spirit of the age and the way he and his friends were living. After making a long and articulate bow to functionalist theories of architecture and asserting in proper 20th century style that our architecture is in our aeroplane hangars and that it makes no more sense to build a Georgian house than an outmoded bicycle, Mortimer and Todd added as it were with a sigh that

> It will be a long time, after all, before more than a small minority (in England) will be living in houses designed on the new system. Most of us are obliged to live in

> Georgian, Victorian or Edwardian houses . . . . In 99 cases out of a hundred the decorator has to make something out of an old room.[46]

Our suspicion that it may have been a sigh of relief is rewarded a few lines later with

> Where they have a well-proportioned 18th century room to deal with, the result is often enchanting: so much so indeed that such interiors are better suited to contemporary sensibilities than the austere work of the French school. The mechanical forms, the absence of all caprice, it may be said, will possibly suit the civilization of the future. They seem intended for Robots, rather than human beings.

French logic and English pragmatism are invoked ("It is a French habit to make revolution, the English arrive later by gradual methods at similar results"); value judgments are avoided ("it is possibly to enjoy, though not to mix, the best works of both"); and in the end the authors have admired Le Corbusier's theory in theory and practice at a distance, and settled down to enjoy that English decoration which, although it be "a palliative, not a dream," satisfied their own requirements: reflected "the varied riches of a cultured intelligence."[47]

Well. It is quite as well after all that Grant and Bell were generally called upon to express riches of that sort and not the more abstract or inanimate qualities, such as nature of materials or physical function or plan, which were preoccupying more thoroughly modern decorators and architects. For, partly of course because they were

not architects but principally because they appear to have thought in essentially individualistic and additive terms, they did not conceive their decorative schemes architecturally in a modern sense. This is by no means to say they were insensitive to architecture. Quite the contrary: they typically picked out and emphasized the structure of a room and its individual features, usually with geometric motif, and they were very fond of designing fictive architecture. One of their last and most impressive domestic commissions was a dining room at Penns-in-the-Rocks in Sussex (figure 20) which admirably illustrates both kinds of device: articulated mouldings and doors, and painted niches backgrounding the six panels which dominate the room. But--and the difference is possibly implicit in the very taste for fictive architecture--the approach of the decorators has been to overlay and transform the existing structure with decoration which, however sensitive they are to the room's features and proportions, starts from an allegiance not to the room but to its inhabitants.

It seems to have been just this difference of approach that made Vanessa Bell's design in the 1930 Architecture Review competition for Lord Benbow's apartment the third prize rather than the winning entry. In a most interesting report the assessor to that competition explained that, after throwing out all entries which

did not conform to two key words of Lord Benbow's stated requirements ("bachelor" and "sporting"), he had judged the surviving entries upon their ability to satisfy the demands implicit in the third key word, "modern." These he defined thus:

> As decoration is regarded by the modern mind as architecture, and as architecture is regarded as involving, first and foremost, the imaginative exploitation of the plan considered three-dimensionally or plastically, so a decorative scheme conceived in a modern way should exploit the idiosyncracies native to the plan, and exploit them in such a way that one would be very nearly justified in saying that the plan dictated the scheme of decoration.[48]

Every scheme of decoration is dictated by something, of course, but it is hard to imagine these decorators (Duncan Grant was named as a collaborator on the panels) spontaneously taking that particular kind of dictation. Actually, the assessor seems to exaggerate the "contempt for the plan" in Bell's design.[49] It certainly depends very much on the subtle colour that so pleased him--lavenders, lemon-yellows, blues, greens, greys--and on the projected textures of textile, beadwork, and painted and tiled surface; but if, as we must, we see her water-colour sketch reproduced in black and white (figure 21) it is apparent that the elaboration of the curved end wall with painted arches, and the placement of the table so that its arcs echo out to the wall and the bay, are features which could not really "be carried out in almost any kind

of room"[50] without considerable loss. On the other hand, very much that is unique and valuable in this scheme is no doubt portable. That is more than can be said of the winning design (figure 22). There, although the decorator (who turned out to be an architect) has done not much more that could not be done in a cubicle than to fit a curved seat into the bay window and summon a strong light through it to emphasize it in his drawing, still, without its distinctive architectural features his room would be distinctly unmemorable. It may thus be said to depend on those features, if not to be dictated by them. The upshot of such considerations is that the third prize was awarded to Bell's design, which despite its perceived contempt of plan the assessor could not resist. There was about it, he said

> . . . a largeness of conception which cannot be ignored, and a scheme of colour [which] is superb and puts it in a class apart . . . . [Although it] treats the plan of the room almost as an irrelevance . . . there can be no doubt that the room conceived by Vanessa Bell would be extremely beautiful.[51]

First prize and the actual decoration of Lord Benbow's apartment was awarded to the entrant in whose scheme "the arrangement of the furniture is most tiresome; the colour is far from satisfactory; but it reveals, as no other design does, a definite <u>will</u> to exploit the plan."[52]

If Lord Benbow had any nervous second thoughts as these priorities were being installed in his apartment,

one hopes that he found solace in his football and racing murals. However he could have had sporting motif in Vanessa Bell's scheme as well. As remarked earlier, the willingness on the part of a decorator who was more at home with fruits and flowers to incorporate yachts, shotguns and riding-whips into her designs may be seen as an ability to treat problems in applied art as something other than an externalization of the artist's personality. In its own way the dining room at Penns-in-the-Rocks is another example of the same thing. Here the iconography was no doubt more congenial: on the wall shown in figure 20 Grant's "Toilet of Venus" was flanked by scenes of rather self-conscious bacchanalia by Bell. And yet the programmatic quality of the images and the shapes of the furniture, and the overall measured formality of the room, create a significantly different atmosphere than the cheerful miscellany of Charleston; which was after all a different kind of country house than the country seat of the Wellesleys.

The contrast between these two successful designs for actual people and a showpiece created for a gallery several years later may lend credence to the suggestion that the artists' interaction with a client--either actual as with Lady Wellesley, or assumed as with Lord Benbow--may be beneficial to the art itself. The "Music Room" which Grant and Bell furnished and decorated and saw

installed at the Lefevre Gallery in 1932 (figure 23) has its attractive features. The scheme of colour was apparently one of them ("a great canvas of autumn" Cyril Connolly called it[53]) and the textiles in particular appear to have been very handsome. But there was too much of it; besides what we can see in this photograph there were four more flower-panels topped with circular mirrors and trimmed with sham drapery, a small three-paneled screen painted with large half-draped musicians, more chairs with embroidered backs, an elaborated gramophone and a decorated grand piano. Most critics would probably agree with Richard Shone's reluctant judgments of "crowded and over-insistent in its insistent patterning . . . in a curious way almost a caricature of their style."[54]

The style of domestic interior decoration which seemed to function so much more happily in interaction with actual patrons, unhappily found little further professional outlet. The reasons for this are not certain. Kenneth Clark records that he and his wife commissioned a dinner service from Grant and Bell in 1932 in the hope of reviving Grant's interest in decorative art, to which Clark thought his talents better suited than to "the virtuous application of Bloomsbury mud."[55] But as the Music Room was installed in the same year and as the painters were involved in textile and ceramic decoration as well as theatrical design throughout the early 30s,

it seems unlikely that their interest in decorative art had significantly flagged. What seems more probable is that the depression had cut into their patronage. The bulk of their domestic decorations had been commissioned, as we have seen, if not by people of their immediate circle, at least by ones of pretty much their own class; and while that class was not ploughed under by the depression, it was cut back considerably by it. Vanessa Bell's broker assured her that her income was only reduced by half, she was sure that if one went back far enough it was reduced by four-fifths.[56] Whatever one's style of living those kinds of percentages make an impact upon it, and similar ones were no doubt at the same moment affecting other people who might in the 20s have put part of the vanished four-fifths into a decorative commission. In fact there was only one more such commission, for the Chelsea house of an Anglo-American painter of independent means in 1938. And that completes the accomplishment of these painters in domestic interior decoration.

It does not of course complete the record of their activity as decorators. Besides the incidental projects to which we have alluded, several large public commissions which should be discussed came about in the 30s and early 40s. One of them ended rather badly, and perhaps for that reason it is difficult to obtain a precise understanding of it. This was Grant's 1935 commission for three large

panels in a lounge on the Queen Mary. The commission was arranged through the seemingly ever-ready offices of Sir Kenneth Clark; Grant did preparatory work on the panels over the better part of a year; then, literally at the last moment, when two of the panels had been installed, the work was personally rejected by the chairman of Cunard-White Star. Some sort of compensation was arranged, and the work was shown at a private gallery and hung for some time in the canteen of the National Gallery, and was well received; but in the meantime there was a tremendous fuss which featured "letters in the newspaper . . . demands from Leonard that £10,000 compensation be paid above the agreed fee . . . Kenneth Clark, Raymond Mortimer, Samuel Courtauld and Clive forcibly expressed their scandalized feelings."[57] The echoes of all these scandalized feelings filtering down to us over the years have tended I think to introduce some distortions. Raymond Mortimer later decided that the decorations "would certainly not have appealed to the film-stars, opera-singers, oil-magnates and other Big Business tycoons who before the war were bound to be the most valuable patrons of a luxury liner."[58] By such remarks have later writers still been tempted to see in this unfortunate experience evidence that the Bloomsbury painters were anti-establishment

figures.*

But surely it is difficult to locate the threat to the establishment either in Duncan Grant's late style or in the subject matter of the Queen Mary panels, which consisted of Spanish dancers and musicians and pairs of female figures referred to as The Flower-Gatherers and The Sheaf. It seems more likely that we are dealing less with corporate cunning than corporate clumsiness and perhaps the personal idiosyncracies of Sir Percy Bates, the chairman and "chief sinner" as Vanessa Bell called him in a letter to Maynard Keynes.[59] Possibly he had, as she said, "got rattled as to what Queen Mary will think of her effigy."[60] Reportedly Bates had, on the celebrated occasion of his refusal of the panels, said that he had always been against decorations for the lounge, which had been commissioned and approved by subordinates; and apparently he attempted to cancel a number of other contracts at the same time--including that of Vanessa Bell, who was working on "panels, stuffs, carpets and everything for what they call the 18th class drawing

---

*For example, in 1966 Peter Stansky and William Abrahams were writing about "the directors of the Cunard Line, who commissioned Grant to decorate a room on the Queen Mary and then having seen the work, decided nervously that it would not do." And by 1973 Carolyn Heilbrun was quoting Stansky and Abrahams to show that the Bloomsbury painters were "able still, in the thirties, to shock the bourgeoisie"; this in a paragraph praising the positive accomplishments of the Bloomsbury circle (in Toward a Recognition of Androgyny, p. 134).

room."[61] As it appeared to her that the effort was "simply to suppress all 'modern art',"[62] perhaps Sir Percy simply had something analogous to Lord Benbow's "invincible loathing of abstract patterns, which he had never been able to understand";[63] but had not Lord Benbow's foresight in making sure his requirements were understood in advance.

In any event there are slender grounds for regarding this incident as a morality play. The most scandalized feelings and intimations of right-vs.-might were made not by the painters but by their friends; Vanessa Bell, far from washing her hands of the whole sordid affair, was upon the intercession of Keynes with Sir Percy given an alternative commission, and seems to have set about it happily enough; at any rate, enough that Keynes could report back that Mrs. Bell was not only satisfied but felt she had been handsomely treated.

The other large decorative commission of this period ended in more general satisfaction. In fact we could find no happier summation of the issues of adaptability and affection for tradition which I have wished to trace in this chapter, than the decorations in the church of St. Michael and All Angels at Berwick in Sussex.

A number of factors make the Berwick decorations unique in the art of Vanessa Bell, and nearly so in that

of Duncan Grant.* The setting was certainly unique: not the flat of a friend or even a theatre stage, but a 12th century parish church. The patronage situation was likewise unusual. It had been set in motion in a familiar way, by the efforts of a family friend who happened to know a Bishop who was intent upon encouraging modern church decoration. And it was financed largely by earmarked contributions to the Sussex Churches Art Fund from wealthy friends such as Keynes and Clark. But obtaining the approval of the Parochial Church Council, and responding to the in several cases strenuous opposition of nervous parishioners, involved direct interaction with an English country congregation; and at some level, I fancy, consideration of their needs. So that the subject and treatment of the main elements of the decoration are correspondingly unusual. They are three large murals, an Annunciation and a Nativity in the nave and a Christ in Glory over the chancel arch (figures 24, 25 and 26); and they are handled in a most direct, unskeptical and traditional way.

To say that these paintings are handled in a traditional manner is of course not to say they are not

---

*Only nearly, because in the 50s, a time of substantial activity in the movement L'Art Sacre of which Berwick might be called an early and isolated English example, Grant decorated a chapel in Lincoln Cathedral.

modern, or even that they are archaicizing. No one would mistake the freshness of the colour or the relaxed nature of the realism for anything but products of the twentieth century. But to stress their contemporaneity, or to insist that "they remain the expression of the artists' own experience in a completely personal language,"[64] seems to me to miss the point, and even to confuse it. Because rather clearly these artists' own experience was not conventionally religious, and the formal and iconographic vocabulary they employ here is as conservative and as related to precedent as anything they ever did. What they have made is something of significance not only to themselves or people interested in their selves, but art which finds common ground with those who use it, and in the conventional sense believe in it.

The common ground is the feeling for human values and for the past. Certainly precedent is nowhere more apparent. In 1920, revisiting Italy for the first time since the war, Vanessa Bell had written "We are overcome by the modern church decorations--sham marbles, flowers, vases,etc. They are really a wonderful people even now."[65] She probably did not expect to ever be able to try such things in such a setting, and it was 20 years before she did. But here it is, not only the flowers that make a foreground for her nave painting or the sham marble panels and round windows that frame it, but dozens of

references, in the pictures and out of them, to a valued European past extending back through the Renaissance and implicit in the phrase "even now." Traditional themes are illustrated with traditional configurations and in a frank figurative style: a kneeling Virgin and angel of annunciation before a garden enclosed; shepherds and animals gathered around the holy family in a stable; Christ enthroned in a mandorla, attended by levitating angels and kneeling mortals. Additional elements are a crucifixion on the west wall, a Wise and Foolish Virgins on the back of the chancel arch, a small Supper at Emmaeus above the altar; on the front of the screen are especially appealing and formally successful representations of the seasons (figure 27) and on the rear the sacraments. And, these configurations are unexpectedly rich in iconographic detail which, one imagines, could be enjoyed either symbolically or pictorially or with a sense of their transmission through hundreds of years of western religious art: for example the prefiguring lilies and lamb and sheaf in the Annunciation and the Nativity; the Nativity's alert ox of the Gentiles and indifferent ass of the Jews; the inclusion in the Christ in Glory of portraits of the Bishop and the Rector and three servicemen from the parish, in the established attitudes of donors.

This last example illustrates especially well the way these images have been made to resonate both with religious

and historical experience and with the parochial experience of the parishioners. Perhaps not many of the villagers knew that the model for Mary was the artist's daughter, or that the gardener and the housekeeper's son posed for the Nativity; but they probably knew the two local shepherds who posed in their professional capacities, and they certainly knew the Rector, the Bishop, and the soldier and airman from Berwick and the soldier from Firle. Two of these last survived the war and are still in the parish and this fact is pointed out to visitors. The servicemen are in their World War II uniforms, the priests in their robes, the children in the Nativity scene are English schoolboys in soft collars and sweaters. There is Sussex downland in the background of all the murals. The Nativity barn is a Sussex barn at Tilton, beyond its doors lies Mount Caburn of Lewes. "Pyecomb crook, Southdown lamb and Sussex trug complete the picture"; and the church brochure which calls attention to these things, written I expect by the Rector, adds happily, "'Though this happened many years ago in a distant land, it belongs as much to you here today.'"

In short there are a number of ways into this work for those to whom it belongs, and I suspect it is quite unusual in functioning about as actively in its setting as could be expected in a literate society. Paul Roche, a friend of the painters who now stays with Duncan Grant

at Charleston, thinks that the Berwick murals are an example of the public being educated to accept contemporary painting. This is one way of looking at it; apparently the worst fears of those parishioners who had opposed the project were laid to rest with the installation of the murals; so that a visitor in 1943 could report to the Bishop that

> From a young woman in the church, who was dusting, I learned that she had heard no comments from the parishioners, either favorable or unfavorable; but that she herself viewed them with delight; and such indeed was my impression.[66]

And by now some thousands of people visit the church yearly and the decorations in it are a source of local pride. But surely, if these paintings are an example of the willingness of the public to accept contemporary art, they are an example too of contemporary artists being willing to provide the public with something it <u>can</u> accept.

This success in fulfilling an historic function of art is the more remarkable, though perhaps the more tenuous and even unintentional, because the artists seem to have had a more complicated task than an historic artist would have had. They seem to have functioned as their own program designers and iconographers. This is not certain; Duncan Grant has recalled with I imagine to be his characteristic tact that "Vanessa Bell, Bishop

Bell* and I suggested the theme of the Berwick paintings together." He added however that "I remember going to Brighton to discuss it with him after first talking with Mrs. Bell about it all."[67] A contemporary letter from Bishop Bell also implies that rather than proposing a scheme he approved an already well-defined one. Grant, the Bishop wrote to the friend who had suggested the painter to him,

> has produced a most promising scheme, really beautiful, for the total decoration inside the lovely little church at Berwick . . . . It is to be a joint work in which he and Vanessa Bell and her son and daughter collaborate doing different things. I have seen the whole scheme and like it very much.[68]

The scheme as approved is definitely appropriate to the preferences of the artists. There is an unmistakable happiness about the program, a turning from pain, that is reminiscent of the cheerful imagery, the musicians and dancers and fruits and flowers, of their non-religious decoration. As it happens this suits the sunny outlook--over a graveyard to be sure, but a most pleasant one--and perhaps the archangelic dedication of Berwick Church.

> Send the Archangel, Michael, to our succour;
> Peacemaker blessed, may he banish from us
> Striving and hatred, so that for the peaceful
> All things may prosper.

---

*George Bell, Bishop of Chicester, was not related to Vanessa Bell or Clive Bell. The connection was a mutual friend of the Bishop and Duncan Grant's aunt.

The church brochure again, quoting a ninth-century verse. But, had they been called upon to decorate the grimmest of churches dedicated to the most unspeakably-misused of English saints, these artists would most likely have passed up all the martyrdoms at their disposal, all the trials, flagellations, depositions, lamentations, entombments and judgments, and hit upon something like the two grave and tender interior scenes which were just the sort of thing Vanessa Bell liked to paint and would have been willing to think about, and a triumphant and fluent imaginative composition which was the equivalent for Duncan Grant. A crucifixion was added to the scheme, but not till later. It is on the rear wall, and here is a description of it:

> . . . also by Mr. Duncan Grant . . . is "The Victory of Calvary" on the West wall. Note that all traces of suffering have gone, our Lord's head is erect and His eyes open, and his arms outstretched in the Jewish attitude of prayer, as though offering His sacrifice to the Eternal Father.

Now this preference for the pleasant is integrated, as I have been at pains to suggest, into a functional parish church interior. I do not think anyone would say of it, as the communist poet Louis Aragon is supposed to have said upon seeing the working model for Henri Matisse's beautiful chapel at Vence, "Very pretty--very gay--In fact when we take over we'll turn it into a dance hall."[69] And, though I suppose a professional theologian and iconographer,

if such a person exists, might have come up with a more tightly-knit program for St. Michael and All Angels or one more specific to its dedication (though angels there are in plenty in this program, and the archangels were the subject of the original Bell panels for the pulpit), still, the program devised by these artists is a coherent one (happy scenes, in which angels figured, from the history of Christ), and one illustrating themes which the congregation no less than the artists may have preferred to dwell upon.

The coherence of their program we may attribute to their intelligence and to the attention they had paid to historic art. But the complex function they were performing--which is, not only making art but deciding what art was to be made--is not a legacy of historic art. It is related rather to that relatively recent conception of art as primarily self-expressive and the artist as a creator rather than an interpreter of form--as a form-giver rather than a form-finder, as Alan Gowans puts it--with which we were concerned in the chapter on formalist theory. This conception has become so general as to be automatic in our thought, about the past as well as the present. When the art historian Frederic Hartt read a paper documenting the development of the program of the Sistine ceiling and ascribing it not to Michaelangelo but to functionaries of his patron, some of Hartt's colleagues

felt the artist had been defamed. When the British painter Richard Carline was asked who devised the program his brother-in-law Stanley Spencer painted in the Oratory of All Souls which was designed for him at Burghclere, Carline was astonished that the question would occur: "Why he did of course. No one else would have been allowed."

This iconological independence of the modern artist is what makes it exceptional that St. Michael and All Angels remained its parish's church, rather than becoming, in the manner of some major monuments of L'Art Sacre such as the Vence and Ronchamp chapels, a monument to the artist's style. For both Bell and Grant expressed themselves from first to last, often most engagingly, in the terms of the twentieth-century form-giver. When the young Vanessa Stephen was asked by the aged Watts if she knew what style was, "I gibbered feebly about its being one's individual expression."[70] When the 90-year-old Duncan Grant was asked by a young admirer about his continuing work he said "There is something wrong with the day if I have not painted. I suppose it is a desire to express myself. Anyway, one ought to, especially if one's desire is not the same as other people's."[71] It is almost certainly due in part to his intimacy with these artists that J. M. Keynes, although he thought as did no one else in this circle in terms of relationships between public and

artist in which the artist would be "at the same time the servant and his own master,"[72] yet could not help emphasizing the latter role. So that in a speech on the policy and hopes of the British Arts Council, of which he was an architect, he would express with complete certitude if in more secular language the conception of the artist as prophet and priest:

> . . . Everyone, I fancy, recognizes that the work of the artist in all its aspects is, of its nature, free, undisciplined, unregimented, uncontrolled. The artist walks where the breath of the spirit blows him. He cannot be told his direction; he does not know it himself. But he leads the rest of us into fresh pastures and teaches us to love and enjoy what we often begin by rejecting.[73]

The conception of the artist which has come to be seen as so natural has had extraordinary effects on the way artists work and think about their work, and on the relationships between artists and society and between artists and patrons, when these can be found. These effects are neither wholly good nor wholly bad. On the one hand a great gulf has opened between serious artists who would think of themselves as in the great tradition, and patrons who, like their aristocratic precursors in that tradition, are interested in seeing and paying for the externalization of their own values and not necessarily those of painters or sculptors. On the other hand, creative self-expression surely has at least the potential

for being what Roger Fry or Clive Bell would call an end in itself. Besides it has produced work of great power and beauty, which have given pleasure to most of us. And which no doubt have been a source of, one hopes, pleasant surprise to adventurous patrons. In 1932, we will recall, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Clark commissioned a dinner service from Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell. "As usual with commissions," Clark writes, "it turned out different to what we had expected." He does not mean somewhat different, he means completely different. "Instead of a gay cascade of decoration like the best Savonal," which the Clarks had evidently not mentioned to the artists was what they had in mind, they got 48 plates with individually painted portraits of famous women: "Bloomsbury asserting its status as a matriarchy," Clark added good-humouredly.[74]

Some considerations of the next chapter will reflect upon easy assumptions to the effect that Bloomsbury was a matriarchy. Here we may just recall that Clark's commission had been intended as bait to lure the Bloomsbury painters in the direction of decoration; and remind ourselves as we did at the outset of this chapter that most of the work produced by these painters was not commissioned but sent out to show; that the speculative, in both senses, private, self-expressive and self-absorbed engagement with the easel painting was what mostly preoccupied them, even during the 20s, and probably what they most

cared about.

Certainly that engagement was what art and work meant most surely to Vanessa Bell. "I have also been painting a quiet little still life which I find the greatest relief after theatrical helter-skelter," she wrote to Fry once, when she had been working simultaneously on a domestic commission in which "the whole thing is threatened by Karin's views on curtains," and on a theatre decor. "It's extraordinary," she said of her still life, "to find that one can spend as much time as one likes over what one's doing and that it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks of it."[75]

It did matter to Vanessa Bell what people thought, very much; and just because it did, the studio seems to have taken on extraordinary importance to her as a retreat; as the place where she could be most indifferent to what she seems generally to have felt as the bruising intrusion of the outside world. The impulse to withdraw conditioned much in her life and her art.

IV. VANESSA BELL

Vanessa Bell's painting was a way out for her as far back as we know anything about it. When in the year after their father's death the four Stephen children moved from Kensington to Bloomsbury, they escaped, as Quentin Bell says, from an extremely depressing Victorian home.[1] It had not always been that. Virginia Woolf remembered and recreated in To The Lighthouse, and Vanessa Bell compared with life at Charleston and in a way recreated there, a warm and various family life, kept in being by their mother. But keeping that life in being had worn their mother out, and she died in 1895 at the age of 49; and, as Leslie Stephen had been deprived of the wife he had expected would care for him till his death, an atmosphere of peevish depression settled over the family which was not dissipated until he died himself nine years later. At first Julia Stephen's eldest daughter, the Stephens' half-sister Stella Duckworth, was moved into the role of caring for the common life and consoling the inconsolable Leslie Stephen. But in 1897 she died also: a few months after a marriage which Stephen had done what he could to discourage and which he had reluctantly blessed only as the young couple agreed to live on in his house and retain him his housekeeper. Upon Stella's death he

turned to his own eldest daughter to fill that role.

Now Vanessa Stephen was not a child but a young woman of 18 when her half-sister died and she became her father's housekeeper. Her life in the last seven years of her father's had in it art lessons at Sir Arthur Cope's school and at the Royal Academy, visits and excursions with friends and relatives, and several trips to the continent: we will not compare her lot with that of a woman match-worker or the unmarried daughter of a widowed day-labourer. But above a certain point deprivation and frustration are relative matters. Vanessa Bell was not as free, or more precisely as carefree, in her young womanhood as she would have been had her mother lived; as were other young women of her class; as were her brothers. Everyone in the family had to put up with Leslie Stephen's petulance and morbidity, his regrets, his rudeness and his groans at tea. But his sons and step-sons went off to work and business, his daughters stayed at home. And they were not left to themselves. Virginia Woolf wrote very much later that the general attitude of her brother Thoby, for example

> . . . was aloof, judicious, conventional. From his remote station as a schoolboy, as an undergraduate, he felt generally that we should accept our place: if George* wanted us to go to parties, why not? If father wanted us to walk with him, why not?

---

*George Duckworth, one of Julia Stephen's sons by her first marriage.

> It thus came about that Nessa and I formed together a very close conspiracy. In that world of many men coming and going we formed our private nucleus . . . . Very soon after Stella's death we saw life as a struggle to get some kind of standing place . . . we were always battling for that which was always being interfered with, muffled up, snatched away.[2]

The Stephen women were in fact expected to be what Virginia Woolf later called Angels in the House: creatures whose own desires and aspirations, if any, were unthinkingly subjugated to those of men. Leslie Stephen's demands were the more oppressive upon his older daughter because she was required to keep his house. This was apparently an indispensible supervisory task in a Victorian home, but it also apparently was an impossible one to do to Stephen's satisfaction in his: for the chief servant was an entrenched and valued cook whose cooperation with Stephen's budgetary dictates went only so far as occasional collusion in cooking the accounts to avoid some measure of his wrath. This wrath descended very nearly weekly. Something in it must have satisfied something in Leslie Stephen, for he never removed the cause of it. That he might have done by taking over those supervisory tasks regarding which he had such specific requirements and wherein his daughter so consistently failed him. But though he had been able to make so momentous a change of mind in the 1860s as to abandon

his belief in God and with it his Cambridge fellowship, his belief that the supervision of servants and the keeping of domestic accounts devolved by their nature upon women, seems to have gone deeper.

