

VOICE AND VISION IN THE LYRICAL FICTION OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

by

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VOICE AND VISION IN THE LYRICAL FICTION
OF
VIRGINIA WOOLF

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Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron.

To the Lighthouse

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ABSTRACT

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The vision of reality Virginia Woolf expressed in her novels asserts the significance of both the subjective inner and the objective outer nature of man. In seeking to articulate this vision, Virginia Woolf modified traditional methods and subjects of fiction and brought the novel closer in form and function to the lyric poem. This thesis explores both the methods and the subjects Virginia Woolf used to create such a novel.

By sidestepping realistic plots and stories, and by concentrating on the psychic dimensions of the human personality as revealed in dreams, associations, memories, and reflections, Virginia Woolf sought to characterize man's inner nature. The use of stream of consciousness techniques, extensive images and symbols, and subjective time sequences enabled her to achieve this goal.

Although both subject and method accented the subjective inner world, Virginia Woolf's novels never relinquished their grasp of external life. This becomes apparent not only in the vivid and concrete

details with which she described inner experiences, but also in her refusal to abnegate the mimetic character of the novel. Virginia Woolf never tried to transform the novel into a poem; she simply sought to make it imitate the inner and outer views of reality as she perceived and imagined them. By fusing the impersonal and personal voices of poetry and fiction in her novels, she succeeded in creating works of art reflecting her vision.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The novels of Virginia Woolf acknowledge the transitory nature of life and the immutable significance of art. Since Virginia Woolf believed that a work of art achieved immutability through transitory life, she felt that the artist could not withdraw from life to create; he had to retain his connection with the world before he could create something permanent from it.

The First World War shattered established connections and fostered a painful separation between artist and society. Scientific and industrial advances increased this gap. Before the war, however, artists and intellectuals maintained their ties with the society against which they rebelled. Loosening Victorian moorings did not result in disintegration and isolation as did war, peace, depression, and industrial changes. In the early years of the twentieth century, young idealists rebelled against Victorian traditions, but sought to create a new social and intellectual order in which they would be connected both to society and to each other. Leonard Woolf summarizes the attitude of the early twentieth-century revolt in the first volume of his autobiography:

We found ourselves living in the springtime of a conscious revolt against the social, political, religious, moral, intellectual, and artistic institutions, beliefs, and standards of our fathers and grandfathers. We felt ourselves to be the second generation in this exciting movement of men and ideas. The battle, which was against what for short one may call Victorianism, had not

yet been won, and what was so exciting was our feeling that we ourselves were part of the revolution, that victory or defeat depended to some small extent upon what we did, said, or wrote.¹

In the influential book, Principia Ethica, published in 1903, the Cambridge philosopher, G. E. Moore, enunciated the ideals of the young generation and suggested the best mode of attaining them. Leonard Woolf describes Moore's importance to his generation and the high optimism his philosophy expressed:

The tremendous influence of Moore and his book upon us came from the fact that they suddenly removed from our eyes an obscuring accumulation of scales, cobwebs, and curtains, revealing for the first time to us, so it seemed, the nature of truth and reality, of good and evil and character and conduct, substituting for the religious and philosophical nightmares, delusions, hallucinations, in which Jehovah, Christ, and St. Paul, Plato, Kant, and Hegel had entangled us, the fresh air and pure light of plain common sense.²

Moore asked the young Cambridge men "to make certain that [they] knew what [they] meant when [they] made a statement and to analyze and examine [their] beliefs in the light of common sense." He justified their beliefs "that friendship or works of art for instance were good . . . and that one ought to do some things and not to do others." Moore distinguished between "things good in themselves or as ends and things good merely as means," and "his passionate search for truth" inspired the young Cambridge sceptics who pursued "truth," but only until the war, without concern for the political world around them.³ Their "passion for friendship, . . . for literature and music (. . . the plastic arts came a good deal later), . . . for what

¹Sowing: An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904 (London, 1960), p. 160.

²Ibid., p. 147.

³Ibid., pp. 147-148.

[they] called the truth," remained steadfast throughout the war, and even afterwards, but their faith in "a new society which should be free, rational, civilized, pursuing truth and beauty," dwindled as the grotesque spectres of barbarism loomed continuously, after 1914, over Europe.⁴ Political realities dwarfed man's capacity for creation and for freedom, and psychology and science reduced his ideal self-image. These things seemed to undermine all moral values, and the ideals towards which the generation strove. The immediate and distant future threatened chaos; the only vital connection between intellectual and artist and society lay in mutual annihilation. For some, life seemed totally meaningless;⁵ for others, however, meaning could be wrung out of anxiety and disillusion.

In a world where every act seemed transitory, and immutability an unattainable ideal, each moment of experience became important. To saturate each moment with significance was to give life some meaning, and to transcend a world circumscribed by relative values. Evolving from a position of relative importance in late nineteenth-century aestheticism, the moment became a final goal⁶ in the Twenties for

⁴Ibid., pp. 159-161.

⁵The so-called "lost generation" reflected this attitude. It fostered a carpe diem philosophy that tended to disfigure the values of love, truth, and honour sought by many people. Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (1926) is a fine illustration of this mood as reflected by American expatriates after the First World War, whereas Aldous Huxley's Point Counterpoint (1928) illustrates the frustration of intellectuals seeking meaning, and finding violence and brutality instead.

⁶Ruth E. Temple, "The Ivory Tower as Lighthouse," Edwardians and Late Victorians, English Institute Essays, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York, 1960), p. 34.

artists who, having rebelled against social and dogmatic constraints on individuality, sought a centre towards which they could direct their spiritual energy. The "moment," or "the moment of being" in Virginia Woolf's work,⁷ like T. S. Eliot's "still point," and James Joyce's "epiphany,"⁸ refers to both the important insight into the self, which fills present, and shapes future, life with meaning, and the reconciliation of opposites in the self and nature, in which the self experiences complete being and understands reality.⁹ During such an experience, the conscious individual loses himself in contemplation and becomes freed from time. He moves from a simple perception of the facts of the world to an awareness of their universal implication, and thus attains the connection to reality contemporary society denies him. "In its final stage, the moment obtains an independent existence of its own, combining both physical and mental worlds and engulfing the self in brief, ecstatic recognitions before it collapses into its component parts and burns out"¹⁰

⁷For the most recent, lucid explanations of the "moment" and "moment of reality" in Virginia Woolf's work, see Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton, 1963), and Ethel F. Cornwell, The Still Point: Themes and Variations in the Writings of T. S. Eliot, Coleridge, Yeats, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1962).

⁸Cornwell, pp. 3-4. See also the unpubl. diss. (Cornell, 1963) by Morris Beja, "Evanescant Moments: The Epiphany in the Modern Novel."

⁹Ibid., pp. 4-5.

¹⁰Freedman, The Lyrical Novel, pp. 198-199.

Although transient, the intensity of the moment gives value to immediate experience, and thus counters the absolute nihilism to which relative belief leads. The concept of the moment provided Virginia Woolf with such a counter, and intensified her desire to treat it in her novels. In the nineteenth-century novel the quest for reality occurred in the social world where "the material of its analysis" was "always manners as the indication of the direction of man's soul."¹¹ It was not through manners that Virginia Woolf sought to explore reality. Neither was it through the naturalistic fiction of her Edwardian predecessors. Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, and John Galsworthy carried the Victorian concern for public reality to a point that seemed to deny the existence of anything non-material. Problems of marriage, property, and environment were the proper subjects for their novels, since these subjects best illustrated actuality. In "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," written for a Cambridge lecture in 1924,¹² and in "Modern Fiction," written in 1919, and published in 1925,¹³ Virginia Woolf attacked the Edwardian position, and established her own. She knew that the point of view behind the elaborately drawn pictures of Edwardian society and its institutions would not permit her exploration of the reality she perceived. In

¹¹Lionel Trilling, "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," The Liberal Imagination (New York, 1950), p. 205.

¹²The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays, ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1950), pp. 90-112.

¹³The Common Reader, First Series (New York, 1953), pp. 150-158.

Edwardian novels, she wrote, "Life escapes; and perhaps without life nothing else is worth while." The Edwardians "spend immense skill making the trivial and the transitory appear true and enduring," and sacrifice the truth of character in excessive realistic portrayal.¹⁴ Character should not be drawn for something outside itself, "to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire"¹⁵ Mrs. Brown, Virginia Woolf's symbol for character, should be drawn for herself, for through character, the novelist discovers "the spirit we live by, life itself."¹⁶

Virginia Woolf sought a type of fiction that would catch "life or spirit, truth or reality . . . the essential thing"¹⁷ To achieve this, she had to record the mind as it experienced life:

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions -- trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this

¹⁴Ibid., p. 153.

¹⁵"Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," p. 97.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁷"Modern Fiction," p. 153.

varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?¹⁸

Writers who sought this end, "spiritual writers," such as Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and E. M. Forster, knew that it was fruitless to construct "two and thirty chapters after a design which more and more cease[d] to resemble the vision in [their] minds."¹⁹ The novel must reflect the vision. It must be self-contained; it must become a quest for, and image of, truth. To effect this goal, Virginia Woolf, and the other spiritual writers, explored new techniques for fiction. They explored symbolist poetry, Dadaism, intuitionist psychology, impressionist painting of France; psychoanalysis and the psychology of myths and archetypes, expressionism, Wagnerian opera of Germany; novels of the soul and the classic ballet of Russia; imagist poetry, symbolic logic, and aesthetic philosophy of America and England. The novelists borrowed techniques and points of view, transforming them to suit the mode of narrative they desired. Although they emphasized the uniqueness of their visions, they strongly aimed at objectifying them in an intelligible form.

