REASON AND VALUES IN BLOOMSBURY FICTION

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in English at

Massey University.

Diane Wendy Wills

1970

"From these primary qualities, Reasonableness and a Sense of Values, may spring a host of secondaries: a taste for truth and beauty, tolerance, intellectual honesty, fastidiousness, a sense of humour, good manners, curiosity, a dislike of vulgarity, brutality, and over-emphasis, freedom from superstition and prudery, a fearless acceptance of the good things of life, a desire for complete self-expression and for a liberal education, a contempt for utilitarianism and philistinism, in two words - sweetness and light."

(Clive Bell.)

PREFACE

When I first began looking at the fiction of the Bloomsbury Group I had little idea of what my final argument would be. Now, I find myself measuring the values implicit in the novels against the beliefs of Bloomsbury as enumerated by outside commentators and by members of Bloomsbury itself, and reaffirming not only the independence of mind which individual members retained but the faulty judgments of which some outsiders have been guilty. This thesis makes no claim to be an exhaustive coverage of Bloomsbury ideas in fiction. In a short study this is simply not possible. As a result, I may be guilty of having left out some things which are important in themselves but which were not strictly relevant to my purpose. I have for example, concentrated on the novels of E.M. Forster and Virginia Woolf rather than the short stories, as presenting their points of view in a more fully-developed form, and I have avoided too much involvement with Forster's and Virginia Woolf's theories of the novel and the extent to which they have successfully implemented them. I may also have done some aspects less than justice through condensing them into short statements - Moore's philosophy, Forster's doctrine of the 'freed' heart, or the complex relationship of Virginia Woolf's mind with the visual world around her. If I have set running a far greater number of hares than I have subsequently chased and caught, at least some of those I have caught may be deemed to have been worthy of study, and some of those I have not, to be deserving of further pursuit.

The bibliography is not in any way a complete list of material by or about Bloomsbury. It is only a 'list of sources', and I have included in it nothing which has not in some way influenced my thinking on the subject. One glaring omission, of which I am uncomfortably conscious, is Leonard

Woolf's second novel, The Wise Virgins (1914), a copy of which could not be found in the time available for this thesis. Leonard Woolf himself is an interesting person and an able writer, and the book might well repay study for whoever can find it.

My thanks are due to a number of people without whom this thesis may have been started, but would certainly never have been completed.

First and foremost, Professor R.G. Frean, who originally suggested the fiction of Bloomsbury as a possible area of study. All faults in the way the subject has been treated are entirely my own. For his patience and understanding in trying circumstances I shall always be deeply grateful.

Next I must thank Mr. P.J. Gibbons, who has said all the right things at the right times, offered me a useful note on G.E. Moore, and given me a great deal of invaluable advice on practical matters of typing, presentation, and preparation of the bibliography.

My thanks go also to my friends in the English and History M.A. classes of 1969, for many happy hours and interesting discussions, and for the inspiration I have gained from seeing their theses, like mine, incomplete. I must mention Miss Susan Bindoff, Miss Jan Hunter, Miss Marianna Ward, Mrs Dorothy Morrison, Rev. L. Barber, Mr. P.K. Charan, Mr. M.K. Fitzgerald, Mr. T. Kenyon, Mr. K.L. Stewart, and Mr. R.H. Voelkerling, who provided the base for a phenomenon not unlike Bloomsbury, known as 'Bryant St.' The interests and activities of the latter may have been less esoteric than those of the more famous group, but they afforded no less enjoyment. Here, apart from those already named, I must mention Mr. M. Turner and Mr. P. Berquist.

I am grateful to those who have alternately patted me on the back and applied the whip; to my parents, whose help, as ever, has been given generously and unquestioningly; to Ray, who is always there in spirit; and

to Miss Joan Boddy and Mr. B.R. Wills.

I wish to thank the librarians of the Alexander Turnbull and General Assembly libraries, the Wellington Public Library, the library of Victoria University, and the Massey University library, especially Miss M.D. Rodger and Miss E.M. Green.

Finally, my grateful thanks to Mrs Gail Ring, for her excellent typing and for the interest and willingness to help out in all possible ways which she has shown at all stages of the work.

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

Mr. Clive Bell, in a Twentieth Century article,[1] asks the Times Literary Supplement, which had attacked Bloomsbury in reviews and in a leading article, to justify its accusations by answering two questions:

> "(a) Who are or were the members of Bloomsbury?
>
> (b) For what do they, or did they, stand?"[2]

He goes on to say:

> ... having appealed to the highest authorities for simple answers to simple questions, I now repeat my request to the smaller fry. Let everyone have his or her notion of 'Bloomsbury'; but let everyone who uses the name in public speech or writing do his or her best to say exactly what he or she intends by it. Thus, even should it turn out in fact there never was such a thing, the word might come to have significance independent of the facts and acquire value as a label.[3]

Finally, at the end of the article, he suggests that

> [with] the discovery that no two witnesses agree on a definition of the 'Bloomsbury doctrine', historians are bound to wonder whether there ever was such a thing. At last they may come to doubt whether 'Bloomsbury' ever existed. And did it?[4]

A disturbing thought, in view of the subject of this present study. But Bell has clearly pointed out the first duty of anyone wishing to write about Bloomsbury and so, humbly admitting to being one of the 'smaller fry', and having committed myself by putting 'Bloomsbury' on the title page to the

---

1. "Bloomsbury", reprinted in Old Friends, p.126.
2. Old Friends, p.127.
3. Ibid. p.128.
4. Ibid. p.137.

opinion that it did exist, I must begin by attempting to explain exactly what I 'intend by it.' However, this introduction is intended to deal fully with the first question: 'Who are or were the members of Bloomsbury', and only sketchily with the second: 'For what do they, or did they, stand?' The answer to the second question will I hope become clear in the course of the main body of the thesis.

The need for any commentator on 'Bloomsbury' to provide some working definition of the word is made necessary by more than Bell's pleas for clarity. Few writers have agreed on the membership of the group or on its beliefs. The situation is further confused by the widely differing senses in which 'Bloomsbury' has come to be used. R.F. Harrod has outlined one aspect of this confusion and the way in which it arose in a footnote to his very thorough study of Maynard Keynes:

> Recently the word Bloomsbury has come to be used in a very loose sense, quite unconnected with that defined in the text. For convenience I will call the latter its 'original' sense. It has been used for ill-defined groups of young intellectuals. There is a danger of confusion because this secondary use would not have arisen but for the prior existence of the 'original' Bloomsbury.[5]

One example is a leading article in The Times Literary Supplement of July 14th, 1948; another is the transcript of a radio talk by Alan Pryce-Jones, part of a BBC Third Programme series on 'The Twenties':

> Was there a 'ruling clique' dictating what was to be admired and what rejected after the war? Certainly there was a dominant faction, a kind of sixth form with special privileges, special tuition, and a special sense of community. To the outside world it was called 'Bloomsbury'.[6]

---

5. John Maynard Keynes, p.174. Clive Bell also mentions, and indicates his disapproval of, this wide use of the word 'Bloomsbury' in Old Friends, p.126.
6. "The Frightening Pundits of Bloomsbury", Listener, 1st March 1951, p.345.

Harrod concludes:

> In neither case can I find any connection between the views and characteristics described as belonging to Bloomsbury and those of the 'original' Bloomsbury.7

It is not, then, of Bloomsbury in this broad sense that I wish to speak, but of something much closer to Harrod's 'original' Bloomsbury and even more clearly defined. Quentin Bell has justly recommended Leonard Woolf as the man in whom the historian will find 'his most accurate authority', and it is Woolf's definition of Bloomsbury which is most logical and best supported by the evidence available, and which I wish to adopt.

Bloomsbury had its origin in Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1899, with a number of young men who became friends through student societies. The most important of these was one which dated from the eighteen-twenties. To the small, select body of members it was simply 'the Society'. The few outsiders who knew of its existence called it 'The Apostles'. The story of the Society has been told often enough in the biographies and autobiographies of various Apostles. It is enough here to say that it comprised some of the most brilliant Cambridge men, that they met once a week on Saturday evenings to discuss intellectual problems, that it enforced on its members absolute sincerity in all they said while granting them absolute freedom of discussion, and that, of the ten men of Woolf's Old Bloomsbury,[8] only Clive Bell, Adrian Stephen and Duncan Grant were not Apostles. Of the other seven, Desmond MacCarthy, E.M. Foster, Lytton Strachey, Saxon Sydney-Turner, Maynard Keynes and Leonard Woolf, all more or less overlapped at Cambridge and became close friends as members of the Society. Clive Bell, with Thoby Stephen and Woolf,

---

7. John Maynard Keynes, p.174. Harrod uses only one of the examples I have mentioned, but nevertheless his judgment is mine. In place of the Pryce-Jones article he cites Professor J. Jewkes's book, Ordeal by Planning (1948), p.28.
8. See p.5 below.

belonged to a Club which Strachey founded, the 'Midnight Society',

> whose activities seem to have consisted mainly of readings of Shelley after meals of whiskey and beefsteak pie.[9]

Their Cambridge experiences, social and intellectual, though the distinction hardly existed, were to have a lasting influence on the minds, friendships and lives of these young men, and through them Cambridge dictated many of the characteristics of Bloomsbury.

