
REVOLT AND THE IDEAL IN BLOOMSBURY*

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One good justification for a study of revolt and the ideal in the sex and art of Bloomsbury-at a time when feminism and homosexuality are current issues-can be found in the public response to members of the Bloomsbury group' during their own lifetimes. Although the aim of their contemporaries' criticism ran the gamut from class to personality, from financial status to ideology, the major emphasis seems to have rested upon their art and their sexual mores. At first the relationship between these two points of attack seems rather startling, given the relative lack of explicit sex in the published works of E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, and Virginia Woolf-the three major writers of the group. Their books were never banned, as were those of D. H. Lawrence or Radclyffe Hall, yet critics such as Roy Campbell attacked them as both artists *and* as "sexless folk whose sexes intersect."

In *The Georgiad*, Campbell set *out*, among other things, to parody Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* with his own *Androgyno*, a "joint Hermaphrodite-of-letters," complete with long blue stockings and a sexual metamorphosis. His multi-directional satire seems to be directed against Vita Sackville-West and also Woolf's androgynous literary creation, since he specifically calls his creature a "new Orlando" speaking with a "Bloomsbury accent." However, the homosexuality of Bloomsbury in general also comes under attack;

Both sexes rampantly dispute the field
And at alternate moments gain or yield.
This was no neuter of a doubtful gender,
But both in him attained their fullest splendour,
Unlike our modern homos who are neither
He could be homosexual with either.

Taking his pleasure in and out of season,
He gave for his perversity no reason.s

L. H. Myers took a similar stand against the homosexual artist in the "Pleasance of Art" section of *Prince Jali*. His Daniyal, who would seem to be

a satirical portrait of Lytton Strachey, spends his day squeezing young boys and writing savagely ironic portraits of "famous characters in religious history" (*à la Eminent Victorians*)-portraits which only serve to reveal the mocker's own inadequacies. To Myers's hero, Jali, such efforts are "spiteful, tasteless and pretentious." The homosexuality together with the art were seen by Myers as deliberate attempts to outrage moral and literary conventions: "the pleasure which the Camp took in regarding itself as scandalous was actually the chief source of its inspiration, its principal well-spring of energy."³

Was Bloomsbury compulsively exhibitionistic or consciously revolutionary? Myers raises questions that had already come to the fore during the trial of Oscar Wilde, with "the love that dare not speak its name." What are the motives of those who are unconventional in their art or in their sexual proclivities? Was Wilde a social rebel? How closely linked are art and sex? To E. M. Forster they were intricately connected because of the inhibiting English social code. Citing the "ridiculous cases" of the suppression of *The Well of Loneliness*, *The Rainbow*, *Ulysses*, and *Boy*, he wrote: "I want greater freedom for writers, both as creators and as critics. In England, more than elsewhere, their creative work is hampered because they can't write freely about sex, and I want it recognized that sex is a subject for serious treatment and also for comic treatment.1"

Yet the enemies of Bloomsbury remained deaf and blind, but not at all dumb. In his 1954 introduction to *The Apes of God*, Wyndham Lewis deplored the "wave of male perversion among the young" in the 1920s. He saw that it was revolutionary in intensity but, characteristically, failed to understand that it was against people like himself that the revolt was directed. Strachey and Forster-both homosexuals-would certainly have resented their sexual tendency being labeled a "nasty pathological oddity." They probably would have resented as well Lewis's condescending approbation of sentimental friendships between adult males-with no penal consequences. Lewis apparently felt strongly that all decent men would *want* to impose such restraints on "pathological perverts." Indeed, in 1967, Lord Arran still found the opponents of his Sexual Offences Bill prophesying the fall of England on sexual grounds, on the model of Greece and Rome. In the Terminal Note to *Maurice*, Forster's posthumously published homosexual novel, the author wrote that any change in law would merely mean a shift in public opinion from "ignorance and terror to familiarity and contempt." That seems the truer prophecy.

It appears to be an historically validated fact that if an artist is a recognized homosexual, his work will first be judged by non-aesthetic criteria. Wilde's name had to be obliterated from posters of *The Importance of Being Earnest* before the public would attend the performances. Publishers refused

"The Portrait of Mr. W.H." only when Wilde's trial seemed to be going poorly. The "unconscious deceit" or "muddleheadedness" that Forster condemned in his "Notes on the English Character," triumphed over autonomous literary judgment. Was this sexual/aesthetic hypocrisy not enough to make artists contemplate revolt?