Revealing subjectivity through objective modes of expression became the primary goal regarding style and form of twentieth-century

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 153-154.

fiction,²⁰ just as the paradox of transcending time through the moment, and of understanding reality through the self, and the self through reality, became its metaphysics. The effacement of the narrator was the first step in fictional dramatization. By ^{the author's} effacing the narrator, the character's experience, which the narrator conventionally related, became concrete and immediate. The novelists emulated Flaubert: *L'artiste doit être dans son oeuvre comme Dieu dans la Création, invisible et tout puissant, qu'on le sente partout, mais qu'on ne le voie pas.*"²¹ James Joyce, so dedicated to this ideal, transformed it into the artistic credo of Stephen Dedalus:

The personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalises itself, so to speak. The esthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination. The mystery of esthetic like that of material creation is accomplished. The artist like the God of the Creation, remains within or behind or beyond or

²⁰In the comprehensive and provocative book, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1961), Wayne C. Booth analyzes the criterion of "objectivity" in fiction especially as modern novelists have explored it. The whole of Part I, "Artistic Purity and the Rhetoric of Fiction," treats the subject as a major problem in the writing of any kind of fiction, and reveals how objectivity became a goal of form and style as well as a step towards philosophical autonomy. Professor Booth also traces the development of the ideal in post-Flaubertian novelists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, showing how impersonality and dramatic experience became more important than story and plot. He also speaks pertinently of the essential subjectivity of this type of "objective" presentation in Part III, Chapter Thirteen, "The Morality of Impersonal Narration."

²¹The Critical Writings of James Joyce, ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (New York, 1959), p. 141 n. Joyce quotes from a letter of Flaubert's dated March 18, 1857.

above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.²²

Locating the point of view in the mind of the character became the second major step in fictional dramatization. In both the long and short fiction, Henry James developed and refined this concept. In the Prefaces, and in other critical essays, James explained and analyzed the "new" perspective,²³ stating that dramatizing story and character was vital in creating "the intensity of the illusion of reality."²⁴ Jamesian reality differed from that of the next generation of novelists to whom examination of the mind of character itself became the primary goal. To follow events as a particular mind perceived them, and subsequently considered, analyzed, and felt them, was to make concrete the elusive thing Virginia Woolf said the spiritual writers were trying to capture. "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness."²⁵ For these writers, searching for the clue to the nature of consciousness, the dramatic approach was vital.

²²A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York, 1957), p. 215.

²³See especially, The Art of the Novel, ed. R. P. Blackmur (New York, 1934). Wayne Booth astutely notes that James, and Flaubert before him, lacked the dogmatic attitudes about dramatic fiction that characterized those later critics who adopted their formulations. See Chapter Two, "General Rules I: Novels Must Be Realistic," passim.

²⁴Booth discusses James's attitudes on this notion on pp. 43-44, et passim.

²⁵"Modern Fiction," p. 155.

To depict and to dramatize the nature of consciousness, the novelists used the interior monologue. Who actually introduced the technique into fiction, who coined the term, and whether the French "monologue intérieur" or the English "interior monologue" or "inner monologue" is more accurate, are still matters of dispute.²⁶ The relationship among the interior monologue, internal analysis, sensory impression, and the monologue techniques of drama and poetry, also

²⁶The most important discussions of these problems are: L. M. Bowling, "What is the Stream of Consciousness Technique?", FMIA, LXV (June 1950), pp. 333-345; Edouard Dujardin, Le Monologue Interieur, Son Apparition. Ses Origines. Sa place dans l'oeuvre de James Joyce (Paris, 1931); Gleb Struve, "Monologue Interieur: The Origins of the Formula and the First Statement of its Possibilities," FMIA, LXIX (1954), 1101-1111. Dujardin claims that the interior monologue had its origins in the symbolist movement (p. 92), although he also sees Browning's dramatic monologues, and passages of Stendhal and Dostoevsky as partial precursors (pp. 31 and 71). Dujardin is claimed to have written the first novel using the interior monologue, Les Lauriers sont coupés, published first in La Revue Independente (Paris, 1887), and in 1888, in book form. Dujardin notes that James Joyce called particular attention to it, and sent him an autographed copy of Ulysses, inscribed "A Edouard Dujardin, annonceur de la parole interieure, le larron impenitent" (p. 152). Dujardin says others used the technique shortly after him: Arthur Schnitzler, Leutmont Gustl (1901) and Armondo Polaccio Valdes, El Cuarto Poder (c. 1890). Struve claims Tolstoy, in his early short story, "Sevastopol in May 1855," as the father of technique, and Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky, the critic, as the one who coined the term inner monologue, when describing Tolstoy's method (pp. 1105-1106). He claims also that Audrey Bely's Kotik Letaev (1917; 1922) is a precursor to Joyce's Ulysses. More recent critics (see references n. 29) consider Victor Egger's La Parole Interieure (1881) the first important analysis of the technique. With regard to the name, Dujardin refers to notable writers from Mallarme to George Moore who used terms similar or equivalent to "le monologue interieur," but notes especially the use by Valery Larbaud, the editor of the 1924 version of Dujardin's novel. Melvin Friedman (see below) says that Larbaud's Amants heureux Amants (1924) is the first genuine use of the interior monologue (p. 166).

raises several critical queries.²⁷ The critics agree, however, on the general nature and particular use of the interior monologue and its distinction from the stream of consciousness. Stream of consciousness refers to the subject matter of a novel rather than its techniques, purposes, or themes.²⁸ The phrase originally appeared in William James's Principles of Psychology (1890), the term "stream" referring to how consciousness was represented, the term "consciousness," to what consciousness contained.²⁹ James said:

Consciousness . . . does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.³⁰

A stream of consciousness novel, then, is one

²⁷Bowling, Dujardin, and Struve attempt to distinguish between these terms as do two of the most recent writers on stream of consciousness fiction, Melvin Friedman, Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method (New Haven, 1955), and Robert Humphrey, Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel. (Berkeley, 1954). Joseph Warren Beach and Leon Edel also have written on the topic in their books on the twentieth-century novel. (See Bibliography.) Briefly, the differences are between the direct expression of the unconscious and conscious thoughts reflecting a mind in the interior monologue, the indirect expression of thoughts and sensations of a character, often through the omniscient narrator, in internal analysis, and the passive reception of sensations as a character perceives them in sensory impression. See below, p. 14 for further discussion.

²⁸Humphrey, p. 2.

²⁹Ibid., p. 117.

³⁰Psychology The Briefer Course, ed. Gordon Allport (New York, 1961), p. 26.

which has its essential concern the exploitation of a wide area of consciousness, generally the entire area of one or more characters; that is, whatever plots, themes, or general effects are achieved in these novels result from the use of consciousness of the character as a 'screen' or 'film' on which they are depicted.³¹

Developing from the naturalistic writers' concern with external man and his motives and actions, the stream of consciousness novelist turned the scrutiny of naturalistic detail to internal man and his psychic life. The difference between Zola, the Goncourts, Glissing, and Bennett, for example, and Joyce, Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf, is the difference between "being concerned about what one does and being concerned about what one is."³²

The interior monologue is the central technique of stream of consciousness novelists in their exploration of sensations, memories, imaginations, conceptions, intuitions, the whatness of mental and spiritual experience, and the symbolizations, feelings, processes of association, the howness of that experience.³³ Edouard Dujardin defines the interior monologue as follows:

Le monologue intérieur est, dans l'ordre de la poésie, le discours sans auditeur et non prononcé, par lequel un personnage exprime sa pensée la plus intime, la plus proche de l'inconscient, antérieurement à toute organisation logique; c'est-à-dire en son état naissant, par le moyen de phrases directes réduites au minimum syntaxial, de façon à donner l'impression tout venant.³⁴

³¹Friedman, Stream of Consciousness, p. 3.

³²Humphrey, p. 8.

³³Ibid., p. 7.

³⁴Dujardin, Le Monologue Interieur, p. 59.

The interior monologue records the flux of a character's thoughts, "the illusion of their uninterrupted flow."³⁵ Through the interior monologue, the novelist represents the mind perceiving sensations, emotions, and thoughts. Dujardin felt that this proximity related the novelist's use of interior monologue to the poet's use of symbol and image.

Il nous est en tout cas, devenue impossible d'accorder la qualité poétique à une oeuvre où intervient la raisonnement et qui n'émane pas directement des profondeurs du subconscient. Quant à moi, je salue dans le monologue intérieur une des manifestations de cette entrée fulgurante de la poésie dans le roman, qui est la marque de l'époque.³⁶

The interior monologue describes pre-speech levels of consciousness, those areas existing below the level of the conscious control of mind and speech.³⁷ "It is invariably the pre-speech level that relies most heavily on poetic effects, with the exertion of logical control at a minimum and punctuation depending more on an emotional 'breath group' than on a grammatical unit."³⁸ The "poetic effects" are neither rhyme, metre, nor specific structures, but rather those devices by which a poet expresses immediate experiences and by which he evokes associations and connotations illuminating the meaning of those experiences, the dramatic presentation of action, and the use of image and symbol. Interior monologue requires these devices, although whether the monologue is direct or indirect determines the poetic effect that emerges.

³⁵Friedman, Stream of Consciousness, p. 19.

³⁶Dujardin, p. 51.

³⁷Humphrey, p. 24.

³⁸Friedman, Stream of Consciousness, p. 20.

The direct interior monologue is one in which the author acts as if there were no reader; almost all syntax disintegrates and consequently all logical punctuation; the first person point of view emphasizes the narrator's negligible interference.³⁹ The indirect interior monologue differs fundamentally from the direct in its third person point of view. Although the character's psyche still controls the point of view, the reader senses the narrator's continuous presence. Since the narrator preserves syntactical order and logical punctuation, the monologue has greater coherence and surface unity. More description and exposition in the indirect interior monologue also increases clarity.⁴⁰ For over-all poetic effect, the indirect interior monologue depends on devices imposed on the novelist's material from without, whereas, in the direct interior monologue, poetic effect emerges from the same source as the language. Although most stream of consciousness novelists rarely make exclusive use of either type, the dominant use of direct interior monologue in Joyce's Ulysses, for example, suggests poetry that arises from a naturalistic fidelity to life in any quarter, whereas the indirect interior monologue in Mrs. Dalloway suggests poetry that arises from those states of being that most characterize it. In Ulysses the direct interior monologue forces poetry out of experiences that seem "unpoetic"; in Mrs. Dalloway, poetry emerges from the blending

³⁹Humphrey, p. 25.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 29.

of Clarissa's expressive responses and the larger poetic pattern Virginia Woolf weaves into the novel.