With the death of his famous father, Sir Leslie Stephen, in 1904, Thoby Stephen, his two sisters, Vanessa and Virginia, and his brother Adrian, moved from their old home in Hyde Park Gate to set up house in Gordon Square, in Bloomsbury. Vanessa decided to become a painter, Virginia a writer. They were beautiful, witty and intellectual, and Thoby began to invite his Cambridge friends home and introduce them to his sisters. In 1906 Thoby died of typhoid. A few months later, in 1907, Vanessa married Clive Bell and they moved to another house nearby. Around the two houses a group began to form, with Thoby's Cambridge friends as a nucleus; young, talented intellectuals with original minds and an interest in art. Duncan Grant, a painter and Lytton Strachey's cousin, lived in the same area and became a close friend. In his tribute to Virginia Woolf after her death he described the informal Thursday evening gatherings in Adrian Stephens's study:

> a continuation of those evenings which began in Gordon Square before Thoby died and before Vanessa married. It was there that what has since been called 'Bloomsbury' for good or ill came into being.
>
> About ten o'clock in the evening people used to appear and continue to come at intervals till twelve o'clock at night, and it was seldom that the last guest left before two or three in the morning. Whisky, buns and cocoa were the diet, and people talked to each

---

9. 'M.A.M.', in a biographical sketch of Strachey in his Eminent Victorians, p.5.

> other. If someone had lit a pipe he would sometimes hold out the lighted match to Hans the dog, who would snap at it and put it out. Conversation, that was all.10

In 1910 Roger Fry joined the group, at the time of the Post-Impressionist exhibition he had organised. He was then forty-four and had left Cambridge before the younger men arrived. They, unlike all but a few people in the social and artistic world of London, were excited and enthusiastic about the paintings and Fry became a lifelong friend.

Thus, when Leonard Woolf returned in 1911 from seven years with the Ceylon Civil Service he was asked to dine with the Bells and was soon spending most of him time with them and their circle.

> This was, I suppose, so far as I was concerned, the beginning of what came to be called Bloomsbury.[11]

When Adrian and Virginia moved house later that year Woolf, Keynes and Grant shared the new place with them. In 1912 Woolf married Virginia Stephen.

Woolf has defined Bloomsbury as

> ... a kind of group of friends living in or around that district of London legitimately called Bloomsbury.[12]

Bloomsbury in this sense did not exist in 1911, but ten years later Vanessa and Clive Bell, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Saxon Sydney-Turner, Morgan Forster (E.M. Forster), Duncan Grant, Maynard Keynes, Adrian Stephen, Lytton Strachey and Roger Fry all lived in Bloomsbury, within a few minutes walk of each other. Desmond MacCarthy and his wife Molly, who lived just outside the true Bloomsbury area, were always regarded by the others as members of Old Bloomsbury. Woolf explains their own use of the word Bloomsbury:

---

10. "Virginia Woolf", Horizon, Vol III, No. 18 (June 1941), p.403.
11. Beginning Again, p.21.
12. Ibid. p.21.

> We did ourselves use the term of ourselves before it was used by the outside world, for in the 1920's and 1930's, when our younger generation were growing up and marrying and some of our generation were already dying, we used to talk of 'Old Bloomsbury', meaning the original members of our group of friends who between 1911 and 1914 came to live in and around Bloomsbury.13

Woolf mentions the Memoir Club, which met from time to time and read in turn original pieces of an autobiographical nature, as further evidence : its original thirteen members were those thirteen listed above as 'Old Bloomsbury'.

In the nineteen-twenties and 'thirties Old Bloomsbury widened into a newer Bloomsbury. It lost Fry and Strachey through their deaths and added Julian, Quentin and Angelica Bell (Vanessa and Clive Bell's children) and David Garnett, who later married Angelica. In 1940 these young people were members of the Memoir Club, with the exception of Julian Bell who was killed driving an ambulance during the Spanish Civil War.

This is Woolf's Bloomsbury - the original thirteen members of the Memoir Club and the four younger people of 'new Bloomsbury'.

However, continual reference to 'Bloomsbury' and 'group' can give a wrong impression. Bloomsbury as I have defined it was essentially a group of friends, not a club or society of any kind. There were no rules, no recognised membership, no formal or regular gatherings other than the early Thursday evenings at the Stephens's and the occasional meetings of the Memoir Club; nor was there any common cause for which all of them were crusading. They did share some things - the influence of Fry's aesthetics and of Cambridge philosophy was felt through the whole group - but it seems that the most common fault of those who have denounced Bloomsbury as an unhealthily over-refined, self-satisfied intellectual coterie has been to take the easy way out, to lump these people

---

13. Ibid. p.21.

and some of their friends together and treat them as though they were solidly representative of a set of reprehensible opinions. Frank Swinnerton is one of those who has made this mistake:

> The seat of intellectual ton lay in Bloomsbury. There, in the shadow of learning's home from home, Bloomsbury (as the embodiment of an assumption) felt strongly its intellectual superiority to the rest of British mankind. It represented culture.... The glory of Bloomsbury was not a modest glory; and for me modesty is the only true glory. It had no love for others.... It claimed aristocracy.... Ostentatious refinement... was a part of its assertion of superiority...[14]

At times the men and women of Bloomsbury can appear guilty of some of these charges. Statements from Keynes's My Early Beliefs,[15] for example, or pieces from Clive Bell's Civilisation, can be interpreted in this way. But was this the real picture? Was Bloomsbury totally cold-hearted, irreverent, rational to the point of irrationality, snobbish? The aim of this thesis is to answer these questions by looking at the values and beliefs asserted by Bloomsbury in its works of fiction, and to measure these against what the attackers of Bloomsbury have claimed to be 'Bloomsbury doctrine'.

These works of fiction are surprisingly few in number. Literary pursuits were an important part of Bloomsbury life, as one might expect in such a formidable array of intellect and education. Bloomsbury people had much they wanted to say, and found writing almost as natural a means of communication as conversation. There were exceptions - neither Molly MacCarthy, Adrian Stephen nor Sydney-Turner had any literary ambitions, while Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell were content to practise their art and leave it to others to

---

14. The Georgian Literary Scene, 1910 - 1935, pp.265-267.
15. Published in Two Memoirs (1949).

theorise about it in print. None of the young Bells was writing at the time with which this study is concerned, but Quentin Bell has since published a number of books, one on Bloomsbury itself.[16]

All the others were prolific writers, but most of their work was non-fiction, in the form of books and a multitude of periodical articles. Clive Bell and Roger Fry wrote on art theory and the history of art. Lytton Strachey is famous for his biographies and Maynard Keynes for influential works in his professional field of economics. Desmond MacCarthy was a journalist, a literary and dramatic critic, and Strachey, the Woolfs, Garnett, and Forster also wrote a considerable amount of criticism. Leonard Woolf's books deal largely with political questions.

Only five, as far as I know, of those I have called 'Bloomsbury' have been writers of fiction. Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster need no introduction; they must, however critics dispute the exact value of their achievement, be counted among the most notable novelists of the twentieth century. David Garnett is a lesser-known figure, a bookseller and critic who has, over a period of more than forty years, written novels of increasing length and maturity which are more favoured by public libraries than by university collections, but which have a charm of their own. Leonard Woolf's two novels and three short stories are more often mentioned in books on Ceylon than in books on literature; an implied judgment which does not do justice to the best of them, the novel A Village in the Jungle. And finally, I have used the recently published story by Lytton Strachey, Ermyntrude and Esmeralda; a short piece, but one which has a valuable contribution to make with regard to establishing the 'tone' of Bloomsbury.