Similarly, perhaps, was not the narrow heterosexual perspective of the age enough to make homosexuals revolt? D. H. Lawrence wrote: "*the* problem of today, the establishment of a new relation, is the readjustment of the old one, between men and women."! In *Maurice* we get the fullest critical portrait of this heterosexual chauvinism. Mr. Ducie's "All's right in the world. Male and Female," Dr. Barry's view of homosexuality as an "evil hallucination," Mr. Borenius's desire to see all "sexual irregularities" punished severely—all these tend to prove Forster's contention that England had "always been disinclined to accept human nature." The "outlaws," those who indulge in the "unspeakable vice of the Greeks," are finally forced out of society. Forster deliberately gave the novel a happy ending, however; unlike *The Well of Loneliness*, *Maurice* ends with the united lovers. As Forster ironically suggested: "If it had ended unhappily, with a lad dangling from a noose or with a suicidal pact, all would be well, for there is no pornography or seduction of minors. But the lovers get away unpunished and consequently recommend crime.?? For this reason the book remained in manuscript for fifty-eight years, and those homosexual short pieces only saw print a few years ago in *The Life to Come and Other Stories* (London: Edward Arnold, 1972).⁷

In the light of such social pressures, seemingly insignificant comments take on new suggestiveness. In *Aspects of the Novel* Forster wrote that the inner lives of characters must be presented in fiction (although they are never known in real life): "even if they are imperfect or unreal, they do not contain any secrets, whereas our friends do and must, mutual secrecy being one of the conditions of life upon this globe.?" Homosexuality demands secrecy; fiction does not.

Forster was no doubt very aware of what homosexuality could contribute to art: he saw and appreciated Diaghilev, Nijinsky, Strachey, and many others. Homosexuality, although no doubt intensified by the educational system of the upper classes which physically and intellectually separated males and females, was a credible social phenomenon in Europe at the time. Perhaps, however, another way of accounting for this is that the Victorian heterosexual standards of value were finally being challenged. In other words, maybe homosexuality was less a congenital public school disease than a deliberate form of anti-Victorian revolt. And the revolution was against not only this sexual snobbery, but also the social position of women that prevented even a true heterosexual love between two equals. In 1898 Strachey

wrote: "I think it is too much that one cannot speak to a member of 'the sex' without being looked upon askance by somebody or other. If only people were more sensible on this point, half the so called immorality would come to an end at once.?" His biographer, Michael Holroyd, claims that Strachey spasmodically experienced some attraction to women—to Carrington, Ottoline Morrell, Nina Hamnett, Katherine Mansfield, Vanessa Bell—but that his intense childhood love for his mother always restrained him (p. 935n). It seems wisest at this point, however, to let lie the matter of particular psychological reasons for homosexuality: the literature itself of Bloomsbury is rich with less hypothetical material for such a study.

Whatever the individual or social reasons for this revolt, it seems evident that Bloomsbury did want to lead the way to a change in educated public opinion on sexual mores. After all, the times were changing. Virginia Woolf wrote to Vita Sackville-West: "I will tell you about Anna Karenina and the predominance of sexual love in nineteenth century fiction, and its growing unreality to us who have no real condemnation in our hearts any longer for adultery as such."?

Yet many felt differently and revolutionaries were still needed to combat the hostility of society. Although never published during his lifetime, *Maurice* was E. M. Forster's self-consciously rebellious tract against the exclusiveness of that Victorian heterosexual love that "ignored the reproductive and digestive functions." As Noel Annan suggests in his review of the novel: "When Forster describes Maurice and Clive in love, we feel he is observing them with an intruding sympathy, believing that he has to excuse them, although the theme of the book is that they need no excusing."¹¹ Unlike Wilde, neither Maurice nor his creator ever married. They were not bisexual; nor were they ever hypocrites. Neither was attracted to homosexuality as a "sin," or solely for its shock value.

Yet is not some concept of the fascination of moral disobedience probably at the heart of all rebellions against moral codes which are considered absurd? In his biography of Goldsworth Lowes Dickinson, Forster discusses his mentor's impatience as a child with "current rules of conduct," and his deliberate disobeying of his parents. Dickinson wrote: "I emerged from it ultimately as a rebel, and at bottom have been so all my life."¹² His homosexuality, subtly yet definitely suggested in the biography, could perhaps be yet another form of this revolt. But the rebellion was a concealed one: Virginia Woolf wrote to Roger Fry in 1921 that Dickinson had written a "dialogue upon homosexuality which he won't publish, for fear of the effect upon parents who might send their sons to Kings: and he is writing his autobiography which he won't publish for the same reason. So you see what dominates English literature is the parents of the young men who might be sent to Kings."¹³

Could rebellion, then, be seen as a motive power behind Strachey's homosexuality as well? Perhaps. "The Trinity Diary-November 1902," a dialogue with G. Trevelyan about the love of men, would intimate this. However, his letters do suggest a desire to shock people and a need for attention as equally strong conscious forces.

There are therefore obvious qualifications that must be made on the claim for a revolutionary intent among Bloomsbury writers. Perhaps revolt was not the *primary* reason for insistence upon homosexual love for Strachey and Forster. Undoubtedly, given the restrictive social code, one was a rebel, a challenge to society by one's very existence as a homosexual. However, as an explanation of the phenomenon, revolt does not fully take into account the intellectual nature of Bloomsbury. These writers were not primarily social activists, although they obviously cannot be criticized for being unaware of, or uninterested in, social issues. Must we look elsewhere for the intellectual and ideological reasons for this sexual rebellion?