At any rate his insistence upon delegating the responsibility for the household, combined with his insistence upon absolute and regular accountability to himself, made for extremely painful scenes. These have been referred to by a number of writers. But they have never been described so vividly as by Virginia Woolf in an autobiographical piece first published in 1976.

> Over the whole week of these evasions, propitiations, brooded the horror of Wednesday. On that day the weekly books were shown him. If they were over 11 pound, that lunch was a torture. The books were presented. Silence. He was putting on his glasses. He had read the figures. Down came his fist on the account book. There was a roar. His vein filled. His face flushed. Then he shouted "I am ruined." Then he beat his breast. He went through an extraordinary dramatization of self-pity, anger and despair. He was ruined--dying . . . tortured by the wanton extravagance of Vanessa and Sophie. "And you stand there like a block of stone. Don't you pity me? Haven't you a word to say to me?" and so on. Vanessa stood by his side absolutely dumb. He flung at her all the phrases--about shooting Niagra and so on--that came handy. She remained static. Another attitude was adopted. With a deep groan he picked up his pen and with ostentatious trembling fingers he wrote out the cheque. This was wearily tossed to Vanessa. Slowly and with many groans the pen, the account book were put away. Then he sank into his chair and sat with his head on his breast. And then, at last, after glancing at a book,

> he would look up and say half-plaintively, "And what are you doing this afternoon, Ginny?"[3]

Privileged, certainly, but certainly ungenerous, I said of the background of Roger Fry, as it appears to have appeared to him and his friends. Similarly here: privileged but incredibly depressing. Vanessa Bell was proud of her father; we have seen how she wished her children had known their maternal grandparents; and she retained a number of his values, including some of those which had most oppressed her. Further it would be unfair to suggest that her father's egotism was the only thing that made her 20s a less than happy time. She had lost her mother and older sister, her younger sister's physical and mental health was unstable and she was largely responsible for guarding it; she was frustrated in an attachment to her late sister's young widower by a law which forbade those so related to marry in England, and by the militant conventionality of her relatives regarding that law; and, her half-brother was determined to help her make what she could of her beauty in society, whether she wanted to or not. However, as her mother had kept in being a merry and various family life, so her father kept in being this configuration of unhappy memories and accountabilities at Hyde Park Gate. In that house she remembered darkness and silence as the chief characteristics; but for her father's large light study at the top, the rooms were dim, windows

were smothered in Virginian creeper, woodwork was black, walls dull blue; they in their black dresses hardly talked in company and their father was old, deaf, morose and demanding. When he died she was relieved. When George Duckworth by happy chance married and could not accompany his siblings to Bloomsbury, she was free. In those "tall clean rather frigid rooms," she wrote later, it seemed they were making a new beginning.

> . . . it was exhilarating to have left the house where there had been so much gloom and depression, to have come to these white walls, large windows opening onto trees and lawns, to have one's own rooms, be master of one's own time, to have all the things which come as a matter of course to many of the young today but so seldom them to young women at least.[4]

So. She was 25 years old and able for the first time to feel both grown-up and free. The sense of release from an unreasonably constricting past, which for various reasons was shared by various members of her circle, must have conditioned much that was self-conscious and insistent in the later social and sexual non-conformity of the Bloomsbury circle. This non-conformity became most marked later on. But from the first "we seemed to be a company of the young, all free, all beginning life in new surroundings, without elders to whom we had to account in any way."[5]

Before Bloomsbury and the company of the young, the major escape had been painting. The tendency to think of

the studio in partly negative terms, as a place which was not where she was not happy, also conditioned her later attitude toward her work. The studio was a place to withdraw to even before it was a room of her own; her fellow art students at Sir Arthur Cope's school in South Kensington

> . . . were separate entirely from my home life and so a great relief. They knew no more about my private life than I about theirs and in their company one could forget it oneself and think about nothing but the absorbing difficulties of oil paint.[6]

She was already at this time developing a characteristic set of attitudes about this separate world: persistent depreciation of her abilities in it, and a slightly apologetic but just as persistent stubbornness about protecting it. So she would write to her brother that her Academy figure was "very dull and I'm doing it very badly so I don't expect I shall even get my first drawing accepted--I don't know where I shall hide my head then."[7] It was accepted and she attended the Royal Academy Schools from 1901 to 1904. Then upon planning visits to Thoby at Cambridge she would be propitiatory--"I wish my blessed Academy didn't take so much time"[8]--but determined. "I wish I could come early," she responded on one occasion, "But I can't afford to miss any more than I can help of the model."[9] Or again "I'm afraid I can't possibly be away longer than that, as we shall be having a model for the drawing of a hand and arm."[10]

As these remarks suggest, she was obtaining a quite conventional art education, drawing and painting from casts and models and being criticized by Sargent at the Academy: she only briefly in 1904 put herself in the position of being "squashed by Tonks" at the Slade.[11] "She would bring home now and then very careful pencil drawings of Hermes perhaps and spray them with fixative"; Virginia Woolf wrote, "or an oil head of a very histrionic looking male nude."[12] It was an apt enough education for a still quite conventional young Englishwoman. So far was she yet from her later francophilia that she found the French disgusting people, who never seemed to wash, and spat.[13] She might a few years later love being introduced to "all the latest geniuses" in Paris by Thoby's friend Mr. Bell, but she still was more thrilled by Tintoretto.[14] If she had long since found Watts tiresome ("Every leaf is painted cleanly," he had assured her in his studio, "and cleanness is a great quality"[15]) she still looked up to Sargent. His Lord Ribbesdale was to her much the best thing in the Paris salon of 1904; "and there are some beautiful Whistlers."[16] As late as 1908 she would still think Sargent's skill "amazing."[17] It would be a while yet before she decided that, like Burne-Jones for the Victorians, he was not an artist at all: simply a machine for giving flashy Edwardian society what it wanted.[18]

If Edwardian flash had been what Lady Nelly Cecil had wanted in Vanessa Bell's first commissioned work in 1905 (figure 28), she would have been disappointed.* Sargent is, however, one of the influences we can notice in this portrait, which contains its traces not only of where the painter had been but where she would be going. It was painted in the first year in Bloomsbury. There are some souvenirs of the past, of the kind Bell would keep: as specific as the ornate frame she has liked to substitute for the plain one in the original scene and in the original sketch (see figure 29), or as general as the atmosphere of well-upholstered Victorian comfort. But careful pencil drawings of Hermes have been pretty much subsumed into an Impressionist idiom. More broadly, this is not the Hyde Park Gate milieu where faces at table "loomed out of the surrounding shade like Rembrandt portraits";[19] it has more in common with the "bare plaster walls and faces seen against them"[20] that had so pleased Vanessa Stephen when she visited Charles Furse a few years earlier. So here we are in the age of Sargent-Furse, as Virginia Woolf called the first years in Bloomsbury. Not only her broken stroke and Whistlerian tonalities record Miss Stephen's affinity with the English Impressionists; but the light, the wall, the

---

*It appears she was not, for Lord Robert Cecil sat to Miss Stephen in the following year.

window onto trees; the well-mannered reach for freedom. At the same time, we could not mistake Nelly Cecil for a Sargent. There is a passive sobriety, in her expression and in her pose, that we will find to be characteristic of Vanessa Bell's portraiture, even at its most fauve. It is possible to find exceptions to this generalization, but in general her sitters do not stand like the archtypical Sargent subject; they sit, and they sit very still, absorbed or simply silent; and it is remarkable how often their hands are folded or suppressed entirely, their arms kept close against their sides.

Nelly Cecil is about the only evidence we have, so far as Vanessa Bell's painting is concerned, of the first few years in Bloomsbury of these relieved but at this point really rather sober young people. As the handling of this painting may suggest to us, there was certainly no headlong plunge into hedonism. Just talk: that was all; that is what Duncan Grant remembered of his first evenings with Adrian and Virginia Stephen and their friends in Fitzroy Square, where they moved after Vanessa Stephen married Clive Bell in 1907, and where they continued the habit of being at-home on Thursday evenings which Thoby Stephen had begun before his death. Just cocoa and buns and whiskey and philosophic talk among young men who had not entirely left Cambridge, and two young women who, as the elder of them said, "I do not

think it had at first occurred to Thoby to include in the arrangement, still there they were."[21]

With the death of Thoby Stephen, who by all accounts was not only a charming but a calm, judicious and essentially conservative character; with the closer relationships between his siblings and his friends that resulted from their grief over his death; with the entry of the ebullient Clive Bell into the family, and, probably, simply with time, that initially fairly prim atmosphere became substantially more gamy. Quentin Bell dates the commencement of Bloomsbury bawdy talk from about 1908.[22] Virginia Woolf, who gives the account of the commencement which sets him looking for dates, parallels it with the end of the age of Sargent-Furse and the dawning of the age of Augustus John:[23] John being a sort of late romantic star then aloft in the London art sky, one of whose paintings the Bells owned, and who, probably more to the point, was enchantingly, flamboyantly bohemian.

I think we see no real reflection of this in Vanessa Bell's painting. Rather, the few surviving paintings from the post-1906, pre-1910 period tend to confirm the impression of sobriety and restraint we receive from Nelly Cecil. And like that painting they adopt patterns that emerge and re-emerge in her subsequent work. Consider Hotel Garden, Florence (figure 30). This figure-less and absolutely still little painting is said to be unusual at this date in Bell's work for its

colour. But its treatment of the exterior scene would not seem unusual for her at any date. A very literal manifestation of her feeling for the studio as a retreat was that she never really liked painting en plein aire; open landscape is rare in her work. When she does go outside, her eye is trained back upon buildings--one is tempted to say, upon what Sarah Peters has referred to as "shelter shapes"[24]--and/or is stopped, held within an intimate and generally domesticated area by some such device as the cushioning and encircling foliage of this Italian garden. Even more typical, because it is a studio still life, is another painting of this period, the Iceland Poppies (figure 31). It was highly praised when it was exhibited at the New English Art Club in 1909, and deservedly, for it is exceptionally beautiful. And its beauty is a cool beauty, in colour--silvery greens, grays with one flush of warmth in the petals at lower right--and in the calm and distanced placement of intently observed objects, set into a stable field of brushed and drawn horizontals.

If it is hard to feel the Age of Augustus John dawning in the detached and passive temperment which is expressed here, it might be simply, as we agreed back in the Introduction, that paintings do not have such clear diagnostic value. But it might also be that things had not gotten that much freer for the painter. To be sure

things were loosening up conversationally at Gordon and Fitzroy Squares. And to be sure Bell's circle had long since begun to annoy if not to shock those conventional friends and relations whom the Stephen children had begun to avoid after their father's death, to whom unchaperoned groups of young men and women were suspect, even if they were only drinking cocoa and talking. "What did we talk about? Who were these young men? etc.," Vanessa Bell remembered "a group of young and older people at an ordinary conventional party" asking her. "They laughed," she continued. "Even then there was a tone of disapproval."[25] The tone would have no doubt been shriller and the laughter replaced with something else had these persons realized that within a few years frank talk about the nature of good would be enlivened with bold reference to copulation. It seems that none enjoyed this verbal liberty more than Vanessa Bell. "Vanessa trying to sail as close to the wind as she could," Adrian Stephen remarked in a description of a Fitzroy Square parlour game in 1909; "She is always trying to bring out some bawdy remark and is as pleased when she has done it as a spoilt child."[26] For her group as a whole and historians of it, the easing of "barriers of speech and thought and feeling" that bawdy talk signalled has seemed of fairly substantial significance. Quentin Bell remarks its importance "in the history of

the mores of Bloomsbury and perhaps in that of the British middle classes"; but he goes on to say that whatever its long-term consequences it did not have a radical effect on the conduct or, he thinks, the imagination of his subject Virginia Woolf.[27] I think this may be true also of Vanessa Bell. Nothing is more noticeable in looking through her correspondence than that her epistolatory conduct varied very much according to its object: at its bawdiest in her later exchanges with J. M. Keynes; affectionate, in these years sometimes anxiously so, with Clive Bell; chattery and cheerful with Margery Snowden, an old friend from art school. If we want to get at how she felt to herself, we may find it helpful to consider carefully not only behaviours which reflect trends in her circle, but also products of her private imagination.

To our consideration in this light of Hotel Garden and Iceland Poppies, let us add 46 Gordon Square (figure 32). This picture was painted around 1908-9, exhibited in 1911 as Apples. If we were looking for an illustration of the Age of Augustus John having dawned on Gordon Square, we should want I think an image of some greater license, some more vigorous assertion of the still tentative freedoms of Nelly Cecil. If we are interested in thinking about the Bloomsbury circle from a fresh point on its circumference, and in the experience and perspectives peculiar to women and women artists, we may

observe that 46 Gordon Square is an image of constriction. It combines the three approaches to motif we have already seen--the window, the exterior scene, and the still life--into a theme of still-life-by-a-window that will recur again and again in her work; and never with more dogged delimitation of landscape and confinement of perspective. The viewpoint is unusually high so that a clear view over the trees is precluded. The glimpse out the window is as through a series of cages: the eye is hedged not only by trees but by the iron fence before them, and before that by the striking vertical motif of the balcony railing. Even the balcony does not have a visual way clear to it, for the approach is baffled by the still life in the foreground. This might be seen as a device for concentrating attention on the motif which, to judge from the picture's original title, Bell thought of as central. But it certainly contributes to an image of less than unimpeded freedom and expansiveness.

To the extent that we see such expansiveness in Vanessa Bell's work, we will see it after, not before, the end of the decade. Even then it will take place largely within the foreground of her pictures, as in her life it would take place largely within her circle. If for the time being we find not so much freedom and expansiveness as a reflective intimacy and even, as in this last case, a somewhat disturbing sense of

constriction, it may reflect the fact that, bawdy talk or not, Vanessa Bell was not more free in these years than she had been; she was less free. When she had first moved to Bloomsbury, her own and her brothers' and sister's no doubt automatic assumptions had ensured that she would still be primarily responsible for the household. But not entirely so, they at least talked things over--at least the sisters did: such sweeping reforms as doing away with napkins and having coffee after dinner were discussed. And anyhow, as Vanessa Stephen wrote to a friend

> . . . it's really very ideal to have to arrange for a household all of much the same age. It makes most things very easy and all the difficulties of trying to meet opposing claims of different generations are done away with. I only wish we could always go on like this--but after all we may for a long time yet--I dread every day to hear that Thoby is in love![28]

But after all they were only able to go on, just like that, for two years. Thoby rather than falling in love fell ill and died, a month after returning from a trip to Greece with his brothers and sisters. Vanessa Stephen's grief and weakness--for she had fallen ill in Greece as well--were the immediate precipitant to her acceptance of the proposal Clive Bell had been pressing for some time. She was married, a year later her first son was born, a year and a half after that, her second.

So, within a year of Thoby Stephen's death Vanessa Bell was subject again to the claims of different generations. And although it is clear from her early letters to him that Vanessa Bell loved her husband very much, it is equally clear--as much as anything from the fact that she was so often writing to someone who was somewhere else--that after the first year her marriage was not a relationship that made most things easy. As far as the children were concerned, this is not a question of which parent changed the diapers or got up for the midnight feeding; neither did; Bell almost always had nurses for her children. Had she not, we should be looking at a three or four year hiatus in her painting, for it would not have occurred to Clive Bell to share their mutual responsibilities; and did not, even at the relatively moderate level of interference with ease and autonomy and mastery of one's time at which those responsibilities stood. We have seen that he required in Civilization that the man of culture be insofar as possible free from material care and distraction. And although he regretted in that book that women of culture who are wives and mothers are not free--that

> the loss of freedom, time and energy, the cares and schemings in which any modern woman must be involved, who bears and rears children and orders a house, will tend generally to blunt the fine edge of her intelligence and sensibility, will indispose

> so delicate a creature for that prolonged study which is indispensible . . .[29]

--yet he could think of no solution more personal than that children be out-housed, at state expense. This not being immediately practicable, even had it been seen by all concerned as perfectly desirable, the Bell children were parented by that delicate creature, their mother.

So both practical and emotional demands upon Vanessa Bell were substantially increased by her marriage; the emotional ones still further because Clive Bell did not acknowledge fidelity as a virtue at a time when his wife, if not acknowledging it, was still practicing it. She seems to have accepted this in principle, but it evidently gave her pain, particularly when her husband embarked upon a prolonged flirtation with her sister. Add to these distresses that her sister was several times in this period on the verge of breakdown, and that Vanessa Bell still felt primary responsibility for urging her to rest and eat, for consulting with her doctors and for nursing her if necessary, and I think we will be able to see without much difficulty why, whatever we may generalize about the sense of freedom rising among members of the Bloomsbury circle and others so situated in these years, we do not yet see it in the paintings of a young woman among their number.

We do begin to see it in 1911. In works like Nursery Tea and Studland Beach (figures 33 and 34) there

begins a very noticeable simplification of form and broadness of surface treatment that over the next five years produced all the works on the basis of which it is argued that Vanessa Bell is a pioneer of modern painting in England. It is extremely interesting to consider why a change in style was suitable to her needs at this time. The usual explanation of such things is simply that stylistic change was around, and so was the artist. "The slightest whiff of the European avant-garde in any post-1910 work is immediately ascribed to the Grafton Galleries exhibition," Richard Shone has remarked,[30] and I could not agree more that identification of such "influences" is seriously over-simple. However much the Post-Impressionist Exhibitions and Armoury Shows of this world may increase the aesthetic options and simplify art history, they make no difference unless they meet with predispositions in the hinterlands. As much as she enjoyed the excitement it generated, the First Post-Impressionist would hardly have struck Bell as a bolt from the aesthetic blue, since she had been in Paris and looked at contemporary pictures several times in the preceding several years. And however much of a revelation Post-Impressionist colour may have been to her, on those visits or at the Grafton, her palette remained reticent until she had reasons for it to be otherwise. So, rather than thinking of Bell or any artist as a sort of

permeable substance that rolls through galleries and picks avant-garde imprints, we may get further by thinking back and forth between her work and her life and seeing why particular approaches seemed appropriate at particular times.

One needn't look very far or hard in 1911 to discern a change which rendered personal the prevailing climate of freedom. Vanessa Bell's painting became bolder at the same time her life did: Nursery Tea was painted shortly after she fell in love with Roger Fry. This had occurred in the course of a trip to Turkey which the Bells and Fry and another friend Harry Norton had undertaken. Bell miscarried in Broussa, became very ill there, and Fry's wit and energy were largely responsible for getting her through. The affair that grew out of this experience lasted several years. It is possible to see that Fry fulfilled a number of needs in Bell, as indeed she for him; perhaps most of all a need for sympathetic support. He took her painting more seriously than she was accustomed to having it taken ("Clive roared with laughter when he saw it!"[31] is the only mention I have come across in her letters to Clive Bell's interest in her work), and he was an unexpectedly sympathetic person emotionally. As it happened the previous year had been particularly difficult for Bell; her sister had undergone a rest cure, Clive Bell's attentiveness preceding it had

given rise to letters from his wife which are pathetically eager to reach and please him; their second son had been born in August and had become ill at the Bells' summer resort of Studland so that, she recalled in a memoir, "I stayed on alone in lodgings with a nurse and a month-old baby who was ill--presently very ill," while Clive Bell went to Paris to help Fry choose pictures for the Grafton. "These domestic horrors are only of interest," she added, "as an explanation of why I knew so little of the preliminary excitements of the show."[32] But they are also of interest as an explanation of her feeling that Fry, who troubled to ask her about the baby and tell her about the difficulties his own children had gone through, offered

> . . . sympathy far more intimate than any one had had before . . . [from] any of the people who ought to have known. So I found . . . not only the world of painting but the human world suddenly enlarged for me.[33]

And a sense of enlargement is just what we see in these paintings of 1911 and 1912: sometimes even in the canvas size, consistently in the forms. Still life moves in closer to subject; landscapes of Virginia Woolf's Asheham House, though they center on a structure and pile up cradling forms on the horizon as Bell's landscapes will always do, still pull back a bit first and take in a careful bit of countryside; figures appear in groups

and in some sort of relation to each other (figures 35, 36, 37).

But would we ever mistake these pictures for images of anything like license? I think not: personally I think we never do see anything like license in the art of Vanessa Bell, but a little later the resemblance will be closer. Here the colour is still generally cool and controlled. The forms if bigger and bolder and relatively more animate--figures standing instead of sitting, people eating or painting--are still intimate, as indeed they will remain: family, friends, familiar habitations. Moreover the images themselves have an odd indirection and secretiveness about them. Part of this effect is due to the featureless faces Bell was fond of painting at this time. The device has several interesting referents. It may have been stimulated as much as anything in her style was by a desire to be interesting and modern ("I am really much more interested in my Nativity . . . which I am trying to liven up a little. That seems to consist mostly of taking out all the features"[34]), and more broadly, to avoid any implied criticism of her unlucky knack of catching a likeness.* In the pictures where

---

*"Creating a work of art is so tremendous a business that it leaves no leisure for catching a likeness," Clive Bell wrote in Art (p. 51). E. M. Forster once reported to a friend that the portrait that Roger Fry was painting of him was so far rather like, but Roger was sure that could be remedied (catalogue note in Vision and Design, the Life Work and Influence of Roger Fry,

they appear, at any rate, the blank faces resonate with the silent absorption of the figures, the suppression of interaction, the tendency even to turn the backs of the figures, especially those nearest the painter.

The rather marked reticence of a number of the imaginative images of this period relate I think to the state of mind of a woman rather cautiously assuming sexual autonomy. Sexual autonomy for women, or even, one imagines, for men if they enjoyed it too conspicuously, was unheard-of, though I am sure not non-existent, in polite Edwardian society. It was by no means unheard-of in Bloomsbury; a great deal had been heard of it, and for several years; but where the women were concerned it was undone. This will scarcely surprise us if we think how much easier it is to talk about liberation than to practice it, and how automatic even now are dual sets of expectation for men and women. It will only surprise us if we think too literally of the history of the Bloomsbury circle as "a moral adventure . . . in which women were accepted on a completely equal footing with men."[35] A generalization like that can be

---

p. 20). Forster was joking and no doubt partly at his own expense, but the suspicion of likeness was very much current. However Vanessa Bell's observation of details of stance--her turns of foot are especially expressive --generally resulted in very individual, and apparently wholly recognizable, featureless figures.

defended, with some careful attention to terms, but it passes very quickly over much that was real, painful, and sex-conditioned in the experience these men and women shared. Surely if Vanessa Bell had felt on a completely equal footing with men she would not have said--it seems unlikely Clive Bell would have said in her place--that if it came to the point her husband's wish and not her own would be decisive: "If Clive really minds I can't do it, as you know."[36] Surely she would have had fewer concerns with keeping her affair a secret even within her own circle: concerns with being overheard, with keeping her letters private, with separating the two sides of her life, which are very much consistent with the sort of expanded but mute imagery that we see in these paintings.

This imagery is in fact consistent with very mixed emotions. Besides juggling two relationships Bell was ill, troubled with nervous symptoms which had developed in the wake of her miscarriage and which persisted for several years. She complained of exhaustion, felt "sensations of unreality,"[37] felt "on the verge of some obscure abyss."[38] At the same time the excitement in the art world and the related social and aesthetic excitement in and around her circle made her in some ways happier than she had ever been, so that she would look back on

> a time when everything seemed springing to new life--a time when all was a sizzle of excitement, new relationships, new ideas, different and intense emotions all seemed crowding into one's life.[39]

By 1913 this rather unstable mixture was--not settling--but becoming somewhat more self-directed. For the first time in 15 years she did not feel directly responsible for her sister, for Virginia Woolf had married the previous fall, much it appears to Vanessa Bell's relief. Although she herself would suffer periodically for years from what sounds like nervous exhaustion, her health was normalizing. And, she was assuming more autonomy in dealing with the conflicts in a life that was for a while more emotionally complicated than it would ever be again. She was extricating herself from her affair with Roger Fry, resolving into a friendship her marriage with Clive Bell, and moving toward the relationship with Duncan Grant that would last the rest of her life. It is interesting that this was the only one of these relationships that was not precipitated, or at least preceded, by a crisis. "I changed," she tried to explain to Fry in 1914, "but I think really not in feeling but in wanting to lead my own life . . . I had made up my mind to try and look after myself more independently."[40]

The pictures image up her resolution. It is their extraordinary bloom of colour, above all, that astonishes even now, and leads a critic (friendly) to find in them

"a trenchency and originality that were, for the time, almost wild."[41] Here black-and-white reproductions may at last have a mark in their favour, for if we see without their astonishing colour the 1913 portrait of Lytton Strachey or the Omega screen of four figures in a geometric setting (figures 38 and 39), we may more readily notice some tame continuities. Lytton Strachey sits passive, reading, his hands muffled in his lap; the vaguely primitive nudes do not dance or even bathe, but sit, or half-recline, languidly in their closed landscape of angular, sheltering forms. The fauve colour animates the portraits of an old friend reading placidly in a Sussex garden; the nudes are based on sketches of so primitive a subject as young people (clothed) sitting outside tents at a summer camp in Norfolk.* Still, Lytton Strachey is modelled in strips of yellow and pink with a pure red beard, and the nudes on the screen are green, on a field of very bold interlocking shapes in burnt siena, ochre, lime, grey, charcoal. The effect of these shapes and colours is at once subtle and startling and a long way from 1912. There is also a strangeness about them, emphasized by their interaction with passive

---

*Bell wrote of this outing that she thought "Life under Canvas would grow on me until I should never return to civilization." However she slept in the farmhouse when it rained (VB/Clive Bell 91, Aug. 16, 1913).

motif, which strikes one as--if not wild--somehow extreme, fragile, even artificial; which Richard Morphet perceptively relates to the intense and self-conscious social and entertainment life of cultural London just before the 1914 war:[42] costume parties, theatricals, international visitors, post-impressionist sizzle, Russian ballet, Omega. It is a sort of hot-house quality.

Hothouses are very English and the things that grow in them are not, to start with at any rate. It will have been noticed by now that Vanessa Bell had stopped looking with any approbation at English art. The sense that Paris was the center had been there for a long time, surely since she had gotten to know Clive Bell, taking a post-graduate year there and full of news. Her organization of the Friday Club for painters in 1905 had been an attempt to import some of the sense of the center to peripheral London. But as we have seen the admiration for Sargent was long-lived, though increasingly qualified and finally repudiated, and the cool New English tradition was congenial enough long enough that she used it to very good purpose in Iceland Poppies in 1908. It was around 1910 and 1911 that she became not only francophile but a persistent grouser about things English. Reaching English shores with Roger Fry on their return from Broussa she had

> . . . seen through his eyes a country of incredible crudity, commonplaceness,

> vulgarity. That year I remember everyone was wearing blue--and how brightly blue all the hats and coats looked compared to all the exquisite dingy many-toned blues of the east.[43]

From then on the gross limitations of provincial English culture, fitfully-illuminated, unpaintably-green English landscape, and--nothing worse--inclement English weather, are familiar refrains. Pitch-dark, pouring, ice-cold, damp: it will be noticed how reminiscent are these epithets of those chosen for oppressive Victorianism. And of course this association is reflected in her art. It shows above all, in these years when just this aspect of the transplanted idiom was so much to her purpose, in the infusion of reserved English images with warm southern colour.