---

16. Bloomsbury (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1968).

There is one piece of Bloomsbury non-fiction, Clive Bell's Civilisation, which is useful as a point of reference for the beliefs of Bloomsbury, as they existed in the minds of outsiders and as they are embodied in the Bloomsbury Group's fiction. Civilisation, though not published until 1927, was originally conceived before the war as part of a great work to be called The New Renaissance. Thus it was an expression of youthful Bloomsbury opinions, modified by the experience of the war. The book begins by asking what civilisation is, since they had apparently been risking their lives for its sake. Bell finds three undoubtedly civilised states : fourth and fifth-century B.C. Athens, Renaissance Italy from 1375 to 1527, and France from the Fronde to the Revolution. All the characteristics of civilised societies develop from the two 'parent qualities of high civilisation', a Sense of Values and the Enthronement of Reason. A Sense of Values is found in 'those who are capable of sacrificing obvious and immediate goods to the more subtle and remote', and Reason is taken to be enthroned 'when there is a prevailing opinion that everything requires, and must ultimately admit of, a rational explanation.' Art, intellect and knowledge must be valued above comfort, politics, trade. Civilised people, ruled by reason, are free from intolerance, superstition, and prudery; they 'can talk about anything', for 'conversation is a delight known to the civilised alone.'

The criticisms to which this kind of statement is open are obvious. It is well enough for those who are well-endowed with life's material blessings - influence, intelligence, a secure job, and a good income - to prefer

> a liberal to a technical education, an education that teaches how to live rather than one that teaches how to gain ...17

---

17. Civilisation, p.42.

but such judgments give no chance to the ordinary man, who must know 'how to gain' in order to make his way in what is, whether Bell likes it or not, a materialistic world. There is a good measure of truth in a remark which Quentin Bell attributes to Virginia Woolf:

> He has great fun in the opening chapters but in the end it turns out that civilisation is a lunch party at No. 50 Gordon Square ...18

and in Quentin Bell's own comment:

> It seemed that Clive Bell felt it more important to know how to order a good meal than to know how to lead a good life.19

Superficially, then, if Civilisation is indeed representative of Bloomsbury there appears to be some justification for the more serious charges which have been made against Bloomsbury - an ivory-tower mentality, intellectual snobbery, self-satisfaction, and an unhealthy championship of the power of the mind rather than the natural sway of the heart. Whether Bloomsbury was all this, or no more than this, must so far be regarded as not proven.

---

18. Bloomsbury, p.88.
19. Ibid. p.93.

II. BLOOMSBURY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Individualism, Clive Bell says, is a 'highly civilised characteristic'. The possession of his 'two parent qualities' of civilisation, a sense of values and the ability to discriminate between ends and means, together are enough to make a man an individual. Bell had already said in the book that the sole good as an end is a good state of mind. Anyone who accepts this and the fact that

> there are no grounds for supposing that such a thing as a collective mind exists, will naturally set store by the individual in whom alone absolute good is to be found.[20]

The reasoning here assumes a great deal, but the conclusion is clear - the belief in the vital importance of the individual and the individual mind. This belief was shared by the rest of Bloomsbury.

The terminology of 'ends' and 'means' which Bell uses frequently comes from G.E. Moore, the Cambridge philosopher whose theories were an encouragement to individual thought, and had a great influence on the future Bloomsbury men who were Apostles and through them on the rest of the Group.

Moore was a senior 'Apostle' when Leonard Woolf and his friends were members of the society and they were greatly impressed by his teachings. In 1903 his book Principia Ethica was published and at once adopted, almost as a Bible, by his young followers. Moore set a new emphasis on private virtues; social duties were good, but not as

---

20. Civilisation, p.67.

good. He exploded the Victorian code of ethics, based on the judgment of conduct in relation to an acknowledged code, and repudiated the public definition of good - the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Moore says that good cannot be defined in this way - because it is 'intuitive' it cannot be defined in terms of anything else. This appears to leave the definition of good as entirely subjective, and Moore recognises the dangers of this in insisting that one should use the rational mind to check one's questions and statements very carefully, to determine the things which are worth having for their own sakes, or as ends, and those which have value merely as ~~ends~~ means. For Moore, the only two good ends are love and art, 'the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful things'.

This doctrine put moral judgment into the hands of the individual, requiring him only to be rational, an honest seeker after truth, discerning in his approach to beauty, and appreciative of his friends. The Bloomsbury people found this system of values congenial. They were intelligent, well-educated, original thinkers; lovers of art, and notable talents in their chosen professions. They had no reason to doubt their own ability to follow Moore's rules. They were intellectuals by temperament and training, and their approach to problems was intellectual and rational. David Daiches has said:

> that particular class of urban intellectual to which Virginia Woolf all her life belonged ... looked for the meaning of life in the sensibility of the individual. ('Sensibility' referring not to an emotional state but to a complex of thoughts

> and feelings in which the intellectual element tended to be dominant.)21

In Bloomsbury novels, the intellect is undeniably valued. 'Cambridge', says Quentin Bell, 'valued the intellect above all things', and the lasting influence of Cambridge on the Bloomsbury people has been outlined already. Thus, Cambridge stands in the novels as the home of enlightenment. Lytton Strachey, himself a distinguished graduate, took a quiet laugh at Bloomsbury's reverence for his alma mater in the short story he wrote for his friends and first read to them at a Christmas party

> ... this morning I caught the tutor, Mr Mapleton, smiling at one of their jokes, but what does that matter? He is only a young man from Oxford, so he can be safely disregarded, can't he? I don't believe Oxford's as good a place as Cambridge, and the light blue is my favourite colour.22

E.M. Forster is more serious about it. In The Longest Journey Cambridge represents happiness for the hero, Rickie. There, he finds himself among friends with whom he can converse openly and without self-consciousness, where his shy nature is respected and his immature opinions listened to fairly. He is still struggling to achieve the 'right' state of mind and attitude to life which Cambridge has to offer him when he moves to Sawston school to become a teacher. Forster himself was miserable and frustrated at his own school, and only when he

---

21. Virginia Woolf, p.42.
22. Ermyntrude and Esmeralda, p.9.

went to Cambridge did he discover the intellectual fulfilment of which he had been starved. Rickie's Sawston is Tonbridge, a horrible contrast to the university. The masters care, not for intellectual honesty and open-mindedness, but for petty considerations of money, status in the school, and the whims of rich parents, to which they sacrifice their integrity. Rickie is too weak to resist the pressure of their example. It is only just before his death that Forster has him return to the 'right' path.

In Jacob's Room Cambridge culture is implicitly opposed to the 'provincial prudishness' of Professor Bulfeel of Leeds and his unobtrusive editing of Wycherley. Cambridge is unlike anywhere else, even to the sky above it.

> They say the sky is the same everywhere.... But above Cambridge - anyhow above the roof of King's College Chapel - there is a difference. Out at sea a great city will cast a brightness into the night. Is it fanciful to suppose the sky, washed into the crevices of King's College Chapel, lighter, thinner, more sparkling than the sky elsewhere? Does Cambridge burn not only into the night, but into the day?23

The young men meet, and talk, and what they learn affects the rest of their lives. Jacob and his friends gather in one of the don's rooms as the Apostles of Woolf's generation did in G.E. Moore's sitting-room:

> Until midnight or later there would be undergraduates in his room, sometimes as many as twelve, sometimes three or four... Sopwith went on talking. Talking, talking, talking - as if everything could be talked - the sould itself slipped through the lips of thin silver disks which dissolve in young men's minds like silver, like moonlight. Oh, far away they'd remember it, and deep in dullness gaze back on it, and come to refresh themselves again.24

The intellectual characters in the novels are products of the same

---

23. Jacob's Room, p.29.
24. Ibid. p.39.

backgrounds as those of their creators. Katherine Hilbery in Night and Day belongs to 'one of the most distinguished families in England', intelligent, upper middle class, the grand-daughter of a famous poet. This is Virginia Woolf's level of society - the Stephens were closely connected to the Ritchies, Thackerays and Duckworths, and remotely to Stracheys, MacCarthys and Forsters, an intricate tangle stretching through the upper middle classes, the county families, and the aristocracy. Virginia Woolf therefore belonged by birth to what has been called the 'intellectual aristocracy' of London, and rationalist, intellectual habits of thought were part of her upbringing. She finds it hard to sympathise with stupidity. Jacob Flanders is an intellectual from the middle class, a Cambridge man, his mind full of the Greeks and Shelley, 'Shakespeare and Adonis, Mozart and Bishop Berkeley'. At first he is attracted by Florinda's beauty and her apparent innocence, but he cannot accept her empty-headedness.

> ... it did occur to Jacob, half-way through dinner, to wonder whether she had a mind.... /He/ observed Florinda. In her face there seemed to him something horribly brainless - as she sat staring.25

Virginia Woolf can find no answer in this book to Jacob's dilemma.

