

Virginia Woolf:

An Inventory of Her Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Woolf, Virginia, 1882-1941
Title:	Virginia Woolf Collection
Dates:	1922-1956
Extent:	1 box (.417 linear feet)
Abstract:	The collection documents the life and works of this English Bloomsbury group writer. The bulk of the collection comprises letters written by Woolf.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-04591
Language:	English
Access	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchases and gifts, 1959-1997
Processed by	Chelsea S. Jones, 1998
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Born early in 1882 to Sir Leslie and Julia Stephen, Adeline Virginia Stephen (Woolf), was the third of four children (Vanessa, Thoby, and Adrian). Though she received little formal education, her father, a writer and editor with strong interests in literary history, encouraged her to read extensively and gave her general advice on writing. Her father's connections to the literary world brought Virginia into contact with many well-known writers, including James Russell Lowell (Virginia's godfather), George Meredith, and Anne Thackeray Ritchie.

The death of her mother in 1895, when Virginia was thirteen, led to the first in a life long series of bouts of "madness" or depression, which plagued Woolf and which she treated with rest, milk, and long walks. The death of her step-sister in 1897 and then her father in 1904, though tragic, gave Virginia and her siblings the impetus and opportunity to move from the family home in respectable Hyde Park Gate to a new home in the less respectable neighborhood of Bloomsbury. It was here that the Bloomsbury group, formed at the Stephen's Thursday evenings "at-home," got its start. Groups of Thoby's friends from Cambridge visited to participate in wide-ranging discussions about politics, economics, and art. In 1906, Thoby died and Vanessa married Clive Bell, leaving Virginia and her younger brother Adrian to set up house together at a new Bloomsbury address.

The next few years were difficult for Virginia. Distressed by the loss of Thoby and the symbolic loss of Vanessa, but also invigorated by the relative independence of her new situation, she began writing her first novel. Also during this period, Lytton Strachey, a friend of her late brother, pointed out Leonard Woolf, another friend and original member of the Bloomsbury group, as a potential match for Virginia. Leonard Woolf, a writer in his own right, encouraged Virginia, a fact much in his favor when he proposed marriage in 1912.

In 1917, the Woolfs purchased a small hand press and set it up on their dining-room table with the idea of printing some of their own work and that of a few friends. From this small beginning grew Hogarth Press, giving Virginia Woolf the advantage of being able to publish everything she wrote, without concern for conventions or conservative editors. Woolf published all of her books through Hogarth Press, including *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), and *A Room of Ones' Own* (1929). The exceptions were Woolf's first two novels, *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919), published by her half-brother's publishing company, Duckworth Press. Most of her works were picked up by Harcourt, Brace and published in America within a year of English publication.

In 1919, the Woolfs moved to Monk's House in Rodmell, maintaining a flat in Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury for the work week. Through the twenties and thirties Woolf continued to write, not just novels, but essays on feminism, literary criticism, and some biography. During the early years of World War II, she spent most of her time at Monk's House on the Sussex coast, and it was there that she committed suicide, drowning herself in the Sussex coast on March 28, 1941.

Sources

Dictionary of Literary Biography -- Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890-1929. Thomas F. Staley, ed. (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1985).

Who's Who in Bloomsbury. Alan and Veronica Palmer. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

Caws, Mary Ann. *Women of Bloomsbury: Virginia, Vanessa, and Carrington.* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

Scope and Contents

Letters written by Virginia Woolf make up the bulk of this collection. Also included are two manuscripts and a few letters between other people. The collection is organized into three series, with materials arranged alphabetically by title or author: I. Works, 1940, nd, II. Letters, 1922-1940, and III. Miscellaneous, 1923-1956. This collection was previously accessible through a card catalog, but has been re-cataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

The Works Series contains typescripts of *Kew Gardens* and "Thoughts on Peace During an Air Raid." Both manuscripts have been edited, with corrections and additions made in pencil.

The Letters Series contains about 80 letters from Woolf to various friends and acquaintances. A few individuals are particularly well represented, among them Richard Aldington, Dorothy and Janie Bussy, Angelica Garnett, and William Plomer.

While the Miscellaneous Series contains three autographs by Woolf, it is composed primarily of letters from her husband, Leonard Woolf, their friends Clive and Vanessa Bell, and Clarence Cline.