The first world war gave Bell another reason to feel distaste for England. She once said that the policy of non-conscription was the only thing that made England better than other countries in spite of everything; if that went, there was really no reason to raise one's children English.[44] This was said at an anxious moment--January 1916--and makes her sound more politically deliberate than she actually was. She was really apolitical, surprised and upset by the war and opposed to the war effort less I think on humanitarian or even libertarian grounds than on personal ones: "How damnable that people with ideas so utterly different from one's

own should have so much control over one's life."[46]* As one would expect from these remakrs, though everything about the war upset her ("Two of them have been in six bayonet charges, which seem to have been most unpleasant"[46]) and worried her ("One thinks that even the sort of things one vaguely hoped for the children may be spoilt"[47]), it was conscription that really angered her: "For once I would if I could lend a hand in public affairs, but one can't."[48] This reaction was clearly due to the fact that most of the adults she cared about were men of military age. For them also compulsion was the sticking point. At that point those who had not got exemptions, went in search of them, and thus began the brief and not very dedicated careers of Clive Bell and Lytton Strachey as estate labourers at Garsington, and those of Adrian Stephen, Duncan Grant and David Garnett elsewhere on the land. In contrast to this resolution in 1916, in 1915 there had been a good deal of milling around. Adrian Stephen had almost enlisted in the first weeks of war; in later months Duncan Grant had considered

---

*In some situations, at least later in life, Vanessa Bell seems to have framed her pacifism in humanitarian terms. In 1936 her son Julian responded to a letter trying to dissuade him from going to Spain by saying that intellectually and emotionally he had "none of your horror of killing human beings as such" (Julian Bell: Essays Poems and Letters, p. 167). But in the letters I have read dating from World War I the general objection is as above.

joining the Artists' Rifles or working in an ammunition factory, Clive Bell and David Garnett had enquired about the Army Service Corps; "partly to avoid being conscripted if that should happen," Vanessa Bell wrote in May of 1915, "and partly because it's impossible to go on as usual."[49] But in the end the painters at least had tried to go on as usual, retreating as much as they could to the country where "it's extraordinarily nice and quiet and one hears as little of the war as possible."[50]

Several of the portraits done in this first year of the war are almost illustrations of this effort to patch the hothouse roof and go on as before. The same curious coincidence of striking colour and static image that we saw in Lytton Strachey recurs in the portraits of David Garnett and Iris Tree (figures 41 and 40). It is really rather poignant with these sitters and in these circumstances, for Iris Tree was only 18 and David Garnett 23 in 1915, and they appear as great soft sober children, just ripe in time for war. Literally ripe, tropically ripe, for they are painted in brilliant oranges, yellows, pinks, rose-reds. The painter's desire for warmth and expansion and her desire to withdraw and keep cool are nowhere clearer. I do not know if Bell emphasized Iris Tree's passivity by exaggerating her immobile rotundity: comparison with a portrait painted by Roger Fry in the same year (figure 42), would suggest

so; comparison with a portrait painted by Duncan Grant in the same sittings and depicting pretty much the same figure as did Bell, would suggest not. But certainly a comparison between the Bell and Grant portraits of David Garnett (see figure 43) will show just how passive a young pacifist can be made to appear. If Bell has folded the hands of Iris Tree politely in her lap, she has forestalled those of Garnett entirely, and laid soft arms against lax sides. Duncan Grant, we observe, has done something generally similar, and indeed it is a sign of their common predisposition to the pacific that Grant, too, produced a long series of portraits of sitters sitting, with folded or invisible or innocently-occupied hands. But we may also see here an important distinction between the two painters. Duncan Grant has painted in David Garnett a powerful young man. The forms of his body angle up and out from the base of the canvas, the forms of his face are clear and forceful. He turns toward the picture plane and he looks as if he might do something. Even the non-figurative background with its turning, rising forms, is far more active than the neutral colour-field Bell has placed behind her Garnett: with his soft features, averted and abstracted posture and gaze, plump slumped torso sloping toward the lower margin. The more passive and withdrawn quality of Bell's

work as compared with Grant's is nowhere more demonstrable. But it is persistent; and it will increase.

The tension we remark in these paintings between the desire to go on as usual and an altered reality which made it impossible to do so, was not, I am sure, inserted into them deliberately; for the point was not to emphasize the tension but to retreat from it. But it was felt. "I see one must just make up one's mind to things being beastly as long as the war lasts," Bell wrote in 1915.[51] One hears in this the vague hope that when the war ended things might be as before. But it lasted three more years and by that time everything was changed and so was she. And so was her painting. In the course of the war the experimental features of her easel painting were radically moderated, if that is not too paradoxical. The high bright colour began to give way to much closer, even sombre tones, the summary and fantastic forms to realistic ones. It is interesting that a major production of the mid-war years which is also a major exception to this conservative trend--in form more than in colour, for although the colour is not what one would call naturalistic, it is muted--was intended specifically as a decoration. The Tub (1917, figure 44) in the Tate Gallery was painted for the dining room at Charleston. It is big--almost six foot square--and the mask-like features of the standing nude, the langourous

heads of the flowers, the summary brushwork that bespeaks a disdain for niggling finish*--all relate it more to the Omega screen or the broad-brush still-lives and portraits of a year or so before 1917, than to the more descriptive ones of a year or two later. This continued to be generally true of Bell's applied art. Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that summary forms really could be produced more quickly, if need be, and that could be an advantage when working to a specific purpose. "Of course I could go on for a long time," she had said as she was painting some great simple animal and landscape shapes for a Nursery mural shown at the Omega in 1913 (see figure 7). "But if I started to do much more to any one bit I should have to carry it much further and I shouldn't have time for that."[52] She had discovered the wonderful applicability of the Post-Impressionist style. Perhaps also there was an increasing separation in her mind between the playful arts of decoration and the serious art of easel painting. In any case the two streams of her work began to diverge in the late 'teens and 20s. The decorations and illustrations, for all their increased

---

*The appearance of swiftness is here and probably elsewhere apparent only. This painting was certainly worked over quite carefully. In the course of painting it Bell wrote that she had "taken out the woman's chemise and in consequence she is quite nude and much more decent" (VB/Roger Fry 253, Jan. 1918). But the provisional-looking strokes around the feet, for example, were left in.

gentility of image, retain a more Post-Impressionist look, while the easel paintings revert to something more like a low-key, indoor Impressionism. The woodcut illustration for Virginia Woolf's Monday or Tuesday, published in 1921 (figure 45) and the Tate's still-life-by-a-window painted in the same year (figure 46) are as good examples as any of this divergence.

We might find evidence of the increasing sobriety which must account for one-half the divergence, in the progress of the geometric abstracts painted between 1913 and 1915 or '16 (figures 47, 48, 49).[53] These it is generally agreed were stimulated by Bell's experience in applied design but were painted in "full equality" with her figurative painting:[54] in other words date from a period in which the distinction between applied and easel painting was not so marked. The earlier abstracts employ the experimental medium of collage; they have a boldness of form, the first one in particular a fluidity of line, that gives way in the 1915 composition to a much more stable image, carefully laid down in oil. The image was not originally this rectilinear, for a disc at lower right was lost in a recent cleaning. But the contrast holds.

However that contrast is subtle enough, and besides there are so few of these abstracts extant and the dating of them is sufficiently tentative, that one would not want

to push very vigorously this particular demonstration of the conservative trend. And it is not necessary to do so. We have only to set most any 1911-15 work beside one done at the end of the war: say Still Life with Beer Bottle, 1913, beside Arum Lilies, painted in the first year of peace (figures 50 and 51). To make a thorough-going comparison let us add the 1908 Iceland Poppies (figure 31).

Now clearly Arum Lilies is no simple reversion. Aside from the movement souvenirs, the Omega chair and screen and rustic pot, there is in comparison with Iceland Poppies a marked boldness, both in stroke and in intimacy with the motif. Also, compared to the early work's straightforward, almost ingenuous arrangement of objects, Arum Lilies is a very self-consciously designed picture, setting up careful rhythms between the body of the vase and the swell of the back-rest, between these and the spiral of the glaze pattern and the turn of the flowers, between the plastic forms of the lilies and the linear forms on the painted screen. But if Arum Lilies has abandoned the distance and refinement of Iceland Poppies, it has returned to its stability; and in comparison with Still Life with Beer Bottle the rendering of appearance is almost studious.

This must be the work of time and the war on a temperment. It cannot be simply that Bell was relatively

isolated in the country and seeing relatively little new works. Were that all, she could just have tread water: gone along in the style of 1915 until new avant-garde "influences" came handy, then pressed them into the service of a post-war avant-garde style. But she did not. What she did was work out, and work in for the rest of her life, a basically conservative idiom. Now if this chapter and indeed essay have said anything, they have said that idiom means something; and that changing meanings are one of the most interesting aspects of changing style. The root of Vanessa Bell's postwar conservatism appears to have been a heightened sense of what she had to conserve, a sense stimulated in large part by the war. "Surely," she wrote in 1920, "anyone who can think at all must have come to some conclusion as to what they value most in the last five years. It hasn't been possible not to face the question."[54]

Her own conclusion was very clear. She valued a few personal relationships and she valued painting. Those who knew her testify to this: "She instinctively limited her life to the two things she cared about most," her daughter has written, "her painting and her family. The wider world seemed to her to threaten these two points and she appeared to choose the limits of her affection and sympathies."[55] Bell herself testified to it in her letters: always by her preoccupation with family and

work, occasionally with a specific remark. "You don't know how desperate I sometimes get about everything" she wrote during the war, defining everything as "--painting --bringing up the children properly--etc."[56]

These are not very unconventional preoccupations. In fact in some important ways Vanessa Bell was not a very unconventional woman and if we want to understand her we will want to notice them. Of course it would be absurd to call her conventional. If nothing else her sexual independence, asserted in the abandonment, however cautious, of the standard practices of a marriage that so practiced met no one's needs, and feeling her way toward relationships which did, was literally damnable by the standards of her time and class. She did not escape being measured by those standards, and lost an old friend or two by her shortfall; but I think she did not lose much that hurt, nor that she threw much away. Her contempt for the judgments of society she expressed in interesting terms. To a censorious friend of her youth she responded in 1920

> Perhaps the peace and strength you talk of can come in other ways than by yielding to the will of the world. It seems to me at any rate rash to think that it can't . . . . No one can doubt surely that the best people have been of both kinds. At least don't assume that one kind is more likely to be right than the other. The world at large does assume this--and that is why I think its judgments worthless.[57]

There is nothing here that suggests an eagerness to challenge convention, or really even to change it; there is not much elsewhere. The contempt for convention was not only partial, as we will be seeing; it was almost entirely personal.

That removes it from the realm of the revolutionary. And she was not a revolutionary. She sounded facetious, and I imagine was, when she told the assembled students at her sons' Leighton Park School in the mid-20s that "Besides being rather mad, artists are apt to be revolutionaries."[58] She sounds merely distraught and careless writing to Roger Fry in 1912, apparently apropos some especially vitriolic criticism spawned by the second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, to "never mind, we shall get on somehow and perhaps its rather fun to be at war with everyone--We may manage to get down to a lower class if our own won't have us."[59] For Vanessa Bell certainly did not want to get down from the privileges and prerogatives of her class. Nor to improve its lot, still less the lot of any other. She just wanted to improve her own; so that projects which at first flush sound pregnant with social possibility turn out to be very non-doctrinaire; rather like the Omega Workshops. A new Omega in Paris after the war would have been no more revolutionary in intent than the old one in London: "We have a plan by which we may all make money live in Paris

and paint."[60] A communal kitchen at Gordon Square might be described as "one of the ideas that will become universally accepted in 10 years time," but its recommending virtues were that it would save money, employ Duncan's father and--the personal appeal was immense--"one would have no bother of housekeeping, only a menu to choose from."[61] A school at Charleston was to allow her to have her sons educated and off her back and home with her too; it was certainly not to spread any kind of word. Fry was asked to scout acquaintances for prospective pupils and to

> . . make it clear that it is not to be a cranky establishment, merely a very small one--so that children can get real teaching, have their health properly looked after and not have to be so mechanically treated. They can go to church or do anything of the kind their parents want them to.[62]

Bell had not much more of a flag to wave in the most unconventional area of her life, that of sexuality. When she wrote that the nice French governess she hoped Fry might help her find

> . . . would have to be someone who wouldn't mind this rather oddly composed household. But though its odd its not scandalous--I mean she need not be afraid she'd be mixed up in scandals of divorces etc.[63]

she may well remind of one of the libertines of a rather more elevated English class of the 1890s, of whom Barbara Tuchman has said that

> As long as the partners in these intramural infidelities did nothing to provoke a public scandal by outraged wife or cuckolded husband, they could do as they pleased. The overriding consideration was to prevent any exposure of misconduct to the lower classes.[64]

Vanessa Bell's concern would probably have been articulated in terms of avoiding fuss rather than maintaining a posture appropriate to her class. But that, it may be argued, is more a shift of emphasis than a revolution in values. She had rather assumed than declared her independence, and was quite willing to be discreet to save trouble and spare feelings. At first, as we have seen, she assumed secrecy was necessary even within her own circle. Long after that was no longer necessary or possible, she would write to an old and good but not intimate friend outside the circle about some planned travels with Grant and Fry, in this hedging, softening way:

> I don't know of course whether my projected Spanish tour will make me too shocking a companion for you--but after all it's really no worse than many in the past--is it? And really I think I'm getting too old to be considered scandalous any more . . . . Also I daresay all I do can now be put down --with truth--to the necessary consequences of following an artistic career. One must go and see things when one gets the chance and its no good hoping that either you or Clive will ever chaperone me.[65]

This softening discretion probably accounts for the fact that it was not till 1920 that the less credulous and more censorious old friend mentioned above happened

to hear gossip about a departure from standard behaviour that was by then nine years old. And by that time Vanessa Bell's life was much simpler. It would appear that by the end of the war the pressures of that period in her life when three relationships overlapped were something to which she did not care to return. In the very early 20s she was assuring Fry, who was still painfully attached to her and worried that as he had not had a letter she must be having an affair, that "nothing would induce me to start on one if I could possibly help it. You are used to my old ones and they (or it) are all you need reckon with."[66] The emotional demands of the prewar period must have seemed part and parcel of a time when too much was happening. She spoke nostalgically in later life of that time, but rather as people are inclined to speak of carefree youth, to the strains and uncertainties of which they would never willingly expose themselves again. Even before the war she had begun to find London "really a fearful place for getting tired in";[67] by the first years of the war it was "a life of intolerable rush";[68] in the late teens she was upset when her friends and still more her acquaintances descended upon Charleston too much en masse and stayed too long. After the war, though she spent a good deal of time in London, the bustle and distraction and telephones and lack of privacy at Gordon Square were things to which she

increasingly needed alternatives, from which she increasingly wanted to withdraw. It would be a good while yet before she would write only half-facetiously from Charleston that "I expect I shall subside peacefully into never leaving the house except for occasional jaunts abroad";[69] before her preference for her own circle would sharpen into active distaste for much other society ("It feels incredibly remote," she wrote happily from her retreat in the south of France, "I can't believe that anyone will ever come near us, but Duncan says I am too optimistic");[70] or even into violent division, particularly of the art world, into Us and Them: ". . . why was Edward hobnobbing with that little worm. We must find out if possible."[71] But already in the late 'teens and early 20s she was withdrawing when in England into the Sussex countryside where her sister had a house too and which her son would call "Bloomsbury-by-the-sea"; in the course of the decade she would want increasingly in the winter to be abroad, and in 1929 she and Grant built a small house in the Provencal port of Cassis, and she called it "another Charleston in France."[72] So that she was navigating as much as possible between safe harbours, and trimming the pre-war sails of her life back to the things that really mattered to her, family and painting.

These values in her life, and an art perfectly expressive of them: quiet interiors, protected exteriors,

quiet pictures of old friends and children, flowers and food and utensils gathered into still-life, often by a window. If this last is as Richard Shone has remarked a revealing leitmotif,[73] does it not reveal that a still life by a window was what she wanted to live? The luxuriant colour subsided, and so apparently did her enthusiasm for it: on a trip to Berlin in the 20s the pictures she singled out were Manets with "perfect colour and quality, very quiet and direct," early Monets which were "incredibly lovely . . . made one wonder why he had ever taken to bright colours," Renoir "in very quiet colours."[74] Her summary treatments became thorough, so that though she still responded to Matisse she could easily find him slight, and in a show of his in Paris in 1922 liked best some pictures which were "very quiet and restrained in colour" and a large nude which "looks as if it had been pushed further than most things."[75] Her own things were pushed further; we saw it in the 1919 Arum Lilies and can see it to an even greater degree a dozen years later in the Still Life in the Kitchen (1933, figure 52): a serious assembly of objects by a half-curtained, invisible window, each one carefully drawn and described in its individual allowance of space and light.

It is this passion for observation, for the fruits of physical sense, that most allies the work of Vanessa

Bell with that of Virginia Woolf. Woolf in fact responded strongly to just this quality of her sister's painting: to their revelation of a sensibility "to whom the visible world has given a shock of emotion every day in the week."[76] But Virginia Woolf had a writer's mind, as might have been said in Bloomsbury: where great emphasis was placed, at least by the painters, upon the difference between the literary (content-oriented) and visual (purely aesthetic) approaches. And her intensely humanly-interested mind was always alert for a tale to be told in a picture. "What are the people saying," she wrote hopefully about the Bell interiors in a show of recent paintings in 1934, "who are not sitting on that sofa?"[77] Woolf occasionally became irritated, as did the other writers in the circle, when the tale-telling impulse was too firmly or too long rebuffed. "The furious excitement of these people all the winter over their pieces of canvas coloured green and blue is odious," she wrote in 1912.[78] Or again

> Last night Mark Gertler dined here and denounced the vulgarity, the inferiority of what he called 'literature'; compared with the integrity of painting. "For it always deals with Mr. and Mrs. Brown"--he said--with the personal, the trivial, that is; a criticism which has its sting and its chill, like the May sky.[79]

For her part Vanessa Bell, who appears to have had little feeling for literature and none for criticism, would

observe a little coolly that "the writers are all rather cock a hoop" when Woolf's Orlando, Strachey's Elizabeth and Essex and Clive Bell's Proust appeared in a single season.[80] Or again she would complain when the visiting "Woolves" gossiped too long about articles and reviews and other literary shop, that "it really bores me stiff, all this talk about writing that no one can possibly remember in a year's time or less."[81] Virginia Woolf could never forget "all those unrecorded lives,"[82] and that turn of mind was behind her love of London; Bell, perhaps, could never really believe in them, and turned from them to the country. So although the writing and painting of these sisters are clearly sibling, imaging up the same world and similar values, Woolf's engagement and sense of the shift and shimmer of experience could find more stimulus, even criticism, than corroboration in the resolute withdrawal, the silent stability of Vanessa Bell's art.

The rather more cautious, static character of Bell's painting indeed brings her close to the religiosity of Roger Fry. I have no doubt she would have raised her eyebrows at that word. She was not religious; she had been raised so far as religion was concerned to believe nothing; and when, after a brief bout of faith induced by friends when she was an adolescent, she discovered she really did believe nothing, she was relieved. Like Fry

though, she tended to put painting in the place of faith. Painting was what was solid and enduring and lifted one above the cares of the moment. When England had entered World War I and she felt confused and distressed and worried for the children she would say "However it's no good--must simply work and try to find out what is permanent."[83] When in 1918 her third child was imminent and the household was adrift in one of the servant crises that were endemic in those years and Fry was complaining that she had not asked enough questions about him, she would try to explain and then say "I can't paint you see which is the one infallible refuge from such things. I can only do small jobs like woodcutting which don't really occupy all one's mind."[84] Or when her daughter was sick in the 20s:

> Are you able to paint at all? That seems to me the only real cure for unhappiness--at least one gets into another world. I cannot do it when I am actively worried as I am now, but for other pains I think it is the only relief.[85]

And so on. But these are negative examples; she put the same idea of the preoccupying power of art into positive, indeed most attractive and amusing, terms in her mid-20s speech at Leighton Park School. Setting up the standard Bloomsbury dichotomy between the writer or other normal person who perceives the visual world in terms of human significance, and the painter who perceives even the human world primarily as form and colour, she told the

boys that, if they looked about them in this mad painterly way, they could see beauty even in dirt and decay and sides of beef (here a slide of Rembrandt's ox was shown) and would find it nearly impossible to be bored, for

> Even a kitchen coal scuttle may become the most exciting combination of curves and hollows, deep shadows and silver edges, instead of a tiresome thing to be filled with coal, or a half-worn out thing that will soon need renewal.[86]

This is an appropriately homely and domestic counterpart to Fry's feeling for landscape, for the slope of the land and the trees free in the air. As a matter of fact Vanessa Bell's antipathy for open landscape, especially anything with a panorama or a spectacle in it, increased with the years. But there in the security of the kitchen is the same association between creative expression and intense perception of the actual world, coupled with the same longing to escape the impertinences of human significance. And what better formula for this particular kind of spiritual exercise, as Fry might have called it, than the selection (for of course Bell no more painted the mutton in Charleston kitchen than Fry let smokestacks into his landscapes), the arrangement, and the slow steady description of objects that do not move, or change, or distress. Indeed one of the most telling criticisms that has been made of Vanessa Bell's painting is that everything is treated as still life;[87] for her need to <u>still</u> life, to make all things quiet, can be

disturbing when the subject resists the treatment. The Bacchanale painted for Penns-in-the-Rocks (figure 53) is an example. In colour and as part of an overall decorative scheme the panel probably worked, but as an individual image, especially one of happy bacchanalia, it is stiff, straight, embarrassed. With other subjects this peculiar rectitude resonates with meaning and adds to the effectiveness of the image; as, the silent figures fixed in attitudes of annunciation and adoration in the murals for Berwick Church. Interesting: religious images.

There is a rather more negative way in which we might compare Bell to Fry in this connection: about art in particular she tended to be a true believer. In fact because she had a less inquiring mind and because she tended to want to shut things out of a preconceived system rather than to bring them into one, she was even less likely than Fry to suspend judgment; art seemed in an odd way to be even less a matter of opinion than social issues. She certainly had her rigidities about these, and strong feelings about how thing went within her circle. But she seemed generally to recognize that on a wider scale at least, social issues were debatable. So she could say and I think mean "At least don't assume that one kind is more likely to be right than another," or, in a circumstance where she was making less point of

being fair, "I can't say I like the sound of their establishment--but then its not intended to suit my taste."[88] As regards art and artists however she herself tended to assume that one kind was right, and that it corresponded with her taste. As did Fry: and this no doubt contributed to the resentment of the Bloomsbury painters in the London art world between the wars. Strongly self-convinced authority and authoritativeness often make a way for themselves. In 1919 Fry and Bell joined the London Group, an association of painters formed before the war and from which they formerly had been excluded. They quickly became members with whom a young painter felt he had to come to terms. "Fry would sit in the front row when pictures were chosen, and if he didn't put up his hand nobody else ventured to put up theirs," Richard Carline has said. "Vanessa Bell would be sitting right beside him and supporting him in the most uncompromising way."

In other ways, however, Vanessa Bell had nothing of Fry's religiosity about art or anything else. She would never have given flight to religious metaphor, for one thing; in part because it was not in her personal style, in her supple but prosaic vocabulary, to wax metaphorical; in part because, even if it had been her style, that kind of metaphor would not have come handy to the tongue or pen of Julia and Leslie Stephen's daughter. Unlike Fry

she was a second-generation unbeliever, and had gotten different input in the cradle. To this we may add that she was habitually rather silent and inclined to be--not modest--but self-deprecatory; with the related and radical difference from Fry, and Clive Bell, that she was not a proselytizer. And upon these differences may we remark that Fry and Clive Bell were very well trained as men, and Vanessa Bell was a very well-trained woman?

For it is impossible, for me at any rate, to study the life of Vanessa Bell without being impressed with the astonishing degree to which she and her circle accepted conventional Victorian sex-role stereotypes. Since almost everyone then in existence accepted them as well, this would not be astonishing at all except that we have come to expect something different. I imagine we expect it mostly because of the presence in the circle of Virginia Woolf. Indeed Virginia Woolf was almost the only other female presence; it was an almost entirely male circle which, although it absorbed a large number of later-arriving males who had not been friends of Thoby Stephen at Cambridge--viz., Desmond McCarthy, E. M. Forster, J. M. Keynes, Duncan Grant, Roger Fry, David Garnett--never took to its heart a woman, except for Molly McCarthy, who was not one of the two Stephen sisters. This fact alone ought to have made us wonder.

On inspection there begin to appear some reasons for it. Virginia Woolf appears to have been more of a sport in her circle, on feminist issues, than one would have thought. The patent assumption of A Room of One's Own is that women are educable, and as capable of making art as are men; the argument is that they need freedom and independence to do so. The essay is as witty and well-written as it is opinionated, and might therefore have been expected to meet as did Woolf's novels with nods and applause in male Bloomsbury. It is interesting that she herself did not expect that. It was a little ominous, she wrote in her diary,

> that Morgan won't review it. It makes me suspect there is a shrill feminine tone in it which my intimate friends will dislike. I forecast then, that I shall get no criticism, except of the evasive jocular kind, from Lytton, Roger and Morgan; that the press will be kind and talk of its charm and sprightliness; also I shall be attacked for a feminist and hinted at for a Sapphist.[89]

There is no follow-up on this forecast in A Writer's Diary. But one of the jocular nodders, we have already seen--Virginia Woolf herself quoted her subject in Roger Fry--remarked that women seldom learn.[90] An out-member of her circle wrote that women are less aesthetic.[91] Clive Bell was sure that women could be civilized, but only as the intimates of men: "With exceptional luck, aptitude and physique a married woman can retain her civility. Can a maid?"[92] It is not surprising that A Room of One's Own

was one of Clive Bell's least favorite books by Virginia Woolf, and that he wished she would stick to fiction. And in this light it is not surprising either that the circle did not come to include on a basis of something like equality, many more women than the two unusually beautiful and gifted Stephens. For the prevailing predisposition was to find women inferior in the things that were held to matter most.