> The problem is insoluble. The body is harnessed to a brain. Beauty goes hand in hand with stupidity.... Jacob... had a violent reversion towards male society, cloistered rooms, and the works of the classics....
>
> Then Florinda laid her hand upon his knee. After all, it was none of her fault.... Any excuse, though, serves a stupid woman.
>
> He told her his head ached.
>
> But when she looked at him, dumbly, half-guessing, half-understanding, apologizing perhaps, anyhow saying as he had said "It's none of my fault," straight and

---

25. Ibid. pp. 78-79.

> beautiful in body, her face like a shell within its cap, then he knew that cloisters and classics are no use whatever. The problem is insoluble.26

Most of the problems which face the characters in Bloomsbury fiction are intellectual ones - the nature and purpose of life, the nature of truth, the conflict between appearance and reality. The Longest Journey opens with a typical student debate on the question of appearance and reality, and it becomes one of the main themes of the book as Rickie is seduced away from the Cambridge way of thinking, which values the inner life and looks below superficial appearances in search of a deeper meaning. Rickie's wife is the agent of this seduction - it is pressure from her which persuades him to betray his own integrity and lie not only to others but to himself about Stephen, his half-brother. Rickie cannot, until it is too late for him, accept Stephen's true nature, (which is that of a straightforward, simple, earthy man who likes drinking), because he is the son of Rickie's adored mother.

The intellectual sweetness and light of Cambridge is put forward as a relatively simple solution for Rickie, but ultimately neither Forster nor Virginia Woolf is satisfied with this. Forster is too conscious of the dangers which await the intellectual, while Virginia Woolf requires the recognition of something which lies beyond the Cambridge love of truth.

Jacob looks around himself at Trinity and wonders if he should leave

---

26. Ibid. p. 81.

Cambridge. He asks himself 'Is there not too much brick and mortar for a May night?' There are a number of people in Virginia Woolf's novels who have accepted the light of Cambridge as an ultimate and do not reach beyond it; Ambrose and Pepper in The Voyage Out, Charles Tansley and Mr Ramsay in To The Lighthouse. In fact, the portrayal of Mr Ramsay's intellectual quest is gently satiric and it is made to seem futile and frustrating. There is a hint that the values behind it are inadequate.

> It was a splendid mind. For if thought is like the keyboard of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately, until it had reached, say, the letter Q. He reached Q. Very few people in the whole of England ever reach Q.... Z is only reached by one man in a generation. Still, if he could reach R it would be something.... he heard people saying - he was a failure - that R was beyond him. He would never reach R. On to R once more. R - [27]

No, this though praiseworthy, even heroic, is no answer to the problems of living.

Throughout To The Lighthouse, Mr Ramsay's intellect and rationality has been set against the imaginative mind of Mrs Ramsay, and it is in her that Virginia Woolf finds a true wisdom. Mrs Ramsay is not nearly as clever as her husband, but this does not matter for she has a stability and certainty he lacks. Her concern for human feelings and relationships, for the concrete matters of everyday life are contrasted with his abstract, theoretical frame of thought. Because of her direct concern for her

---

27. To The Lighthouse, p. 57.

guests and her understanding of human motivation and reaction, it is Mrs Ramsay who is the great integrating force in the novel, shaping life, if only for brief moments, in such a way as to overcome the loneliness and apartness which is seen as the essential condition of man.

The holders of wisdom in Forster's novels are also women who are not, for the most part, intellectuals. Margaret Schlegel is, certainly, but even she is subject to the influence of Mrs Wilcox in Howards End. Mrs Wilcox is not clever or particularly interesting to meet - clever people can find her company dull. Her influence, like that of Mrs Ramsay, comes from her insight and ability to handle people well, as she does, for example, on the occasion of Aunt Juley's untimely arrival at Howards End. Helen is convinced that Mrs Wilcox knew all about what had happened between herself and Paul, without anyone having told her. Her wisdom is traditional and intuitive:

> She seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it. One knew that she worshipped the past, and that the instinctive wisdom the past can alone bestow had fallen on her.... High born she might not be. But assuredly she cared about her ancestors, and let them help her. When she saw Charles angry, Paul frightened, and Mrs Munt in tears, she heard her ancestors say "Separate those human beings who will hurt each other most. The rest can wait".28

Mrs Moore in Passage to India is another of these wise women. Though not active in the way in which Mrs Wilcox and Mrs Ramsay are active, she is nevertheless an integrating power within the book through the openness of her mind and sensibilities, which brings Indians and Europeans together,

---

28. Howards End, p.23.

if briefly, in admiration for her. This comes about because she has not armed herself against India as the administrators have done and she intuitively feels its true nature as they can never do. When she is told about the Nawab's car accident after his chauffeur swerved to avoid something on the path, she remarks, 'A ghost!' Neither the English nor the chauffeur know that the Nawab had killed a man on that spot years before. This, Forster says, 'was a racial secret communicable more by blood than by speech.'

Forster's attitude to life is not optimistic, but neither is it totally cynical. He believes that man does not need to become better but to order and distribute his native goodness and to eschew the use of force. Those things which really matter are 'tolerance, good temper, and sympathy.' His belief starts

> With personal relationships. Here is something comparatively solid in a world full of violence and cruelty.... starting from them, I get a little order into the contemporary chaos.[29]

Though in the early novels it is the 'inner life' which Forster holds up as an ideal, the value of personal relationships takes an equal place with this in Howard's End; and by the time of Passage to India personal relations are of central thematic interest, and the value of the 'inner life' and the freed imagination is taken for granted in Mrs Moore.

Virginia Woolf's view of life is at once one of great joy merely in living, and in having contemplating order, beauty, and harmony; and one of a fear of life's dissillusionments, lack of meaning, and chaos. Both attitudes are present in Jacob's Room:

> The magnificent world - the live, sane, vigorous world.... These words refer to the stretch of wood pavement between Hammersmith and Holborn in

---

29. I Believe, p. 96

> January between two and three in the morning. That was the ground beneath Jacob's feet. It was healthy and magnificent because one room, above a mews, somewhere near the river, contained fifty excited, talkative, friendly people. And then to stride over the pavement ... is of itself exhilarating .... A young man has nothing to fear.[30]

On the other hand -

> ... should you turn aside into one of those little bays on Waterloo Bridge to think the matter over, it will probably seem to you all a muddle - all a mystery...[31]

Mrs Dalloway, too, in the book which bears her name, often experiences an exquisite joy in living as she walks through the park, anticipates a meeting with friends, thinks back to some happy event in the past, or makes plans for her big party. Her fear of life is not expressed through her but through her alter ego, Septimus Warren Smith, who is overcome by the chaos and horror, goes out of his mind, and commits suicide. The two 'persons' of Clarissa come together at the party when she is told of the suicide and suddenly is conscious of death.

There is no conclusion from Virginia Woolf. The joy and the fear coexist in her novels as they did in her own life.

Both Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster find some kind of solution to the problems of life through intense moments of experience when everything comes right and the character sees the world in an ordered perspective, with a deeper insight than usual into the meaning of life. This most often occurs through art. Roger Fry's artistic theories were a strong influence on Bloomsbury aesthetics, and Fry makes it clear that the artist, with his more penetrating vision, sets up in his work special relations between everyday things,

---

30. Jacob's Room, p.110.
31. Ibid. p.111.

investing them with a meaning closer to their own intrinsic truth. Forster has this moment of experience usually coming about through music, of which he was very fond. Helen Schlegel has such an experience while listening to Beethoven's Fifth:

> ... the music started with a goblin walking quietly over the universe, from end to end. Others followed him. They were not aggressive creatures .... They merely observed in passing that there was no such thing as splendour or heroism in the world. After the interlude ... they returned and made the observation for the second time. Helen could not contradict them, for, once at all events, she had felt the same, and had seen the reliable walls of youth collapse. Panic and emptiness![32]

Helen is deeply moved:

> The music had summed up to her all that had happened or could happen in her career .... The notes meant this and that to her, and they could have no other meaning, and life could have no other meaning.[33]

With Virginia Woolf the experience comes more often through painting, which is more typical of Bloomsbury's artistic interests than Forster's music. There are a number of artists in Virginia Woolf's novels. She is familiar with the artist's mentality and describes sympathetically poor Miss La Trobe in Between the Acts; and Charles Steele in the opening pages of Jacob's Room, who is irritated with his painting until he adds a dab of black, and it is 'just that note which [brings] the rest together! The power of art is seen most effectively, however, in the last lines of To the Lighthouse:

> "He has landed", she said aloud. "It is finished." Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was - her picture. Yes, with all its green and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she

---

32. Howard's End, p.34.

33. Ibid., p.36.

> thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.34

The impact of these final lines is strong because so many elements in the novel come to fulfilment in this one creative act : the author has finished, the Ramsays have landed on the lighthouse, the conflict of intellect and imagination between Mr and Mrs Ramsay no longer exists as both sides are brought together; and Lucy has finished her picture.