Once again, an enemy of Bloomsbury leads us to a possible answer. In *The Georgiad* once again Roy Campbell mockingly wrote:

For, sure enough, his love was Humbert's kind,
Though not, like it, Platonic, of the mind,
Yet it extended out of time and space
To all the members of the human race⁻¹⁴

Despite the irony, he has placed his finger exactly on one of the major concerns of Bloomsbury: love and human relations *in general*. Society thwarts the intimate relationships of individuals-by its trivial conventions, its moral strictures-regardless of sex. Marriage cannot be a truly loving union of equals when the woman is relegated to the role of "the Angel in the House." When Mrs. Thornbury in *The Voyage Out* declaims: "You men! Where would you be if it weren't for women!", the sardonic Ridley Ambrose replies: "Read the *Symposium*."

Virginia Woolf preferred intimate friendship with women because it was possible to achieve "a relationship so secret and private compared with relations with men," as she wrote to Vita Sackville-West. Her nephew, Quentin Bell, writes in his biography of her affection for this, her Sapphist friend: "There may have been-s-on balance I think that there probably was-some caressing, some bedding together. But whatever may have occurred between them of this nature, I doubt very much whether it was of a kind to excite Virginia or to satisfy Vita. As far as Virginia's life is concerned the point is of no great importance; what was, to her, important was the extent to which she was emotionally involved, the degree to which she was in love."¹⁵ Love was not seen as an emotion which was limited, as society claimed, by the barrier of sex. It was a question of *human* relations.

As Campbell suggested, the origins of this particular "justification" for homosexuality are Platonic. In the *Symposium* those males who love men are said to be the most noble, yet "do not act thus from any want of shame, but because they are valiant and manly, and have a manly countenance, and they embrace that which is like them."¹⁶ Heterosexual relations are seen as common, and indeed more devotion is expected in homosexual love, since it is the more spiritual. Plato's dialogue continues: "Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul." Heterosexuals are pregnant in the body only, but homosexuals have souls which are pregnant. The latter do not waste creative energy on having children: their offspring are wisdom and virtue. The link between homosexuality and the products of creative energy first appeared to Lytton Strachey through his love for the painter Duncan Grant: "I am filled with ... joy,-not by the consummation of my own poor pleasure ... but by the sudden knowledge that he too was moved.... For the first time, I loved his soul. In the future when we meet, I want to be worthy ... of what I am feeling now. I want our intercourse to be unmarred by the weaknesses that I know are mine too often ... let us be occupied with the cleansing aspirations of our art as much as with each other and with ourselves." Strachey had discovered the *Symposium* during a boyhood infatuation: "I may be sinning, but I am doing so in the company of Shakespeare and Greece.":

This Platonic desire for an ideal love would seem to have been a common concern among Cambridge intellectuals-even before *Principia Ethica*. According to Goldie Dickinson, the philosopher McTaggart believed that "in the relation of love we come into the closest contact we can attain with Reality; for the Reality is an eternally perfect harmony of pure spirits united by love.": Dickinson himself wrote that "there is no good like friendship; which indeed may be termed love; which love, it seems to me, is the one thing to be cherished if there is to be any purport in life; cherished as the fundament of one's conduct and opinions-much deeper and more important than they."²⁰ The idealized Hellenistic homosexuality of his *The Greek View of Life* perhaps influenced his young friend, E.M. Forster.

In that review of *Maurice*, Noel Annan claims that Forster saw sex as an attribute of love, but by no means the most important one. Like Plato, he expected devotion and affection from his relationships: "indeed because children, coquetry and the impediments of social conventions were absent from homosexual love, he expected more from it than from heterosexual love." Nevertheless the world conspires against homosexual lovers. In an early novel, Forster writes: "Dutiful sons, loving husbands, responsible fathers-these are what [Nature] wants, and if we are friends it must be in our spare time. Abram and Sarai were sorrowful, yet their seed became as the sand of the sea, and distracts the politics of Europe at this moment. But a few verses of

poetry is all that survives of David and Jonathan."²¹ Rickie, in *The Longest Journey*, may desire "the marriage of true minds," but like Fielding and Aziz in the later *A Passage to India*, he realizes that the time and the place for such an ideal and demanding male love have not yet come in the modern world. As Forster wrote in *Howards End*: "When men like us, it is for our better qualities, and however tender their liking, we dare not be unworthy of it, or they will quickly let us go."²²

For Forster, love was "harmonious, immense"-regardless of the sex of the lovers. In *Maurice* he tried to show how homosexual love could also unite the "brutal and the ideal," "athletic" and platonic love, lust and sentimentality. Alec and Maurice must "live outside class, without relations or money; they must work and stick to each other till death. But England belonged to them. That, besides companionship, was their reward. Her air and sky were theirs, not the timorous millions' who own stuffy little boxes, but never their own souls" (p. 223). As Furbank notes in his introduction to the novel, if there is any "perversion" in the matter, it is the perversity of a society which insanely denies part of the human heritage. Homosexual love was a revolt against this denial, but it was also an ideal.²³