In both novels, as in both types of monologues, however, the novelist dramatizes experience by placing the reader in the character's mind. He enables the reader to participate in the psychic experience and the symbolic language of that experience. Only, however, when the reader interprets the random associations, images, and symbols layering the psyche, can he understand, and subsequently evaluate, the character. The reader's organization of the psychic material becomes, then, creative, and analogous to the artist's own imaginative organization.

The fundamental premise underlying stream of consciousness fiction is that a self, different from the one acting in the world, exists. Virginia Woolf's use of the interior monologue indicates her acceptance of this premise, but her particular attitudes towards that self required a different approach to the stream of consciousness. Since she conceived of the self as part of a vaster and more impersonal reality, she had to relate the psychological facts and rhythms to the facts and rhythms of the larger forces outside the self. Psychological analysis in Virginia Woolf's novels is generally only the point of departure for other speculations. After her first two novels, she eliminated story and plot,⁴¹ and almost all other objective frames of reference, not only because consciousness does not evolve in a narrative way, and not only because concern with psychic life presupposed a sceptical view of objective

⁴¹ See E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (London, 1962), pp. 93-94 for the distinction between story and plot.

reality, but because she wanted to create an artistic equivalent to the impersonal reality she conceived. Like other stream of consciousness novelists, she used symbolic structures to represent the symbolic processes of consciousness, but like a lyric poet, she created a formal design from these symbolic modes that had significance and beauty in itself. Using images, symbols, motifs, and rhythms, she created patterns from nature, time, personality, and imagination, always striving, however, to weave these patterns into the over-all design. The design, like Eliot's "objective correlative," became Virginia Woolf's metaphor for reality and an assertion of the value art has for expressing that reality.

By consciously choosing the novel to express metaphysical ideas and to explore symbolic techniques, Virginia Woolf affirmed the realism characteristic of the genre, although she founded her "realism" on a spiritual rather than a material concept. She also implied that poetry, the usual vehicle for such subjects and technical experiments, would, by itself, not serve the mixture of her vision. In "The Narrow Bridge of Art," published in the New York Herald Tribune on August 14, 1927, she predicted that in ten or fifteen years, prose would serve purposes it had never served before, purposes usually served by poetry.⁴²

Prose will express "the sneer, the contrast, the question, the closeness and complexity of life," and "that queer conglomeration of incongruous things -- the modern mind." To convey that conglomeration

⁴²Granite and Rainbow, ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1958), p. 18.

the novelist will use "the democratic art of prose," for "prose is so humble that it can go anywhere; no place is too low, too sordid, or too mean for it to enter." Significantly, for psychological fiction, "with all the suppleness of a tool which is in constant use it can follow the windings and record the changes which are typical of the modern mind."⁴³ The novel will focus on outline, however, rather than detail, and will make "little use of the marvellous fact recording power, which is one of the attributes of fiction." "It will express the feelings and ideas of the characters closely and vividly," but in a more poetic way, "not only or mainly people's relations to each other and their activities together, as the novel has hitherto done, but it will give the relation of the mind to general ideas and its soliloquy in solitude."⁴⁴ The novelist, Virginia Woolf said, has not fully explored one essential aspect of the mind.

We have come to forget that a large and important part of life consists in our emotions toward such things as roses and nightingales, the dawn, the sunset, life, death, and fate; we forget that we spend much time sleeping, dreaming, thinking, reading, alone; we are not entirely occupied in personal relations; all our energies are not absorbed in making our livings. The psychological novelist has been too prone to limit psychology to the psychology of personal intercourse; we long sometimes to escape from the incessant, the remorseless analysis of falling into love and falling out of love, of what Tom feels for Judith and Judith does or does not altogether feel for Tom. We long

⁴³Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 18-19.

for some more impersonal relationship. We long for ideas, for dreams, for imaginations, for poetry.⁴⁵

Therefore, Virginia Woolf deliberately chose to write novels; she did not want to transform the novel into poetry. She deliberately chose to write prose. She aimed, however, to bring the novel as close to a poem as possible, without becoming one. She wanted to recreate poetic rhythm in the prose sentence and to redefine the abstract and personal meditations of lyric poetry in the mode of fiction. Virginia Woolf continued to call her books novels although she said, in an unpublished letter to Hugh Walpole, she always wanted to name her books afresh,⁴⁶ and in her diary, "I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my books to supplant 'novel.' A new -- by Virginia Woolf but what? Elegy?"⁴⁷ The abundance of misdirected criticism⁴⁸ of her novels resulted, perhaps, because she did not change their name. Arnold Bennett, D. S. Savage, and Walter Allen, among others, attacked her novels for failing to adhere to "'the proper stuff of fiction,'" for failing to provide story and character, for providing poetry and

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 19. Recent French writers like Nathalie Sarraute, Michel Butor, and Alain Robbe-Grillet have pursued these ideas in different ways, testifying to the continuing influence of Virginia Woolf's attitudes towards the novel, if not her novels themselves.

⁴⁶Unpublished autographed letter, Virginia Woolf to Hugh Walpole, Monk's House, Rodmell, Friday, n.d.

⁴⁷A Writer's Diary, Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1959), p. 80.

⁴⁸For a complete study, until 1955, of Virginia Woolf's reputation, see the unpubl. diss. (Pennsylvania, 1959) by Robert F. White, Jr., "The Literary Reputation of Virginia Woolf; A History of British Attitudes towards Her Work, 1915-1955."

philosophy instead.⁴⁹ They said her novels, lacking plot, lacked any meaningful action unifying the filaments of life drifting across her pages. They criticized the bloodless, faceless phantoms who peopled her books. Were these character, they asked? Where was Emma, Sam Weller, Maggie Tulliver, where was Becky Sharp? Virginia Woolf only gave them upper-middle class intellectual, artistic, or social butterflies, preoccupied by parties or abstract philosophy rather than by love or adventure. Often her characters did nothing but brood on random moments of existence. In fact, they believed that Virginia Woolf's subjective focus only flimsily disguised the design of the ivory tower aesthete to write of herself. To prevent any immediate identification between character and author, however, she wrote in an highly artificial style, substituting decorative imagery and undulating rhythms for substance. They called the novels, derogatively, "poetic" or "lyric," because of their evanescent atmosphere, abstract subject matter, and use of non-fictional techniques.⁵⁰ To such criticism, Virginia Woolf

⁴⁹See Walter Allen, The English Novel: A Short Critical History (London, 1954) pp. 329-337; Arnold Bennett, The Savour of Life Essays in Gusto (London, 1928), pp. 47-49 et passim; Dudley Carew, "Virginia Woolf," Living Age, CCCXXX (1926), pp. 47-54; H. C. Harwood, "Recent Tendencies in Modern Fiction," Quarterly Review (April 1929), pp. 321-338; D. S. Savage, "The Mind of Virginia Woolf," South Atlantic Quarterly, 46 (October 1947), pp. 556-573.

⁵⁰See, for example Muriel Bradbrook, "Notes on the Style of Mrs. Woolf," Scrutiny, I (1932), pp. 33-38; C. B. Cox, "Virginia Woolf, The Free Spirit A Study of Liberal Humanism in the Novels of George Eliot, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Angus Wilson (London, 1963), pp. 70-105; Q. D. Leavis, Fiction and the Reading Public (London, 1932); F. R. Leavis, Towards Standards of Criticism (London, 1933); Mark Schorer, "The Chronicle of Doubt," Virginia Quarterly Review, XVIII (Spring 1942), pp. 200-215; William Troy, "Virginia Woolf: I Poetic Method; II The Poetic Style," Symposium (January and April 1932), pp. 53-63, pp. 153-166.

replied, "'the proper stuff of fiction' does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought, every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss."⁵¹ Although her reply gave the novelist every opportunity to extend the boundaries of the novel, to the *Scrutiny* critics, extension in the direction of metaphysics and poetry meant sidestepping the true province of the novel, contemporary political, social, scientific, and moral realities. The *Scrutiny* group attacked Virginia Woolf particularly for the aesthetic and social views that seemed to emanate from her Bloomsbury companions.⁵² Virginia Woolf's ironic question to Dorothy Bussy Strachey, "By the way, are you Bloomsbury?"⁵³ indicates that her friends though living in the Bloomsbury section of London, had no formally declared group or club, despite what many people said.⁵⁴ Since their gatherings, discussions, and friendships excluded many writers not sharing their interests, tastes, or temperaments, they acquired a

⁵¹"Modern Fiction," p. 158.

⁵²In The Bloomsbury Group A Study of E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf and Their Circle (New York, 1954), J. K. Johnstone indicates the relationship between detractors of Bloomsbury and of Virginia Woolf as does Robert White, p. 340 (see n. 48 above), although they both suggest how difficult it is to isolate the two factors.

⁵³Unpublished autographed letter, Virginia Woolf to Dorothy Bussy Strachey, Tavistock Square, December 15, 1936 to January 1, 1937.