David Garnett, talking of his book, No Love, has said:

> [there] hangs about the whole story the indefinable melancholy and hopelessness of life.35

This is indeed true of a book such as this in which all the major characters are left tired or unhappy, and unfulfilled. Garnett is far from regarding mankind as doomed, but he does believe that man rarely finds a permanent victory over the circumstances of life which continually thwart his desire for happiness. He does not offer any unifying force to bring order to the world - life is not so much a whole as a series of experiences from each of which man must be prepared to move on as the scene is played out.

His characters are not intellectuals. They run up the social scale from William Targett, the simple ex-sailor turned publican in The Sailor's Return, to the upper middle class family of Admiral Keltie in No Love, but they are more people of action than of contemplation. Garnett is less interested in intellectual problems of belief than in the problems of people acting and re-

---

34. To the Lighthouse, p.319.
35. Familiar Faces, p.26.

acting with those around them.

Love, usually that which exists between men and women, alone gives some momentary meaning to life. Nevertheless, even those characters who love most cannot win. Benedict in No Love loses Cynthia for good because he fails to take her away with him at once when it becomes possible; William Targett dies defending his negress wife and she is left a poverty-stricken drudge; and Mr Tebrick, whose loyalty to his wife remains even when she is turned into a fox, sees her torn to pieces by fox hounds. Perhaps only John and Josephine in The Man in the Zoo have hope for the future, once they have learned the necessity for unselfishness in love, for she offers to live with him in a cage in the zoo because she loves him, and because he loves her he leaves the shelter of his cage for the outside world again.

III. BLOOMSBURY AND SOCIETY

> "If 'to revere' means, as the dictionary says, 'to regard as sacred or exalted, to hold in religious respect', then we did not revere, we had no reverence for anything or anyone, and, so far as I am concerned, I think we were completely right; I remain of the same opinion still - I think it to be, not merely my right, but my duty to question the truth of everything and the authority of everyone, to regard nothing as sacred and to hold nothing in religious respect. That attitude was encouraged by the climate of scepticism and revolt into which we were born and by Moore's ingenuous passion for truth."36

Bloomsbury's enquiring habit of mind, its confidence in its own abilities, its unceasing search for truth, and its refusal to accept anything at face value, made it inevitable that it should clash with the Establishment. Leonard Woolf has described the 'climate of scepticism and revolt' of which his generation at Cambridge felt itself to be part, reacting against:

> a social system and code of conduct and morality which, for convenience' sake, may be referred to as bourgeois Victorianism.37

It was the beginning of a new era:

> We were not part of a negative movement of destruction against the past. We were out to construct something new; we were in the van of the builders of a new society which should be free, rational, civilised, pursuing truth and beauty. It was all tremendously exhilarating.38

Personal relationships, as has been suggested in the previous section of this study, were of great importance to Bloomsbury, and it was time for a new honesty, clarity, and justice in the relationships of men with each other.

---

36. Leonard Woolf, Sowing, p.153.
37. Ibid. p.151.
38. Ibid. p.160.

Bloomsbury thinking repudiated the Victorian attitude to women and the nineteenth-century code of sexual morality. Moore's philosophy freed them from conventional codes of behaviour, and looking at these objectively they could see no reason why sexual conduct which the Victorians would have condemned should not be permitted, as long as it was founded on genuine love.

Prudery is 'a dangerous enemy' in Clive Bell's civilised society. First, because its basic principle is false - it presumes to set up a standard which will apply to all, whereas in truth 'what is unseemly in sentiment or expression is clearly a matter of taste'. But above all it is dangerous because it limits the intellect and

> If it be a civilised society you want, the intellect must be free to deal as it pleases with whatever comes its way, it must be free to choose its own terms, phrases, and images, and to play with all things what tricks it will.[39]

Lytton Strachey's little 'facétie' Ermyntrude and Esmeralda is a plea for this kind of free speech. Here is the author of Eminent Victorians, the man who attacked Victorian imperialism, public school education, religion, and humanitarianism, turning from the deadly weapon of irony to the equally effective one of impish humour, in order to expose the ludicrous hypocrisies of nineteenth-century reticence about sexual matters. The story is in letter form. It is the correspondence between two young upper-class girls, whose curiosity about the facts of sex has been aroused by nude male statues and the rowing man at the Oxford races whose trousers were split. After Ermyntrude's failure to get any satisfaction from the dictionary on the definition of castration things are quiet, until the girls' puzzlement is increased by the adult reaction to the passionate affair Esmeralda's brother Godfrey is having with his tutor.

---

39. Civilisation, p.86.

If love is supposed to be good, why are they adults so horrified? Why won't they talk about it? And could Godfrey and Mr. Mapleton have babies? The Dean is thrown into confusion by Esmeralda's enquiries as to whether or not he felt like Godfrey when he was young. Ermyntrude is seduced by the new footman, Henry, and then by the butler. Her governess, Mrs Simpson, also tries to get into bed with her but she is told to go away, not because Ermyntrude has any particularly strong moral objections, but because Henry is under the bed. The final irony is delightful : from the last two letters, which cross in the mail, the reader discovers that the disgraced Godfrey, and Ermyntrude, who has also been found out, are being sent by their respective families to the same 'dismal town' in Germany.

The story greatly impressed David Garnett, who first heard it read by Strachey at the Christmas house party in 1914, an event which he has recorded in his autobiography with a paragraph about the effect the piece had on his own values:

> I had been brought up to share my parents' free views on the relations of the sexes, but I had, up till then, been, in my love affairs, an unrepentant sentimentalist and, like most sentimentalists, an unconscious hypocrite. Lytton's little tract made it clear that sincerity was a chief virtue in love, or lust. I realised this was true and adopted for ever afterwards a more honest attitude to my amours. I became and for the rest of my life have remained, in what I take to be the true meaning of the word, a <u>libertine</u> : that is a man whose sexual life is free of the restraints imposed by religion and conventional morality.[40]

Although his Bloomsbury friends would have applauded his freedom from 'the restraints imposed by religion and conventional morality', and would not have disapproved of his 'libertine' policy, I doubt whether any of them

---

40. <u>The Flowers of the Forest</u>, p.19.

felt a particular desire to pursue it with such admirable energy as Garnett did after his conversion by Ermyntrude and Esmeralda.

Garnett says in his autobiography:

> The passionate physical love which I have felt for many women has been the most important part of my life for forty years.[41]

It is the most important part of the lives of his major heroes, too, and some of their experiences have, for Garnett, an autobiographical basis. As David Garnett is proud of his sensuality, so are Alexander Golighty ('Alexis') in Aspects of Love, and Benedict Lydiate in No Love.

Garnett has no moral objections to either pre-marital love, extra-marital love, or sexual relationships between people who have known each other only for a short time. In Aspects of Love the major characters play musical beds with confusing regularity, without adverse comment by the author, who does not seem conscious of the almost farcical situations which sometimes result. Alexis is deeply in love with Rose, an actress, who becomes his mistress and then, after they part for a while, the mistress of Alexis's uncle, Sir George (who has another mistress, Guilietta, in Italy). Alexis is shocked to find Rose in his uncle's flat, but moves in with her for a few days. (Sir George is visiting Giulietta). Rose tells Alexis she will not want him when George returns. Alexis goes to the flat again, with a large revolver, loses his head and shoots Rose in the arm. Sir George, the perfect English gentleman, enters at this point, expresses his sorrow at the violence and offers to leave Rose to the younger man .... And so on. Later in the book one finds Alexis passionately in love with Rose's daughter, refusing to seduce her because she is only fourteen, and taking out his frustration on Giulietta

---

41. Ibid. p.20.

in Rose's hay-loft.

However, Garnett's love game has its own rules, which his characters must obey. Alexis is criticised for refusing to bow out gracefully when Rose says she prefers Sir George. One can be sad and regretful when an affair is over, but one must accept the final parting with dignity.