Plato, McTaggart, Dickinson and, we might add, Edward Carpenter, seem to have been the mentors behind Forster's belief in love as the consummate experience of life. Strachey reached a similar conclusion by way of the *Symposium* and G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*. In his famous chapter on the "Ideal," Moore claimed: "By far the most valuable things which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects.">' States of consciousness are not determined by the sex of the possessor, it would seem; nor do "human intercourse" and personal affection imply any heterosexual limitations. Indeed given Victorian social constrictions, they might almost be said to preclude heterosexual love. Strachey's early letters to Keynes point to his awareness of this irony. Holroyd claims that Lytton felt "the superiority of homosexuality to the humdrum heterosexual relationship lay in the greater degree of sympathy and the more absolute dual-unity which it could command. Between opposite sexes there must always be some latent residue of doubt, ignorance, perplexity; so often intelligence was matched with stupidity, talent paired off with mediocrity" (pp. 240-41).

In Strachey's later relationships, it was the intensity of his state of mind, not of his passion, that acted as the ultimate criterion for evaluating his love. Indeed, what Moore called the "mental qualities" often seemed to be uppermost in Strachey's mind during his love affairs. Holroyd makes much of Strachey's aversion to physical lust, his fetishes and his fantasies, but tends to underplay the importance of the philosophic quest for an ideal love. Bertrand

Russell, ironically, seems to have comprehended the seriousness of this search in his criticism of Strachey, who he felt had perverted Moore's doctrines so as to condone and exalt his own homosexuality." It is important to keep in mind Strachey's belief that society continually prevented the realization of real love even between members of *opposite* sexes—a belief shared by Forster in *Howards End*.

If revolt alone seemed inadequate as an explanation of Bloomsbury homosexuality, so does this idea of an ideal love. However, *together*, these two theories take into account the emotional needs, the philosophic search for truth and the reaction against social convention—the three elements that seem to have given men like Strachey and Forster the strength to accept and to believe in their homosexuality, despite the attacks of the critics of Bloomsbury. These two possible explanations are reflected in the tone of the recently published short pieces by Forster. It ranges from somber idealism in the name of honour and truth and love (often in stories set in another time—"The Life to Come"—or in an isolating location—"The Other Boat") to ironic, even facetious cuts at heterosexual chauvinism ("What Does It Matter? A Morality").

It is interesting to note that *Maurice* was the only full-scale literary study of overt homosexuality" done by any Bloomsbury member and that it was not published until 1971. Yet, as we have seen, criticism of Bloomsbury art was often founded on sexual grounds. Critics seemed unwilling to allow art any autonomy from life, when something in life (the subject matter of art seemingly) outraged them.

There *are* homosexual characters in the fiction of Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster, but they are usually minor and their sexual proclivities are rarely explicit. They hardly merit the critics' moral wrath. Does Mr. Carmichael in *To the Lighthouse* love Andrew Ramsay? We know that he used to take the boy to his room to "show him things," and that he lost all interest in life after Andrew's death; but does this make him a homosexual? Is the question even relevant, much less interesting? In other of Woolf's novels we suspect homosexuality in certain male characters because they are fictive portraits of Lytton Strachey. With the publication of Holroyd's biography and Carrington's letters we are better equipped to see parallels between Strachey and the fictional characters.

Strachey himself wrote a few humorous pieces on homosexual themes: "The Unfortunate Lovers" or "Truth Will Out," written in 1913, and in the same year, "Ermyntrude and Esmeralda."²⁷ This latter piece of privately circulated "pornography" is interesting because the young Esmeralda sees the love of her brother, Godfrey, and his Oxford tutor, Mr. Mapleton, as natural and innocent. Her father, however, banishes the tutor and exiles his son to Germany. For his part, Godfrey (relates Esmeralda) "did not think he'd

done anything wicked at all, and it seems the Greeks used to do it, too—at least the Athenians, who were the best of the Greeks.... And he said that Mr. Mapleton agreed with everything he's said, and, in fact, he had told him most of it; and as for Papa, he said he was a silly old man and he expected he'd done just the same himself when he was a boy at school but that he'd forgotten all about it." When the young girl asks the visiting cleric, a school friend of her father, what love is, he replies that it is "the purification and the sanctification of something," *unless* its object is a member of the same sex. Although Socrates was a homosexual, the Dean says, "it was one of the mysteries of Providence that the highest and the lowest sometimes met in the same person, and that the Greeks had not had the benefits of the teaching of Our Lord." Needless to say the Dean is horrified by her notion that he had loved her father when they were boys. His overreaction, however, suggests the truth of her unwitting accusation. It is perhaps a sign of Strachey's confidence in his homosexuality that he can joke about Plato and the serious motives seen above—revolt and the search for the ideal.