Related Material

Available elsewhere in the Ransom Center are a few photographs of Woolf, her husband, and her home, located in the Literary Files of the Photography Collection, and 130 books from her personal library. Letters from Woolf can also be found in the collections of Mary Hutchinson and Ottoline Morrell, as well as others.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Aldington, Richard, 1892-1962.

Bell, Clive, 1881-1964.

Bell, Vanessa, 1879-1961.

Cline, Clarence Lee.

Harper, Allanah.

Lehmann, John, 1907- .

Plomer, William, 1903-1973.

Robins, Elizabeth, 1862-1952.

Woolf, Leonard, 1880-1969.

Subjects

Authors, English--20th century.

Bloomsbury group.

Literature--History and criticism--20th century.

Psychology in literature.

Women authors.

Women poets, English--19th century--Fiction.

Document Types

Autographs.

Series I. Works, nd, 1940

Kew Gardens, typescript with revisions, nd, 12pp

box 1
folder 1

"Thoughts on Peace During an Air Raid," typescript with corrections, 1940, 8pp

folder 2

Series II. Letters, 1922-1940

A-Z	box 1 folder 3
Aldington, Richard, 1922-1926	folder 4
Bussy, Dorothy Strachey, 1923-1937	folder 5
Bussy, Janie, 1931-1936	folder 6
Garnett, Angelica Bell, 1937-1940	folder 7
Lehmann, John, 1931-1935	folder 8
Plomer, William Charles Franklyn, 1929-1940	folder 9
Rhondda, Margaret Haig Thomas Mackworth, 2nd Viscountess, 1930-1938	folder 10
Robins, Elizabeth, 1929	folder 11

Series III. Miscellaneous, 1923-1956

Miscellaneous correspondence between others, and three Woolf autographs, 1923-1956

box 1
folder
12

Virginia Woolf Collection--Index of Correspondents

Index entries that include the notation (from Woolf) indicate that the person is the recipient of correspondence from Virginia Woolf.

In general, the box and folder number are followed by the recipient of the letter(s) and the date of the letter(s) when known. Where there is no number, there is only one letter. So in the example

Bell, Clive, 1881-1964--1.12 (3 to Francis Hackett, 1931-1934)

Bell sent 3 letters to Francis Hackett between the years 1931 and 1934 and they are located in box 1, folder 12.

When a correspondent received as well as sent letters, or sent letters to more than one recipient, the sender and/or recipients are listed beneath the name of the sender and the date or span of dates of the correspondence are followed by the box and folder number. So in the example

Woolf, Leonard, 1880-1969--

to Angelica Garnett, 1941--1.12

6 to Francis Hackett, 1932-1934--1.12

Leonard Woolf sent one letter to Angelica Garnett in 1941, located in box 1, folder 12, and six letters to Francis Hackett between 1932 and 1934, which are also located in box 1, folder 12.

- Aldington, Richard, 1892-1962--1.4 (16 from Woolf, 1922-1926)
- Bell, Clive, 1881-1964--1.12 (3 to Francis Hackett, 1931-1934)
- Bell, Quentin--1.3 (from Woolf, nd)
- Bell, Vanessa, 1879-1961--1.12 (3 to Clarence Cline, 1954-1956)
- Bussy, Dorothy--1.5 (14 from Woolf, 1923-1937)
- Bussy, Janie--1.6 (7 from Woolf, 1931-1936)
- Cline, Clarence Lee--1.12 (3 to Vanessa Bell, 1954)
- *Échanges*--1.3 (from Woolf, 1931)
- Garnett, Angelica--1.7 (19 from Woolf, 1937-1940)
- Harper, Allanah--1.3 (from Woolf, 1929)
- Lehmann, John, 1907- --1.8 (4 from Woolf, 1931-1935)
- Mackworth, Margaret Haig Thomas, Viscountess Rhondda, 1883- --1.10 (4 from Woolf, 1930-1938)
- Plomer, William, 1903-1973--1.9 (35 from Woolf, 1929-1940)
- Roberts, Denys Kilham, 1903-1976--1.3 (from Woolf, 1937)
- Robins, Elizabeth, 1862-1952--1.11 (3 from Woolf, 1929)
- Woolf, Leonard, 1880-1969--
- to Angelica Garnett, 1941--1.12
- 6 to Francis Hackett, 1932-1934--1.12