These of course are the attitudes of men. One might expect that Virginia Woolf's sister, being a woman similarly situated, would have come to some of the same conclusions about the value of women and their experience. There are some qualities in Vanessa Bell's art which encourage this expectation. She produced at least one image which seems to token a feeling for the equality of the sexes: a most untraditionally arranged Adam and Eve (figure 54) done for a decorative project at the Omega, in which the first couple appear each about equally eager and apprehensive about the apple. This is an isolated example, however; if it meant anything (and almost certainly the artist did not mean for it to mean anything), it was probably that in 1913 the painter found sympathetic the idea of equal access to sexual experience; if unaccompanied by other changes of mind and condition, that is a very limited equality. To take more typical examples, we might see a valuation of women and women's

experience in her frankly domestic subject matter, or in her unapologetic embrace of "womens-work" such as stitchery, beadwork, curtain-making: all the Bloomsbury painters designed for these media and applications, but as far as I know the men did not execute works in them; Bell did. Similarly in a portrait like Molly McCarthy (1913) or in a number of other iconographically comparable pictures, we might see a sort of affirmation of the quiet, centered act of sewing: Bell's McCarthy is almost haloed.

But these images again give one pause, by their very typicality, both in her work and in the gallery of standard types of what-women-do. She could conceive of women in somewhat more assertive terms: observe the portraits in figures 55 through 57, with their direct expressions and unsubordinated hands. Observe also that they are exceptions, in her life as in her work: portraits of herself, her sister, and a young physician who pulled Bell's baby out of a sharp decline in 1919. It seems apparent that the idea of the exceptional woman, the woman who has in a sense graduated from being a woman into being something interesting, was operative in Bell as in her circle generally.

For with the exception of the exceptions she did not much relate to women. Virginia Woolf formed very close relationships with women outside her family;

Vanessa Bell was almost entirely male-oriented. There are traces of ambivalence about this, as about so much else in her character. In her early letters to her art-student friend Margery Snowden, Bell was more expansive and self-confident, particularly about her work, than she would be with any of her male correspondents. In those years when, as she later wrote, she felt "one was that terribly low creature, a female painter," so that when she first met Roger Fry she thought "'Here's another of them' . . . and prepared to be silent and afraid,"[93] she seemed especially to value that friendship with a woman, and in the context of it to express a view of men as other than lords of creation. "Really," she joked once after rattling on for some paragraphs about a new technique she had devised, "I am becoming almost as tiresome as a man!"[94] She maintained the friendship with Snowden for many years, too, but not on an intimate basis. After her marriage the lords-of-creation attitude took over; after all, much in Edwardian culture, from clothes to the division of labour, existed to propagate it. So that not only did she speak rather condescendingly ever after of her "old friend Snow," she began to show a marked tendency to condescend to other women, and to do so in a way particularly flattering to men. "They argued as to whether wrong and stupidity were the same thing," she wrote to Clive Bell in the first year of their marriage.

"M. is cleverer than G. but you can imagine the crudities of their talk."[95] Or again

> Irene came back to tea with me . . . she was full of the equality of the sexes. You will think me hard on her but really after my accustomed high male level of conversation I find it practically impossible to get any connected ideas out of females.[96]

This elevation of the male more or less on principle was not just a product of the honeymoon, or of the enthusiasm with which one imagines Clive Bell would have received it. In less obsequious forms it persisted all her life. "It was a stodgy affair with three Stephen women and only one male and he about 80," she once wrote Fry about a teaparty. "However such as he was I talked to him most of the time."[97] There is an obvious payoff in this sort of thing. Its positive pole endears one to men (her "feminine capacity for listening tolerantly to the arguments and ideas of the men," Angelica Garnett has written, "made a special place for her in the heart of Bloomsbury"[98]). And its negative pole establishes one's eagerness to be promoted from the ranks of women. This readiness did not go unnoticed. Fry wrote her in 1920 that he had

> . . . come to the conclusion that you're the only woman I know who has as good a temper as most decent men have--women don't really have good even tempers, they're always suddenly going off the tracks; I suppose its their insides--but you are as equable as anyone I know . . . .[99]

In this dichotomized world of unintellectual and inequable females and intellectual and equable males, Bell crossed the aisle as an exception. Exceptional status cannot be maintained if too many people claim it, and the security of her circle was more threatened for her by women than by men. "I get on with her perfectly well and like her very much," she wrote to Clive Bell when it appeared that Maynard Keynes, who shared a house in Gordon Square and Charleston in the summer, would want to add his future wife to the menage, "but I see that the introduction of anyone, especially female, for more than a week into such an intimate society as ours, is bound to end in disaster."[100] She wrote as much to Keynes, to whom she was then very close, adding the speculation that Grant was "afraid of petticoats in the home";[101] just like one of the boys. Keynes eventually married Lydia Lopokova anyway, but she remained where Vanessa Bell so pointedly painted her in The Memoir Club in the 40s: just outside the circle.

There is another example of this hostility to interlopers in the really extraordinary portrait of Mary Hutchinson (figure 58). Mary Hutchinson was Clive Bell's mistress for many years and as such was more often at Charleston and Gordon Square than Vanessa Bell would have wished. As Clive Bell was a less detachable part of the household than Keynes, "Mary is on us again" became

something of a refrain. Vanessa Bell revealed I think as much about herself and Roger Fry as about Mary Hutchinson when she wrote to him:

> I know you always enjoy abuse of one lady by another, but I will only say that she does as usual strike me as a person of singularly little originative power, and rather irritates me by being so self-conscious to her finger tips of what every fraction of herself is doing and looking . . . .[102]

The portrait which this passage illuminates really should be seen in colour to get the full effect of the flat cat's eyes, dark sinister pupils sharply averted on narrow whites that are painted blue. Even in black and white the bizarre eyes and split-level brows, the pouting lip and pinioned arms, the general impression of recoil, make a remarkably successful record of a failed relationship between painter and subject. At least the portrait was uncommissioned.

Vanessa Bell's woman-related imagery is not generally hostile, as in these latter cases it seems to be; for in general the outer female world did not cut close enough to draw a hostile response. So she could develop a positive feminine imagery--I mean by that imagery dealing with women in contexts in which they have traditionally been involved--without ever having much to do with other women. It is possible, of course, that some of these images of women and children and domestic scenes are only superficially positive. For example, the 1913

Conversation seems at first glance to depict the pleasant and unusual--unusual generally, and for Bell very unusual --subject of three women in intense communication. However on closer inspection one of them, the one of simple dress and fair Greek profile, seems to be trying to get something across to the other, ostentatiously garbed and sharp-nosed, two; as there is a flash of bright canvas in the background, circumstantial evidence would have it that this painting is related in origin to a suggestion Bell made for the cover of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition catalogue in 1912: "I did what seemed to me rather a good idea--a very fashionable woman looking in horror at the announcement of a 2nd Post-Impressionist exhibition. On the whole it was thought too vulgar and I did another head."[103] This characterization of the Post-Impressionist opposition as female, when by all accounts many an opposition made himself most unpleasant at the Grafton Galleries, puts one uncomfortably in mind of the predominantly female make-up of Clive Bell's goody-goody gang. It also makes it difficult to continue to see this image as a positive one.

However in most cases where women or "womanly subjects" appear in the art of Vanessa Bell, the treatment is I am convinced not barbed; it is positive; but it also seems impoverished. She once told Fry that she thought

the only way one could really get to know another person was to be in love with them;[104] and perhaps that is why there were so few women in the world of this very heterosexual woman, and they as it were born into it: her sister, her daughter, later her daughter-in-law and granddaughters. Also why, when her daughter was at a particularly enchanting age so that she felt "really in love with Angelica for the time being," she would conceive of "the real value of femininity" in perfectly sex-polarized and perfectly frivolous terms: "in her I realize . . . the real charm of the female as opposed to the male and what variety and amusement and colour they give to life." She added "But I supposed they don't often, poor creatures."[105] The same disinclination to find even this decorative value in women other than the several exceptions close to her shows in another passage about Angelica dating from a few years later. Angelica was becoming "a grown-up female," she said, and

> It is odd for me, who am used to male society mostly to have a female companion with whom I am really intimate and whom I never find tiresome in a female way! She really does not seem to me to have female vices, although she's very feminine, as she's perfectly honest and I must admit that when they are honest, once in a blue moon, they are enchanting creatures.[106]

And in her art the enchanting creatures who are anyhow so few, do not do much: men are more likely to write, as in her portrait of Leonard Woolf, to play chess,

as in her picture of Roger Fry and Julian Bell; to read, as in the painting of Duncan Grant in the sitting room we saw in figure 10; women are more likely just to sit, perhaps sew (figures 59 and 60). This is not necessarily a less valuable mode, but especially when bound to gender it is a narrow one. And all we have seen suggests that Vanessa Bell herself valued it less; reacted to its narrowness by trying to disassociate herself from it, by treating women as other. Once, casting about for a solution to Fry's loneliness, she would say "What about Madame Doucet? . . . someone simple and affectionate and contented to be domestic . . . [who] would give you a great deal without making it impossible for you to get all you now do from your friends and without getting in the way."[107] Would not such a person be rather like the kitchen coal scuttle Vanessa Bell commended to the boys at Leighton Park School? --Something which does not move or change or distress, which is free--or, since we are talking about human beings, void--of compelling human significance? This may account for the frequency with which women appear in the work of a painter who cannot be said to have valued women. In their place, they posed no threat.

The striking thing about these attitudes is their continuity with the age of Victoria. The sexual dichotomizations and evaluations on which they rest would have had the warm approbation of Mr. and Mrs.

Ramsay, the high Victorian characters in To the Lighthouse who are a double portrait of Vanessa Bell's parents. And as attitudes often do they came in a set, all fresh, or stale, from the same mint: as the superiority of men is accepted, so is the service role of women. Vanessa Bell, unlike her mother and perhaps because of her effort to except herself from the general run of women, did a good deal of wriggling and chafing in her role as domestic manager; she complained of the distraction and irritation of it, she tried to find ways and means to reduce it; but, like her mother, she never seems to have asked herself why she was the only one who was doing it. Hiring, firing, superintending servants, ordering meals, keeping accounts, dealing with landlords and repairs, all the things that had to be done to keep post-Victorian homes running smoothly and comfortably for every one in them, she did.

> And no one lifted a finger to help her. Clive was always very generous financially but not really practically--he just didn't spend time doing things that bored him. And Duncan . . . she always felt Duncan should be spared things like that.

She thought Duncan should be spared: why he and not she, or rather, why either at the other's expense? Their daughter's remark touches perhaps on a tension in Bell's life that we marked near the beginning of our consideration of it. She stubbornly protected her work--almost her right to work, her need to work--and yet as Shone has

said she neurotically depreciated her gifts.[108] The tendency to describe almost every ongoing project as a failure became less marked as she grew older, but it never really left her. "I'm glad you liked my woodcut," is a fairly typical remark to Fry. "I don't know why but I thought it was a failure."[109] And this uncertain valuation of the results of the process she valued so much, took one of its most significant forms in her assumption that Grant's work was more important than her own. It shows in any number of ways. She was anxious that his paintings be seen in Paris where they could be properly appreciated; she did not in this context mention her paintings. She included in her image of The Memoir Club Grant's images of Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey; she had made memorable portraits of these sitters herself. And she felt he should be spared; that, again as her daughter has said, "Duncan was the great man, and should have all the time he needed for painting."

The judgment of art history, for what its hierarchial judgments are worth, will probably agree with the (generally unspoken) judgment of Bell and her contemporaries that Grant was the better painter; at any rate, the more fluent, imaginative, and confident painter. The effect upon those qualities of expectation and privilege is an important consideration which we cannot and perhaps need not pursue here. But no one I think

would suggest that Grant was the more serious painter, that his work appears to have been any more important to him than Bell's was to her. Nor was she sparing him to win the family bread, or to work for the wider good. She appears to have been sparing him essentially because she believed that what was personally important to him, was more important than what was personally important to her. Clive Bell, whose work she did not even especially admire, was spared because he expected to be. So that a woman who at a conscious level did not believe in self-sacrifice went far beyond sharing, for reasons which must have much to do with expectations and self-esteem.

There were really two kinds of domestic activity which the men avoided or were spared. One was the necessity of parenting in an active way: spending regular time with their children, dealing with their nurses and governesses, teaching them to read, making decisions and arrangements about their health and their educations; being there for them. Vanessa Bell showed signs of wishing Clive Bell were of more practical assistance, e.g. writing him from southern France that "I wish you could arrange it all but I don't suppose you'll want to,"[110] or to Fry from Charleston "Do tell me what you think. Clive will give no advice at all."[111] No doubt he did what he felt he could, but as the pessimism of these examples implies, the children generally might have

been immaculately conceived insofar as anyone but their mother was assumed to be responsible for anything more trying than writing cheques for their expenses or less pleasant than loving them.

And their mother generally shared the assumption. "I feel I've brought this creature on myself and ought to bear the brunt of her," she wrote Keynes in 1919.[12] Her feeling may be wide of the mark biologically, but emotionally it makes a certain sense. It recognized reality, for one thing: the reality that she was going to bear the brunt whether she rationalized it or not. Besides, she had carried and borne the children herself, and she loved them very much. She seems further to have had stronger parenting impulses than any of her friends and relations; at least, she was about the only one who could enjoy small babies, although she got as tired of children of any age as did anyone else when she had to be too constantly with them. Her love and feeling of responsibility for her children was called in Bloomsbury, as it would have been in Kensington, maternal instinct; and was quite admired, generally from a safe distance.

It is difficult to separate emotion from convention in a case like this. We can only recognize it as a complex situation, and as a problematic one for a woman who missed her children badly when they were not with her, and yet was frustrated at many turns by the demands their

presence made upon her so much more than upon anyone else. "I have begun to paint again," she wrote from Paris after having "a terrific dose" of children with no governess during her first winter in France, "and feel more myself in consequence, in spite of no family who are after all more of an afterthought than one's painting."[113]

Her other category of responsibility was even more an afterthought, which makes her automatic acquiescence in it even more remarkable. She loved the children, she did not love household management: convention was here the sole precept, but it was iron. It held for her: "I'd give a good deal for a respite from housekeeping and family managing generally, but I see that will never happen in this life."[114] It held for other women: "If Mary lives at 46 I should make her do the housekeeping."[115] The more did it hold in the minds of those around her. Duncan Grant was a generous companion who did the housekeeping when Bell took to her bed, but when she returned to normal, so did he. Viriginia Woolf loved her sister passionately, and was surely more sensitive than any other in their circle to the trap of angel-in-the-house in which her sister moved. Yet even Woolf was, it appears, almost irresistably drawn to that ancient image of "natural woman" which must account for Bell's peculiarly traditional assignments in a circle which prided itself upon questioning precepts.

> I always measure myself against her and find her much the largest, most humane of the two of us . . . and how proud I am of her triumphant winning of all our battles; as she takes her way so nonchalantly, modestly, almost anonymously, past the goal, with her children around her.[116]

The mental chain linking womanliness and maternity and domestic management held even for Virginia Woolf. Roger Fry once wrote Vanessa Bell that he and her sister had been discussing "why you never had any sufficient freedom (of your time)"; they put it down, he said, to maternal instincts.[117] The writer Gerald Brenan remembered "Virginia telling me how incomplete she felt in comparison to her sister Vanessa, who brought up a family, managed her house, and yet found plenty of time left in which to paint."[118] That these recollections are inconsistent, as are similar ones by other people, on the effect of domesticity upon Bell's time and autonomy, reflects I suspect the wavering interface between myth and reality. Something in all of us, perhaps, wants to believe in superwoman: not only in the "new woman" who has plenty of time for painting, but in the ancient, enigmatic, paradigmatic beauty of the earth mother.

Given the powerful undercurrent of that image, given its tributary complex of conventional expectations for the role of wife and mother--expectations that were held though held uneasily by Bell and everyone around her, and a role only somewhat modified from that played out so

winningly by her own mother that Carolyn Heilbrun has spoken of the need to "counter the enormous beauty of Mrs. Ramsay,"[119]--given all these, it may be that Vanessa Bell felt that, as she had given birth to children, she had given birth to Charleston too; and ought to bear the brunt. "I often think it's not unlike family life in my mother's time in the summer holiday," she said, "an odd mixture of people and all rather a hurly-burly."[120] Her mother's role in her mother's time was described by her sister this way.

> . . . she was keeping what I call in my shorthand the panoply of life--that which we all lived in common--in being. I see now that she was living on such an extended surface that she had not time, nor strength, to concentrate, except for a moment . . . . Can I ever remember being alone with her more than a few minutes? Something was always interrupting.[121]

Somewhat modified, I said of this role and the expectations which created it; certainly so far modified that the Bell children could remember time alone with their mother, certainly so far modified that she had time alone to herself, that she perceived the option of saying no, at least to those outside her family, and increasingly exercised it. And so far modified that an exceptional activity like painting could be carried on in uneasy equality with the domestic ones. And paint she did; she did a great deal of work--respect for hard work was another legacy of the past; and it could make her happy.

But so far unmodified was that role that she felt herself often vulnerable upon the extended surface, and the studio became more and more a haven from interruption and interference. This is one reason I think that as time went on she made less and less effort to paint outdoors, even in the garden, especially when she was at Charleston: something was always interrupting. It may also be a reason why her late work is generally thought--by those who have seen it, for it is not much collected--to have deteriorated: the withdrawal was too complete.

For partial withdrawal, it must be clear by now, there had always been. The extended surface had always extended just so far and no further, the common life had never included much more than home and family and friends, more or less narrowly defined; an invisible circle traced round it had long since excluded, and she had long since been exclusive. If her exclusiveness has not the same flavour as Clive Bell's, it is not because she was less conscious of the distinctions that might be made between herself and others. She was as proud to be <u>au mouvement</u>, as complaisant of class; she had a most unpleasant way of categorizing Jews, and it would take a thick-skinned American indeed to read through her correspondence at total ease. It has even been my unhappy lot to discover that she shared with Clive Bell a depreciatory view of women. If her exclusiveness has,

nonetheless, a different and sweeter flavour, it is because all that is kept out there. Rather than mocking at what she despised, she tended especially in her art to turn to what she loved; or at least, to what she did not fear.

Eventually, it seems, she turned too far for her art to retain either its significance for many other people or its freshness as self-expression. Some degree of engagement appears to have been salutary: that is perhaps what makes her late murals at Berwick Church describable as among the best things she had ever done. It is surely part also of what makes the paintings of the early 'teens those to which people today most respond: because for all the reticences and the tensions in those paintings, they are her most open. It is no accident that Conversation and Street Corner Conversation, both 1913, are the only two of her images in which people are actually talking, and people beyond the circle, at that.

But the voices were too loud, the experiment with freedom too exhausting, the example of upheaval too appalling, and she returned to what made her more comfortable. "What I really enjoy," she responded to a description of great heights and panoramas sent home from Fry's travels, "is driving as I did this evening at 18 or 20 miles an hour through twisting lanes with no object but to avoid main roads."[122] Her terms for travel and

landscape were at one with her terms for life. While the balance between engagement and withdrawal lasted she made on her own terms art that is gravely positive, often beautiful, and touching all the more for the conflicts it holds at bay. Look at the Interior with a Table in figure 46: a room cool and humane and untroubled by humanity; pools of reflected colour, a view on a calm warm cradling landscape; free but safe, enclosed but unconfined; that is the feeling for which the art of Vanessa Bell seems always to be reaching.

V. CONCLUSION

> In that protected garden of culture . . . the cultivation of beauty was a religion and a highly protestant one, a violent and queasy aversion from the jocular vulgarity of Philistinism. The devotees of this creed cultivated the exotic and precious with all the energy and determination of a dominant class. With the admirable self-assurance which this position gave them they defied ribaldry and flouted common sense. They had the courage of their affectations; they openly admitted to being "intense."[1]

This passage was not written, as it might have been, in rather sniping tribute to the Bloomsbury circle. It was written by Roger Fry, in rather backhanded tribute to the high Victorian milieu of Little Holland House: where Tennyson was the poet and Watts the painter and Julia Margaret Cameron the gifted exception who might amaze without altering one's essential view of women. There people were so sentimental and so "excessively careful to conform to a certain code of morals," that to Fry, writing his preface to Hogarth's edition of Mrs. Cameron's photographs in 1926, it seemed seen through a spy-glass backwards: excessively distant. He sounded admirably self-assured himself as he found "something touching and heroic about the naive confidence of these people. They are so unconscious of the abyss of ridicule which they skirt, so bravely provincial."[2]

Ah but do we not see the kinship? It is literal, for Julia Margaret Cameron was Julia Stephen's aunt, her sister the mistress of Little Holland House. But it is spiritual as well. For not only is it apparent in retrospect, as Clutton-Brock has remarked, how much the members of the Bloomsbury circle resemble one of those large Victorian families to whom the bonds of consanguinity and "connection" were the most significant human ties;[3] it is also apparent with what--not naive necessarily, but resolute confidence they skirted the abyss of change. They were so bravely English.

"Behind the gaiety certain things were taken so very much for granted," Quentin Bell writes of Roger Fry.[4] By all Fry's circle, I think: and not only the honesty, tolerance, good humour Bell mentions, but privilege, security, peace. It was these that they spent, before the war, upon that degree of audacity to which the security and stable culture which had produced them, inclined them. It was these that after 1919 they did their best to conserve and maintain.

Both responses were in a characteristically English spirit of compromise. We may generalize I think that most of the members of this circle wished to be more socially and politically generous than they perceived the previous generation to have been. This shows in the political activities of several members and in the apolitical

perceptions of several others. At least in a rare moment, it could occur to Virginia Woolf to wonder why the poor did not drive them out of their houses with knives; to Vanessa Bell that, if conscientious objectors were obliged to do alternative service "I don't see that they would be in a very different position from that in which the poor are now, whom we practically compel to work."[5] She added that "it would of course be quite horrible," but she had voiced a perception which would likely have been foreign to her parents. Her parents' children also achieved a substantial degree of social liberation for themselves and their children: extended the possibilities of what might be said and done so that, as Virginia Woolf remarked with reference to the changing climate in literature, it was no longer necessary to talk about the weather or its equivalent in respectability, the whole visit through.[6]

But there are some important continuities. The degree to which the social climate they cultivated was at radical variance from that which they left behind can be exaggerated. Describing the early gatherings in Bloomsbury, Vanessa Bell wondered

> what those who imagine a rarified atmosphere of wit, intellect, criticism, self-conscious brilliance and never any toleration of ordinary dullness would have thought of the rather stiff young ladies to whom it never occurred not to talk about the weather . . . .[7]

Nor, even much later, did it occur to one of the young ladies or to most of her friends to question traditional sex stereotypes in any thoroughgoing way. A lingering double standard, it may be argued, was part of what gave Vanessa Bell some particularly anxious seasons around 1911; for, in a circle which assumed the value of openness and prided itself upon bawdiness, she was assuming that her relationship with Roger Fry "must be kept as far as possible secret . . . . Partly I think I was uncertain how Clive would take it and could not then face a difficult situation--partly many friends and relations would of course have been terribly shocked."[8]

Now to notice the peculiar position of women in this circle, or any circle testing sexual conventions, is not to minimize the feat of these people in rejecting the claims of jealousy, adjusting their relationships as much as they could to mutual satisfaction, and living to be old friends. Quite the contrary: it is almost incredible. It will only seem the more remarkable if, instead of referring blithely to, say, "The Bloomsbury Gavotte--a gracefully romantic dance in which the participants couple, separate, and go on to another partner without ever having to leave the floor,"[9] we realize how humanly difficult the whole thing must have been. "It is an odd disease we all suffer from," Vanessa Bell wrote to Roger Fry in 1915, a few years into a long struggle

with a jealousy to which he would still be susceptible ten years later. "I see one can't always expect to be rational and when one isn't I think one must just treat it as a disease and wait till it gets better."[10] He did wait, and she waited it out with him, and they were rewarded with a friendship which meant a great deal to both of them.

But our admiration for these happy endings (or our astonishment or disappointment, or whatever else our personal values may predispose us to feel) need not blind us to their inconsistencies as regards women. Especially since, in areas of belief and behaviour other than equal access to sexual experience--an access which was, at that, rather moderately exercised in Vanessa Bell's case --the members of this circle remained surprisingly attached to conventional assumptions about the nature of the sexes. They may well have rejected more or less collectively, as we know Virginia Woolf did individually, the rigid segregation of sex-roles implicit in Leslie Stephen's reported belief that "the androgynous is nearly always dangerous,"[11] or indeed in their young contemporary Rupert Brooke's assertion that "this mixing of the sexes is all wrong . . . manliness in man is the one hope of the world."[12] They would have rejected it not only for its grandiloquence upon subjects on which they were not inclined to wax grandiloquent, but because

rejecting rigid notions of manliness meant the men might have fuller lives.

"The possession of such a sensitive apprehension," Roger Fry advised his students in last last lectures at Cambridge, "is one of the marks of a man of culture, a necessary complement to the possession of a well-stored and logical mind."[13] This duality may well give us pause, as may the implication that sensibility is something that is added, however necessarily, to your basic, well-stored, logical mind. What surely must give us pause is his clear implication that mind is male. This reflects more, it should be clear by now, than the likelihood that he was addressing a male audience. The men of the Bloomsbury circle did not wish to be denied sensibility, but it was to be firmly in the service of sense; and if they embraced certain kinds of intuition and emotion, it is unlikely that they would have called these, or any part of themselves, feminine. For that was not a compliment. The feminine, when it was not purely decorative, was associated with instinct. Instinct, unlike cultured sensibility, was definitely suspect. Women seldom learn, Fry said, but they have an instinct; aesthetic apprehension, he also believed, is "as much detached from the instinct as any human activity we know."[14] To Clive Bell, similarly, it was the fact of "unconsciousness," the lack of "critical sense," based

ultimately upon the lack of "intelligence," that barred from profundity the art of those he called savages.[15]

These kinds of ideas should be kept in mind when we read, as dippers into the Bloomsbury bibliography will read again and again, references to Vanessa Bell's mysterious and convenient "maternal instincts"; or Lytton Strachey's I suspect only half-joking characterization of her "dumb animality--like some creature aux bois I've often thought";[16] or even her sister's surely more than half-joking speculation, in one of those charming catalogue introductions, that the enigmatic painter was not an (ordinary) woman at all, but "a mixture of goddess and peasant, treading the clods with her feet and with her hands shelling peas."[17] For the unarticulated and apparently unexamined assumption that to be a "real woman" is to be a very particular kind of animal, with very particular kinds of roles to play out at the bidding, one supposes, of its "insides," had as we have seen a profound effect on Vanessa Bell's life. That life was as a consequence much different than generalizations about androgynous lives in action, or moral adventures in which women and men are on a completely equal footing, or matriarchal subcultures in central London, would lead us to expect. This issue has been stressed in this essay more as an effort to contribute to the emerging history of this circle, and more

importantly to the emerging history of women's experience, than as a criticism of the circle itself; for as Noel Annan has very wisely observed, it is supercilious folly to criticize a previous generation for not adopting what we ourselves have only just accepted as normal.[18] But it is no more useful to praise our predecessors as pioneers in country they have not yet sighted, and we ourselves have only begun to explore.