⁵⁴See Clive Bell, Old Friends: Personal Recollections (London, 1956); Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Art, trans. Jean Stewart (London, 1965); A. D. Moody, Virginia Woolf (London, 1963); Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again. An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918 (London, 1964).

reputation for snobbery and highbrow aestheticism,⁵⁵ which resulted often in distorted judgments of their various achievements. A recent commentator on Bloomsbury has suggested that "the spectacle of gifted people positively enjoying themselves is never one which gives pleasure to onlookers, and it is probable that the reputation of Virginia Woolf would stand higher today had she lived on the outskirts of Goole or immigrated to Cap Ferrat."⁵⁶ The "uncritical devaluation,"⁵⁷ resulting from such attitudes caused the novels to be disregarded as unique works of art, and significant in the same way that novels overtly concerned with social issues were. Some critics, like William Troy and Muriel Bradbrook,⁵⁸ by attacking style and technique, effected more thorough analyses of the philosophical and technical achievements of the novels themselves. Ralph Freedman, Jean Guiguet, Josephine Schaefer, James Hafley, N. C. Thakur, and R. W. Chambers, among others, have considered the novels as outstanding examples of content expressed as form.⁵⁹

⁵⁵See Angus Wilson, "Diversity and Depth," Times Literary Supplement (August 15, 1958), pp. vii-viii. Irma Rantavaara, Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury (Helsinki, 1953), p. 10 and p. 86 n. speaks of the jealousy of D. H. Lawrence in this respect, and of the peculiar hostility of the Leavises and their "followers" who lived side by side at Cambridge with former Bloomsbury haunTERS, E. M. Forster, F. L. Lucas, and George Rylands.

⁵⁶"The Perpetual Marriage," Times Literary Supplement (July 4, 1958), p. 370.

⁵⁷A. D. Moody, Virginia Woolf (London, 1963), p. 100.

⁵⁸See above, n. 50.

⁵⁹R. W. Chambers, The Novels of Virginia Woolf (London, 1947); Ralph Freedman, see above, n. 7; Jean Guiguet, see above, n. 54;

This thesis explores the lyrical nature of Virginia Woolf's novels and examines her way of achieving it. It also explores the view of reality informing that achievement. Since Virginia Woolf's first creative problems centred in form, Chapters II and III study the aesthetic tradition in which she worked and trace the development of the lyrical design as she gradually articulated it. Chapters IV, V, and VI consider the social and metaphysical visions underlying that development, particularly as certain characters express and reflect them. Virginia Woolf's attitudes towards the relationship of society, self, and art illustrate not only her view of reality, but also the relationship between what she wrote and how she wrote it, and these indicate how her lyrical perspective blended the fact and vision of the world and her art.

Neither contemplation nor creation offered Virginia Woolf absolute solutions to the problems of time, isolation, and death, and her novels, however profound and far-reaching her achievement, revealed an embracing vision rather than an ultimate truth. That vision, however, led her to seek meaning in aesthetic form, and value in the creative act. It was through her vision that she reconciled the isolated self with its world, and

Jean-Jacques Mayoux, Vivant Piliers Le roman anglo-saxon et les symboles (Paris, 1960); Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Threefold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (The Hague, 1965); see the unpubl. diss. (Chicago, 1949) by Lotus A. Snow, "Imagery in Virginia Woolf's Novels"; see the unpubl. diss. (Columbia, 1951) by Jean Sudrann, "The Sea, the City and the Clock: A Study of Symbolic Form in the Novels of Virginia Woolf"; N. C. Thakur, The Symbolism of Virginia Woolf (London, 1965).

harmonized the discord between fact and feeling. Through that vision, too, she attained a place among those writers whose personal meditations sang of truths general to man.

Chapter II

SEEING LIGHTS: DISCOVERING THE LYRICAL VISION

In The Voyage Out, the prospective novelist Terence Hewet explains his views on fiction to Rachel Vinrace:

'I want to write a novel about Silence, . . . the things people don't say. But the difficulty is immense However, you don't care Nobody cares. All you read a novel for is to see what sort of a person the writer is, and, if you know him, which of his friends he's put in. As for the novel itself, the whole conception, the way one's seen the thing, felt about it, made it stand in relation to other things, not one in a million cares for that.'¹

He continues further on: "'What I want to do in writing novels is very much what you want to do when you play the piano, I expect We want to find out what's behind things, don't we? -- Look at the lights down there . . . scattered about anyhow. Things I feel come to me like lights I want to combine them Have you ever seen fireworks that make figures? . . . I want to make figures.'"

(VO, 266). To make figures from lights, to create design from vision, is Terence Hewet's aesthetic for fiction. Without sacrificing the requirements of the novel, Terence wants to make it transparent, to make it reflect and suggest while it unfolds its story. It is this aesthetic that underlies the definition of lyrical fiction discussed

¹Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out (London, 1957), p. 262. Subsequent references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text as VO followed by a page number.

by Ralph Freedman, in his recent study, The Lyrical Novel.² By clarifying the implications of Terence's aesthetic, in the light of Freedman's views, one can see how, after The Voyage Out (1915), and Night and Day (1919), Virginia Woolf made Terence's aesthetic her own, and how, by transforming idea into image, she created lyrical novels.

Although some form of lyrical narrative has always existed, the hybrid genre of lyrical fiction became particularly significant in Europe in the twentieth century as novelists closely analyzed and evaluated the nature of inner experience. The achievement of the lyrical novel in England, France, and Germany³ differed as historical conditioning of narrative, and the rationale for contemplating sensibility, differed. Like German romantic and French symbolist novelists, English lyrical novelists reacted against the realistic and naturalistic approach to fiction and sought a new form in which to express their concern with inner experience. Unlike their German and French counterparts, however, they had to surmount the formidable barrier of the Great Tradition, which rooted fiction in social reality. The romantic belief that lyric poetry was the "type and epitome of the purest poetry," expressing most immediately, as it did, the poet's feelings, and that it was not only the prototype for poetry in general, but the "expression

²Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton, 1963).

³For a survey of the development of lyrical fiction see Freedman, "The Lyrical Tradition," pp. 18-41.

of an unadulterated spirit," the "'representation of the inner world in its totality' . . .,"⁴ was acceptable for poetry, but not for the novel. The attempts at non-realistic fiction by eighteenth-century novelists like Sterne and Richardson, and by nineteenth-century novelists like Emily Brontë,⁴ George Meredith, and Thomas Hardy, and prose writers like De Quincey, Ruskin, and Pater,⁵ were against the grain of the traditional mimetic mode and the "familiar" style. By combining seventeenth and eighteenth-century empiricism, novels of sensibility, and psychoanalysis, with romance, Gothic Tale, poetic prose, prose poetry,⁶ and symbolism, the lyrical novelist, in the twentieth century, succeeded in creating a novel that maintained a foothold in the outer, social world while it explored the inner world of awareness.⁷

The lyrical differs from the traditional novel, particularly in its

⁴M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York, 1958), pp. 87-90.

⁵See Virginia Woolf's own comments on the lyrical efforts of these authors in essays such as "Phases of Fiction," pp. 93-145, "Impassioned Prose," pp. 32-40, "On Rereading Meredith," pp. 48-52, in Granite and Rainbow; "De Quincey's Autobiography," pp. 119-120, "The Novels of George Meredith," pp. 204-213, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy," pp. 222-233, in The Second Common Reader (New York, 1956); "'Jane Eyre' and 'Wuthering Heights,'" pp. 159-165, The Common Reader First Series; "Ruskin," pp. 49-52, and "Half of Thomas Hardy," pp. 61-66 in The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays.

⁶For a comprehensive history of prose poetry, see the unpubl. diss. (Harvard, 1958) by John Ivan Simon, "The Prose Poem: A Study of a Genre in Nineteenth-Century European Literature."

⁷Freedman, pp. 277-278.

conception of reality. To the lyrical novelist, the primary problems he must confront concern the nature of the mind's perception of itself and the external world, the functional relationship of the inner and the outer worlds, and the relationship of awareness or knowledge to human conduct and choice.⁸ Instead of representing an outer, objective world, the lyrical novelist reveals an inner world through patterns of images; instead of "a universe in which men display their actions," he displays "a poet's vision fashioned as design."⁹ Although never abjuring narrative elements, the lyrical novelist subordinates conventional narrative progression to a "'lyrical process'" in which he develops an idea through images which the reader follows until the idea reaches its greatest intensity and fullest vision.¹⁰ The lyrical process eliminates the consecutive time scheme underlying narrative, but simulates consecutiveness through lyrical language; "its surge towards greater intensity reveals not new events, but the significance of existing events."¹¹ These events characterize the world of "the lyrical self," the equivalent of the "I" of the lyric poet. Through images and symbols, the lyrical self mirrors the external world it

⁸Freedman, p. 272.

⁹Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 6-7, Professor Freedman attributes the phrase to Wolfgang Kayser, Das Sprachliche Kunstwerke. Eine Einföhrung in die Literatur-wissenschaft (Bern, 1951), pp. 160-162 ff.

¹¹Ibid., p. 8.

experiences, and transforms itself into a symbolic vision.¹² The refashioning of almost all action, character, idea, and emotion into patterns of imagery, indicates, in the twentieth century,

more than a shift of taste in literary history or a predilection for imagistic design. Rather, it epitomizes a writer's special attitudes toward knowledge. The lyrical novelist is faced with the task of reconciling succession in time and sequences of cause and effect with the instantaneous action of the lyric. Not only is time experienced spatially, to borrow a phrase from Joseph Frank, but also the distance between self and world is telescoped; the engagements of men in the universe of action are re-experienced as instances of awareness. The lyrical novel . . . emerges as an 'anti-novel' in the true sense of the term because by portraying the act of knowledge, it subverts the conventionally accepted qualities of the novel which are focused on the inter-course between men and worlds. But in this form it also expresses a peculiarly modern approach to experience that has ripened into our current obsession with the conditions of knowledge. In this strangely alienated, yet somehow essential genre, the directed portrayal of awareness becomes the outer frontier where novel and poem meet.¹³

The concept of spatial form on which the lyrical novelist based his portrayal is important in understanding the aims of the genre. Joseph Frank elucidated the concept of spatial form¹⁴ when he opposed Lessing's distinctions between poetry and painting to defend the methods of modern poets and novelists. Illustrating the romantic reaction to form as a technical arrangement dictated by rules, Lessing argued in favour of a form that related the sensuous nature of the art medium to human perception.¹⁵ He asserted that critics should judge literature and

¹²Ibid., pp. 8-9.