Both the young men in No Love are faulted by the author, though they break different rules. Benedict is wrong for not having taken his opportunity of keeping the girl he loved. As the result of his failure to act decisively he is left, at the end of the book, lonely and isolated, the meaning gone from life. Simon too is left alone and unhappy, and Benedict realises what is wrong with him:

> "It's because there's No Love. No Love in his heart. He has never learned what it is from other people. That is the explanation. No Love."[42]

Physical love has nothing like this central place in the novels of the other Bloomsbury authors, and they are not as concerned to assert their freedom from conventional morals. Jacob's love affairs are just incidents in a young man's life, and no particular attention is paid to them as physical encounters. Virginia Woolf is far more interested in Jacob's mind as he talks to his girlfriends. The few sexual relationships which develop in E.M. Forster's novels are consummated 'off-stage', as it were, and only once are there significant consequences, when Helen Schlegel has a child. Forster does not, any more than does Virginia Woolf, pass moral judgments on such affairs. Rather, he condemns those in Howard's End who fail to sympathise with Helen's unhappiness and instead condemn her as irretrievably wicked.

Bloomsbury disliked the oppressive Victorian attitude towards women even more than it disliked Victorian prudery. The early part of the century

---

42. No. Love, p. 275.

was a time in which women were beginning to have their rights acknowledged, and within the Bloomsbury circle women were regarded as equals, without either undue reverence or undue superiority on the part of the men. Leonard Woolf contrasts the conduct of his friends when he left England in 1904 with what he found on his return in 1911:

> To have discussed some subjects or to have called a (sexual) spade a spade in the presence of Miss Strachey or Miss Stephen would seven years before have been unimaginable; here for the first time I found a much more intimate ... circle in which complete freedom of thought and speech was now extended to Vanessa and Virginia, Pippa and Marjorie.[43]

Virginia Woolf believed that women should have equal opportunities with men, according to their talents:

> She believed firmly that women were intellectually the complete equals of men and they have contributed less to culture only because of the conditions under which in almost all situations they have been forced to live.[44]

She illustrates her point about the frustration of women's talent with a story in A Room of One's Own about Shakespeare's hypothetical sister, Judith, who is forced by social and family pressure to hide her gift for imaginative writing, which equals that of her brother. She is forced to marry and is very unhappy, has a child by a wandering poet, and kills herself, her genius totally wasted.

Men, who have controlled society for generations, are largely responsible for this wastage of feminine talent. Virginia Woolf, however, is no militant suffragette. Her contribution to the feminine cause is, in the words of Joan Bennett, 'something much more interesting and profound than

---

43. Downhill All the Way, p.34. Pippa and Marjorie were two of Lytton Strachey's sisters.
44. Daiches, Virginia Woolf, p.144.

an advocacy of equal rights', for in her work Virginia Woolf

> unveils the essential quality of female experience where it differs from the male .... she discerns more clearly perhaps than any other novelist the peculiar nature of typically feminine modes of thought and apprehension.[45]

For example, Mrs Flanders thinks of her husband lying in his grave:

> the face of a young man whiskered, shapely, who had gone out duck-shooting and refused to change his boots.[46]

Into a sober recollection the author, with the remark about the boots, infuses a touch of the pathetic, of wifely regret for the husband who didn't heed her advice.

There is an explicit comment on women's mentality a few pages earlier, when Mrs Flanders is talking to her son.

> "What did I ask you to remember?" she cried. "I don't know," said Archer. "Well, I don't know either," said Betty humorously and simply, and who shall deny that this blankness of mind, when combined with profusion, mother wit, old wives' tales, haphazard ways, moments of astonishing daring, humour and sentimentality - who shall deny that in these respects every woman is nicer than any man?[47]

Leonard Woolf remarked on the special characteristics of the 'undiluted female mind' in terms which are remarkably close to those which Virginia Woolf has used:

> [The minds of most women] seem to me to be gentler, more sensitive, more civilised. Even in the many stupid, vain, tiresome women this quality is often preserved below the surface .... this pure, curiously female quality of mind. It is the result I suppose partly of their upbringing, which is so different from that of the male in all classes, and partly of fundamental, organic differences of sex.[48]

---

45. Bennett, Virginia Woolf, p.76.
46. Jacob's Room, p.14.
47. Ibid. p.9.
48. Growing, p.151.

No trace of this, however, appears in his short stories or in The Village in the Jungle. The women in the novel are women of the jungle, too much occupied with keeping alive to be concerned about their rights.

Virginia Woolf has her own clear idea of the masculine mind, too, and opposes it most successfully to the feminine in To the Lighthouse. Mrs Ramsay knows life in a sympathetic, intuitive way, yet she has no illusions. Mr Ramsay is a professor of philosophy, whose mind works rationally, moving from one step to the logical next step, unlike the sometimes vague processes of Mrs Ramsay's thinking. Mr and Mrs Ramsay are complementary - they need each other. Mrs Ramsay sees her husband's mind as a criss-cross of iron girders, 'upholding the world,' so she could trust herself to it utterly. And when he is overwhelmed by the belief that he is a failure she can provide comfort. It is the women in Virginia Woolf's novels, and in those of E.M. Forster, who are the holders of warmth and of wisdom.

Bloomsbury people were not religious. Almost without exception, the sceptical turn of mind, which they either inherited as the Stephens did, or acquired at Cambridge, led them to eschew organised religion completely, though Fry always retained traces of his Quaker background, as did Keynes and Forster of their Non-conformist upbringings. Leonard Woolf once said that he felt no need for a god or a faith and found it difficult to understand those who did feel this need. He finds it impossible to praise any god when there is so much 'wastefulness, cruelty and misery in the world'.

Not content with remaining outside the religious pale, Bloomsbury writers make many subtle attacks on organised religion and the repressive orthodox morality which too often accompanies it. Forster is particularly bitter against the clergy and is constantly abusing them in his novels. Mr Eager in A Room With a View has been responsible for the death of Mrs Emerson because his playing upon her fears about the non-baptised state of

her son has driven her under. The missionaries in Passage to India are doing a futile job, and make themselves look ridiculous with their difficulty in answering the Indians' questions about which insects and animals will be admitted into heaven; and why not? Mrs Moore is a religious person, but even she finds Christianity is not enough in India - there is always so much beyond its scope. In Where Angels Fear to Tread Forster, very much tongue in cheek, praises the piety of the patron saint of the Italian village church.

> So holy was she that all her life she lay upon her back in the house of her mother, refusing to eat, refusing to play, refusing to work.[49]

Even when the devil tempts her by throwing her mother downstairs,

> so holy was the saint that she never picked her mother up, but lay upon her back through all, and thus assured her throne in Paradise.[50]

Such are those whom the religious worship.

David Garnett looks with favour on Alice, Benedict Lydiate's mother, who as a girl holds the view, constantly expressed,

> that it was religion alone that had always prevented the advancement and enlightenment of mankind, that all wars and pestilences could be traced to religious causes, and that but for the mistaken belief in God, mankind would already be living in a condition of almost unimaginable material bliss and moral elevation.[51]

Forster, who holds the clergy up to ridicule in his books, does not belittle genuine religious feeling. The sincerity of Herbert Pembroke's belief is commended. Forster does value religion as an expression of the human mystery, though not a solution to it. And in both Passage to India and Woolf's Village in the Jungle Eastern religions are portrayed with symp-

---

49. Where Angels Fear to Tread, p.112.
50. Ibid. p.112.
51. No Love, p.1.

athy. The authors find the gentleness of these doctrines attractive, though the Buddhism of Woolf's jungle people is distorted by superstition and the fear of spirits, and appreciate their importance in the lives of the Indian and Ceylonese people.

The full weight of Bloomsbury disapproval, then, was directed towards the values of what might be called middle-class Victorianism. In Civilisation, the nineteenth century is the time when the 'essentially liberal' tradition of European education was violently attacked by

> the industrial revolution, the rise of the middle classes, the religion of money-making sometimes called 'the gospel of work', and the passion for 'getting on';[52]

and in Orlando the nineteenth century is the time when the essential 'sense of taste', the power to discriminate, was lost.

It is E.M. Forster who criticises middle-class manners and morals most stringently in his fiction; the snobbish Philistinism of Sawston town in Where Angels Fear to Tread is made to seem ridiculous with its false idealism about the Italian way of life, and even dangerous, in its certainty about its own righteousness. It is this self-satisfaction which kills Lilia and Gino's child. The public school system, which trains the minds and bodies of men but not their hearts, is Philistinism's way of perpetuating itself, producing 'successful' men like Admiral Keltie or the Wilcoxes, men who make their fortunes but have never learned to appreciate personality, to say 'I'.