Sex-stereotyping is of course only one of several ways in which the members of this circle were very much what Victorian childhoods had made them. Class assumptions also lingered. "The shoddy old fetters of class," as Virginia Woolf called them,[19] had still and all their attractions as shoes, and hardly a one in this circle did not take a certain pleasure in knowing and showing where she or he stood. That pleasure was no doubt a root of the attraction of so many of them to the English and French 18th centuries. Virginia Woolf liked not a little to talk about the l'Etangs, her greatgrandparents in the court of Marie Antoinette; Lytton Strachey to specify his relationship to "a great tradition--the aristocratic tradition of the 18th century," which sadly by his Victorian boyhood had "reached a very advanced state of decomposition." He could hardly have found a more sympathetic audience than the Memoir Club to whom to confide that

> My father and my mother belonged by birth to the old English world of country-house gentlefolk--a world of wealth and breeding, a world in which such things as footmen, silver and wine were the necessary appurtenances of civilized life. But their own world was very different: it was the middle-class professional world of the Victorians, in which the old forms still lingered, but debased and enfeebled, in which Morris wallpapers had taken the place of Adam panelling, in which the spoons and forks were bought at the Army and Navy stores.[20]

Roger Fry too, we have seen, looked back a bit wistfully to a time when, as he thought, money and taste were coterminous. He had to look past the 19th century to find it; it was the democratization of taste in that bumptious era, as Fry saw it, that finally drove the artist to cut loose from society: because with the decline of the aristocrat and the rise of the plutocrat, society no longer deserved art.

In each case, we may observe, these middle-class people identify up, not down. And as might be expected none among them, with the exceptions of the socialist Leonard Woolf and perhaps the gentle liberal E. M. Forster, can be said to have looked forward with much enthusiasm to an egalitarian society. Even Woolf of course was a Fabian and English Labour Party socialist--that is a gradualist; not an advocate of revolution. The rest, even Clive Bell in his salad days, probably wished to see things more free and more fair; to see ameliorated

those inequalities which produced conspicuous suffering and diminished "one's pleasure in being English," as one of their friends put it.[21] But they surely did not wish to be done with remembered glory--"It must be wretched never to have had the England of the governing classes," Julian Bell wrote witheringly of more anxious young radicals in 1935--or with the pleasures of privilege; or with a system that would shelter it.

The most active, externalized expression of the liberal sentiment among the elders is in Keynesian economics. These, if I correctly understand their direction, proposed that planning and intervention should replace the unimpeded functioning of the market, which in the 19th century had been more generally agreed to be sacrosanct. An important shift, certainly, but one that in Keynes' case at least sought not so much a newer world as a tidied-up, rationalized old one. Employment would be full but classes would remain. "Taking London as our example," Keynes said expansively in the 30s,

> we should demolish the majority of the existing buildings on the South Bank of the river from the County Hall to Greenwich and lay out these districts as the most magnificent, the most commodious and healthy working district in the world.[22]

And in this paternally rearranged world, or across the river from it, there would still be room as Joan Robinson has said "for a rich man to enjoy his wealth in a civilized manner."[23]

Among the artists and writers of Keynes' circle the values were generally similar: more diffuse, less systematic, less tied to policy; far more passive and perhaps more impulsive. With some generally egalitarian principles they might have tended in principle to agree; but one feels the accord would have been similar to that of Vanessa Bell with feminism. "She would have agreed," her daughter has said, "but she wasn't really interested." In basic economic change it was not really in the self-interest of these people to be interested. With whatever variations of sophistication various members of the circle might have expressed it, I fancy most shared something like Molly McCarthy's feeling that "We were liberals--but not socialists. England for me was cut up into classes--that were not unnatural as the socialists avowed--we were like flowers in the border arranged by botany."[24]

As for the inclination to pacifism that accounted for their sharpest political break with the society of which they were part: well, just as happy, and, one imagines they hoped, responsible habitation of this late Victorian flower-border assumed the persistence of privilege, it prayed for the preservation of peace. War trampled personal liberty: that was as we have seen a critical factor in the resistance of this circle to World War I. Duncan Grant would consider manufacturing

armaments, Adrian Stephen consider using them, if they might retain their right to choose. Further war was seen as bestial, as the epitome of ugliness and unreason. Its inconsistency with a whole preferred way of seeing the world is admirably illustrated, as Quentin Bell suggests to us, by painting that is pacific even when it is not pacifist. Indeed, even when it is in a way a contribution to a war effort: for no more striking example of this determined passivity could be found than a picture which Duncan Grant painted as an official war artist in 1940. It is a picture of a gun drill--an interior scene--in which almost everyone stands still, and straight, and as many people as possible have their hands folded behind their backs.

Finally, to the politically and economically-inclined minds among these friends, war not only impinged upon personal liberty and disturbed the personal peace, it depleted the general reserves: those reserves which funded the privilege of the upper classes and which, properly capitalized and accumulated, might eventually raise the standard of living enjoyed by the lower ones. Keynes and Clive Bell both expressed the anxiety that World War I had squandered the future.* It was a modern

---

*This is a major theme of Keynes' Economic Consequences of the Peace (1919) and is expressed as well in Bell's "Before the War," which appears in Since Cezanne, 1918.

and less territorial sort of Pax Britannica they seem to have imagined, where reason would moderate--perhaps replace--power, but similar benefits would continue to accrue to governing and civilizing elites.

The art of the Bloomsbury circle, as Duncan Grant's Gun Drill shows, is the image of these politics. At its most audacious it finds a middle ground between the striking and the stable; in its mature forms it settles firmly for stability. Moderation, resolution, humanistic motif, the pleasant and the pacific are prevailing characteristics. This art always kept at least one foot on the ground, and the ground was English soil. It is true, as a contemporary critic objected when Clive Bell claimed that Duncan Grant was solidly in the English tradition (the "real" English tradition of Constable and Gainsborough), that post-1910 Bloomsbury painting is unthinkable without French example.[25] But there is always a sense that what Forster called continental enthusiasms[26] are brought back; rather like fruits of empire.

And to what were the aesthetic spoils brought back? Often, to the arts of use: like their grandparents in the English avant-garde, the Pre-Raphaelites, the Bloomsbury painters seem to have found no inconsistency in seeing themselves as the most advanced painters in the land and in hiring themselves out as decorators. And

often, the spoils were brought back to serve what another grandparent, William Morris, called even as he worked for it "the swinish luxury of the rich";[27] only, being as English and practical as Morris but far less interested in social change, the Bloomsbury painters served luxury--served, after all, themselves and their friends--with none of Morris' alienation. And the spoils were brought back always, for all the francophilic grousing of some of them about it, to the protected garden; to the right little, tight little English island which geography and history have conspired to make, like one of those paintings by Vanessa Bell, at once enclosed and unconfined.

The feeling for security; the reaching for that which is both positive and private; for a balance between demands upon social conscience and attachment to personal privilege: these it seems likely are factors in the present Bloomsbury boom. After all it is not an isolated phenomenon. A lot of other cultural expressions of the 20s and 30s have been enjoying revivals as well, and I suspect that the art and ideas of Bloomsbury commend themselves to many contemporary imaginations for the same reasons as does, say, art deco. They are post-Victorian but in a sense pre-modern responses; they stand this side of what Barbara Tuchman has called the band of scorched earth that separates the world before the war

from our own,[28] but they stand as survivors. And the tales they tell and the compromises they spell must have a special appeal in an age similarly traumatized and less securely grounded.

Similarly the family feeling among these friends must commend itself to many uneasy in an age increasingly rootless, mobile, fragmented. Very few people nowadays enjoy the pleasures of connection: the easy visits, long holidays, extended correspondence, relationships and loyalties sustained over half a century and more. The experience of circles like this one looks from our distance very close and warm. That same experience, it may be said, reflected the weakening of the structure it recalls, for it involved the elevation of affinity grouping over that of biological kinship. But as so often with this circle what we are seeing is a compromise, a moment of balance, in which much of the form and content of the parent system is conserved.

That is where much of the bitterness towards Bloomsbury must have entered in. What the Victorians called connection could and did become what we call contacts; could take the gross form of favoritism, self-advertisement, a sort of aesthetic nepotism. It can hardly be denied that, as contemporary outsiders complained, we are dealing with a circle of people who were in a position to publish and review and introduce and

illustrate each other's books, to buy each others' paintings and decorate each other's homes, to set up structures (as the Woolfs' Hogarth Press, Fry's Omega, Keynes' London Artists' Association) which would support each other's work; and, having done all that, to declare each other in print the foremost artists of their generation. And they were people with the self-confidence, often enough obtuse, to equate personal taste and personal loyalty with excellence. John Rothenstein may sound sour and snide in a passage like this:

> One of these days it will be possible to arrive at a clearer idea of "Bloomsbury" art criticism by considering it in the light of the personal relationships of certain of its leading members to the artists whose work came under the notice of The Nation and its successor, but this, for obvious reasons, is a question that cannot now be publicly discussed.[29]

However he had a point. Vanessa Bell herself was once startled by the parochial view of modern English art suggested by a list of photographs Clive Bell had asked her to obtain for an article he was writing on the subject for L'Art Vivant. She would get the photographs, she said, "Only, without being too modest, we feel it would really be better wouldn't it to distribute them more equally--it seems a little marked, really to have three by me and only one by Steer."[30] Marked the parochialism of Bloomsbury criticism was, self-convinced and partly for that reason convincing; we want to keep

that in mind. But to focus too insistently upon this equation of loyalty and quality, or to characterize it as does a particularly hostile critic as "a substitution of the socio-personal standards for the relevant ones,"[31] is to ignore several things. It ignores a response like that of Vanessa Bell to Clive Bell's list:

> . . . You say you want two each from Sickert, Dobson, Epstein and two younger men--one each from Roger, Steer and Paul Nash--four from Duncan and three from me. We suggest having two each of the people you name, one from Matthew Smith, one Roberts, one Gertler, and one John.[32]

And she was hardly the most generous member of the circle. It is not hard to find examples of support extended to outsiders, nor of hard knocks and significant silences exchanged within. A focus on parochialism also ignores the willingness to share: at least among those similarly situated, as in the applied arts which took up the central section of this essay; and on a broader basis too, in proposals as grand as those of Keynes for the British Arts Council or as local as that of Grant for a lending library of contemporary prints and drawings for Cambridge undergraduates.

But perhaps most important, an absorption with Bloomsbury parochialism ignores the degree to which aesthetic judgments are <u>always</u> related to personal ones. "The relevant standards" sounds loftily absolute and independent; it is a concept worthy of Roger Fry himself.

But really it may be questioned whether the success and survival of art is ever unconditioned either by the things people feel for each other, or the things they believe: by the micro-political considerations of the art world or by macro-political conditions in the wider society which the arts, in one way or another, in service or in rejection, always reflect and express.

It is because the arts are expressive in this way that the painting of The Memoir Club, for example, or any of the works of visual art to survive from this circle, have an unintended value for us. It is intimate art, but by its very insistence upon intimacy it speaks as eloquently of what is without as of what is within. It is the art of one corner of one community in what Leopold Schwarzchild called a world in trance.[33] Schwarzchild was angered--he was an anti-fascist German writing in the early 1940s and had every reason to be angered--by that liberal world-view which wished not to see the world in terms of power; which, as he thought, turned its back upon mounting destruction. We might with less political intent, or at least with less intent to place political blame, call it a world in pause, a world between wars; a world trying to make the best of things. "So that is what I think about force and violence," E. M. Forster wrote in 1938. "It is, alas! the ultimate reality on this earth. But it does not always get to the front. Some

people call its absences 'decadence': I call them 'civilization.'"[34]

It is this effort to be civilized, to lead a "life of rational and pacific freedom,"[35] to make the best of privilege and to bring into the place of faith a love of beauty and truth, that is it seems to me the enduring attraction and accomplishment of the Bloomsbury circle. For this effort the visual arts speak more persuasively, because more positively, than Clive Bell's book. That the effort was partial, that it was largely personal, that it has not solved the world's problems, may be granted without hesitation; neither has anything else. But it may do more than appeal to that in us which would not mind backing out of the 20th century: it may also represent a middle and humane way into it; a more successful way than many; a point for the enterprise.

"I call them civilization," Forster went on, "and find in such interludes the chief justification for the human experiment. I look the other way," he continued,

> until fate strikes me. Whether this is due to courage or cowardice in my own case I cannot be sure. But I know that, if men had not looked the other way in the past, nothing of any value would survive.[36]

Something of this modest and resolute optimism touched much of what most of this circle made; it made their works positive, and that makes it in certain ways not only instructive but exemplary. We have come for a

complex of reasons to adore alienation; that is our totem and tribal deity. The members of this circle made no little contribution to this state of affairs: they, and their historians, like the actors and historians of many sequences and subsequences of 20th century art, have much preferred to dwell for instance upon the stupidity of establishment reaction to the Post-Impressionist exhibitions, on a situation so bad that the director of the Tate Gallery would not hang a Cezanne and in 1921 refused the gift of one, than upon the fact that Roger Fry was offered the directorship of that very gallery in 1911, a few months after the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition for which he is supposed to have sacrificed his reputation. Whatever postures were occasionally struck or lip services paid, these artists were not, I have tried to show, very convincing in the roles of alienated artists.

And surely that is a desirable state of affairs. Surely it is why Bishop Bell of Chichester thought it was possible to bridge the gulf between the artist and the church, to reverse the process of "stripping the walls of their colour and their teaching":[37] because he had been able to find English artists, not alone those of Bloomsbury, who were not averse to performing that ancient function. Surely that is why Keynes could see the artist as both servant and his own master, as leading

us into fresh pastures and teaching us to love and enjoy; because the art that he knew was positive art, an art of love and enjoyment. It is a modest enough kind of art, as Alan Gowans has remarked of the art of the French intimistes; but a far from contemptible one.[38]

So one thinks of the soberly pretty pictures, of the cheerfully recollective decorations, of the softening, cradling ambience of curtains and cushions and covers and painted plates. One thinks too of the talk; because if we are to skirt the abyss of blame, or indeed that of excessive praise, we want always to remember that historic figures however illustrative are not simply ciphers to the patterns we perceive. The men and women of the Bloomsbury circle were real people, adapting to their own time without the advantages of hindsight and with such vision as they could bring to it. All that talk: all that intense interest in themselves, all those furious discussions about pure aesthetics, all that effort to make a life and art independent of all they seem now to relate to; a private life and a pure art that in a social sense would not signify.

I hope this essay has suggested that art and art theories, and the lives of artists and art theorists, do signify, and in very many ways. I hope it has suggested too that some of the ways in which the experience and expression of the Bloomsbury circle are significant, may

be worthy of cultivation. If some of the theories of aesthetics spun within it seem fallacious or misleading in retrospect, perhaps we should take the long view of Charles Darwin, who said that false views have at least this merit: everyone takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness.[39] That thought has reassured me in my own spinning. And if some of the less articulated but no less operative theories of women's nature that were accepted in this circle seem to have had a less than salutary effect upon the strength and self-esteem of the woman through whose experience I have approached it, perhaps we should spend a final word upon the obvious fact, like most such facts easy enough to forget, that real life is never so clear as all that. Vanessa Bell was in some ways a victim; but she was also a figure of power, and even more, of complexity, whom simple definitions fail miserably to fix. She was gentle and vicious, humorous and neurotic, warm and paranoid, dependable and evasive. She was very beautiful, and several people have said that when she chose to speak, which was usually only when she knew exactly what she was going to say, she had the most beautiful voice they had ever heard; she has left us silent self-images of, as she put it, rather a grim character.[40] She was the very paradigm of Bloomsbury withdrawal, for she restricted her life deliberately, almost alarmingly; planted round it a palisade, her

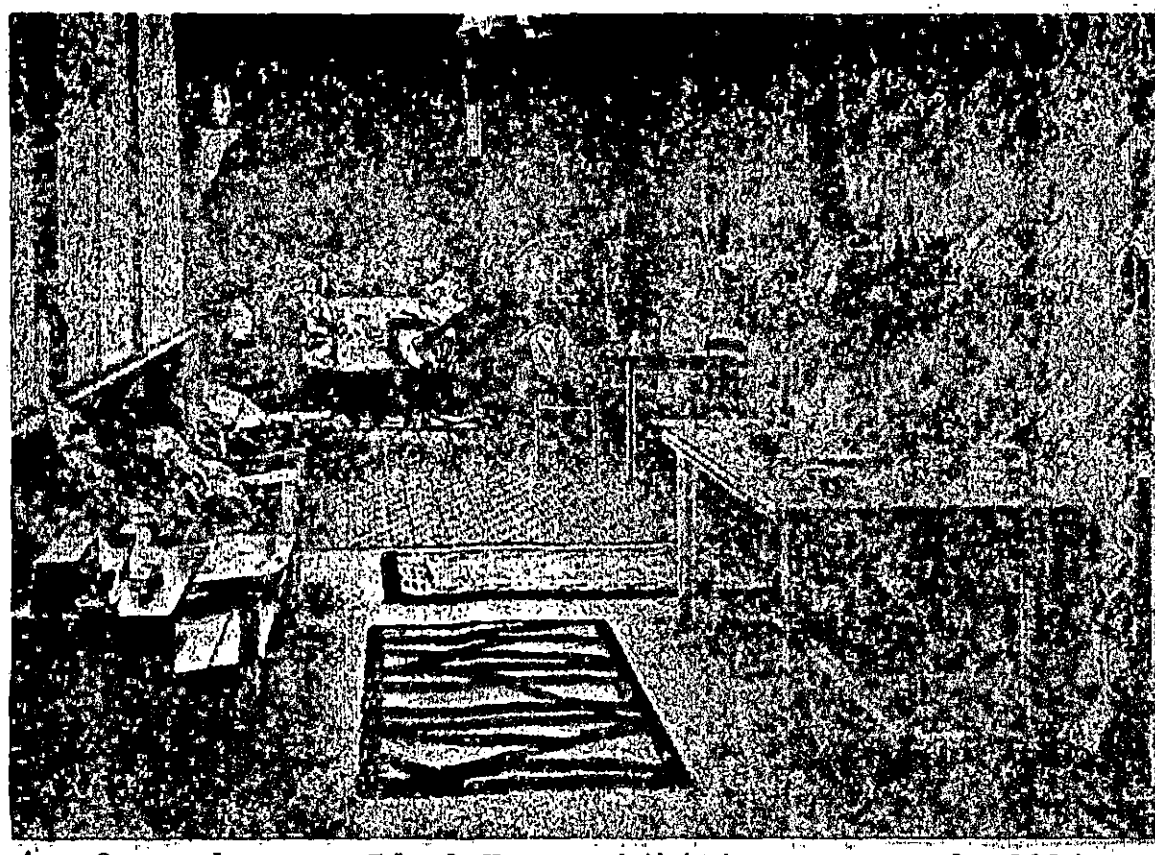
daughter has said, which cast its shadow both without and within.[41] But within that compass was richness; richness ringed by fear. These paradoxes describe this strange and beautiful woman no more finally than would one-dimensional tags. But at least they remind us that, however helpful to our understanding of this period and of women's experience within it is a study of the life and art of Vanessa Bell, she was not a case or a specimen but a human being. Her life and art may teach, puzzle, anger, delight; she herself eludes us. She would have wished to.

# # #

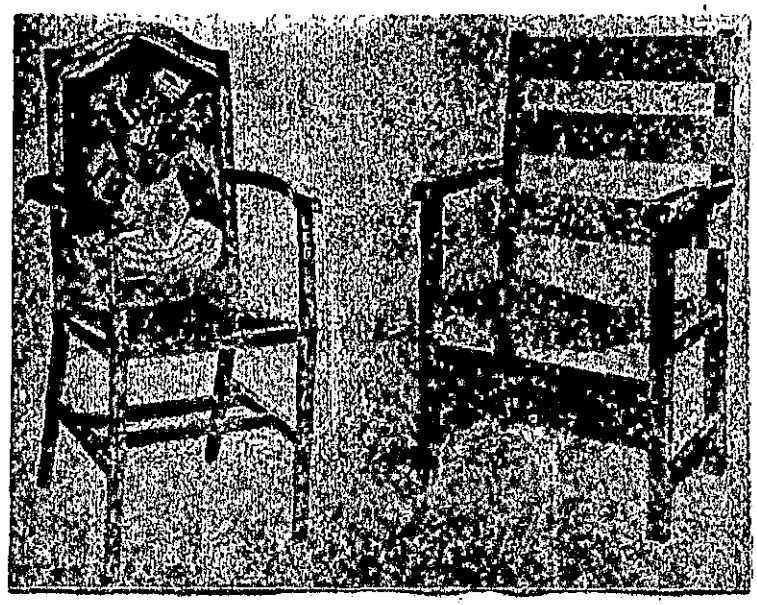
1. William Roberts, The Vorticists at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel: Spring 1915, 1961, Tate Gallery, London.

2. Vanessa Bell, The Memoir Club, 1940s, private collection.

3. Omega showroom photograph, London Daily News, 7 August 1913.



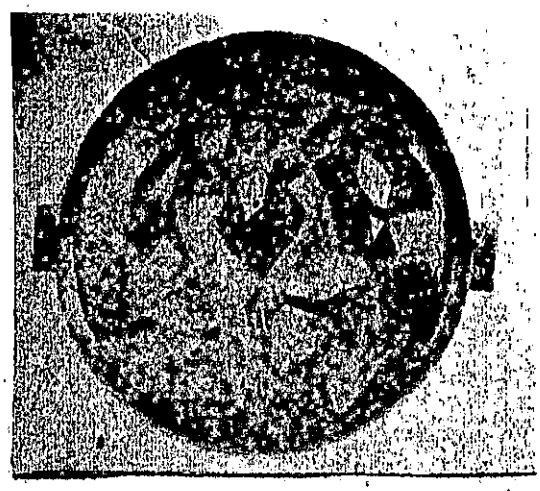
4. Omega lounge, Ideal Home Exhibition, June-July 1914.



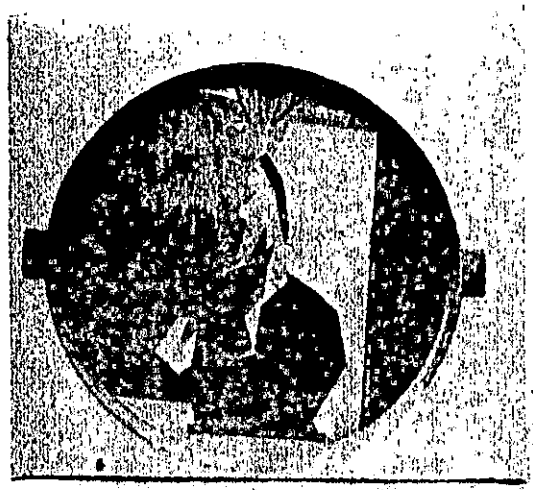
5. Roger Fry, Omega chairs.

6. Duncan Grant, Omega fan, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

7. Omega nursery with murals by Vanessa Bell.



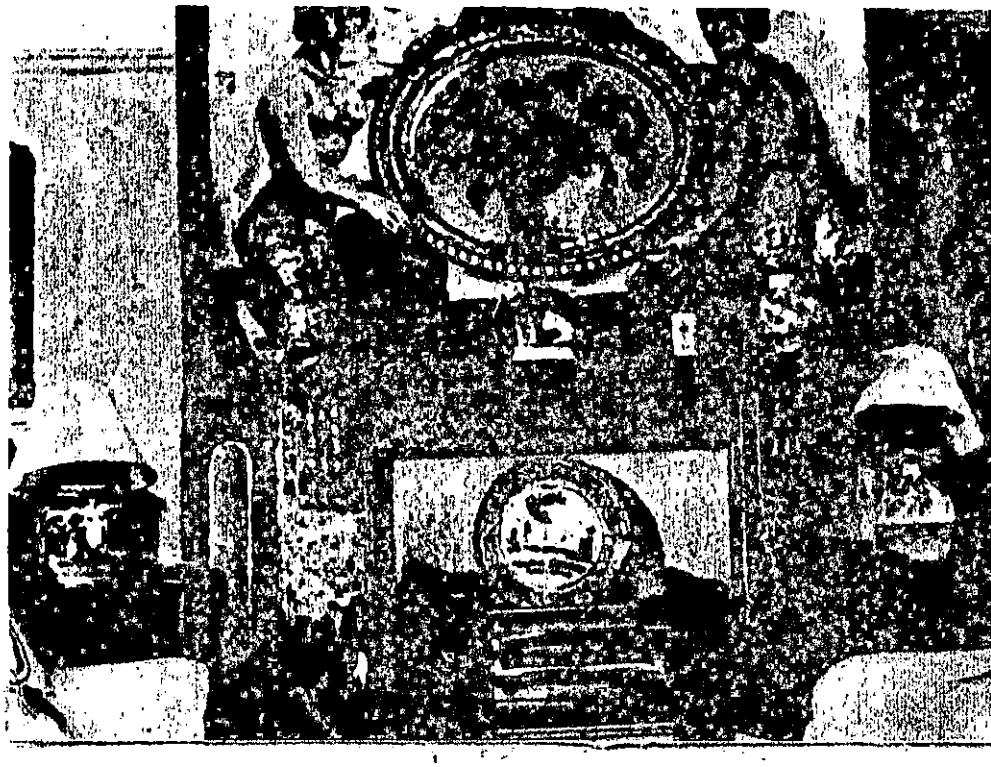
8. (above) Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Wrestlers Tray, 1913, private collection.



9. (above) Duncan Grant, Elephant Tray, 1914, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

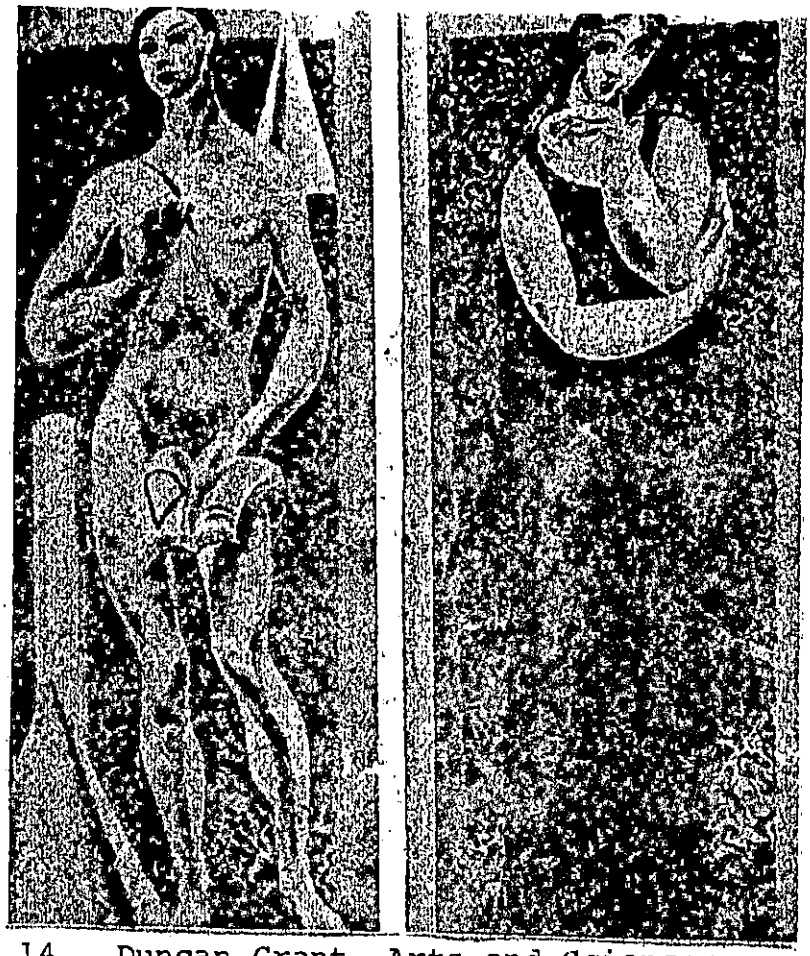
10. (above) Vanessa Bell, Interior with Duncan Grant, 1934.