¹³Ibid., p. viii.

¹⁴"Spatial Form in Modern Literature," Critiques and Essays in Criticism, ed. R. W. Stallman (New York, 1940), pp. 315-328. Originally published in Sewanee Review, LIII (1945), pp. 221-246, 433-456, 643-653. Reprinted also in Criticism, ed. Mark Schorer (New York, 1948), pp. 379-392.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 318.

painting differently, since each involved a different sensuous medium governed by different laws of creation.

If it be true that painting employs wholly different signs or means of imitation from poetry, -- the one using forms and colors in space, the other articulate sounds in time, -- and if signs must unquestionably stand in convenient relation with the thing signified, then signs arranged side by side can represent only objects existing side by side, or whose parts so exist, while consecutive signs express only objects which succeed each other, or whose parts succeed each other, in time.¹⁶

Poetry expresses objects in the process of creation or in action;¹⁷ to attempt detailed descriptions such as the painter depicts is to sacrifice the whole image for an elaboration of the parts.¹⁸ "To try to present a complete picture to the reader by enumerating in succession several parts or things which in nature the eye necessarily takes in at a glance, is an encroachment of the poet on the domain of the painter, involving a great effort of the imagination to very little purpose." Both painter and poet should remember that "succession in time is the province of the poet, co-existence in space that of the artist"; spatial form thus belongs to the plastic arts, successive form belongs to literature.¹⁹

Modern poetry reverses Lessing's distinction and suggests a painter's perception and a spatial orientation.²⁰ Ezra Pound's

¹⁶ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Laocoon An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry, trans. Ellen Frothingham (New York, 1957), p. 91.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁰ Frank, p. 319.

definition of an image as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time"²¹ epitomizes this reversal. The modern poet aims at the creation of a poem that is "one vast image, whose components were apprehended as a unity."²²

Esthetic form in modern poetry, . . . is based on a space logic that demands a complete re-orientation in the reader's attitude towards language. Since the primary reference of any word-group is to something inside the poem itself, language in modern poetry is really reflexive: the meaning relationship is completed only by the simultaneous perception in space of word-groups which, when read consecutively in time, have no comprehensible relation to each other: Instead of the instinctive and immediate reference of words and word-groups or events they symbolize, and the construction of meaning from the sequence of these references, modern poetry asks its readers to suspend the process of individual reference temporarily until the entire pattern of internal references can be apprehended as a unity.²³

Frank states that the space logic of modern poetry characterizes modern fiction. He illustrates this with the county fair scene in Madame Bovary in which Flaubert gave, through juxtaposed dialogues, the sense of the actual simultaneity of the experiences.²⁴ Frank also states that spatial form, in poetry and fiction differ because of the "unit of meaning," that element which refers to the totality of each level of action occurring when several things happen simultaneously.

²¹"A Retrospect," Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, ed. T. S. Eliot (New York, 1955), p. 4.

²²Frank, p. 320.

²³Ibid., p. 321.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 322-323. See Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary Patterns of Provincial Life, trans. Francis Steegmuller (New York, 1957), pp. 148-174.

In a poem, the unit of meaning is smaller than that in a novel, and after reading a few lines, the reader perceives spatiality, or coherent sequence disappears. Since the unit of meaning is more extensive in a novel, it usually preserves coherence by itself. It does not destroy, but only disrupts the narrative sequence, and consequently the reader of a spatial novel may misread and misjudge it.²⁵

Using spatial form does not imply that the lyrical novelist wants to transform the methods of fiction into those of painting, but that modern artists, whether novelist, sculptor, or film director, desire to capture the simultaneity of experience and its consequent ironies, and conceive of the significance of form in a similar way. Frank's explanation of the origins of spatial form aptly illustrates this.

The concept of spatial form evolved from Wilhelm Worringer's analysis, published in 1908, of the stylistic evolution of painting, Abstraction and Empathy A Contribution to the Psychology of Style.²⁶ Worringer sees the history of the plastic arts as a continual alternation between naturalistic and non-naturalistic styles. The naturalistic style, illustrated by all Western European painting until the late nineteenth century, and particularly by classical Greek sculpture and architecture, indicates the artist's attempt to represent the three-dimensional world of ordinary experience and the processes of organic nature. The non-naturalistic style, illustrated by primitive,

²⁵Frank, p. 323.

²⁶Frank in Criticism, ed. Schorer, p. 388.

oriental, Byzantine, and twentieth-century art, Egyptian monumental and Gothic sculpture, abandons, almost entirely, the three-dimensional world, emphasizes the plane, and creates a linear-geometric, inorganic world. An artist painting in a naturalistic style sees an equilibrium between man and his environment, and sometimes an order in which man subdues his environment; he continually tries to reproduce man's harmonious relationship with organic life. Since the non-naturalistic artist sees a lack of harmony and a threat of chaos in the world, he creates linear-geometric forms that suggest stability and order. Non-naturalistic art moves away from naturalistic depth and time values, and reflects increased spatiality. Worringer said that spatial form

is the exact complement in literature on the plane of esthetic form, to the developments that have taken place in the plastic arts In both artistic mediums, one naturally spatial and the other naturally temporal, the evolution of esthetic form in the twentieth century has been absolutely identical: both have moved to overcome, so far as possible, the time-element involved in their perception; and the reason for their identity is that both are rooted in the same spiritual and emotional climate -- a climate which, as it affects the sensibility of all artists, must also affect the forms they create in every medium.²⁷

To escape flux, the artist moves away from depth and towards plane. By eliminating depth, he eliminates time value and connection to the external world. "For when depth disappears and objects are presented in one plane, their simultaneous apprehension as part of a timeless unity is obviously made easier." The formal value of the work of art thus expresses its inner value, and the duality between form and content

²⁷Ibid., pp. 391-392.

ceases to exist.²⁸

Worringer's book was not immediately available in English, but T. E. Hulme published an abstract of Worringer's opinions in an essay in Speculations entitled "Modern Art."²⁹ Whether the two English art critics who so influenced aesthetic attitudes in the early decades of the century knew Worringer's work is unknown, but the work of Roger Fry and Clive Bell on form suggests an affinity to Worringer's distinction between naturalistic and non-naturalistic art and its connotations for spatial form. That Fry and Bell were Virginia Woolf's close friends, and doubtless important in the formulation of Virginia Woolf's aesthetic ideals,³⁰ suggests another aspect of the particular aesthetic connections between the arts during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Roger Fry and Clive Bell made seminal contributions towards the acceptance and understanding of late nineteenth-century French painting. They explained how the radical change in perspective in the 1870's and 1880's illustrated the desire to replace representational with individual style. Painters experimented with light and colour in the direction of their own visual impressions. Through extensive refinement and purification of these impressions, the impressionist movement

²⁸Ibid., pp. 389-392.

²⁹Ibid., p. 388.

³⁰See, for example, Mark Goldman, "Virginia Woolf and the Critic as Reader," PMLA, LXXX (June 1965), pp. 275-284; John Hawley Roberts, "Vision and Design in Virginia Woolf," PMLA, LXI (September 1946), pp. 835-847; Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group, pp. 46-95, et passim.

turned increasingly towards abstraction. Under the influence of Paul Cézanne, the post-impressionist painters³¹ reached towards pure form rather than visual sensation. As Fry said, "Art . . . turned its vision inwards," and [began] "to work upon the fundamental necessities of man's aesthetic functions."³² It was the post-impressionist quest for simplification, purity, and clarity that paralleled the imagist and symbolist movements from which twentieth-century lyrical fiction emerged.

Both Fry and Bell believed that through art man could see into the nature of things. Fundamental truth lay hidden in art, particularly in the form in which the artist expressed his ideas. Clive Bell defined the concept of "significant form" in Art, first published in 1914.³³ Significant form results from the combination of lines and colours that move the viewer aesthetically (A, 26); it conveys an emotion felt by the creator to the viewer (A, 57) who senses its rightness as a consequence of the rightness of the emotion (A, 66); it is an end in itself (A, 57), but through contemplation of it, the viewer glimpses ultimate reality (A, 60). Roger Fry called significant form the most essential quality

³¹For the interesting background of the term, and of English reaction to the Post-Impressionist Exhibitions at London's Grafton Galleries in 1910 and 1912, see Clive Bell, French Impressionists (London, 1951); Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again An Autobiography of the Years 1911 to 1918 (London, 1964), pp. 93-99; Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry A Biography (New York, 1940), pp. 153 ff., 177 ff.

³²Vision and Design (New York, 1957), p. 14. Subsequent references will be to this edition, and will be cited in the text as VD followed by a page number.

³³London, 1961. Subsequent references will be to this edition, and will be cited in the text as A followed by a page number.

in art (VD, 294). Significant form expresses the idea not the pleasing object; it "implies the effort on the part of the artist to bend to our emotional understanding by means of his passionate conviction some intractable material which is alien to our spirit" (VD, 302). Fry believed that the artist's emotion was imbedded in the form, but felt that, ultimately, only the aesthetic emotion mattered (VD, 299).

The aesthetic emotion is the non-practical and non-ethical emotion the painter's logical organization of feeling evoked in the viewer, "or of what, for want of a better word, we call an idea; we may even say that the [work of art] is the expression of the idea in the artist's mind" (VD, 50). Both Fry and Bell insisted that a painting must arouse this emotion, and that the emotion arises as a direct response to the work of art itself (A, 21-22; VD, 300-301). It is with this idea of self-contained significant form that post-impressionism and modern literature join hands.