---

52. Civilisation, p.66.

IV. BLOOMSBURY AND REVERENCE

> "The dictionary, however, gives an alternative meaning for the word 'revere'; it may mean 'to regard with deep respect and warm approbation.' It is not true that we lacked reverence for everything and everyone in that sense of the word. After questioning the truth and utility of everything and after refusing to swallow anything or anyone on the mere 'authority' of anyone, in fact after exercising our own judgment, there were many things and persons regarded by us with 'deep respect and warm approbation' : truth, beauty, works of art, some customs, friendship, love, many living men and women and many of the dead."53

Some of the characteristics of these 'many things and persons' which the Bloomsbury circle revered have already been suggested in this study : the importance of rationalism and intellect to give man mastery of his environment; the power of art and beauty to impart a sense of the joy of life and to bring a momentary order to its essential chaos; an appreciation of the emotional, womanly mind which has an understanding beyond that of the intellect; the love of philosophical speculation, open mindedness, and free conversation with close friends. The purpose of this brief chapter is to comment on the extent to which the Bloomsbury Group were able to extend their ideals of tolerance and equality to people beyond their own circle.

In so far as it is possible to generalise about Bloomsbury's political beliefs, they were socialistic and liberal, though not necessarily Liberal. A few, notably Leonard Woolf, had an active involvement but most of the group had simply an intelligent interest in political affairs, and a hatred of tyranny or oppression in any form. They were against imperialism, for example, and greeted the Russian Revolution, though not all its consequences, with joy.

---

53. Leonard Woolf, Sowing, p.153.

Clive Bell maintains that

> it would be as undesirable for the intelligent and sensitive to control the pleasures of the stupid and vulgar, as it is deplorable that the stupid and vulgar should control the pleasures of the sensitive and intelligent.[54]

In spite of this commendable statement, Civilisation remains essentially a tract for those already 'civilised' and those who have the money, leisure and education to cultivate their sense of values and to set Reason on her throne. Bell, like Virginia Woolf, has little direct knowledge of the masses whose rights he is defending here, and one suspects that neither of them really has much interest in the lower classes.

This is not true of all of Bloomsbury, and is certainly not true of Leonard Woolf. He was turned from a liberal into a Liberal by his experiences in 1912 with an urban relief organisation. Appalled by the poverty, disillusionment, and hopelessness he saw in Hoxton, a dreary, economically depressed district in the East End of London, he later became involved in the Co-operative Movement and toured giving lectures on public affairs to workers.

It was the seven-year period he spent in Ceylon, however, which provided the inspiration for Village in the Jungle and Stories from the East. Woolf enjoyed his time as a colonial administrator and

> the flattery of being the great man and the father of the people,[55]

yet he

> knew from the inside how evil the system was, beneath the surface, for ordinary men and women.[56]

and finally resolved this ambivalent attitude by leaving the Ceylon Civil

---

54. Civilisation, p.88.
55. Growing, p.158.
56. Ibid. p.158.

Service. The story "Pearls and Swine" is a hard-hitting, almost contemptuous denunciation of British imperial attitudes. Woolf criticises first the young man who thinks that, because he is a member of a superior race and has been in Ceylon for six months, he knows what is best for the native peoples who have been there for at least seven thousand years. Then he describes in scathing terms the clergyman and stock-jobber who represent all the smugness, ignorance and intolerance which Bloomsbury hated so much in the middle classes. The stock-jobber's answer to the colonial problem is a simple one:

> They want a strong hand. After all they owe us something : we aren't going to take all the kicks and leave them all the halfpence. Rule 'em, I say, rule 'em, if you're going to rule 'em. Look after 'em, of course: give 'em schools, if they want education - schools, hospitals, roads, and railways. Stamp out the plague, fever, famine. But let 'em know you are top dog. That's the way to run an eastern country. I am a white man, you're black; I'll treat you well, give you courts and justice; but I'm the superior race, I'm master here.57

It is this kind of belief which arouses Benedict Lydiate's anger. He talks first about the Liberal Government's cruelty towards the suffragettes and adds:

> but the way we treat our women is better than the way we treat the Hindus or the Irish or the Egyptians. The English are the bullies of the world. Wherever there is a little gold they try and grab it.
> I shouldn't mind it so much if they weren't hypocritical about it, but when they start talking about Dignity and Honour it makes me sick.58

Woolf, like Forster, has a deeper appreciation of the complex relationship between white administrators and the local people, and Village in the Jungle demonstrates his genuine sympathy with the latter.

---

57. Diaries in Ceylon, p.266.
58. No Love, p.105.

The book is set in a small Sinhalese Village in Ceylon, a mere clearing in the jungle. In order to live, the people must fight the jungle unceasingly, clearing patches of soil which can be used for cropping only one year in ten because it is too thin. They live in constant fear of the evil which lurkes in the jungle, the devils which make men go mad and kill each other. They feed well only one year in ten, on the average, and if the rains fail, as they frequently do, it means starvation, fever and death.

These villagers have little understanding of the ways of the European government, so they are unable to explain themselves to its representatives. Thus the gentle Babun is convicted of a crime which he has not committed and dies of sorrow in prison, leaving his dependants to death in the jungle. Those who manage to survive are senile at fifty, their minds dying before their bodies, burnt out by

> the monotony of life, the monotony of the tearing hot wind, the monotony of endless trees, the monotony of perpetual hardship.[59]

Forster's A Passage to India is an obvious piece of anti-imperialist propaganda - the first few chapters show quite clearly the author's conviction that the English in India are acting without sympathy, understanding, or even common decency - the Indians expect every Englishman, after a few weeks in their country, to become proud, and they marvel at the lady who doesn't, Mrs Moore. The fundamental differences in thinking between Indians and Englishmen make it almost impossible for them to be in complete harmony for more than a few hours, but Forster adds an extra dimension, that of the cleavage between different groups of Indians, Brahmins and non-Brahmins. This, in the third section of the book, is made no less significant than the split between Indian and non-Indian and so cancels out the racial factor.

---

59. The Village in the Jungle, p.284.

Forster is often sympathetic towards the problems of those who are prevented by background and circumstance from ever becoming 'civilised' in Clive Bell's sense. The most notable example of this is his portrayal of Leonard Bast, the young clerk at the very bottom of the middle class, who has a genuinely poetic touch in some of his thinking. He is trying to improve his appreciation of beauty and art, which arouse in him a deep response which he cannot name, by reading Ruskin. He has only a few books and less money. The Schlegel sisters recognise his potential but Forster makes the point that Leonard cannot become what Helen would like him to be because he hasn't the money for books and concerts. Finally, Leonard Bast is completely ruined; his job lost through Mr Wilcox's careless advice, his self respect and idealism shattered by his sexual encounter with Helen.

Virginia Woolf's experience of life outside her own class was limited. Educated at home, surrounded all her life by loving friends, and always with an income sufficient for comfortable living, she had no contact with the lower classes. She was even something of a social and intellectual snob, as she herself admitted. Nevertheless, she had a reverence for honesty and love, the love which exists between man and wife, typified in Mr and Mrs Ramsay, between members of a family who have shared experiences for many years, and the love of close friends. In this she is typical of her circle, and this, surely, is Bloomsbury's saving grace.

V. CONCLUSION

The Bloomsbury Group did believe themselves to be the possessors of a right sense of values which put Reason at the top of the scale of man's faculties. They did value the power of the mind to solve man's difficulties. They did have a reverence for the qualities of the 'enlightened' human being - freedom from superstition, prudery, and unquestioning obedience to authority. They loved exercising their intellects in argument and discussion, and regarded the appreciation of beauty and art as an essential facet of a worthwhile life.

Bloomsbury is not entirely innocent of the charges of intellectual and social snobbery, abstract theorising, and intellectual arrogance. They were unconventional, and in ways which alienated people who found David Garnett's morals abhorrent, Virginia Woolf's appearance peculiar to the point of being funny, Lytton Strachey's eccentricity of dress and behaviour quite mad, and the free talk of the circle indecorous. Not all of them were major talents, nor were they all deeply involved with practical problems and social evils.

This thesis has shown that the Bloomsbury Group as a whole was less blameworthy than its detractors would have it be, and that it is misleading to attribute either praise or condemnation to the 'Bloomsbury Group' without some qualification which makes clear the individuality of each of its members. If Virginia Woolf is criticised as being no more than an aloof intellectual, this is ignoring her generosity towards young, struggling artists, the gaiety she brought to life for her acquaintances, her sympathetic portrayal of the emotions of women as wives and mothers, and her own humility towards the great talent she undoubtedly had.