11. (below) Duncan Grant, Interior with Vanessa Bell.



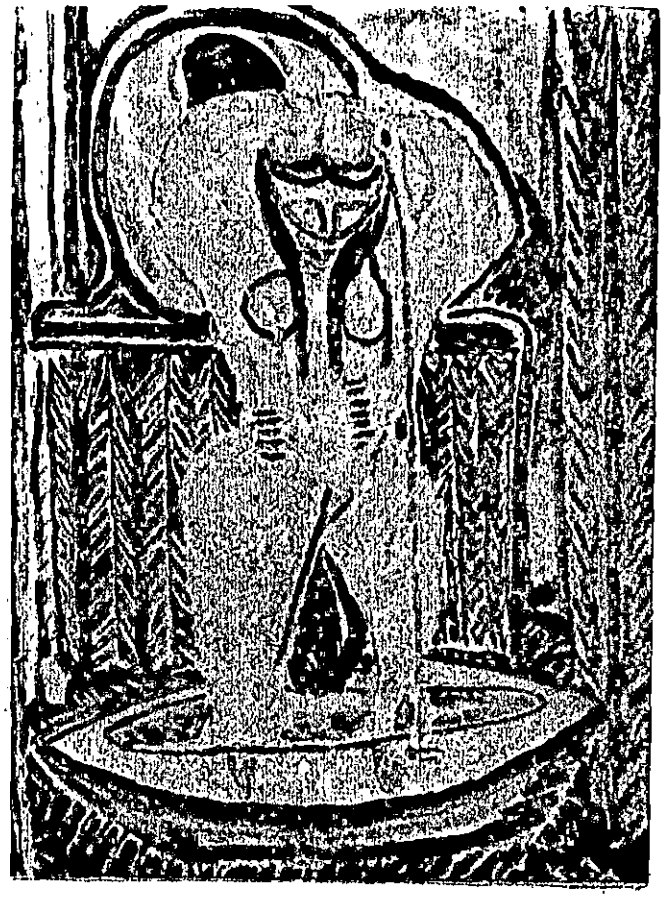
12. Sitting-room at Charleston, Sussex, overmantle by Duncan Grant.

13. Bedroom at Charleston, decoration by Vanessa Bell.

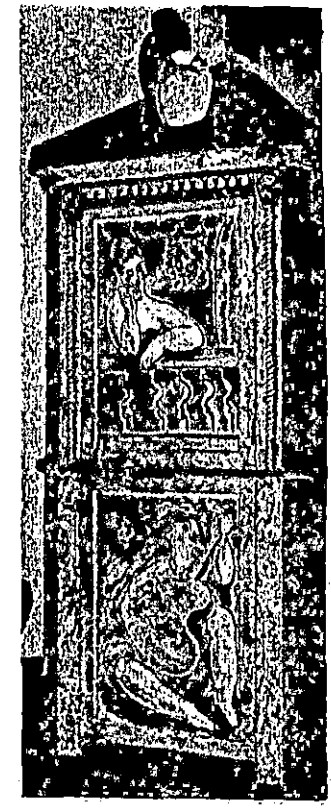


14. Duncan Grant, Arts and Sciences panels, 1919-21, two of eight executed by Grant and Bell for J. M. Keynes' rooms, King's College, Cambridge.

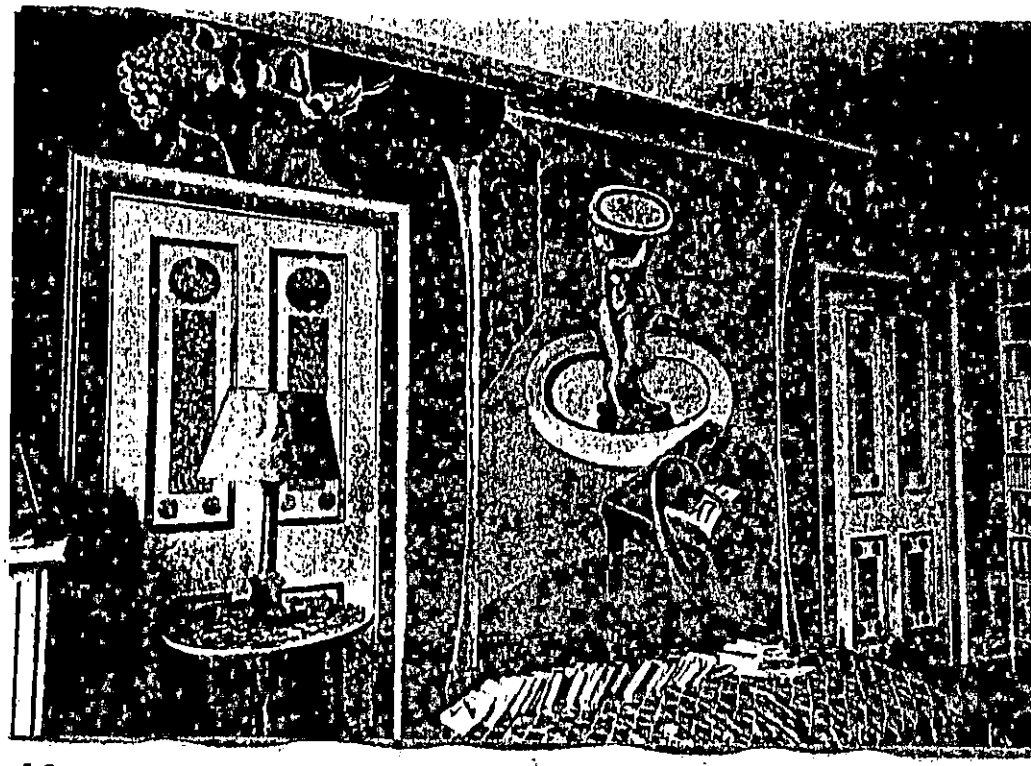
15. Grant, detail of mural c. 1910 in Keynes' rooms, King's College, Cambridge.



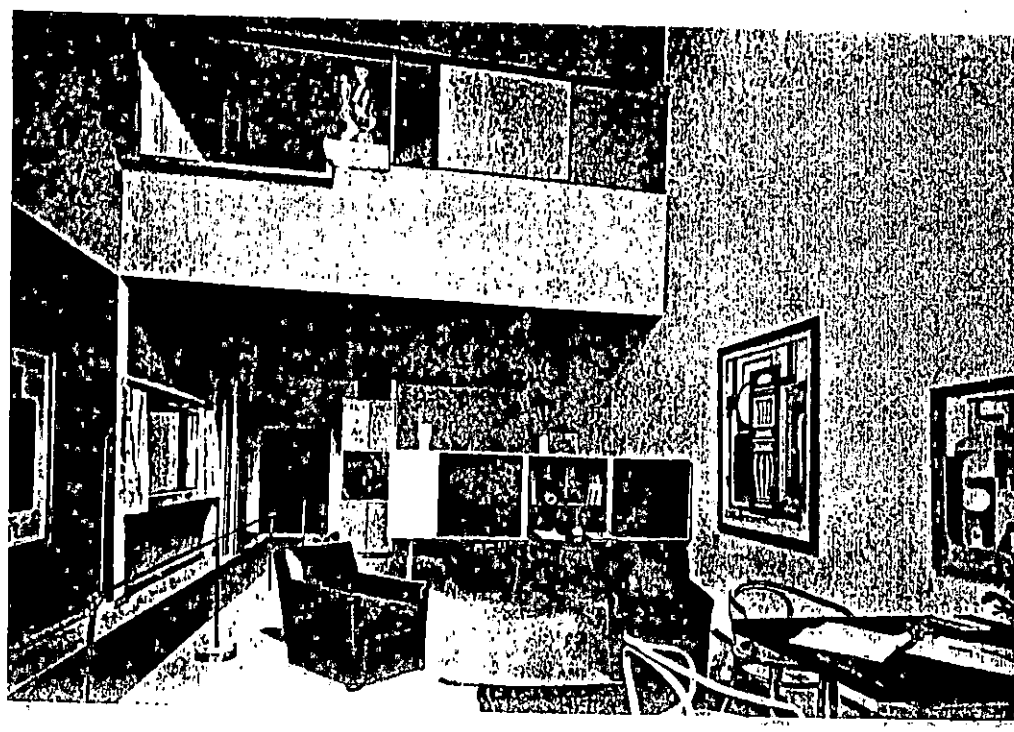
16. Grant, The Tub, 1912, Tate Gallery, London.



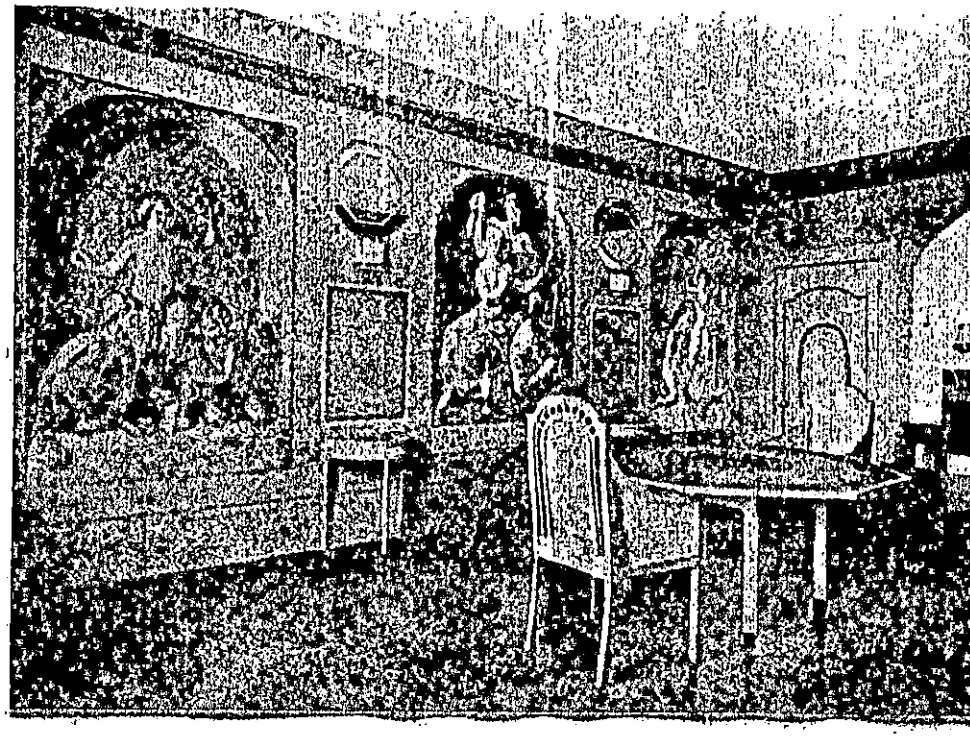
17. Grant, painted cupboard, c. 1924.



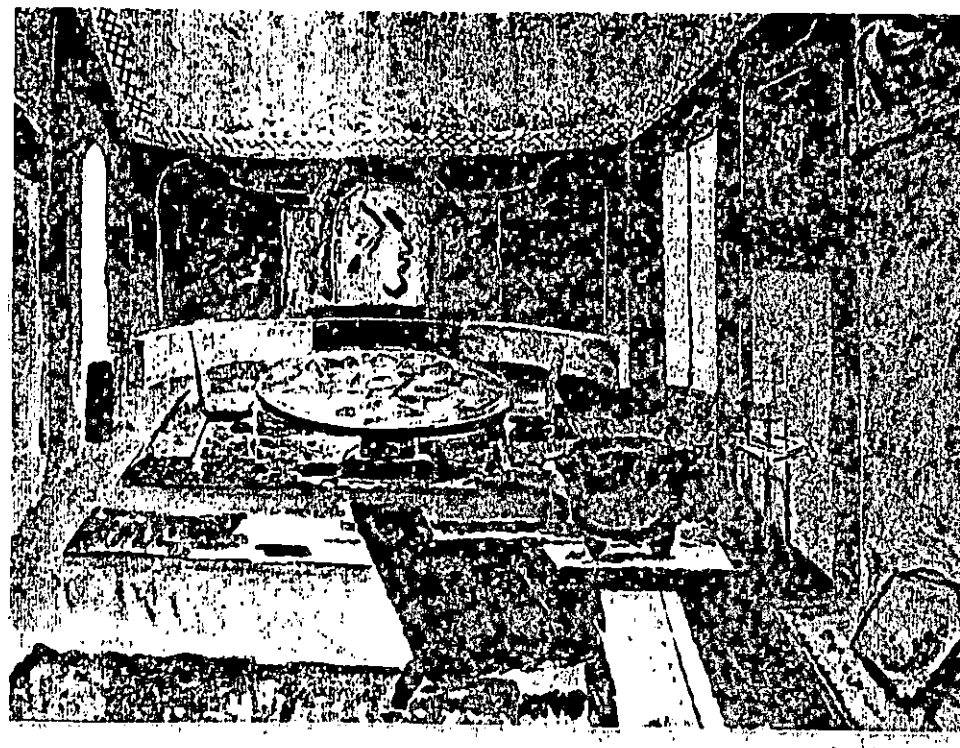
18. Grant and Bell, decorations in a London flat, 1925.



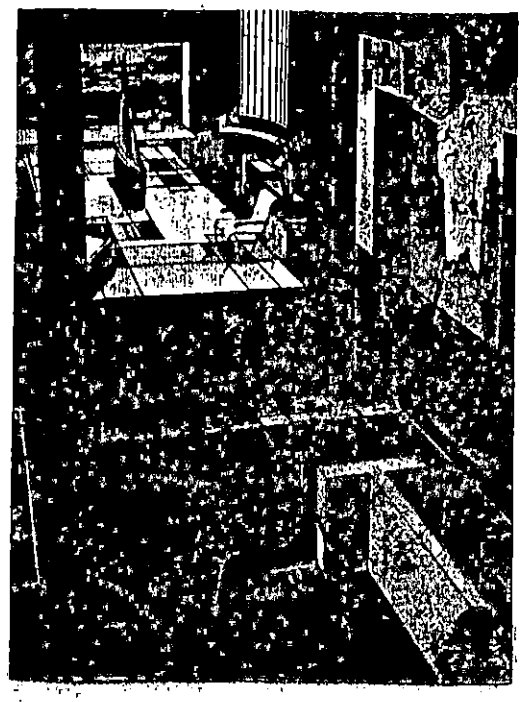
19. Le Corbusier, living room.



20. Bell and Grant, dining room at Penns-in-the-Rocks, Sussex, 1930.

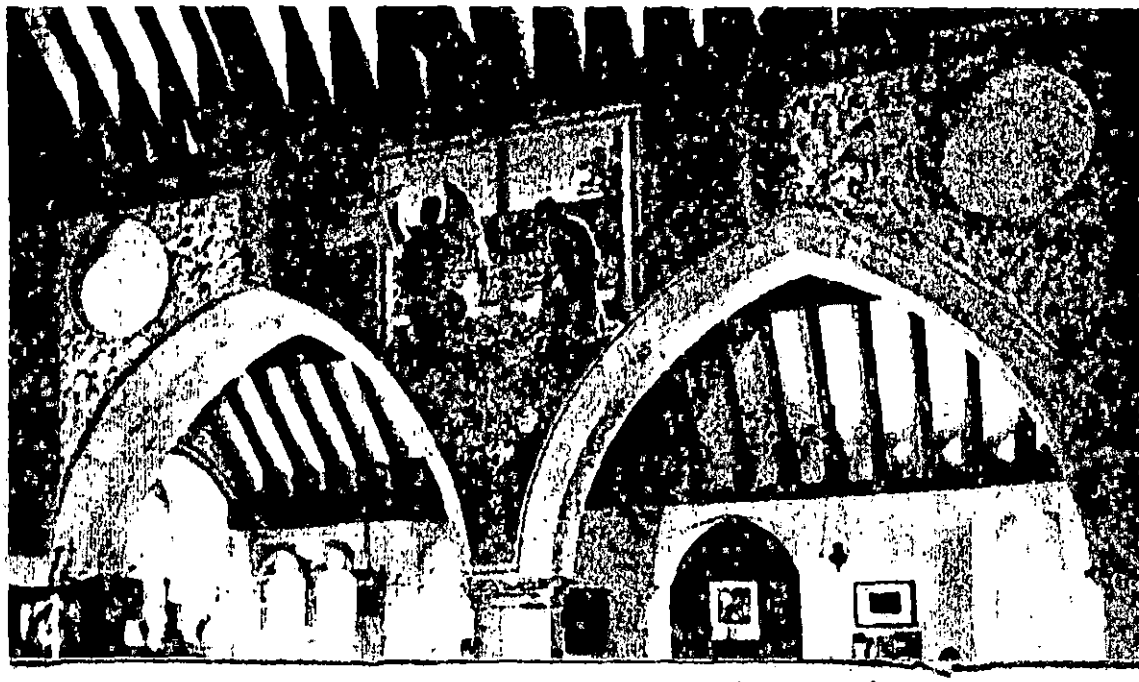


21. Bell, design for Lord Benbow's apartment, 1930.



22. Raymond McGrath, design for Lord Benbow's apartment, 1930.

23. Bell and Grant, "The Music Room," Lefevre Gallery, 1932.



24. Bell, Annunciation, 1942, Berwick Church, Sussex.

25. Bell, Nativity, Berwick Church.

26. Grant, Christ in Glory, Berwick Church.

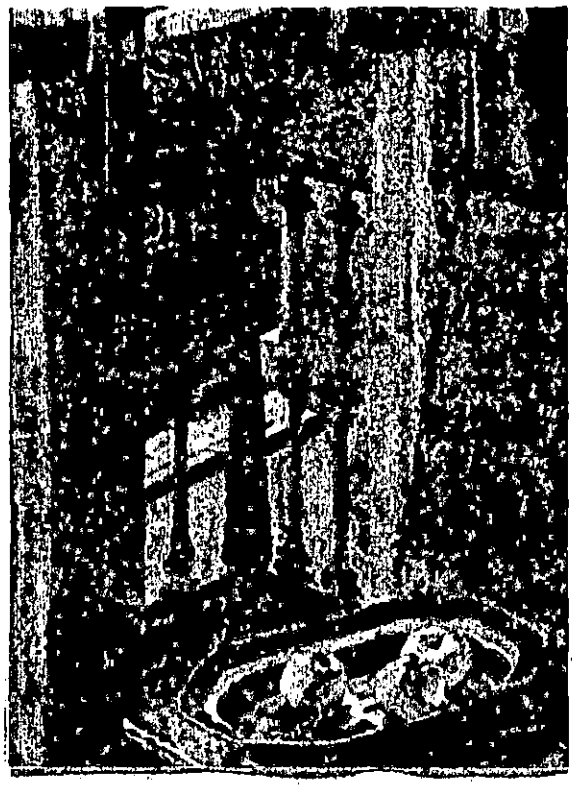
27. Grant, The Four Seasons, Berwick Church.

28. Bell, Nelly Cecil, 1905, private collection.

29. Vanessa Bell painting Lady Cecil.

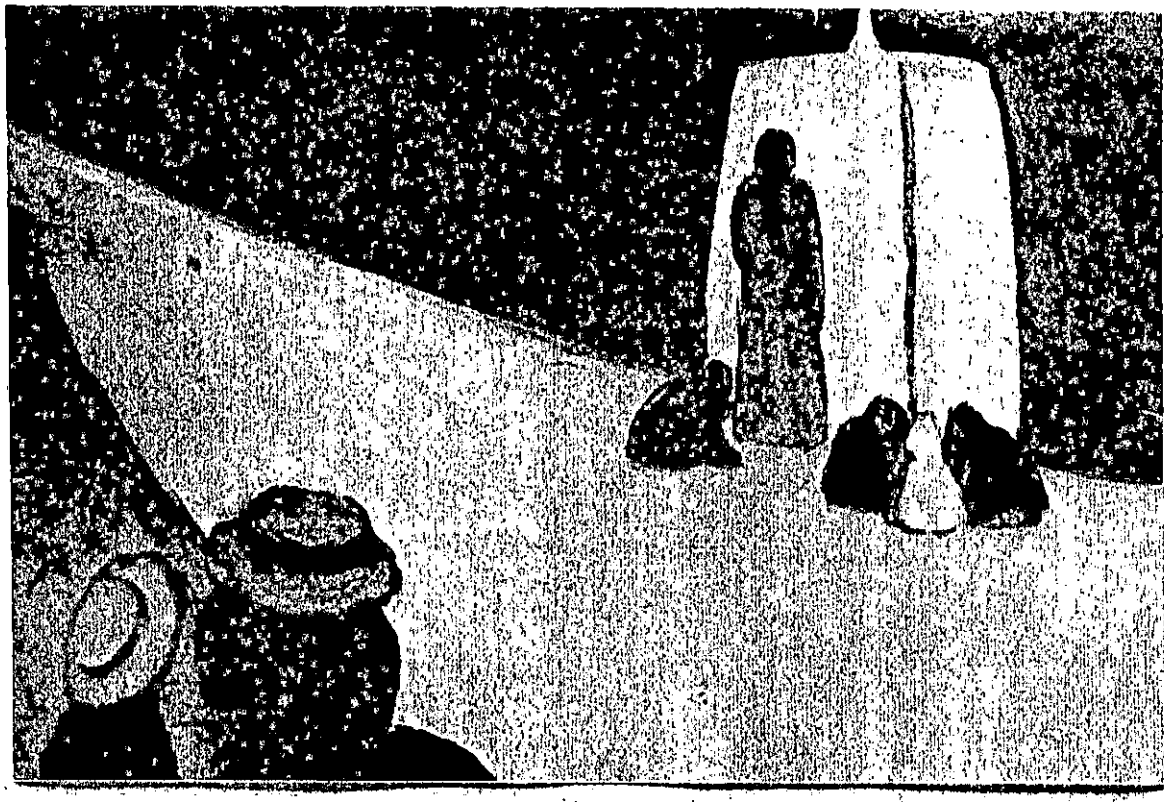
30. Bell, Hotel Garden, Florence, 1909, private collection.

31. Bell, Iceland Poppies, 1908, private collection.

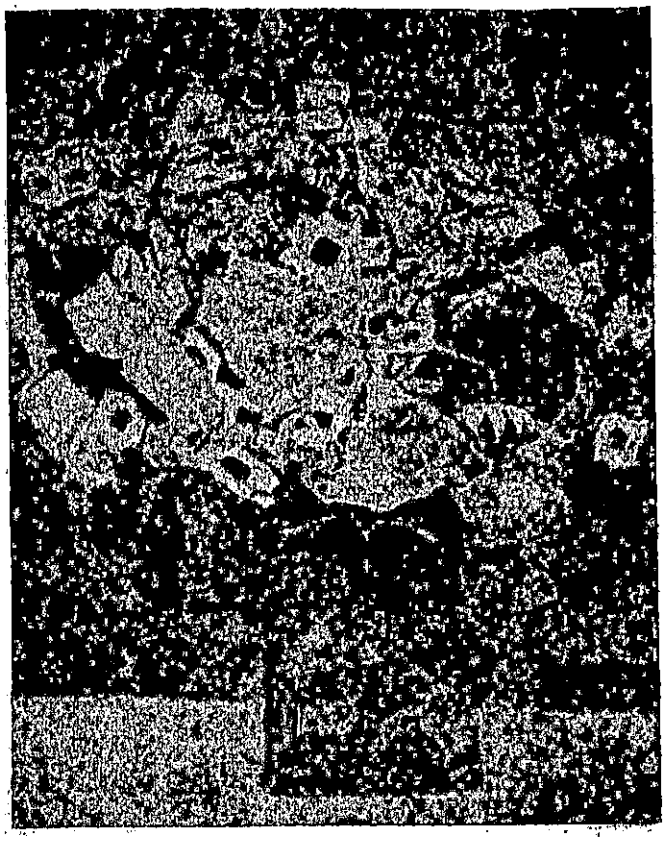


32. Bell, 46 Gordon Square, c. 1908, private collection.

33. Bell, Nursery Tea, 1911, New Grafton Galleries, London.



34. Bell, Studland Beach, 1911, Tate Gallery, London.

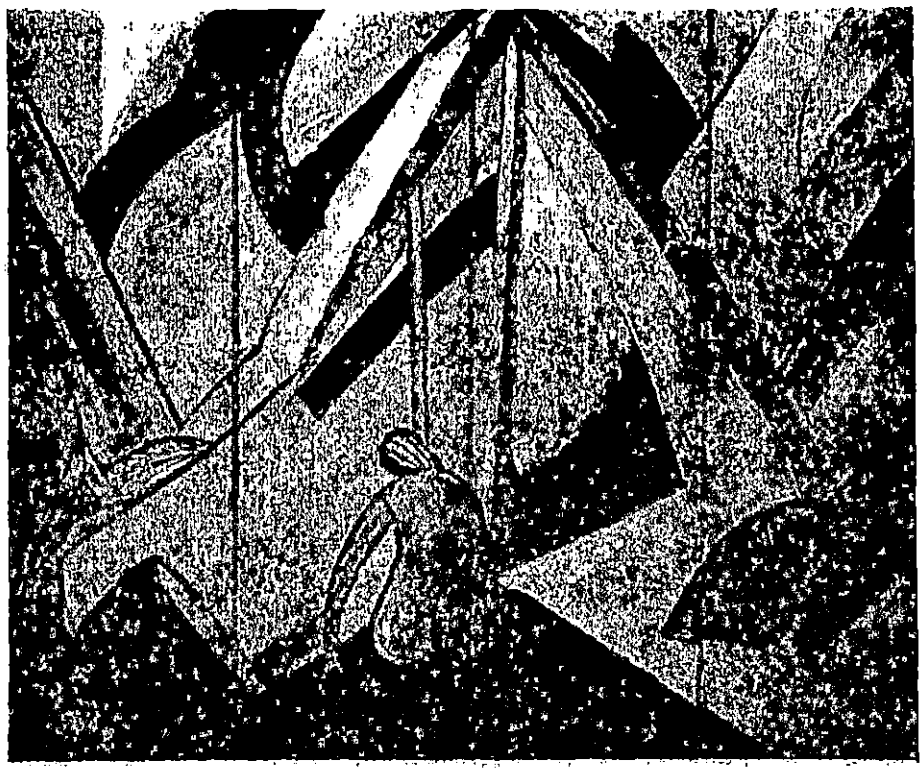


35. Bell, Nosegay, 1912, location unknown.

36. Bell, Asheham House, 1913, private collection.

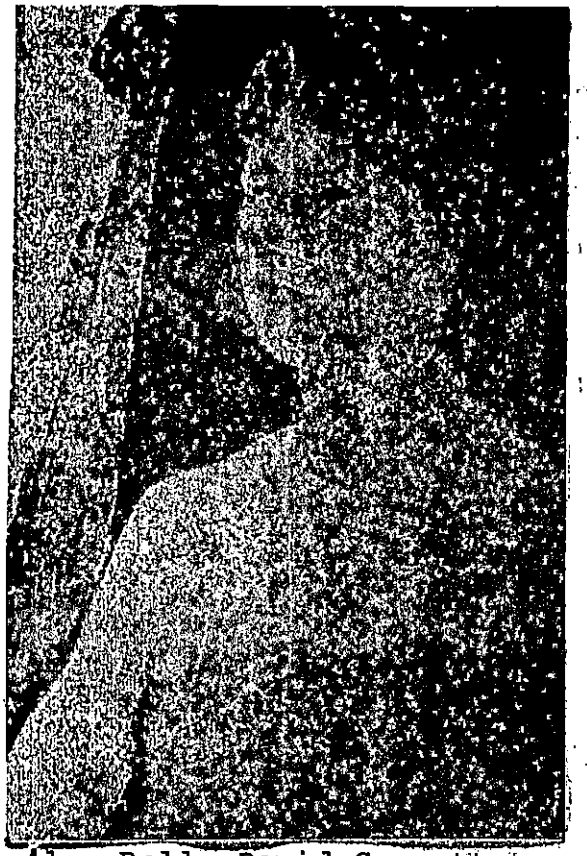
37. Bell, The Etchells Painting, 1912, Tate Gallery, London.