The artist creates a work not for use or resultant action, but to be regarded and enjoyed (VD, 37, 27): One cannot "judge the work of art by its reaction on life and consider it as an expression of emotions regarded as ends in themselves," "as the expression of the imaginative life" (VD, 29). The imaginative life, which all men experience to some extent, is "separated from actual life by the absence of responsible action" (VD, 20). Although moral responsibility is essential in actual life, "In art we have no such moral responsibility -- it presents life freed from the binding necessities of our actual existence" (VD, 21). Those who experience the aesthetic emotion

"feel it to have a peculiar quality of 'reality' which makes it a matter of infinite importance in their lives" (VD, 302). Man senses through art "an existence more real and more important than any [he] know[s] in mortal life," an existence which reflects the freest expression of his own nature (VD, 22).

Both artist and viewer thus experience a vision in the work of art. Fry clearly differentiates the kinds of vision, calling the one with which one contemplates a work of art, the aesthetic vision, and the one by which an artist creates his work, the creative vision (VD, 50-52). The aesthetic vision has no reference to actual life, is "unconditioned by considerations of space and time" (VD, 50), is pure, abstracted from necessity, and reflects the "disinterested intensity of contemplation . . ." (VD, 29). The creative vision also reflects detachment from actuality. The artist views particular objects in an impassioned and detached manner until the colours and the forms become harmonious. As he apprehends their harmony, the actual appearance becomes distorted by the inner rhythm of lines, forms, and colours. The artist tries to seize the rhythm which obsesses him and to transcribe it into his work (VD, 51-52).

In such a creative vision the objects as such tend to disappear, to lose their separate unities, to take their places as so many bits in the whole mosaic of vision. The texture of the whole field of vision becomes so close that the coherence of the separate patches of tone and colour within each object is no stronger than the coherence with every other tone and colour throughout the field. (VD, 52)

The artist then orders his vision into a design in which every part is significant to the whole (A, 203). The parts are more important than

the whole, for "a work should not be good on the whole, but as a whole . . ." (A, 203). The design is composed of elements that first arouse, and then gratify our emotions, since they are connected with the essential conditions of physical existence; rhythm of line, mass, space, light and shade, inclination of the eye of the plane, and colour (the only one not bound to our physical existence), all work towards ordering the rhythm set up in the artist, and by the work of art, in the viewer (VD, 33-35). The design achieves unity from balancing the attractions "about the central line of the picture" (VD, 31), although this differs for representational and non-representational art (VD, 32). It also differs for oriental art, which depends on succession for unity (VD, 32). Literature and music, Fry adds, strive for successive unity, "the forms being presented . . . in such a sequence that each successive element is felt to have a fundamental and harmonious relation with that which preceded it" (VD, 33). The viewer's response to unity must be connected with the unity of the work and "the mind is held in delighted equilibrium by the contemplation of the inevitable relations of all the parts in the whole, so that no need exists to make reference to what is outside the unity, and this becomes for the time being a universe" (VD, 81).

For Fry and Bell, the modern art movement, led by the post-impressionists, epitomized their ideals. The new artists, consciously striving to be artists and to separate all that lay between themselves and the pure forms of things (A, 191), sought to re-establish purely aesthetic criteria in place of conforming to appearance, and to express their rediscovery of the principles of structural design and harmony

(VD, 12). They sought to purify and to simplify so as to render the design representing their inner vision (A, 196). The whole movement expressed its chief aim, therefore, in the desire for form. As Fry stated it,

They [the post-impressionists] do not seek to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life. By that I mean that they wish to make images which by the clearness of their logical structure, and by their closely-knit unity of texture, shall appeal to our disinterested and contemplative imagination with something of the same vividness as the things of actual life appeal to our practical activities. In fact, they aim not at illusion but at reality. (VD, 239)

The artist thus transforms vision into form, the painter into pictorial form, the novelist into expressive form. As Virginia Woolf said, "the 'book itself' is not the form which you see, but the emotion which you feel, and the more intense the writer's feeling the more exact without slip or chink its expression in words."³⁴ Although Virginia Woolf thought Fry's literary criticism too full of painter's values, and although she was generally sceptical of the terminology of other fields supplying critical terms lacking in fiction, she concurred with Fry's view that the goals of modern literature and modern painting, with regard to theories of design, rhythm, and texture, and significant form, were similar. She wrote, in an essay entitled "Pictures," "Were all modern paintings to be destroyed, a critic of the twenty-fifth century would be able to deduce from the works of Proust alone the

³⁴"On Re-reading Novels," The Moment and Other Essays, ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1952), p. 130.

existence of Matisse, Cézanne, Derain and Picasso"35 She also agreed with Fry in his view that Flaubert and Henry James best represented the idea of significant form and the autonomy of art. In Transformations Fry had written, "the purpose of literature is the creation of structures which have for us the feeling of reality, and these structures are self-contained, self-sufficient, and not to be valued by their reference to what lies outside."³⁶ Virginia Woolf sought self-containment and technical mastery in her novels as Flaubert and James sought them in theirs, as her various critical essays indicate.

In criticizing Percy Lubbock's definition of form as revealed in The Craft of Fiction, she wrote:

There is vision and there is expression. The two blend so perfectly that when Mr. Lubbock asks us to test the form with our eyes we see nothing at all. But we feel with singular satisfaction, and since all our feelings are in keeping, they form a whole which remains in our minds as the book itself.³⁷

She says also "when we speak of form we mean that certain emotions have been placed in the right relations to each other; then the novelist is able to dispose these emotions and make them tell by methods which he inherits, bends to his purpose, models anew, or even invents for himself."³⁸ Finally she says: "Is there not something beyond emotion,

³⁵The Moment, p. 140.

³⁶Critical and Speculative Essays on Art (New York, 1926), p. 8.

³⁷"On Re-reading Novels," p. 130.

³⁸Ibid., p. 134.

something which though it is inspired by emotion, tranquillises it, orders it, composes it? -- that which Mr. Lubbock calls form, which for simplicity's sake, we will call art?³⁹

Virginia Woolf's use of the word "art" in this essay makes vague what both she and Lubbock attempt to make precise, for art means more than the shaping power of literature, and meant more than that, also, to Virginia Woolf. But she intended to suggest that connotation, as if to make it synonymous with art.

Like Fry and Bell in the plastic arts, Virginia Woolf tried to re-direct fiction away from the non-essential elements that contributed neither to the artist's creative vision nor to the viewer's aesthetic emotion. She felt the necessity of introducing only those elements in a novel that would contribute to the work's central conception. She not only reacted against the type of novel the Edwardians produced, but against the general lack of aesthetic seriousness of many English novelists, particularly as compared with the French and the Russians. Like Henry James, Virginia Woolf praised Turgenev and Flaubert for exercising the spiritual function of the novel through concern for form. They were less inclined to treat the novel as English critics did, "as a parasite which draws sustenance from life and must in gratitude resemble life or perish."

If the English critic were less domestic, less assiduous to protect the rights of what it pleases him to call life, the novelist might be bolder too. He might cut adrift from the

³⁹Ibid., p. 131.

eternal tea-table and the plausible and preposterous formulas which are supposed to represent the whole of our human adventure. But then the story might wobble; the plot might crumble; ruin may seize upon the characters. The novel, in short, might become a work of art.⁴⁰

In an early letter to Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf wrote:

Please tell me what merit you find in Henry James. I have disabused Leonard of him, but we have his works here, and I read, and can't find anything but faintly tinged rose water, urbane and sleek, but vulgar, and pale as [E. F.]. Is there really any sense in it? I admit I can't be bothered to snuff out his meaning when it's very obscure.⁴¹

Her aims in the novel, however, strongly resembled those of her predecessor. James's "Art of Fiction" complains not only of novelists who lacked concern for aesthetic considerations, but of the middle-class readers who insisted that novels should entertain and edify and that "artistic preoccupations, the search for form, contribute to neither end, interfere indeed with both."⁴² These readers, highly suspicious of craftsmanship, feared a novel so handled was artificial. But James knew craft and content were interrelated and could not be separated

⁴⁰"The Art of Fiction," The Moment, pp. 92-93.

⁴¹Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey Letters, ed. Leonard Woolf and James Strachey (London, 1956), p. 54. Cf. Virginia Woolf's other Views on Henry James in "Henry James, The Death of the Moth and other Essays" ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1961), pp. 112-139, and "Henry James's Ghost Stories," Granite and Rainbow, pp. 65-72. Virginia Woolf's attitudes towards James reveal a difference from typical Bloomsbury reverence for him, and a reaction somewhat jaundiced by his friendship with her father, Sir Leslie Stephen (v. Leonard Woolf, Sowing, pp. 106-110), in addition to a profound respect for his method and concern for art.

⁴²The Future of the Novel, Essays on the Art of Fiction, ed. Leon Edel (New York, 1956), p. 7.

without injuring both. All parts were vital, for a "novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found . . . that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts."⁴³ As for the story, James said:

'The story,' if it represents anything, represents the subject, the idea, the donnée of the novel; and there is surely no 'school' . . . which urges that a novel be all treatment and no subject. There must assuredly be something to treat; every school is intimately conscious of that. This sense of the story being the idea, the starting point, of the novel, is the only one I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from its organic whole; and since in proportion as the work is successful the idea permeates and penetrates it, informs and animates it, so that every work and every punctuation-point contribute directly to the expression, in that proportion do we lose our sense of the story being a blade which may be drawn more or less out of its sheath. The story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and the thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle, or the needle without the thread.⁴⁴

Virginia Woolf's first novel seems to account for James's attitude towards "story," and the demand for organic relationship of all the parts. Although she had neither totally assimilated nor accepted the lesson of the master, and Terence Hewet's aesthetic for a "novel about Silence" remained only an ideal, The Voyage Out reveals several components of the artistic approach that characterizes her later lyrical work. The voyage out belongs not only to Rachel Vinrace; it also belongs to Virginia Woolf, for the novel was her initial attempt to capture and express her vision. As Virginia Woolf allowed

⁴³Future of the Novel, p. 15.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 21.

her lyrical sensibility access to all the corners of her imagination and intellect, general aesthetic intention and created poetic design became more fundamental to the expression of ideas and development of narrative. By using poetic techniques "to redefine rather than to supplant traditional concepts of fiction,"⁴⁵ she ultimately discovered and expressed her unique vision, and contributed to fiction the aesthetic and spiritual seriousness she believed it should have.