Many of the group were more active than some descriptions of them would have. Roger Fry and Clive Bell did not merely theorise about art. They were themselves painters, who did much to make art available to ordinary people through lectures, books, and exhibitions. Duncan Grant was one of England's leading painters between the wars. Leonard Woolf had some influence on national thinking about foreign policy, as Maynard Keynes did on economic thinking.

They found it not unpleasant to épater les bourgeois, as Bertrand Russell said of Keynes, and surely this was not just upper middle class superiority. 'Les bourgeois' needed shocking.

Their values were not rigid and absolute, with the exception of their insistence on sincerity and truth both in art and in life, and they did not all share exactly the same values. 'Bloomsbury' revered good taste and aesthetic perfection, yet E.M. Forster, in Where Angels Fear to Tread, can even defend the bad taste of a group of Italian buildings, because they have the friendliness of imperfection, and reassure him that the world is still human and fallible. So Leonard Woolf can use his energies to defend the under-privileged, and David Garnett can find it worth his time to write a novel about a lower-class ex-sailor with a native wife.

The novels of Virginia Woolf, Leonard Woolf, David Garnett and E.M. Forster show the differences which existed in the personalities and beliefs of four people who were part of Bloomsbury. Virginia Woolf's interest is in the world of the mind, and her theories of the novel are designed to make exploration of this world easier. Leonard Woolf, though his fictional work reveals only a part of him, is concerned for social injustice. E.M. Forster puts 'personal relations' above all other things, and David Garnett substitutes physical love.

They admire logic, intellect, and restraint, and also courage, sympathy,

and love.

Certainly, Clive Bell's 'Reason must be sole judge' and Virginia Woolf's 'I enjoy intellectuality' hold a great deal of significance for their friends in Bloomsbury. But one must never forget Katherine Hilbery's remark : 'The important thing is to care'.

LIST OF SOURCES

Arrangement

I. Works by members of the Bloomsbury Group (see Introduction, pp. 1-10).

A. Novels.

B. Other contemporary works; letters and diaries.

C. Memoirs and Secondary material.

II. Works by Authors not members of the Bloomsbury Group.

A. Biography and Autobiography.

B. Critical and Secondary material.

Within these categories, the listing is alphabetical by Authors, and then in order of first publication.

I. Works by members of Bloomsbury Group.

A. Novels.

E.M. Forster — Where Angels Fear to Tread. (Edward Arnold, London, 1947; first published 1905).

———. The Longest Journey. (Edward Arnold, London, 1947; first published 1907).

———. A Room With a View. (Edward Arnold, London; first published 1908).

———. Howards End. (Edward Arnold, London, 1947; first published 1910).

———. A Passage to India. (Dent, London, 1942; first published 1924).

Garnett, David. Lady Into Fox and A Man in the Zoo. (Chatto and

and Windus, London, 1928; first published 1922 and 1924 respectively).

———————. The Sailor's Return. (Chatto and Windus, London, 1944; first published 1925).

———————. No Love. (Chatto and Windus, London, 1946; first published 1929).

———————. The Grasshoppers Come. One volume edition with The Rabbit in the Air. (Chatto and Windus, London, 1951; first published 1931).

———————. Aspects of Love. (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1959; first published 1955).

———————. Two by Two. (Longmans, London, 1963).

Strachey, Lytton. Ermyntrude and Esmerelda. [Short story] (Anthony Bond, London, 1969).

Woolf, Leonard. The Village in the Jungle. (Hogarth, London, 1913).

Woolf, Virginia. The Voyage Out. (Hogarth, London, 1915).

———————. Night and Day. (Hogarth, London, 1919).

———————. Jacob's Room. (Hogarth, London, 1922).

———————. Mrs Dalloway. (Hogarth, London, 1925).

———————. To the Lighthouse. (Hogarth, London, 1927).

———————. The Waves. (Hogarth, London, 1931).

———————. The Years. (Hogarth, London, 1937).

———————. Between the Acts. (Hogarth, London, 1941).

B. Other contemporary works; letters and diaries.

Bell, Clive. Civilisation : An Essay. (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1938; first published 1928).

Forster, E.M. Aspects of the Novel. (Edward Arnold, London, 1949;

first published 1927).

Grant, Duncan. 'Virginia Woolf', Horizon, III (1941), pp. 403-404.

Strachey, Lytton. Eminent Victorians. (Collins, London, 1959; first published 1918).

Woolf, Leonard and Strachey, James, eds. Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey : Letters. (Hogarth, London, 1956).

Woolf, Leonard. Diaries in Ceylon 1908 - 1911 : Records of a Colonial Administrator, edited and preface by Leonard Woolf; and Stories from the East [latter fiction]. (Hogarth, London, 1963; first published 1962).

Woolf, Virginia. Orlando : A Biography. (Hogarth, London, 1964; first published 1928).

———. The Moment. (Hogarth, London, 1952; first publication 1947).

———. Roger Fry : A Biography. (Hogarth, London, 1940).

———. A Writer's Diary. Edited by Leonard Woolf. (Hogarth, London, 1953).

———. Collected Essays. Volume I. (Hogarth, London, 1966).

C. Memoirs and Secondary material.

Bell, Clive. Old Friends. (Chatto and Windus, London, 1956).

Bell, Quentin. Bloomsbury. (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1968).

Garnett, David. The Golden Echo. Three Volumes, of which Volume II is entitled The Flowers of the Forest, and Volume III The Familiar Faces. (Chatto and Windus, London, 1953, 1955, 1962).

Woolf, Leonard. Sowing : An Autobiography of the Years 1880 - 1904. (Hogarth, London, 1961).

———————. Beginning Again : An Autobiography of the Years 1911 - 1918. (Hogarth, London, 1964.

———————. Growing : An Autobiography of the Years 1904 - 1911. (Hogarth, London, 1964).

———————. Downhill All the Way : An Autobiography of the Years 1919 - 1939. (Hogarth, London, 1967).

II. Works by authors not members of the Bloomsbury Group.

A. Biography and Autobiography.

Gathorne - Hardy, Robert, ed. Ottoline : The Early Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell. (Faber, London, 1963).

Harrod, R.F. The Life of John Maynard Keynes. (Macmillan, London, 1952).

Russell, Bertrand. The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1872-1914. (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1967).

Sitwell, Edith. Taken Care Of : An Autobiography. (Hutchinson, London, 1965).

B. Critical and Secondary material.

Annan, Noel. 'The Mood of the 'Twenties', The Listener, 8 February 1951, p.211.

Bantock, G.M. 'L.H. Meyers and Bloomsbury', The Modern Age, ed. Boris Ford. (Volume VII of The Pelican Guide to English Literature). Hardcover edition. (Cassells, London, 1964).

Beer, J.B. The Achievement of E.M. Forster. (Chatto and Windus, London, 1962).

Bennett, Joan. Virginia Woolf. Second edition. (Cambridge University Press, London, 1964; first published 1945).

Bradbrook, Frank W. 'Virginia Woolf : the Theory and Practice of Fiction', The Modern Age, ed. Boris Ford. (Volume VII of The Pelican Guide to English Literature). Hardcover edition (Cassells, London, 1964).

Brander, Laurence E.M. Forster : A Critical Study. (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1968).

Daiches, David. Virginia Woolf. (New Directions, Norfolk, Conn., 1942).

Ford, Boris, ed. The Modern Age. (Volume VII of The Pelican Guide to English Literature). Hardcover edition. (Cassells, London, 1964).

Fry, Roger. Vision and Design. Revised edition. (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1937; first published 1920).

Johnstone, J.K. The Bloomsbury Group. (Secker and Warburg, London, 1954).

Leavis, F.R. 'E.M. Forster' and 'Keynes, Lawrence and Cambridge' [essays], The Common Pursuit. (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962; first published 1952).

McConkey, James. The Novels of E.M. Forster. (Cornell University Press, New York, 1957).

Moody, A.D. Virginia Woolf. (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh and London, 1963).

Pritchett, V.S. 'Private Voices and Public Life', The Listener, 8 March 1951, p.374.

Pryce-Jones, Alan. 'The Frightening Pundits of Bloomsbury', The Listener, 1 March 1951, p.345.

Swinnerton, Frank. The Georgian Literary Scene 1910-1935. Revised edition. (Hutchinson, London, 1964; first published 1935).

Trilling, Lionel. E.M. Forster. (New Directions, Norfolk, Conn., 1943).

[Various] I Believe : the Personal Philosophies of Twenty-three Eminent Men and Women of Our Time. (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1940).