38. Bell, Lytton Strachey, 1913, collection Richard Carline, London.



39. Bell, Painted Screen, 1913.

40. Bell, Iris Tree, 1915, collection Richard Morphet, London.



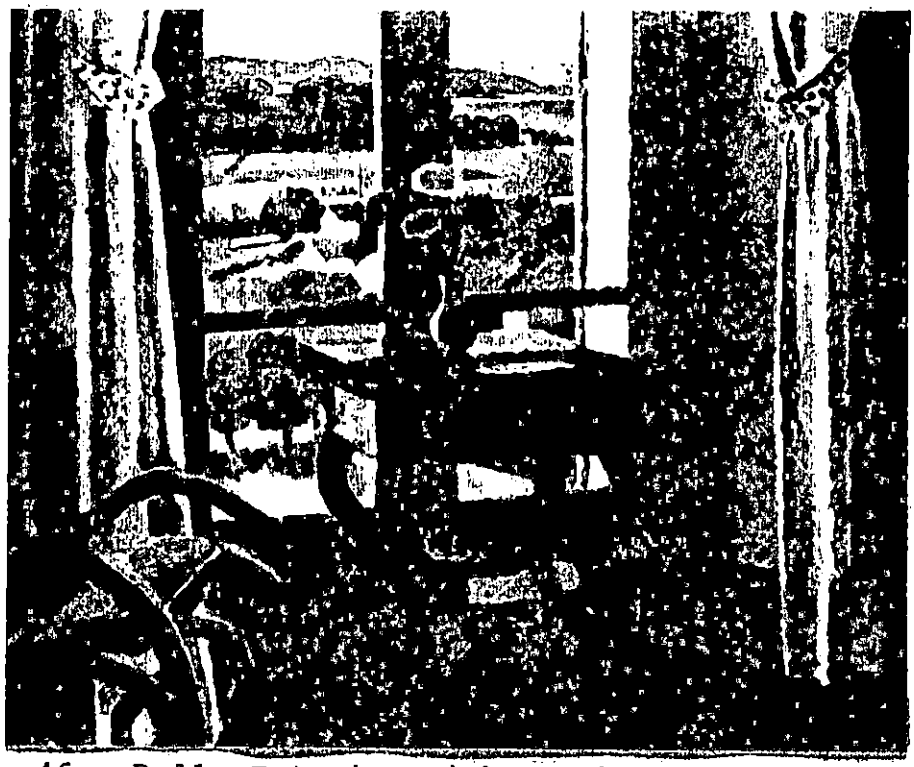
41. Bell, David Garnett, 1915, private collection.

42. Fry, Iris Tree, 1915, private collection.

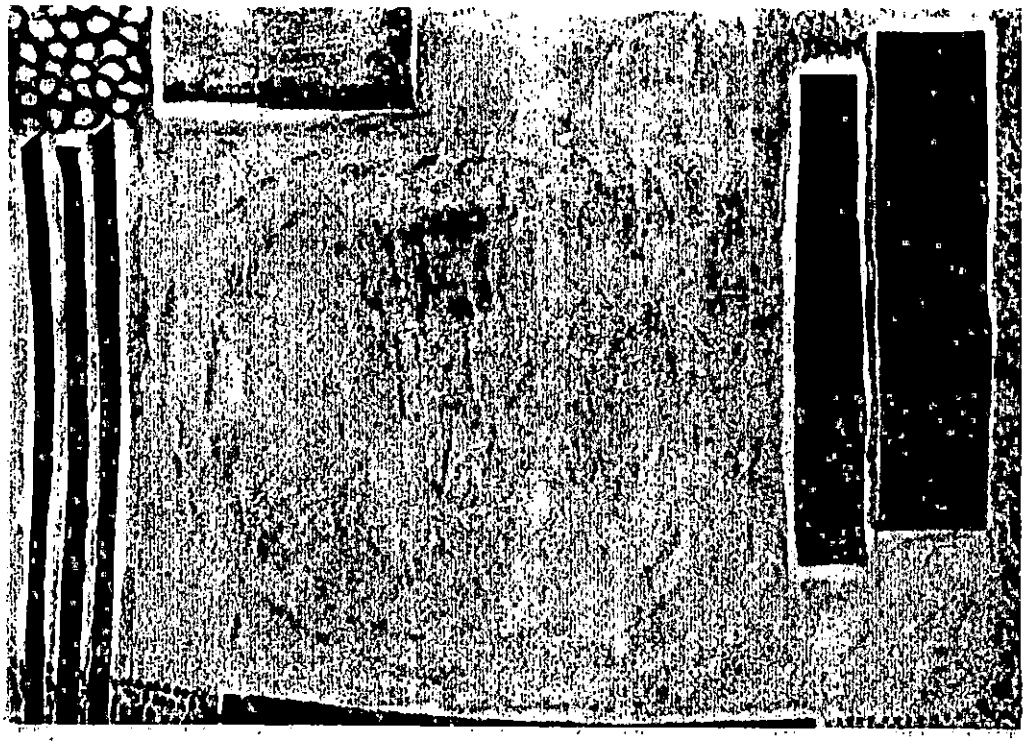
43. Grant, David Garnett, 1915, Agnew and Sons, London.

44. Bell, The Tub, 1917, Tate Gallery, London.

45. Bell, Monday or Tuesday illustration, 1921.

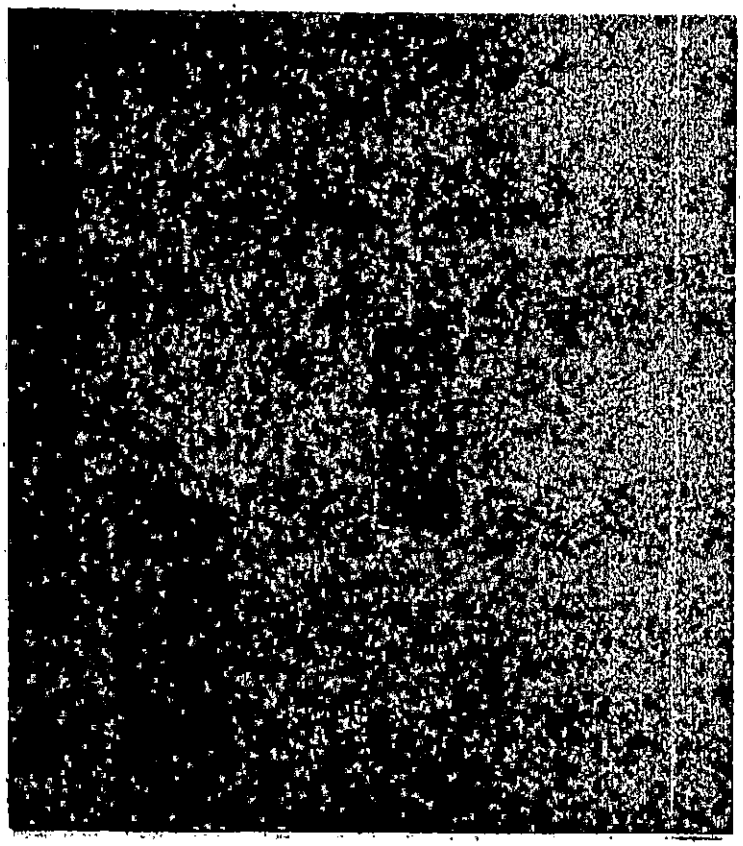


46. Bell, Interior with a Table, 1921, Tate Gallery, London.



47. Bell, Abstract, 1913-14, private collection.

48. Bell, Abstract, c. 1914, private collection.

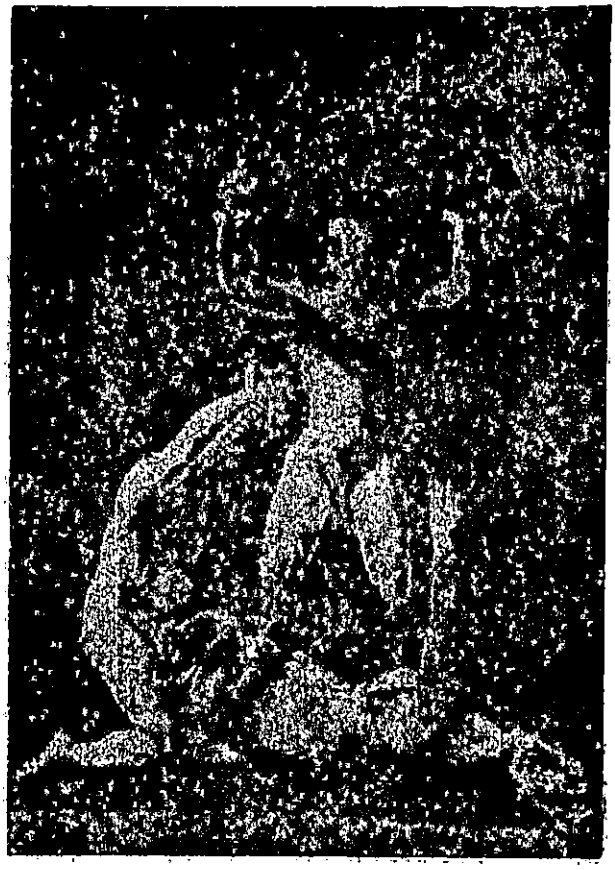


49. Bell, Abstract, 1915, Tate Gallery, London.

50. Bell, Still Life with Beer Bottle, 1913, private collection.

51. Bell, Arum Lilies, 1918, Courtauld Gallery, London.

52. Bell, Still Life in the Kitchen, 1933, Courtauld Gallery, London.



53. Bell, Bacchanale, 1929-30, Southampton Art Gallery.

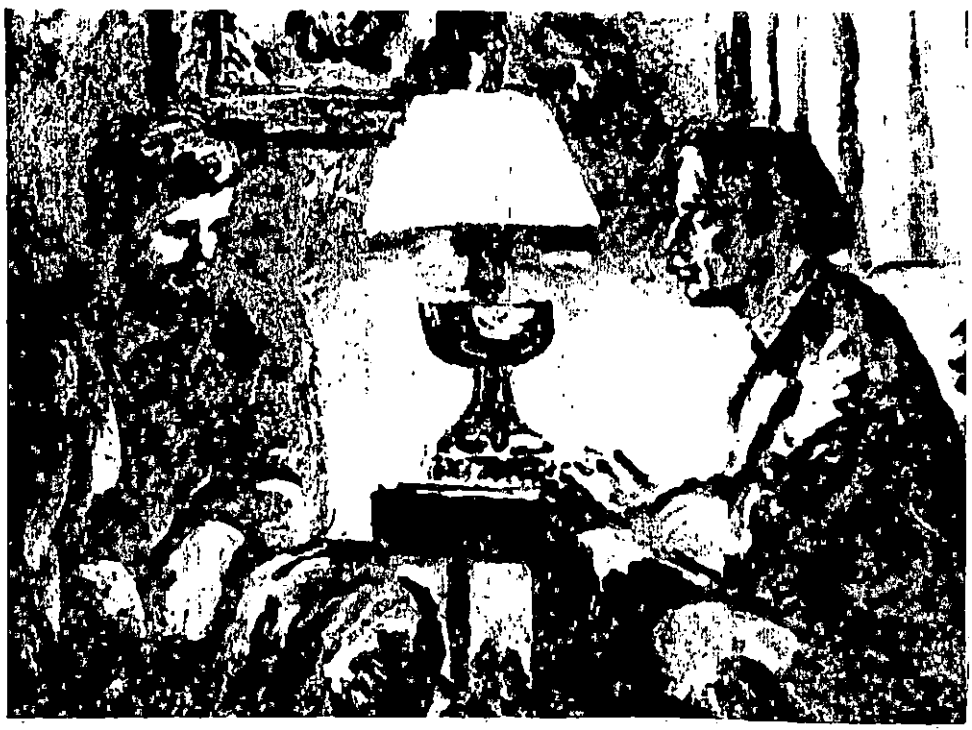
54. Bell, Adam and Eve, 1913, private collection.

55. Bell, Self-portrait, 1926, collection Carolyn Heilbrun, New York.

56. Bell, Virginia Woolf, 1934, Lefevre Galleries, London.

57. Bell, Marie Moralt, 1919, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

58. Bell, Mary Hutchinson, 1915, Tate Gallery, London.



59. Bell, Julian Bell and Roger Fry Playing Chess, 1930.

60. Bell, Angelica Sewing, 1933, private collection.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

Chapter I

1. J. K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954), p. x.

2. Carolyn Heilbrun, Toward a Recognition of Androgyny (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 15.

3. Clive James, quoted in Heilbrun, p. 116.

4. John Jewkes, quoted in Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1968), p. 28.

5. John Rothenstein, Modern English Painters, Lewis to Moore (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956), p. 14.

6. Wyndham Lewis, from Tyro #1, 1921, in Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings 1913-56, ed. Walter Michael and C. J. Fox (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 198.

7. Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 85.

8. J. M. Keynes, "My Early Beliefs," in Two Memoirs (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949), p. 81.

9. Lewis, "A Review of Contemporary Art, 1914," in Writings on Art, p. 66.

10. VB/Roger Fry 108, 20 Oct. 1913, with postscript from Clive Bell.

11. Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 117.

12. Nikolaus Pevsner, The Englishness of English Art (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976), p. 25.

13. Roger Fry, in Letters of Roger Fry, ed. Denys Sutton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972), I, 373.

14. VB/Roger Fry 24, c. 1912.

15. VB/Roger Fry 428, 1934.

16. VB/Roger Fry 109, 22 Oct. 1913.

17. Alan Clutton-Brock, "Vanessa Bell and Her Circle," The Listener, 4 May 1961, p. 790.

18. Clive Bell, Art (1914; rpt. London: Arrow Books Ltd., 1961), p. 196.

19. VB/Roger Fry 170, c. 1916.

20. Lewis, intro. to The Cubist Room catalogue, 1913, in Writings on Art, p. 57.

21. Duncan Grant, quoted in Rothenstein, Modern English Painters, Lewis to Moore, p. 56.

22. Lewis, "Our Vortex," from Blast #1, 1914, in Writings on Art, p. 53.

23. Walter Michael, quoted in S. B. Rosenbaum, The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs, Commentary and Criticism (London: University of Toronto/Croom Helm Ltd., 1975), p. 357.

24. Walter Michael, ed., in Writings on Art, by Wyndham Lewis, p. 103.

25. Michael, in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 357.

26. Lewis, Cubist Room, Writings on Art, p. 57.

27. Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 116.

28. Richard Cork, intro. to Vorticism and its Allies (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974), p. 22.

29. Lewis, Cubist Room, loc. cit.

30. Lewis, "Wyndham Lewis the Artist," 1939, in Writings on Art, p. 58.

Chapter II

1. Kenneth Clark, intro. to Last Lectures, by Roger Fry (Cambridge: The University Press, 1939), p. xvi.

2. John Russell, "Clive Bell," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 199.

3. Matthew Arnold, from Culture and Anarchy, in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. 2, ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), pp. 1408-12.

4. Walter Pater, from The Renaissance, in Norton Anthology, p. 1641.

5. Clive Bell, Art, p. 201.

6. Frank Rutter, Art in My Time (London: Rich and Cowan, 1933), p. 163.

7. Vanessa Bell, "Notes on Bloomsbury," 1951, in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 82.

8. VB/Margery Snowden 32, 15 Oct. 1912.

9. Roger Fry, in Letters, I, 359.

10. David Garnett, The Golden Echo (1953; rpt. London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 238.

11. Clive Bell, Art, p. 8.

12. Fry, The Artist & Psycho-Analysis (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924), p. 16.

13. Pater, from Appreciations, in Norton Anthology, p. 1633.

14. Ibid., p. 1645.

15. Wyndham Lewis, "On Geomancy," from Blast #1, 1914, in Writings on Art, p. 42.

16. Fry, quoted in Letters, I, 61.

17. Fry, review of J. S. Sargent exhibition, in Transformations: Critical and Speculative Essays on Art (London: Chatto and Windus, 1926), p. 127.

18. Kenneth Clark, Another Part of the Wood (London: John Murray Ltd., 1974), p. 44.

19. Clive Bell, Art, p. 24.

20. Ibid., p. 52.

21. Ibid., p. 230.

22. Fry, Transformations, p. 1.

23. Fry, "Art and Socialism," 1912, in Vision and Design (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920), p. 58.

24. Clive Bell, Art, p. 135.

25. Clive Bell, Since Cézanne (London: Chatto and Windus, 1923), p. 157.

26. Bell, loc. cit.

27. John Russell, in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 199.

28. Fry, Vision and Design, p. 131.

29. Fry, Last Lectures, p. 150.

30. Fry, Letters, II, 548.

31. Fry, "Art and Socialism," 1913, in Vision and Design, p. 66.

32. Fry, Artist and Psycho-Analysis, p. 9.

33. Fry, "Art and Socialism," in Vision and Design, p. 59.

34. Clive Bell, Art, pp. 241, 245.

35. Fry, "An Essay on Aesthetics," in Vision and Design, p. 37.

36. Bell, Art, p. 56.

37. Noel Annan, Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1951), p. 199.

38. Bell, Art, p. 42.

39. Ibid., p. 73.

40. Ibid., p. 231.

41. Ibid., p. 235.

42. Ibid., p. 246.

43. Clive Bell, Enjoying Pictures: Meditations in the National Gallery and Elsewhere (London: Chatto and Windus, 1934), p. 96.

44. Bell, Art, p. 43.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., p. 36.

47. Bell, Enjoying Pictures, p. 36.

48. Clive Bell, Old Friends (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), p. 73.

49. Bell, Enjoying Pictures, p. 11.

50. Clive Bell, Landmarks in Nineteenth Century Painting (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), p. viii.

51. Bell, Enjoying Pictures, p. 93.

52. Ibid., p. 11.

53. Bell, "Plus de Jazz," in Since Cezanne, p. 215.

54. Ibid., p. 218.

55. Ibid., p. 229.

56. Ibid., p. 230.

57. Ibid., p. 227.

58. Fry, quoted in Letters, I, 72.

59. Leonard Woolf, The Journey Not the Arrival Matters: An Autobiography of the Years 1939 to 1969 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1969), p. 156.

60. Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 23.

61. Clive Bell, Since Cézanne, p. 91.

62. Virginia Woolf, "Julian Bell," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury, p. 45.

63. VB/Roger Fry 30, 1911.

64. VB/Roger Fry 115, 1913.

65. Clive Bell, Civilization: An Essay (London: Chatto and Windus, 1928), p. 56.

66. Bell, quoted in "The Value of Standards," memorial editorial in Apollo, January 1965, p. 7.

67. Julian Bell, "Autobiography," in Julian Bell: Essays, Poems and Letters, ed. Quentin Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1938), p. 228.

68. Julian Bell, op. cit., p. 17.

69. Julian Bell, op. cit., p. 228.

70. Clive Bell, Civilization, p. 151.

71. Ibid., p. 57.

72. Ibid., p. 205.

73. Ibid., p. 97.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid., p. v.

76. Clive Bell, On British Freedom (London: Chatto and Windus, 1923), p. 60.

77. Ibid., p. 66.

78. A. M. McBriar, Fabian Socialism and English Politics 1884-1918 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1962), p. 284.

79. Clive Bell, British Freedom, p. 58.

80. Ibid., p. 60.

81. Ibid., p. 74.

82. Bell, Enjoying Pictures, p. 101.

83. Clive Bell, The Legend of Monte Della Sibilla or Le Paradise de la Reine Sibille (Richmond: The Hogarth Press, 1923), p. 16.

84. Clive Bell, Art, p. 209.

85. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1929), p. 106.

86. Clive Bell, Art, p. 96.

87. Bell, Since Cézanne, p. 72.

88. Roger Fry, Letters, p. 357.

89. Clive Bell, Landmarks, p. 85.

90. Clive Bell, The French Impressionists (London: Phaidon Press, 1952), p. 12.

91. Bell, Since Cézanne, p. 54.

92. Fry, Vision and Design, p. 131.

93. Fry, Transformations, p. 7.

94. Ibid., p. 20.

95. R. C. Trevelyan, quoted in Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry: An Autobiography (London: The Hogarth Press, 1940), p. 121.

96. VB/Clive Bell 221, 23 Jan., c. 1930.

97. Fry, Transformations, p. 65.

98. Fry, Vision and Design, p. 8.

99. Roger Fry, Cézanne: A Study of His Development (London: The Hogarth Press, 1927), p. 2.

100. Fry, Letters, II, 547.

101. Fry, Transformations, p. 5.

102. Fry, Letters, I, 59.

103. Fry, Letters, I, 113.

104. Fry, Cézanne, p. 3.

105. Virginia Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury," in Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Sussex University Press, 1976), p. 178.

106. Fry, quoted in Letters, I, 72.

107. Roger Fry, "The French Group," catalogue introduction, Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition: British, French and Russian Artists (London: Grafton Galleries, Oct.-Dec. 1912), p. 26.

108. Fry, "Retrospect," in Vision and Design, p. 295.

109. Fry, Second Post-Impressionist, p. 26.

110. Loc. cit.

111. Roger Fry, intro., Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women by Julia Margaret Cameron (London: The Hogarth Press, 1926), p. 11.

112. Loc. cit.

113. Fry, Transformations, p. 1.

114. Ibid., p. 38.

115. Fry, Cézanne, p. 41.

116. Fry, Letters, p. 350.

117. Roger Fry, Reflections on British Painting (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), p. 125.

118. Ibid., p. 66.

119. Ibid., p. 85.

120. John Constable and William Hazlitt quoted in Pevsner, Englishness of English Art, p. 166.

121. Fry, Reflections, p. 127.

122. Ibid., p. 139.

123. Ibid., p. 27.

124. Ibid., p. 85.

125. Ibid., p. 48.

126. Fry, quoted in Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 22.

127. Denys Sutton, ed., in Letters of Roger Fry, p. 3.

128. Fry, in Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 21.

129. VB/Roger Fry 323, 23 Dec. 1921.

130. Fry, Letters, I, 109.

131. Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 48.

132. Benedict Nicholson, "Post-Impressionism and Roger Fry," Burlington Magazine, January, 1951, p. 15.

133. Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972), p. 167.

134. Roger Fry, quoted by Philip Troutman, intro., Vision and Design: The Life, Work and Influence of Roger Fry (London: British Arts Council, 1966), p. 12.

135. Fry, quoted in Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 182.

136. Vanessa Bell, Fry memoir TS, 1934.

137. Clive Bell, Old Friends, p. 76.

138. VB/Maynard Keynes 82, 1920s.

139. Fry, Letters, II, 683.

140. Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 78.

141. Clive Bell, Old Friends, p. 68.

142. Fry, Transformations, p. 63.

143. Ibid., p. 58.

144. Fry, quoted in Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 231.

145. Fry, The Artist and Psycho-Analysis, p. 3.

146. Loc. cit.

147. Fry, quoted in Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 232.

148. Donald Egbert, Social Radicalism and the Arts: Western Europe (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 478.

149. Fry, quoted in Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 272.

150. Clive Bell, Enjoying Pictures, p. 88.

151. Fry, Reflections on British Painting, p. 90.

152. Fry, Vision and Design, p. 61.

153. Ibid., p. 57.

154. Fry, quoted in Letters, p. 363.

155. Roger Fry, Art and Commerce (London: The Hogarth Press, 1926), quoted in Letters, I, 81.

156. Fry, "Art and Socialism," 1912, in Vision and Design, p. 66.

157. Clive Bell, Art, p. 90.

158. Bell, Landmarks, p. 119.

159. Fry, Vision and Design, p. 77.

160. John Rothenstein, British Artists and the War (London: Peter Davies Ltd., 1931), p. 19.

Chapter III

1. Vanessa Bell, "Notes on Bloomsbury," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 80.

2. Clive Bell, Art, p. 149.

3. Walter Michael, ed., in Writings on Art by Wyndham Lewis, p. 230.

4. Nikolaus Pevsner, "Omega," Architecture Review, Aug, 1941, p. 45.

5. Richard Shone, Bloomsbury Portraits (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1976), p. 245.

6. VB/Roger Fry 379, 1927.

7. Fry, quoted in Shone, Bloomsbury Portraits, p. 119.

8. VB/Roger Fry 326, Feb. 1922.

9. Richard Shone, Bloomsbury Portraits, p. 119.

10. Fry, quoted in Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 194.

11. Duncan Grant, quoted in Shone, Portraits, p. 122.

12. VB/Clive Bell 48, 21 Dec. 1912.

13. Vanessa Bell, quoted in Shone, Portraits, p. 101.

14. Clive Bell, "Before the War," in Pot-Boilers (London: Chatto and Windus, 1918), p. 250.

15. Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 51.

16. Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-18 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 198.

17. Clive Bell, Pot-Boilers, p. 255.

18. Pevsner, "Omega," p. 48.

19. Shone, Portraits, p. 108.

20. Fry, Letters, II, 445.

21. Wyndham Lewis, "Plain Home Builder, Where is Your Vorticist," 1934, in Writings on Art, p. 285.

22. Lewis, quoted in Arts Council, Vorticism, p. 26.

23. VB/Roger Fry 112, 1913.

24. Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, quoted in William Lipke, "The Omega Workshops and Vorticism," Apollo, March 1970, p. 230.

25. Shone, Portraits, p. 109.

26. Lipke, "Omega Workshops and Vorticism," p. 227.

27. Shone, Portraits, p. 130.

28. Ibid., p. 84.

29. Denys Sutton, intro., Duncan Grant and His World (London: Wildenstein and Co. Ltd., 1964).

30. Stephen Spender, intro., Duncan Grant: Watercolours and Drawings (London: d'Offay Gallery, April-May 1972).

31. Rothenstein, Modern English Painters, p. 52.

32. Spender, from World Within World, 1951, in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 262.

33. VB/Clive Bell 182, 25 Oct. 1938.

34. Vanessa Bell, quoted in Shone, Bloomsbury Portraits, p. 234.

35. Vanessa Bell, loc. cit.

36. A. F. W. Plumtre, "Maynard Keynes as a Teacher," in Essays on John Maynard Keynes, ed. Milo Keynes (Cambridge: The University Press, 1975), p. 247.