The main themes of The Voyage Out are the nature of self-awareness and the relationship between the self-aware individual and his society. At the outset, Rachel Vinrace is an awkward, inarticulate girl in her mid-twenties, who feels and thinks a great deal. She believes, however, that "To feel anything strongly was to create an abyss between oneself and others who feel strongly perhaps but differently It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant, or ever talked of a feeling they felt, but that was what music was for. Reality dwelling in what one saw and felt, but did not talk about" (VO, 34-35). Rachel's knowledge of music was extensive. Apart from it, however, she knew little. "Her mind was in the state of an intelligent man's in the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth; she would believe practically anything she was told, invent reasons for anything she said" (VO, 31). The novel follows Rachel's development into an intellectually and spiritually aware human being. Through the friendship of Helen Ambrose and St. John Hirst, and

⁴⁵Freedman, The Lyrical Novel, p. 185.

the love of Terence Hewet, Rachel succeeds in objectifying her view of her self and the world around her. She not only affirms her original doubts about most social relationships, but begins to see the limitations of the few that she respects. Love alone was insufficient; "she wanted many more things than the love of one human being -- the sea, the sky. She turned again and looked at the distant blue, which was so smooth and serene where the sky met the sea; she could not possibly want only one human being" (VO, 370). Nature and music suggest the impersonality and immutability that Rachel senses to be the essence of reality. For Rachel, self-understanding means the attainment of a similar impersonality, a losing of oneself in the immutable world. But she cannot shed her personality and experience such a vision. The mirror image of her with Terence indicates this. They see themselves "as if they stood on the edge of a precipice, they cling together. They knew that they could not separate" "But it chilled them to see themselves in the glass, for instead of being vast and indivisible they were really very small and separate, the size of the glass leaving a large space for the reflection of other things" (VO, 371). Death freezes this insight into permanence and immutability; in death, Terence thinks, "They had what they had always wanted to have, the union which had been impossible while they lived" (VO, 431).

Awareness in The Voyage Out is the perception of isolation, death, and impersonality. The expression of these ideas within the metaphoric frame distinguishes the lyrical propensity of the novel as a whole. That Virginia Woolf did not exclude the more conventional

topics of friendship, religion, education, and politics indicates that she did not view their sacrifice as technically requisite in an analysis of the quest for self-understanding. Their treatment, however, diverted her from more complete and immediate treatment of her heroine's problems. Although she attempted to parallel the development of ideas with Rachel's developing sensibility, she never moved out of the atmosphere or structure of the traditional novel. The discrepancy between real subject and mode of expression resulted in constant shifting of point of view, tone, and character treatment, and consequently, in a breakdown in lyrical intensity and order.

Instead of locating the point of view outside or inside one or two characters, Virginia Woolf shifted it randomly from external to internal positions. This caused an uneven treatment of subject-matter and a disparity of emphasis on serious and comic material. Sometimes The Voyage Out seems to be both a tragedy and a novel of manners in the Jane Austen tradition.⁴⁶ Virginia Woolf juxtaposed, but rarely blended, the satire and sympathy with which she saw the protagonists and the chorus of hotel guests, so that both are sometimes developed personalities, sometimes "flat" caricatures. The Dalloways, for example, appear briefly at the beginning of the voyage and seem to serve as exponents of the upper-middle class values Virginia Woolf wanted to satirize. The satire remains extremely superficial, and were it not for Richard Dalloway's crucial part in Rachel's

⁴⁶E. M. Forster, "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf," Abinger Harvest (London, 1936), p. 105.

intellectual and emotional development, their introduction would be entirely superfluous. Even their brief relationship, however, neither substantially deepens nor makes the two portraits more significant.

The same criticism may be made about the central symbol of the voyage. Although the idea of self-awareness it symbolizes is apparent throughout the novel, Virginia Woolf failed to develop its suggestiveness sufficiently and to make it emotionally and aesthetically expressive. The development from the actual voyage of the Euphrosyne from England to South America to the symbolic voyage of Rachel from the insular, isolated young girl to the perceptive, expressive young woman, lacks the depth it might have had if Virginia Woolf had not imposed so much on it. The opening voyage suggests a ship of fools. The departure of the Dalloways and the Euphrosyne's arrival at Santa Marina dispels this idea on the narrative level although maintaining it on the psychological one, since Rachel's voyage extends beyond the sea, the villa, and the jungle retreat. The shift from the actual to the psychological level, however, comes from without, and the symbol fails organically to weave the two levels together. The same applies to the natural symbols of sea, sky, and wind, and to the diverse and plentiful images throughout the novel. Only occasionally, and only partially, are the images made part of the novel's substance. Generally, they serve illustrative or decorative ends. Ridley Ambrose, for example, editing Pindar alone in the villa is described as "an idol in an empty church" (VO, 200); Gibbon's style "goes round, round, round, like a roll of oilcloth" (VO, 237); the afternoon was so hot "that the breaking of the waves

on the shore sounded like the repeated sigh of some exhausted creature" (VO, 398). Though original and penetrating, these images contribute little to the over-all design implicit in the theme and its development. Images revealing Hirst and Hewet's views of life and people function more in this way, but neither are they fully developed. Hirst sees people as types with circles around them (VO, 123); Hewet sees a thing "like a teetotum spinning in and out -- knocking into things -- dashing from side to side -- collecting numbers -- more and more and more, till the whole place is thick with them. Round and round they go -- out there, over the rim -- out of sight" (VO, 124). One image works through repetition and variation in a more functional way. The tunnel image, connoting Rachel's sexual fears, occurs in a dream of hers following Dalloway's kiss, and later, in a slightly different form, during her feverish delirium. The first one is of a "long tunnel," growing increasingly narrow and containing damp bricks.

At length the tunnel opened and became a vault; she found herself trapped in it, bricks meeting her wherever she turned, alone with a little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering, with long nails. His face was pitted and like the face of an animal. The wall behind him oozed with damp, which collected into drops and slid down. (VO, 86)

The second one is of "a tunnel under the Thames, where there were little deformed women sitting in archways playing cards, while the bricks of which the wall was made oozed with damp, which collected into drops and slid down the wall" (VO, 404-405).

The general lack of development of images, resulting from a diffusion of interest in ideas, techniques, and characters, largely

prevents The Voyage Out from being a lyrical novel expressing an objective and organic design. The novel indicates Virginia Woolf's lyrical qualities rather than a development of them. Form and content do not meet except at moments; character only seeks impersonality and abstraction, never achieves it; a larger pattern never really evolves, and the imagery, which might have worked towards defining that pattern, is still largely an accretion. In a letter to Virginia Woolf in 1916, Lytton Strachey pinpointed the book's weakness as "the conception of it as a whole As I read I felt that it perhaps lacked the cohesion of a dominating idea -- I don't mean in the spirit -- but in the action."⁴⁷ Virginia Woolf replied that she thought his suspicion correct.

I think I had a conception, but I don't think it made itself felt. What I wanted to do was to give the feeling of a vast tumult of life, as various and disorderly as possible, which should be cut short for a moment by the death, and go on again -- and the whole was to have a sort of pattern, and be somehow controlled. The difficulty was to keep any sort of coherence, -- also to give enough detail to make the characters interesting -- which Forster says I didn't do. I really wanted three volumes. Do you think it is impossible to get this sort of effect in a novel; -- is the result bound to be too scattered to be intelligible? I expect one may learn to get more control in time. One gets too much involved in details --⁴⁸

Virginia Woolf's vague "somehow controlled," "any sort of coherence," "sort of pattern" suggest that she had not yet isolated what she thought and felt, and that she thought she needed three volumes suggests how cloudy her vision was, for the closer she came

⁴⁷Letters, p. 56.

⁴⁸Letters, p. 57.

to articulating it, the more condensed her method became.

That E. M. Forster, in The Daily News and Leader in 1915, praised the novel as a Dostoevskyan work lacking the Russian's vision,⁴⁹ and Clive Bell, in The Dial in 1924,⁵⁰ called it a "remarkable failure," made Virginia Woolf even more aware than her five revisions over a seven year period⁵¹ had, that to others too, her first novel left unsolved many problems relating to how and what she perceived.

The how of seeing became clearer to Virginia Woolf when, after writing another novel, several sketches, essays, and stories, she wrote Jacob's Room (1922).⁵² She aimed ostensibly at depicting Jacob Flanders' particular sensibility, but Jacob's own awareness becomes the object as well as the subject of the novel. Jacob's Room really expresses the relation between being aware and being an object of awareness, between perceiving and being perceived.⁵³ Virginia Woolf depicts Jacob's psychological development through other people's views of him, through things that interest and concern him, and through the social and historical world in which he lives. Instead of making Jacob's experiences the subject of Jacob's life, as Rachel Vinrace's

⁴⁹Quoted by White, "The Literary Reputation of Virginia Woolf," p. 3.

⁵⁰"Virginia Woolf," The Dial, 77 (July-December, 1924), p. 454.

⁵¹Woolf, Beginning Again, pp. 80, 90.

⁵²Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room (New York, 1960). Subsequent references will be to this Harvest edition, and will be cited as JR followed by a page number.

⁵³Freedman, The Lyrical Novel, p. 208.

were in hers, Virginia Woolf diffuses them into the experiences of the external world. But realistic characterization was not her goal, and so when she described Jacob's sensibility, she did it more subjectively than straightforward narrative or psychological analysis would have done. Through the perspective of the room, Jacob Flanders' particular experiences become the events that occur to the particular generation of civilized Cambridge youth whose potential the Great War blighted,⁵⁴ and the symbolic expression of futility.