This is the very portrait of him we find as Risley in *Maurice*. Just as Strachey acted as a challenge to Forster, so Risley dares Maurice, in so many words, to caper with him on the phallic mountain, leaving behind "the Valley of the Shadow of Life." "Dark, tall, and affected," Risley is always "at play, but seriously." This seriousness is what Wyndham Lewis, for one, failed to comprehend in Strachey. His broad satire of him in *The Apes of God* as Matthew Plunkett, a homosexual feasting on "Eminent Victorian giants," trying to be "normal" by seducing the boyish Betty Bligh (Carrington), is rather crude.

When Strachey appears in Virginia Woolf's fiction, the portrait is usually sympathetic, but rarely without some irony. The arrogant, intelligent St. John Hirst in *The Voyage Out* does not like young women—on intellectual as well as physical grounds—but is careful to try to be fair, asking Rachel whether the lack of "mind" in women is due to lack of training, or "native incapacity." In *Jacob's Room* Strachey appears as "Bonamy who couldn't love a woman and never read a foolish book." Bonamy's "peculiar disposition" as one of the "men of that temperament" makes his love for Jacob deeper than his heterosexual friend could ever understand. He is the "dark horse," left alone to mourn Jacob's death. Strachey was aware himself of the link Woolf had made for him with this fictional character. He once wrote to her: "Of course, you're very romantic—which alarms me slightly—I am such a Bonamy.T"

He was also a Neville. Although the brilliant mind of this character in *The Waves* likely belongs to another Bloomsbury bisexual, John Maynard Keynes, Neville's delicate health, his revolt against religion, his obsession with his physical unattractiveness, and his habit of reading French novels, are

decidedly Strachey's. Neville's one-sided *love* for the handsome, if rather stolid, Percival recalls the "absurd and violent passions" of Strachey's youth. Neville is perhaps the most significant homosexual character in Virginia Woolf's fiction. He is, however, only one of seven equally important characters in the novel, and Hirst and Bonamy place second to Terence, Rachel, and Jacob.

The same holds true for Forster's work. Except for the posthumously published short stories and *Maurice*, the novels are about asexual friendships between members of the same sex: Rickie and Ansell, Mrs. Wilcox and Margaret, Fielding and Aziz. Admittedly, many of the marriages in his fiction are less successful than these other relationships: Gino and Lilia (*Where Angels Fear to Tread*), Rickie and Agnes, Rickie's own parents (*The Longest Journey*), Leonard and Jacky Bast (*Howards End*), the British couples and, potentially, Adela and Ronny (*A Passage to India*). In Forster's last novel, the friendship of Aziz and Fielding must combat great odds merely to exist. As in *The Longest Journey*, the world conspires against them. It is not only culture, or even politics, and that prevents an ideal relationship, despite their mutual affection. At the end of the novel their horses bump together, they embrace, but the horses, the earth refuse them their wish-"not yet" and "not there."

Is there a suggestion of homosexuality in their love? Perhaps, but Forster was subtle and above all cautious. Even D. H. Lawrence was much more explicit, yet the attacks made on him were directed against his concepts and portrayal of heterosexual love. Birkin, in *Women in Love*, says: "I believe in the additional perfect relationship between man and man-additional to marriage." To be safe, Lawrence had him repeat and explain that "additional." He made no claim to the rebellious courage of idealistic confidence in the value of male love that one finds in Strachey and Forster. Implicit in Birkin's remark, however, is the one potential drawback that Forster perceived. In *Maurice* he wrote: "the thought that he was sterile weighed on the young man with a sudden shame. His mother or Mrs. Durham might lack mind or heart, but they had done visible work; they had handed on the torch their sons would tread out" (pp. 87-88). Although the suburban Maurice may be condemned to sterility, Forster, like Plato's ideal lovers, sought his immortality in the products of his creative energy-his art.

It is perhaps wise to recall at this point once again that Forster, like Woolf, was not primarily a "homosexual" novelist. In Woolf's fiction we find Rachel and Terence, Katherine and Ralph, the Dalloways, the Ramsays, and many more traditional couples. On the other hand, marriage is never the final word in human relations. There should be free room for all the other variations on the theme of love-in fiction, at least.

One of these variations is the true friendship of women, and its sexual aspect, lesbianism. The same would seem to hold true here as *in* our investigation of male homosexuality: there are elements of revolt against society and of a search for an ideal love that knows no barriers. We have already seen that Virginia Woolf preferred the friendship of women because it permitted greater intimacy. Whatever the relationship with Vita Sackville-West, it seems likely that it was more an affair of the heart, than of the body. Woolf remained childless for medical and psychological reasons. Like Plato's lovers she too then had to choose to assert her immortality *in* more spiritual ways. For her too this meant through her art. She admitted to an "insatiable desire to write something before I die," and once referred to her novels as her "offspring."

