

## 28. Clive Agonistes

Mark Hussey, \*Clive Bell and the Making of Modernism,\*  
page 279

Clive and Vanessa's correspondence could at times resemble that of any middle-class couple dealing with bills, rent, children's ailments, holiday plans and travel. When Clive needed something done at his flat while he was in Rome, or Paris, or Venice, it was usually Vanessa who arranged it. His wife might be one of those women who 'prefer to live with buggers', as he put it, but Clive and she maintained the public façade of being Mr and Mrs Clive Bell. When a brief notice in the *Daily Telegraph* about the marriage of Lord Gage, from whose Firlie Estate Charleston was leased, referred to Vanessa as 'Mrs Duncan Grant', Leonard and Bunny were sure the newspaper would cough up £100 for libel. Clive urged Vanessa to sue, but they had to be satisfied with a published apology.

Maintaining the illusion of their marriage, as well as the fiction that Angelica was Clive's daughter, was as important for the sake of Hannah Taylor Bell as it was for an inquisitive public. Clive needed to keep on good terms with his mother to avoid any threat to his eventual inheritance, but he also cared about her in a way he never had for his father. After a long absence from England in 1931, he apologetically asked Vanessa to steel herself for a necessary visit to Cleeve House to make peace at Christmas time. Vanessa acknowledged their queer marriage in a letter to Julian: 'You're an odd mixture you know, my dear, like all my children perhaps and like me and Clive – I mean we're an odd mixture, aren't we?' Clive, who shared Vanessa's sceptical view of traditional marriage, had a scornful opinion of the conclusion of Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*: 'The lovers must get married. The