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Virginia Woolf

A BIOGRAPHY

Quentin Bell



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Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
New York and London

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Published in Great Britain in two volumes.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Bell, Quentin.

Virginia Woolf; a biography.

(A Harvest book, HB 269)

Bibliography: p.

1. Woolf, Virginia (Stephen) 1882-1941.

[PR6045.072Z545 1974] 823'.9'12 [B] 73-12870

ISBN 0-15-693580-5

Printed in the United States of America

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"Mr. Bell's biography is, quite possibly, the best written in England in this century, maybe one of the best ever written."

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Manchester Guardian Weekly

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"I find it hard to imagine anyone with even the most casual interest in Virginia Woolf, or the Bloomsbury milieu in which she lived and worked, for whom the reading of this biography will not prove a fascinating, enlightening, and finally a deeply moving experience."

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The New Republic

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—N. Y. Times Book Review

Virginia Woolf: A Biography

Also by Quentin Bell

On Human Finery

1947

The Schools of Design

1963

Ruskin

1963

Victorian Artists

1967

Bloomsbury

1968

Quentin Bell is a painter, sculptor, potter, writer, art critic, and teacher. He has been a lecturer in art education at King's College, Newcastle, and Professor of Fine Art at the University of Leeds and Oxford University. He has held the Chair of History and Theory of Art at the University of Sussex since 1967.

Mr. Bell once recalled: "Virginia Woolf was my aunt and as a child I illustrated and to some extent inspired some rather fanciful biographies of her friends and relations, hence the fact that I am mentioned in the preface of *Orlando* as 'an old and valued collaborator in fiction.' "

For
OLIVIER

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Virginia and Vanessa, 1894

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Vanessa Stephen

Thoby Stephen

George Duckworth

Stella Duckworth

Adrian and Virginia, 1900

Violet Dickinson and Virginia, 1902

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Virginia with Clive and Julian Bell, 1910

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Virginia with Ethel Smyth, 1932
Virginia with Angelica Bell, 1934
Virginia Woolf

FOREWORD

The purpose of the present volume is purely historical; and although I hope that I may assist those who attempt to explain and to assess the writing of Virginia Woolf, I can do so only by presenting facts which hitherto have not been generally known and by providing what will, I hope, be a clear and truthful account of the character and personal development of my subject. In no other way can I contribute to literary criticism. Even if I had the equipment for such a task I should not have the inclination; I have found the work of the biographer sufficiently difficult without adventuring in other directions and indeed the business of gathering and presenting the facts would hardly have been completed without help.

In the next volume I thank all my benefactors, but at the outset there are a few who must be mentioned.

The late Leonard Woolf persuaded me to attempt this work and helped me greatly when I was preparing the first draft of the present volume. The University of Leeds was willing to give me a sabbatical year in which to start my research, the University of Sussex actually gave it. A Leverhulme Research Award enabled me to use my time profitably. Mrs Ian Parsons has been most helpful and kind in every way; my wife has undertaken the arduous task of research assistant and the thankless role of critic. I wish that this book were worthy of their generosity.



In writing this volume I have drawn to a very large extent upon unpublished material. I list here the most important collections, giving an indication of their content and of the abbreviations I have used. I have provided footnotes only when they seem to be of general interest; detailed references to sources will be given in Volume II together with a selective bibliography.

BERG COLLECTION. The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations; the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature.

In 1957 Leonard Woolf made an arrangement whereby the 27 manuscript volumes of Virginia Woolf's diaries (1915-1941) would

VIRGINIA WOOLF

become the property of the Berg Collection after his death. (These diaries are referred to as *AWD*(*Berg*); the selection from them published by Leonard Woolf in 1953 as *A Writer's Diary* is abbreviated to *AWD*). The Berg Collection was thus able to become the nucleus of a Virginia Woolf archive and could acquire, both from Leonard Woolf and from other sources, a very considerable quantity of material of biographical and of literary interest. It includes eight early notebook diaries (which are referred to by short descriptive titles followed by (*Berg*)); and, among its collection of autograph letters, four important series from Virginia Stephen/Woolf: to her sister Vanessa Bell, to Violet Dickinson, to Vita Sackville-West, and to Ethel Smyth. For reference purposes I have abbreviated these names to initials, using always the married surnames of Virginia and Vanessa Stephen, viz: *VW* and *VB*.