In her fiction, love between women is often seen as the ideal relationship. Clarissa Dalloway's love for Sally Seton remains, even after her marriage, the most significant and potent emotion in her life: "The strange thing, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity, of her feeling for Sally. It was not like one's feeling for a man. It was completely disinterested, and besides it had a quality which could only exist between women." Indeed, the most sexual moment *in* the novel is that of the "consummation" of their love: "Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn *with* flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally." Yet Clarissa hates Miss Kilman, her daughter's presumed "seducer," "the woman who had crept in to steal and defile." She tells herself: "it might be only a phase ... such as all girls go through. It might be falling in love." She never consciously connects Elizabeth and her teacher with herself and Sally. The ugly, poor, but educated Miss Kilman rarely had opportunities to meet the opposite sex; instead her energies and passions are directed towards her lovely student.

A somewhat more subtle version of this same love appears in *To the Lighthouse*. Lily Briscoe, the spinster painter, *resists* the male force of Mr. Ramsay, considers marriage a "degradation," and love "tedious, puerile, and inhumane." But it can also be "beautiful and necessary" if the right object is found. Lily "had much ado to control her impulse to fling herself (thank Heaven she had always resisted so far) at Mrs. Ramsay's knee and say to her-but what could one say to her? 'I'm *in* love with you?'"

If Lily speaks out for love between women as an ideal union, Orlando pleads for it as a rebellion against unnatural social conventions. After 'his' sex change "As all Orlando's loves had been women, now, through the culpable laggardry of the human frame to adapt itself to convention, though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved; and if the consciousness of being of the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen

those feelings which she had as a man." Despite expert male opinion, states Orlando's "biographer," women *do* enjoy each other's company. So true is this that our androgynous heroine manages to enjoy her relations with women quite as much as those with men.

Never in her fiction, even while attacking social convention, did Virginia Woolf become strident or chauvinistic, as did Radclyffe Hall in *The Well of Loneliness*-a heavily Freudian novel about a lesbian named Stephen. Not one of Woolf's heroines even has the strident anti-male tone of Lawrence's Winifred Inger (*The Rainbow*): "As if I would be betrayed by him, lend him my body as an instrument for his idea ... they are all impotent, they can't take a woman." His man-hater is, naturally, a member of the Women's Movement. As if that were not damning enough, Lawrence finally has to marry her off to the effeminate Tom Brangwen: "He looked at the athletic, seemingly fearless girl, and he detected in her a kinship with his own dark corruption." Similarly, in *The Fox*, the masculine March is made to respond to the "old spell of the fox" in Henry, who wants to submerge her identity in his.

At least Lily Briscoe has her independence, her memories of love, and her art; these are worth as much to her as Mrs. Dalloway means to her husband, and indeed more than Isa means to hers (in *Between the Acts*). Lily's love, like Clarissa's, is one that operates silently, outside the conventions of heterosexual marriage. It is an ideal emotion, like that of Moore and Dickinson, Strachey and Forster, Bonamy and Maurice. In Bloomsbury fiction the question of sexual mores is never totally in the limelight (except in *Maurice* of course), nor is it ever totally absent. As Maynard Keynes wrote in "My Early Beliefs," in Bloomsbury "one's prime objects in life were love, the creation and enjoyment of aesthetic experience," and the pursuit of truth. But, love did come first. If they discussed in their art the affection between members of the same sex, as well as marital love, it was perhaps because-given the current social conventions-it was one way of calling attention to the need to see human relations in a broader perspective. They actually wrote no essays or tracts on the subject: their subtle vehicles were their works of art and their lives.

We have already witnessed the critics' scornful response to this plea for a less narrow sexual outlook. The position of the homosexual artist in this society, however, was really little different from that of the female artist: they both exist but must one really acknowledge their worth as human beings or writers? As Keynes remarked in his address, "Am I a Liberal?", these problems indicated that certain changes were absolutely imperative: "Birth Control and the use of Contraceptives, Marriage Laws, the treatment of sexual offences and abnormalities, the economic position of women, the economic position of the family,-in all these matters the existing state of the

law and of orthodoxy is still Mediaeval-altogether out of touch with civilized opinion and civilized practice and with what individuals, educated and uneducated alike, say to one another in private."29

Only after 1919 were the professions opened to women; in education opportunities were slim-there was no female equivalent to "Arthur's Education Fund." In *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf wrote that the daughters of educated men formed a class unto themselves, an "anonymous and secret Society of Outsiders"-not unlike homosexuals. She knew that independence of mind depended upon independence of income, but she wanted none of the possessiveness, jealousy, pugnacity, and greed of the public world of men. Her ideal was perforce catholic: "As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.": "As Cassandra says in "A Society," once a woman learns to read, "there's only one thing you can teach her to believe in-and that is herself."