37. Plumtre, loc. cit.

38. Shone, Portraits, p. 234.

39. Clive Bell, Since Cézanne, p. 230.

40. Percy Horton, "Mural Painting in the Private House," The Studio, Oct. 1939, p. 154.

41. John Lehmann, "Working for Hogarth," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 275.

42. Horton, loc. cit.

43. Dorothy Todd and Raymond Mortimer, The New Interior Decoration (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1929), Plt. 16.

44. VB/Roger Fry 407, 1920s.

45. Clive Bell, Art, p. 197.

46. Todd and Mortimer, New Decoration, p. 28.

47. Ibid., p. 29.

48. "Lord Benbow's Apartments, The Architectural Review Competition: Assessor's Report and Awards," Architectural Review, Nov. 1930, p. 203.

49. Loc. cit.

50. Loc. cit.

51. Loc. cit.

52. Loc. cit.

53. Cyril Connolly, quoted in Shone, Portraits, p. 242.

54. Shone, Portraits, pp. 239, 234.

55. Kenneth Clark, Another Part of the Wood, p. 248.

56. VB/Clive Bell 267, 1934.

57. Shone, Portraits, p. 249.

58. Raymond Mortimer, Duncan Grant (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1944), p. 13.

59. VB/Maynard Keynes 84, 1935.

60. Loc. cit.

61. Vanessa Bell, quoted in Shone, Portraits, p. 249.

62. VB/Maynard Keynes 84, 1935.

63. "Lord Benbow's Apartments," Architectural Review, Nov. 1930, p. 202.

64. Richard Shone, intro., The Berwick Church Paintings (Eastbourne: Towner Art Gallery, July 1969), n. pag.

65. VB/Roger Fry 300, 24 March 1920.

66. Quoted in Towner Gallery, Berwick Paintings.

67. Duncan Grant, letter dictated to Paul Roche, 24 Aug. 1977.

68. Quoted in Towner Gallery, Berwick Paintings.

69. Louis Aragon, quoted in John Rothenstein, Modern English Painting, p. 184.

70. VB/Margery Snowden 2, 1903.

71. Duncan Grant, quoted in Lindy Guiness, intro., A Homage to Duncan Grant on His Ninetieth Birthday (London: Gallery Edward Harvane, 1975), n. pag.

72. J. M. Keynes, "Art and the State," 1936, in Keynes: Aspects of the Man and his Work, ed. D. E. Moggridge (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1974), p. 36.

73. Keynes, "The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes," 1945, in Aspects, p. 45.

74. Kenneth Clark, Wood, p. 248.

75. VB/Roger Fry 312, 1921.

Chapter IV

1. Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 40.

2. Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 1939, in Moments of Being, p. 123.

3. Ibid., p. 124.

4. Vanessa Bell, "Notes on Bloomsbury," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 76.

5. Ibid., p. 77.

6. Vanessa Bell, TS of unpublished memoir "Life at Hyde Park Gate 1897-1904."

7. Vanessa Bell, quoted in Shone, Portraits, p. 21.

8. VB/Thoby Stephen 8.

9. VB/Thoby Stephen 11.

10. VB/Thoby Stephen 9.

11. Vanessa Bell, Fry memoir TS, 1934.

12. Virginia Woolf, in Moments of Being, p. 128.

13. VB/Thoby Stephen 15.

14. VB/Margery Snowden 9, 3 May 1904.

15. VB/Margery Snowden 3, 17 March 1903.

16. VB/Margery Snowden 9, 3 May 1904.

17. VB/Margery Snowden 21, 7 Sept. 1908.

18. VB/Margery Snowden 41, 30 Jan. 1924.

19. Vanessa Bell, "Hyde Park Gate" TS.

20. Loc. cit.

21. Vanessa Bell, "Notes," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Circle, p. 76.

22. Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf, p. 125.

23. Virginia Woolf, quoted in Bell, Virginia Woolf, p. 124.

24. Sarah Peters, notes on Georgia O'Keeffe, in Women Artists: 1550-1950 (Los Angeles/New York: L.A. County Museum of Art/Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 304.

25. Vanessa Bell, quoted in Q. Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 41.

26. Adrian Stephen, "A Bloomsbury Party in 1909," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 3.

27. Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf, p. 125.

28. VB/Madge Vaughn 5, c. 1904.

29. Clive Bell, Civilization, p. 237.

30. Richard Shone, review in Burlington Magazine, Dec. 1975, p. 823.

31. VB/Roger Fry 8, 8 June 1911.

32. Vanessa Bell, Fry memoir TS, 1934.

33. Loc. cit.

34. VB/Roger Fry 111, c. 1913.

35. Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 42.

36. VB/Roger Fry 51, 15 Nov. 1911.

37. VB/Roger Fry 33, 31 Aug. 1911.

38. Vanessa Bell, Fry memoir TS.

39. Loc. cit.

40. VB/Roger Fry 157, c. 1914.

41. Richard Morphet, intro., The Art of Vanessa Bell (London: Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 1973), p. 6.

42. Ibid., p. 10.

43. Vanessa Bell, Fry memoir TS.

44. VB/Roger Fry 187, 1 Jan. 1916.

45. Vanessa Bell, quoted in Shone, Portraits, p. 135.

46. VB/Roger Fry 184, c. 1916.

47. VB/Roger Fry 150, c. Sept. 1914.

48. VB/Roger Fry 187, 1 Jan. 1916.

49. VB/Roger Fry 169, 27 May 1915.

50. VB/Roger Fry 168, 1915.

51. VB/Roger Fry 169, 27 May 1915.

52. VB/Clive Bell 93, 1913.

53. Richard Morphet, in d'Offay Gallery, Vanessa Bell, p. 8.

54. VB/Madge Vaughn 20, 1920.

55. Angelica Garnett, "Vanessa Bell," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 175.

56. VB/Roger Fry 236, 1916.

57. VB/Madge Vaughn 20, 1920.

58. Vanessa Bell, Leighton Park School TS, c. 1926.

59. VB/Roger Fry 82, 17 Nov. 1912.

60. VB/Roger Fry 324, 6 Jan. 1922.

61. VB/Roger Fry 317, early 20s.

62. VB/Roger Fry 256, 22 Jan. 1918.

63. VB/Roger Fry 233, c. 1917.

64. Barbara Tuchman, The Proud Tower: A Portrait of The World Before the War (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966), p. 28.

65. VB/Margery Snowden 37, 1923.

66. VB/Roger Fry 341, early 20s.

67. VB/Margery Snowden 33, Dec. 1912.

68. VB/Roger Fry 190, 1916.

69. VB/Roger Fry 389, late 20s.

70. VB/Clive Bell 158, 23 Jan. 1928.

71. VB/Clive Bell 288, c. 1959.

72. VB/Clive Bell 161, 17 Feb. 1928.

73. Shone, Portraits, p. 1936.

74. VB/Roger Fry 398, 19 Jan. 1929.

75. VB/Roger Fry 328, Feb. 1922.

76. Virginia Woolf, intro., Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell (London: The Cooling Galleries, 1930), n. pag.

77. Virginia Woolf, intro., Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell (London: The Lefevre Galleries, 1934), n. pag.

78. Woolf, quoted in Shone, Portraits, p. 96.

79. Woolf, Moments, p. 85.

80. VB/Roger Fry 394, 1928.

81. VB/Roger Fry 345, 1923.

82. Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 93.

83. VB/Roger Fry 150, c. Sept. 1914.

84. VB/Roger Fry 273, 21 Nov. 1918.

85. VB/Roger Fry 346, 1920s.

86. Vanessa Bell, Leighton Park School TS.

87. Keith Roberts, London section, "Current and Forthcoming Exhibitions," Burlington Magazine, April, 1964, p. 197.

88. VB/Clive Bell 213, early 20s.

89. Virginia Woolf, in A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1953), p. 145.

90. Roger Fry, quoted in Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 121.

91. Raymond Mortimer, intro., Modern Nymphs (London: Etchells and MacDonald, 1930), p. 9.

92. Clive Bell, Civilization, p. 237.

93. Vanessa Bell, Fry memoir TS, 1934.

94. VB/Margery Snowden 11, c. 1905.

95. VB/Clive Bell c. 1907-8.

96. VB/Clive Bell c. 1907-8.

97. VB/Roger Fry 185, c. 1915.

98. Angelica Garnett in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 173.

99. Roger Fry, Letters, II, 490.

100. VB/Clive Bell 138, 12 May 1922.

101. VB/Maynard Keynes 66, 4 Feb. 1922.

102. VB/Roger Fry 354, early 20s.

103. VB/Clive Bell 30, 1912.

104. VB/Roger Fry 274, 29 Nov. 1918.

105. VB/Roger Fry 392, 13 Sept. 1928.

106. VB/Roger Fry 421, early 30s.

107. VB/Roger Fry 257, c. 1918.

108. Shone, Portraits, p. 16.

109. VB/Roger Fry 274, 29 Nov. 1918.

110. VB/Clive Bell 135, c. 1922.

111. VB/Roger Fry 345, c. 1923.

112. VB/Maynard Keynes 44, 19 March 1919.

113. VB/Maynard Keynes 66, 4 Feb. 1922.

114. VB/Roger Fry 289, c. 1919.

115. VB/Maynard Keynes 52, 6 Dec. 1921.

116. Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 118.

117. Roger Fry, Letters, II, 518.

118. Gerald Brenan, "Bloomsbury in Spain," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 292.

119. Carolyn Heilbrun, Towards a Recognition, p. 160.

120. VB/Roger Fry 413, c. 1930.

121. Virginia Woolf, Moments, p. 83.

122. VB/Roger Fry 413, c. 1930.

Chapter V

1. Roger Fry, intro., Victorian Photographs, pp. 10-11.

2. Loc. cit.

3. Alan-Clutton-Brock, "Vanessa Bell and Her Circle," p. 790.

4. Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf, II, 180.

5. VB/Roger Fry 187, 16 Jan. 1916.

6. Virginia Woolf, Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924), p. 21.

7. Vanessa Bell, in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 79.

8. Vanessa Bell, Fry memoir TS.

9. Paul Levy, "The Bloomsbury Group," in Milo Keynes, ed., Essays on J. M. Keynes, p. 65.

10. VB/Roger Fry 164, 2 May 1915.

11. Noel Annan, quoted in Heilbrun, Toward a Recognition, p. 126.

12. Rupert Brooke, quoted op. cit., p. 128.

13. Roger Fry, Last Lectures, p. 17.

14. Fry, Art and Psycho-Analysis, p. 4.

15. Clive Bell, "Negro Sculpture," Since Cézanne, p. 116.

16. Lytton Strachey, "Monday, June 26, 1916," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 6.

17. Virginia Woolf, intro., Cooling Galleries, Recent Paintings, 1930.

18. Annan, Leslie Stephen, p. 38.

19. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 92.

20. Lytton Strachey, quoted in Michael Holroyd, Lytton Strachey: A Biography (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 67.

21. Raymond Mortimer, intro., The English at Home: Sixty-Three Photographs by Bill Brandt (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1936), p. 8.

22. Julian Bell, in Essays, Poems and Letters, p. 67.

23. Joan Robinson, "What Has Happened to the Keynesian Revolution," in Milo Keynes, ed., Essays, p. 128.

24. Molly McCarthy, quoted in Elizabeth French Boyd, Bloomsbury Heritage: Their Mothers and Their Aunts (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), p. 104.

25. Cited by Denys Sutton, ed., Letters of Roger Fry, I, 81.

26. E. M. Forster, "Bloomsbury, An Early Note," in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 76.

27. William Morris, quoted in Pevsner, Englishness of English Art, p. 67.

28. Tuckman, Proud Tower, p. xiii.

29. John Rothenstein, Modern English Painters: Lewis to Moore, p. 15.

30. VB/Clive Bell 249, 1930s.

31. F. R. Leavis, quoted in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 401.

32. VB/Clive Bell 249.

33. Leopold Schwarzchild, World in Trance (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1943).

34. E. M. Forster, "What I Believe," in Two Cheers For Democracy (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), p. 68.

35. Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 117.

36. Forster, loc. cit.

37. George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, "The Church and The Artist," The Studio, Sept. 1942, p. 83.

38. Alan Gowans, The Restless Art, A History of Painters and Painting 1760-1960 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966), p. 240.

39. Charles Darwin, from The Descent of Man, in Norton Anthology, p. 1648.

40. VB/Roger Fry 367, 8 Sept. 1926.

41. Angelica Garnett, in Rosenbaum, Bloomsbury Group, p. 175.

NOTE ON SOURCES

The Bloomsbury bibliography is by now enormous, that pertaining to Bloomsbury and the visual arts of fairly good size, that on Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell (particularly Vanessa Bell) rather small. Richard Shone's Bloomsbury Portraits is the recently-published key work. It offers an interesting account of the lives and work of these painters, dependable chronologies, a thorough bibliography and an unequalled source of reproductions. My chapter on applied art is particularly indebted to Mr. Shone's research.

For my suggestions regarding the relationship between Vanessa Bell's art and life, and in various other ways, I have relied heavily upon something over a thousand letters from the painter which are among the Charleston papers at King's College Library in Cambridge, and upon several typescripts of unpublished memoirs and an unpublished speech which are in her daughter's possession. In the Notes these have been cited, in the case of letters, as "VB/(correspondent) (MS #)" and a date where possible; and in the case of typescripts by an actual or ad hoc title (e.g. "Roger Fry memoir") and, again where possible, a date. For permission to

read and quote from these various materials, I am most grateful to Mrs. Angelica Garnett.

Otherwise unattributed remarks by Angelica Garnett, Richard Carline and Paul Roche are from conversations with these persons in summer 1977.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

Annan, Noel G. Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time. London: McGibbon & Kee, 1951.

Anon. "The Air of Bloomsbury." The Times Literary Supplement, 20 Aug. 1954, p. 521.

Anon. "A Neglected Phase of British Art." Apollo, March 1970, pp. 174-185.

Anon. "The Value of Standards," memorial editorial on Clive Bell. Apollo, Jan. 1964, pp. 3-7.

Bell, Clive. Art. 1914; reprt. London: Arrow Books Ltd., 1961.

_____. Peace at Once. Manchester and London: The National Labour Press Ltd., 1916.

_____. Pot-Boilers. London: Chatto & Windus, 1918.

_____. The Legend of Monte della Sibilla or Le Paradise de la Reine Sibille. Richmond: The Hogarth Press, 1923.

_____. On British Freedom. London: Chatto & Windus, 1923.

_____. Since Cézanne. London: Chatto & Windus, 1923.

_____. Landmarks in Nineteenth Century Painting. London: Chatto & Windus, 1927.

_____. Civilization: An Essay. London: Chatto & Windus, 1928.

_____. Enjoying Pictures: Meditations in the National Gallery and Elsewhere. London: Chatto & Windus, 1934.

_____. "What's Next in Art?" The Studio, April 1935, pp. 176-85.

_____. "Paintings in Berwick Church, Sussex." Country Life, 4 June 1943, pp. 1016-17.

_____. Intro. to The French Impressionists. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1952.

_____. Old Friends. London: Chatto & Windus, 1956.

Bell, George K., Bishop of Chichester. "The Church and the Artist." The Studio, September 1942, pp. 81-92.

Bell, Julian. We Did Not Fight: 1914-18 Experiences of War Resisters (ed. and intro.). London: R. Cobsen-Sanderson Ltd., 1935.

_____. Essays, Poems and Letters. Ed. Quentin Bell. London: The Hogarth Press, 1938.

Bell, Quentin. Bloomsbury. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968.

_____. Virginia Woolf: A Biography. Two vols. New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972.

_____. "The Art Critic--'Facts of Feeling' vs. 'Facts of History.'" Art News, May 1976, pp. 55-62.

Bell, Vanessa. Letters to various correspondents, 1897-1960, MS copies. Charleston Papers, King's College, Cambridge.

_____. "Life at Hyde Park Gate 1897-1904," TS unpublished memoir, n.d. Private collection.

_____. "Roger Fry Memoir," TS unpublished memoir, Oct. 1934. Private collection.

_____. "Speech at Leighton Park School," TS unpublished speech, c. 1926. Private collection.

Boyd, Elizabeth French. Bloomsbury Heritage: Their Mothers and Their Aunts. London: Hamish Hamilton, Ltd., 1976.

Cambridge: Arts Council Gallery. Portraits by Duncan Grant (intro. Richard Shone). Nov. 1969.

Clark, Kenneth. Another Part of the Wood. London: John Murray Ltd., 1974.

Clutton-Brock, Alan. "Vanessa Bell and Her Circle." The Listener, May 4, 1961, p. 790.

Cooper, Douglas. The Courtauld Collection, A Catalogue and Introduction. London: The Athlone Press, 1954.

Constable, W. G. Duncan Grant (British Artists of Today, No. VI). London: The Fleuron Ltd., 1927.

Eastbourne: Towner Art Gallery. The Berwick Church Paintings. Intro. Richard Shone. July 1969.

Egbert, Donald D. Social Radicalism and The Arts: Western Europe. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970.

Ekman, Rosalind. "The Paradoxes of Formalism." The British Journal of Aesthetics, Oct., 1970, pp. 350-358.

Forster, E. M. Two Cheers for Democracy. Ed. Oliver Stallybrass. London: Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1972.

Fry, Roger. Vision and Design. London: Chatto & Windus, 1920.

_____. Twelve Original Woodcuts. Richmond: The Hogarth Press, 1921.

_____. Intro. to Living Painters: Duncan Grant. London: The Hogarth Press, 1923.

_____. The Artist and Psycho-Analysis. London: The Hogarth Press, 1924.

_____. Art and Commerce. London: The Hogarth Press, 1926.

_____. Transformations: Critical and Speculative Essays on Art. London: Chatto & Windus, 1926.

_____. Intro. to Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women by Julia Margaret Cameron. London: The Hogarth Press, 1926.

_____. Cézanne: A Study of His Development. London: The Hogarth Press, 1927.

_____. Reflections on British Painting. London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1934.

_____. Last Lectures. Intro. Kenneth Clark. Cambridge: The University Press, 1939.

_____. Letters of Roger Fry. Two vols. Ed. Denys Sutton. London: Chatto & Windus, 1972.

Garnett, David. The Golden Echo. 1953; reprt. London: Chatto & Windus, 1970.

_____. The Flowers of the Forest. London: Chatto & Windus, 1956.

_____. The Familiar Faces. London: Chatto & Windus, 1962.

Gowans, Alan. The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting 1790-1950. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966.

Grant, Duncan. "Virginia Woolf." Horizon, June, 1941, pp. 402-6.

Heilbrun, Carolyn G. Toward a Recognition of Androgyny. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

Holroyd, Michael. Lytton Strachey: A Biography. London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1973.

Johnstone, J. K. The Bloomsbury Group: A Study of E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf and Their Circle. London: Secker & Warburg, 1954.

Horton, Percy. "Mural Painting in the Private House." The Studio, October, 1939, pp. 148-155.

Keynes, John Maynard. The Economic Consequences of the Peace. London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1919.

_____. Two Memoirs. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949.

_____. "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," in The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes, Vol. IX. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1972.

Keynes, Milo, ed. Essays on John Maynard Keynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Lewis, Wyndham. Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings 1913-1956. Ed. Walter Michel and C. J. Fox. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1969.

Lipke, William C. "The Omega Workshops and Vorticism." Apollo, March, 1970, pp. 224-31.

Lodge, David, ed. 20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1972.

London: The Adams Gallery. Exhibition of Paintings by Vanessa Bell. Foreward by A. Dunoyer de Segonzac. October, 1961.

London: British Arts Council. Roger Fry, Paintings and Drawings. Intro. Desmond McCarthy. 1952.

_____. Vanessa Bell 1879-1961: A Memorial Exhibition of Paintings. Intro. Ronald Pickvance. 1964.

_____. Vision and Design: The Life, Work and Influence of Roger Fry. Essays by Quentin Bell and Philip Troutman. 1966.

_____. Vorticism and its Allies. Intro. Richard Cork. Hayward Gallery, March-June, 1974.

London: Courtauld Institute of Art. The Fry Collection. 1958.

London: Anthony d'Offay Gallery. The Art of Vanessa Bell. Foreward by Richard Morphet. Nov.-Dec., 1973.

London: d'Offay Couper Gallery. Duncan Grant: Water-colours and Drawings. April-May, 1972.

London: Gallery Edward Harvane. A Homage to Duncan Grant on His Ninetieth Birthday. Intro. Lindy Guiness. Feb.-March, 1975.

_____. Ottoline: An Exhibition of Works by Those Artists Who Gathered Around the Personality of Lady Ottoline Morrell. Intro. Julian Vinogradoff. Oct.-Nov., 1971.

London: Grafton Galleries. Manet and the Post-Impressionists. Intro. Desmond McCarthy. Nov.-Jan., 1910-11.

_____. Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition: British, French and Russian Artists. Intros. by Clive Bell, Roger Fry and Boris von Anrep. Oct.-Dec., 1912.

London: The Lefevre Galleries. Catalogue of Recent Painting by Vanessa Bell. Foreword by Virginia Woolf. March, 1934.

_____. Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell. May, 1937.

London: The Leicester Galleries. Watercolours by Frank Dobson, Paintings by Algernon Newton A.R.A., Paintings by Vanessa Bell. June-July, 1941.

London: London Artists' Association (The Cooling Galleries). Recent Paintings by Duncan Grant. Foreword by David Garnett. 1931.

_____. Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell. Foreword by Virginia Woolf. 1930.

London: The Tate Gallery. Duncan Grant: A Display to Celebrate his Ninetieth Birthday. Feb.-Mar., 1975.

_____. Duncan Grant: A Retrospective Exhibition. Intro. Alan Clutton-Brock. May-June, 1959.

London: Wildenstein & Co., Ltd. Duncan Grant and His World. Intro. Denys Sutton. Nov., 1964.

"Lord Benbow's Apartments. The Architectural Review Competition: Assessor's Report and Awards." Architectural Review, November, 1930, pp. 201-204. See also Vanessa Bell's design in December number, p. 242.

Los Angeles: L.A. County Museum of Art/Alfred A. Knopf. Women Artists: 1550-1950. Intros. Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin. 1976.

McBriar, A. M. Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918. Cambridge: The University Press, 1962.

Moggridge, D. E., ed. Keynes: Aspects of the Man and His Work: The First Keynes Seminar Held at the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1972. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1974.

Morphet, Richard. "The Significance of Charleston." Apollo, March, 1970, pp. 342-5.

Mortimer, Raymond. Intro. to Modern Nymphs: Being a Series of Fourteen Fashion Plates by Thomas Lowinsky. London: Frederick Etchells and Hugh MacDonald, 1930.

_____. Intro. to The English at Home: Sixty-Three Photographs by Bill Brandt. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1936.

_____. Duncan Grant. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1944.

_____ with Dorothy Todd. The New Interior Decoration. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1929.

Nicholson, Benedict. "Post-Impressionism and Roger Fry." The Burlington Magazine, January, 1951, pp. 11-15.

Nochlin, Linda. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists." Art News, LXIX, 1971, pp. 22-39, 67-71.

The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Ed. M. H. Abrams. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1974.

Ogden, C. K., Richards, I. A., and Wood, James. The Foundations of Aesthetics. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1922.

Pelling, Henry. Modern Britain: 1885-1955. London: Sphere Books Ltd., 1974.

Pevsner, Nikolaus. The Englishness of English Art. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976.

_____. "Omega." Architectural Review, August, 1941, pp. 45-48.

Raffe, W. G. "Mannerly Advertising." Artwork, Autumn 1931, pp. 206-9.

Richards, I. A. Principles of Literary Criticism. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1926.

Rienaecker, Victor. "An Interesting Experiment." Apollo, February, 1946, pp. 34-5.

Roberts, Keith. "Current and Forthcoming Exhibitions," London Section. The Burlington Magazine, April 1964, p. 197.

Rothenstein, John. British Artists and the War. London: Peter Davies Ltd., 1931.

_____. Modern English Painters: Sickert to Smith. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952.

_____. Modern English Painters: Lewis to Moore. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956.

_____. British Art Since 1900: An Anthology. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1962.

Rothenstein, William. Form and Content in English Painting. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934.

Rosenbaum, S. B., ed. The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs, Commentary and Criticism. London: University of Toronto Press/Croom Helm Ltd., 1975.

Rowdon, John. Revaluations: Duncan Grant. With a letter from Duncan Grant. London: Hayward J. W. Marks, 1934.

Rowland, Kurt. A History of the Modern Movement: Art, Architecture, Design. New York/London: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co./Looking and Seeing, 1973.

Rutter, Frank. Art in My Time. London: Rich and Cowan Ltd., 1933.

Rye (Sussex) Art Gallery. Artists of Bloomsbury. June-August, 1967.

Schwarzschild, Leopold. World in Trance. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1943.

Shone, Richard. Bloomsbury Portraits. Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1976.

_____. The Century of Change: British Painting Since 1900. London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1977.

Strachey, Lytton. Eminent Victorians. 1918; rpt. London: Chatto & Windus, 1974.

Tuchman, Barbara. The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1966.

Wallis, Nevile. "Vanessa Bell and Bloomsbury." The Connoisseur, Aug. 1964, pp. 247-49.

Woolf, Leonard. Sowing: An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904. London: The Hogarth Press, 1960.

_____. Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-18. London: The Hogarth Press, 1964.

_____. Downhill All the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919 to 1939. London: The Hogarth Press, 1967.

_____. The Journey not the Arrival Matters: An Autobiography of the Years 1939 to 1969. London: The Hogarth Press, 1969.

Woolf, Virginia. Kew Gardens. Woodcuts by Vanessa Bell. Richmond: The Hogarth Press, 1919.

_____. Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown. London: The Hogarth Press, 1924.

_____. A Room of One's Own. New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1929.

_____. Roger Fry: A Biography. London: The Hogarth Press, 1940.

_____. The Moment and Other Essays. London: The Hogarth Press, 1947.

_____. A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf. Ed., intro. Leonard Woolf. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1953.

_____. Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings of Virginia Woolf. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind. London: Sussex University Press, 1976.

VITA

Surname: Wright Given Names: Patricia Ann

Place of Birth: Maywood, Calif., U.S.A.

Date of Birth: 7 May 1944

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

University of Oregon, Eugene 1962 to 1976

University of Victoria, B.C. 1976 to 1978

Degrees, Diplomas, Etc., Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

B.A. (Honors) 1976 University of Oregon, Eugene

Honors and Awards:

University of Victoria Fellowship, 1976/77, 1977/78

University of Oregon scholarship from Ina McClung funds in art history, 1976

Publications:

Ukiyo-e: Glimpses into the Floating World: 18th and 19th Century Japanese Prints. Collections of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, No. 5, 1977.

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis (the title of which is shown below) to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or similar institutions, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

Eminent Post-Victorians: The Bloomsbury Circle and the Visual Arts.

Author: [redacted]

Patricia Wright

1 January 1980

Date