The building of the Virginia Woolf archive in the Berg Collection was the particular care of the late Dr John Gordan, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude; my correspondence and my meetings with his successor Mrs Lola Szladits has been the most agreeable of necessities.

CHARLESTON PAPERS. King's College, Cambridge.

Letters and other papers of Clive Bell, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, on deposit in the College Library, including the correspondence between Vanessa Bell and Roger Fry. I have used the initials *CB*, *VB*, *DG* and *RF* and the abbreviation *CH* (Charleston Papers) where appropriate.

The care of these documents has I fear added to the heavy burdens carried with such enviable competence, wisdom and good humour by Dr A. N. L. Munby, the Librarian.

MONK'S HOUSE PAPERS. The Estate of the late Leonard Woolf.

The papers which Leonard Woolf made available to me for the purposes of this biography comprise not only a great number of letters to and from his wife and himself, but also a considerable quantity of manuscripts. These I have loosely divided into manuscripts with a biographical interest (*MH/A*) and manuscripts of mainly literary interest (*MH/B*), and numbered.

I have also been able, through the kindness of his executrix, to make use of Leonard Woolf's own laconic but trustworthy diaries.

FOREWORD

There remain in the possession of the heirs and descendants of Sir Leslie Stephen the following sources of information which relate to Virginia Woolf and her family:

The 'Mausoleum Book' (*MBk*), written by Leslie Stephen after the death of his wife Julia in 1895.

Old family letters chiefly to or from Mrs Leslie Stephen and her children.

Two binders containing copies of the *Hyde Park Gate News* (*HPGN*) for 1891, 1892 and 1895.

Six manuscript memoirs by Vanessa Bell (*VB/MS I-VI*).

Letters from Virginia Woolf to Clive, Julian and Quentin Bell.

Minutes of the Play Reading Society, 1908-9 and 1914-15.

I am grateful to my sister Mrs David Garnett and my cousins Mrs Richard Synge and Mrs Nigel Henderson for their willingness to allow me to quote from these documents.

In addition I have consulted material in the possession of Mr Mark Arnold-Forster, Mrs Barbara Bagenal, the Marquess of Bath, the British Broadcasting Corporation, Mr Duncan Grant, Harvard University (the Houghton Library), Lord Kennet, Mr Nigel Nicolson, Mrs James Strachey, Professor John Waterlow and Mr David Garnett, whose copy of Adrian Stephen's diary I have been able to use; I cannot trace the original. To all these I am indebted for their help and consideration and for permission to quote where I have wished to do so.

FAMILY TREE

Antoine, Chevalier de L'ETANG=Therèse BLIN de GRINCOURT
(d. ca 1840) (1767-1866)

James PATTLE=Adeline
(1775-1845) (1793-1845) 2 sons
2 other daughters

Adeline=Colin Mac-
(1814-38) KENZIE
(1806-81)

Julia=C. H. CAMERON
(1815-79) (1795-1880)

Sarah=H. Thoby
(1816-87) PRINSEP
(1793-1878)

Maria=John JACKSON
(1818-92) MD (1804-87)

dau. dau.=Col. H.
CLOGSTOUN
issue

5 sons

Julia=C. L. NORMAN
(d. 1873)

Valentine
(1838-1904) issue
Alice m. 2 other
Ch. GURNEY sons
Rachel Laura

Adeline Maria=Henry Halford
1837-81 VAUGHAN
(1811-85)

Mary Louisa=Herbert William
[Aunt Mary] FISHER (1825-1903)
(c. 1841-1916)

Sarah Emily
[Aunt Minna]
(1828-1918)

William Margaret Augusta Millicent Emma
Wyamar [Marny] m. Robt. m. Vere [Toad]
(1865-1938) (1862-1929) CROFT ISHAM (1874-1960)
m. Margaret 11th Bt.
[Madge] Symonds
(1869-1925) issue 2 s. 1 dau.