Virginia Woolf was no militant feminist, however. A woman could have a profession, like Peggy, the doctor in *The Years*, but perhaps it was not desirable to grow pugnacious like men and go to prison for one's suffragist convictions, like Rose. In many of her essays ("Two Women," "Ellen Terry," and others), Woolf expressed a special concern for the woman as artist. In *A Room of One's Own*, she asserted that a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. The room here is a symbol of independent consciousness, as well as of privacy and protection from the hostility of society. Money would mean an end to her subservience to the male world. She need never alter her values in deference to masculine opinion. Art depends on intellectual freedom, which in turn depends on these material things. Otherwise we are left with "the unpublished works of women, written by the fireside in pale profusion," as she wrote in *Jacob's Room*.

As a woman novelist, Woolf was very concerned about finding a workable relationship between her art and her femininity. Perhaps her solution was dictated by her temperament; perhaps, like Vita Sackville-West and Carrington, she felt she had to struggle for recognition more than a man. Whatever the reason, her answer to the problem took the form of a Platonic theory of the androgynous artist. As we have seen, Roy Campbell chose this aspect as a starting point for his satire in *The Georgiad*. He could not separate, however, this from the sexual theme; he remained blind to the androgyne as a literary concept.

For Woolf, as for Coleridge, the great mind was androgynous. In "The Patron and the Crocus," she wrote: "if you can forget your sex altogether ... so much the better; a writer has none.": "Shakespeare's mind was truly androgynous, she claimed in *A Room of One's Own*: it remains "resonant and porous ... it transmits emotion without impediment ... it is naturally

creative, incandescent, and undivided.t"" Except for Proust, all male writers of her time, she felt, were writing with only the male sides of their minds. As in married love, "some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriages of opposites has to be consummated."

In *To the Lighthouse*, then, Lily Briscoe had her mystic vision of Mrs. Ramsay, and immediately "She wanted him," Mr. Ramsay. She united the male and the female principles, adding the phallic black stroke to the purple triangle, Mr. Ramsay's lighthouse goal to Mrs. Ramsay's "wedge-shaped core of darkness." Charles Tansley may have felt in the novel that "Women can't paint, women can't write," but Lily's painting and Virginia Woolf's novel were completed in the same moment: the goal could be reached.

Orlando is Woolf's fullest study of the androgynous mind (and body) of the poet. The same concerns as we discovered above are present here too: "Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to another takes place." Orlando's poem, "The Oak Tree," is the literary record of this union and vacillation. In *The Waves*, the writer Bernard says: "But joined 'to the sensibility of a woman' (I am here quoting my own biographer) 'Bernard possessed the logical sobriety of a man.'"

Finally in the last-and unrevised-novel Virginia Woolf wrote before her death, we have a woman writer figure-Miss LaTrobe. It is rather disconcerting, however, to discover that she is a defeated writer of country pageants who, despite her superior literary vision of unity, is driven to drink for solace and even inspiration. Did Woolf's ideal begin to fail her now that her youthful rebellious spirit had been somewhat quelled by age, illness and two wars? Miss LaTrobe is "an outcast," like the homosexual William Dodge and the unhappily married Isa. She is the "slave of her audience," she laments. The tone of the novel is somewhat bitter.

In Woolf's response to this challenge to social convention (Miss LaTrobe is also a lesbian), there is little of the satiric confidence of Strachey's "Ermyntrude and Esmeralda" or the defiant revolt of Forster's lovers in the Greenwood. A different note has been struck. Isa, the unhappily married woman, feels she has known the homosexual William for years: "Weren't they, though, conspirators, seekers after hidden faces?" Are these hidden faces those of ideallovers? Do such lovers exist-in either sex? Or do they forever remain hidden? These are some of the questions the last Bloomsbury novels -so separated in time-leave us with. Are we to believe that it is only for the young to rebel or to seek an ideal of personal affection, outside social restrictions, if necessary? Perhaps these issues do look different at 59, after two major wars and the rise of Hitler. However tempting, there is no cause

to speculate that Woolf's suicide was brought on by any such realization. And yet, the tonal change in her work is there.

On his deathbed Lytton Strachey lamented not having married Carrington. Forster felt that his revolutionary social novel, *Maurice*, was publishable, "but worth it?" and he never wrote another piece of fiction after *A Passage to India*. Before his death he confided to his diary: "I should have been a more famous writer if I had written or rather published more, but sex has prevented the latter." In the last Bloomsbury novels, the land that says "No-not yet" and those "hidden faces" suggest the very intimate connection of sex and art. Novels end; human relations remain unconsummated. Is there also an intimation of defeat, a realization of the impossibility of reconciling the individual consciousness with current social convention, even in fiction? The Greenwood exists no more-or not yet. After the 1914 war Forster felt this. During the next one, it became increasingly clear to Virginia Woolf. The fighter planes do buzz over the pageant in her last novel. And *Maurice*, we recall, was dedicated to "A Happier Year."