Frence
(d. 1920)
m. (1) F. W.
MAITLAND
(1850-1906)
(2) Francis
DARWIN
(1848-1925)

Herbert
[H. A. L.]
(1865-1940)
m. Lettice
Ilbert
Mary
(b. 1913)

Arthur
(d. 1902)

Emmeline
m. R. O.
MORRIS

Adeline
(d. 1951)
m. Ralph
VAUGHAN
WILLIAMS
(1872-1958)

Edmund
[Jo]
(d. 1918)
m. Jeanie
Freshfield
issue

Hervey
(1869-
1921)

William
(1875-1937)
m. Cecilia
Warre-Cornish
issue

Charles Cordelia
(d. 1916) [Boo] m.
Richard
CURLE
issue

Ermengard
(1888-)

Fredgond
(1889-1949)
m. Gerald SHOVE
(1887-1947)

George
(1868-1934)
m. Lady Margaret
Herbert
3 sons

Stella
(1869-97)
m. J. W. HILLS
(1867-1938)

Gerald
(1870-1937)
m. Cecil
Scott-Chad

Janet Halford Barbara David
(b. 1899) (b. 1901) (d. 1909) (b. 1906)

James STEPHEN = Sibella MILNER
(c. 1733-79) (d. 1775)

2 other sons
4 daughters

James = (1) Anna Stent (1758-90)
(1758-1832) (2) Sarah Clarke, *née*
Wilberforce (d. 1816)

Louisa = Henry Vincent
(1821-73) BAYLEY
(1816-73)

Virginia = Charles Somers-
(1827-1910) Cocks, 3rd Earl
SOMERS (1819-83)

Sophia = John W.
(1829-1911) DALRYMPLE
7th Bt.
(1824-88)

James = Jane
(1789-1859) Catherine
Venn
(d. 1875)

6 other
children

Maria = Ch. Mac-
[Cousin Mia] NAMARA
(d. 1917)

7 children

Isabel = Ld. Henry
(1851-1921) SOMERSET

1 son

Adeline = Geo. Russell
(d. 1920) 10th D. of
BEDFORD
(d. 1893)

issue

Herbert
(1822-46)

W. M. THACKERAY

James = Mary
Fitzjames 1st Bt. Cunningham
(1829-94) [Aunt
Stephen]

Caroline
Emelia [Nun]
(1834-1909)

Herbert (1) = Julia
DUCKWORTH (1833-70) (1846-95)

(2) Leslie = (1) Harriet Marian
STEPHEN (1832-1904) (1840-75)

Laura
(1870-1945)

Anne (1837-1919)
[Aunt Anny]
m. Richmond RITCHIE

William Hester

Edwin
(b. 1883)
m. Theodora
Hess
issue

Katherine
(1856-1924)

Herbert
2nd Bt.
(1856-1932)
m. Mary
Cunningham

James
Kenneth
(1859-92)

Harry
3rd Bt.
(1860-1945)
m. Barbara
Nightingale

Helen
(1862-1908)

Rosamond
(1868-1951)

Dorothea
(1871-1965)

Vanessa
(1879-1961)
m. Clive BELL
(1881-1964)

Thoby
(1880-1906)

Virginia
(1882-1941)
m. Leonard
WOOLF
(1880-1969)

Adrian
(1883-1948)
m. Karin
Costelloe
(1889-1953)

James 4th Bt.
(b. 1908)

Julian (1908-37) Quentin (b. 1910) Angelica (b. 1918)

Ann
(b. 1916)

Judith
(b. 1918)

VOLUME I

Virginia Stephen

1882-1912

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