NOTES

* A revised version of a paper presented to the ACUTE annual conference, May 1977.

1 S. P. Rosenbaum, in his collection, *The Bloomsbury Group* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. ii and iii, accepts Leonard Woolf's list of the members of "Old Bloomsbury": Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Molly and Desmond MacCarthy, Adrian Stephen, Lytton Strachey, J. M. Keynes, Saxon Sydney. Turner, Duncan Grant, E. M. Forster, and Roger Fry, while adding to it the Edwardian and war-time associates. It is important, as he stresses, that Ottoline Morrell, T. S. Eliot, Bertrand Russell, the Sitwells, and (significantly for this study) Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson were never considered part of Bloomsbury, despite some critics' generalizations. Often too the enemies of Bloomsbury chose to attack the younger hangers-on, who were often homosexual and who lacked the talent of their elders, but who had fallen under the spell of what Virginia Woolf called the "Bloomsbury hypnotism." See *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, I, 1915-1919, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), III.

2 *The Georgiad* (London: Boriswood Ltd., 1931), pp. 12-13. See Rowland Smith's *Lyric and Polemic: The Literary Personality of Roy Campbell* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Presses, 1972), pp. 80-86, in which a case is made for Campbell's confusing of Bloomsbury values and totally opposite ones-to the detriment of the poem. In his reminiscences, *Broken Record* (London: Boriswood, 1934), Campbell himself talks of "male inversion" among "the literary androgynous riff-raff" (p. 161) and mentions Lesbians as "a dismal set" (p. 166).

3 *The Root and the Flower* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), p. 351.

4 "Liberty in England" in *Abinger Harvest* (1936; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 81.

5 *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Aldous Huxley (London: Wm. Heinemann, 1932), to Edward Garnett, Friday, 17 April 1919.

6 Terminal Note to *Maurice* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), p. 236. All further page references to this novel will appear in parentheses in the text.

7 In his Introduction to *The Life to Come and Other Stories*, Oliver Stallybrass quotes Forster's 1922 diary entry which relates that he has burned some of his "indecent" writings because they "clogged" him artistically. He felt that they were written to excite, not express, himself. One does not feel the same aesthetic dissatisfaction in his

comments about *Maurice*, however. Perhaps the didacticism (and sentimentality?) of the novel validated it in his eyes as being of social value at any rate.

8 (1927; rpt. London: Edward Arnold, 1963), pp. 46-47.

9 Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey: A Biography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 19. All further page references to this work will appear in parentheses in the text.

10 In Aileen Pippett, *The Moth and the Star* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), p. 220.

11 "Love Story," *New York Review of Books*, 21 October 1971, p. 14.

12 E. M. Forster, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* (1934; rpt. London: Edward Arnold, 1962), p. 17.

13 *The Question of Things Happening: The Letters of Virginia Woolf 1912-1922*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth Press, 1976), p. 485.

14 *The Georgiad*, p. 55.

15 *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, II (London: Hogarth Press, 1972), 119.

16 Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956), p. 32.

17 "Diary," 6 August 1905, in *Lytton Strachey by Himself*, ed. Michael Holroyd (London: Heinemann, 1971), pp. 114-15.

18 *Lytton Strachey by Himself*, p. 82.

19 E. M. Forster, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson*, p. 71.

20 **Ibid.**, p. 63.

21 E. M. Forster, *The Longest Journey* (New York: Vintage, 1922), p. 69.

22 Forster's friendship with the homosexual writer and editor J. R. Ackerley helped the younger man cope with his need for an "Ideal Friend." See *The Letters of J. R. Ackerley*, ed. and introduction by Neville Braybrooke (London: Duckworth, 1975), p. xxiii.

23 Compare this to the rather more bleak and stoical acceptance of the hero's homosexuality in Christopher Isherwood's 1964 novel, *A Single Man*.

24 (1903; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 188.

25 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1872-1914* (1967; rpt. Toronto: Bantam, 1968), pp. 86, 88-90.

26 S. P. Rosenbaum argues (private communication) that *The Longest Journey* is really about homosexual love-and for this reason, perhaps subconsciously, Forster feels the need to make the "lovers" half-brothers. The reticence (conscious or otherwise) is borne out by Forster's disapproval of J. R. Ackerley's explicitness regarding homosexuality in his *Hindoo Holiday* in the name of propriety. His own stories were only privately circulated among his homosexual friends. See *The Letters of J. R. Ackerley*, pp. xxv-xxvi.

27 Reprinted in *Playboy*, January 1969. Note that *Maurice* was also written in the same year, 1913.

28 Virginia Woolf-Lytton Strachey, *Letters*, ed. Leonard Woolf and James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1956), 9 October 1922, p. 103.

29 *Essays in Persuasion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932), p. 332.

30 *Three Guineas* (1938; rpt. London: Hogarth Press, 1952), p. 197.

31 *The Common Reader, First Series* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1953), p. 214.

32 *A Room of One's Own* (1929; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 97.