Jacob's room is the whole network of external things by which one knows Jacob: friends, family, learning, and love. It is the centre of his encounter with nature, with history, and with human beings. Moreover, it is the material, inanimate sanctuary that symbolizes "selfhood formed in time."⁵⁵ Less elusive than the relationships and personality the room symbolizes, it contains inanimate things that define Jacob: the sheep's jaw he salvaged from childhood days on the beach, the pipe he juggled between his lips during his young manhood, his old shoes, the letters and articles he wrote, some locked in a black box, and some strewn around the room. These things, along with the people Jacob knows,

⁵⁴ The death from typhoid fever, in 1906 of Virginia Woolf's older brother, Julian Thoby Stephen, gives this idea a factual basis. Thoby's death, so crushing to Virginia and Vanessa Stephen, became an ironic foreshadowing of the death in 1937, in the Spanish Civil War of Julian Bell, Vanessa and Clive Bell's son, and Virginia's nephew. See Peter Stansky and William Abrahams, Journey to the Frontier Two Roads to the Spanish Civil War (Boston, 1966), and A Writer's Diary, p. 63.

⁵⁵ John Graham, "Time in the Novels of Virginia Woolf," University of Toronto Quarterly, XVII (1949), p. 189.

the books he reads, the things he does, tell Jacob's story. They exist when he no longer does and would seem to have more permanence than human life. Betty Flanders dispels this notion when, after Jacob's death, she holds up his shoes and asks, "'What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?'" (JR, 176). Without Jacob, the shoes lack particular function. Like all inanimate things, like all relationships, they lack meaning once the source of connection disappears. They only represent Jacob; their existence after his death emphasizes their representative nature. Although the room serves and symbolizes the self, it cannot preserve it. Therefore, the room is also an inadequate means for truly understanding Jacob; once Jacob dies, what he has been vanishes. Jacob's personality is like the image of life Virginia Woolf drew in her diary, during the early months of the book's composition, "a little strip of pavement over an abyss. I look down; I feel giddy; I wonder how I am ever to walk to the end" ⁵⁶

Personality, Virginia Woolf implies in her character treatment in Jacob's Room, is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to know. When trying to assess whether or not Jacob was a stupid fellow, the narrator says:

It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done. Some, it is true, take ineffaceable impressions of character at once. Others dally, loiter, and get blown this way and that. Kind old ladies assure us that cats are often the best judges of character. A cat will always go to a good man, they say; but then, Mrs. Whitehorn, Jacob's landlady, loathed cats. (JR, 154)

⁵⁶ A Writer's Diary, p. 29.

The method of "character-mongering" (JR, 154), also, told little. "So we are driven back to see what the other side means -- the men in clubs and Cabinets -- when they say that character-drawing is a frivolous fireside art, a matter of pins and needles, exquisite outlines enclosing vacancy, flourishes, and mere scrawls" (JR, 155). Perhaps will determines character, will that "unseizable force. They say that the novelists never catch it; that it goes hurtling through their nets and leaves them torn to ribbons. This, they say is what we live by -- this unseizable force" (JR, 156). These comments and the continually shifting views of Jacob indicate that knowledge of another personality and self-knowledge seem illusory. Even existence is illusory, as history and nature, reducing even the smallest part of human significance to dust, continually shows.

Jacob's imprisoned sea crab symbolizes these futile views. Each time the crab tries to reach the top of the bucket, rain submerges him, and pushes him down, and he remains totally helpless (JR, 14). Man's attempt to climb the Acropolis duplicates this action, for although man tries to attain that summit characterizing Greek wisdom, circumstances root him to the earth. Like Jacob, who in childhood embraced the rock on the beach, man reaches out for permanence, but fails to obtain it. Thinking the rock was a "large black woman," Jacob ran towards her: "Nanny! Nanny!" he cried, sobbing the words out on the crest of each gasping breath. The waves came round her. She was a rock. She was covered with the seaweed which pops when it is pressed. He was lost" (JR, 10).

The British Museum, the man-made rock, illustrates another aspect of this search for permanence and the inevitable isolation that results. An "enormous Mind" (JR, 108), the Museum symbolizes the permanence of history, and the immortality of some few great men. The actual preservation of the past, the work of the scholar adds to time's irony too, for it brings him little immediate reward, and little future recognition. Pursuing his task in objective anonymity, he becomes the life he records.

Jacob sees his life and is seen from the perspective of the room, the sea crab and the bucket, the rock on the beach, the British Museum, and the Acropolis, the apparently permanent objects that endure flux. What seems to endure, however, endures for a moment only; the changeless universe of change finally subsumes it. The cry resounding throughout the books poignantly accents this futility. "'Ja-cob, Ja-cob,'" cries Archer, Mrs. Flanders, Clara Durrant, Richard Bonamy. First the cry tries to locate and to reach Jacob; then it expresses finding and losing him, a progression that fits the elegy Jacob's Room becomes.

To shape such a vision required the shaping of life, both historical and personal, from inception to death. In Jacob's Room, Virginia Woolf sought to make significant connections between events and ideas which continually reverberated with suggestion and allusion. She tried to convey idea while evoking elegiac feeling. The narrative movement represents the progression of nature rather than dramatic action. No one event, not even death, becomes climactic; Virginia

Woolf presents all events as part of the inevitable flux of life. Neither Sandra and Jacob's ascent of the Acropolis, nor Jacob's departure for, and death in, war is dramatized. Virginia Woolf emphasizes the impersonality of the forces subduing and burying individual life and effort. The narrative moves, like life itself, from simplicity to complexity to simplicity. It begins with Jacob's childhood on the beach, the early days of innocence and clarity, and proceeds to the development of conscious family relationships, school life and friends, the excitement and mystery of London, sex, and love, and then, to the quest for beauty and knowledge, all finally destroyed by war. Each episode fulfils a narrative purpose in the natural growth outlined, and in the cumulative growth of motifs developing in the fourteen main sections. Each episode contains several interwoven motifs, and usually one or more from the episode preceding, so that an episode in the middle of the narrative may contain major or minor notes of an earlier or later one. The main motifs, nature, family, time, intellectual pursuits, friendship, and love illuminate the important themes.

In the early sections, concerning Jacob's childhood, boyhood and youth, nature and family motifs dominate. They appear, too, in the episodes on London and travel, though in less dominant ways. Motifs of friendship, inanimate things, and the pursuit of knowledge become more significant in the episodes describing Cambridge, women, and academic life. Those corresponding to Jacob's young manhood contain the most diverse motifs, suggesting his complete development, and the

complexity of external and internal life. The simplicity of the final scene differs from that of the opening. Jacob's life begins with love and innocence, and the search for understanding and unity; it ends with cold fact and unsolved riddles, piles of letters and empty shoes. As the narrator says, "We start transparent, and then the cloud thickens. All history backs our pane of glass. To escape is vain" (JR, 49).

The weaving of these motifs affects the cumulative expression of mood as well as the ideas, for the motifs convey variations of meaning and allusion at each appearance. Like musical motifs and poetic refrains, they are the same and different each time. The interwoven motifs aptly illustrate how narrative progression has become subordinate to emotional and intellectual development. The imagery illustrates this even more decisively.

Unlike the images in The Voyage Out, the images in Jacob's Room directly reveal the main themes, and like the motifs, link the blocks of narrative. Coming predominantly from nature, domestic life, war, and subjective life,⁵⁷ the images come closer to Jacob's real personality than action could. The nature images generally express the idea of man as a refined animal, foraging in a wild jungle for something that endures beyond himself. He forages until death, when other animals replace him, and repeat his task. The various animal images

⁵⁷Two less dominant areas of imagery present throughout concern upper middle-class society and commerce with their connotations of artificiality and exchange.

suggest man's sense of isolation, imprisonment, and ignorance. Man is "like a caught fish" (JR, 149), a "hawk moth at the mouth of mystery" (JR, 73). Voices in Soho are those of "caged beasts at night" (JR, 81), and the poor dashing home from town are "beetles scurrying to their holes" (JR, 112-113). Images of the elements express isolation through a subjective content, and destructive impersonality. The sun appears like "an eye" (JR, 24), or "a gold finger issuing from a cloud" (JR, 51); moonlight is "a pale page on a church wall" (JR, 133), and a heavy wind, a "veiled figure suddenly woken" (JR, 145). The waves are "something alive" (JR, 11), the ages are "waves fit for sailing" (JR, 77), a horse jumping is "a monster wave" (JR, 101), and the Acropolis surging into the air is "a large immobile wave" (JR, 48). The church is "a ship on the sea" (JR, 133), and ships are like "sentences of life" (JR, 156). Significantly then, Jacob resembles a "Margate fisherman out of Job" (JR, 145), a "British Admiral" (JR, 165), and the "figurehead of a wrecked ship" (JR, 75). Inanimate rocks, granite cliffs, and caves seem more permanent than the animal and vegetable world, but they, too, like the things which are compared to them, wear away with time. Church spires are "granite cliffs" (JR, 67), towns, black "strewn rocks" (JR, 160), and St. Paul's, a "volute on top of a snail's shell" (JR, 65), while civilizations are "flowers ready for picking" (JR, 76), and time, "brief balls of yellow among green leaves" (JR, 153).

Domestic imagery serves primarily to reduce the dramatic and immediate quality of all, even the most intense, experience. By

reducing emotional contact between things, Virginia Woolf creates a sense of remoteness and inanimateness and an atmosphere of cultivated artificiality. Hence, the town is like "a puzzle" (JR, 17); the frozen earth, "a treadmill" (JR, 99); clothes, "sugar cakes in a baker's window" (JR, 121); and shabby slippers, boats burnt to the water's rim (JR, 38). Experiences, though subjectively described, become more objective, more palpable, and similar to inanimate objects in the natural world, something to reach for and hold onto in the midst of flux, even though here it is the flux of subjective experience. The cry of a woman at the door is like a coal dropped from a fire (JR, 109), the wind driving the snow is like a broom (JR, 98), and the feeling following the making of love, like a baby after an airing (JR, 92). By domesticating these experiences, Virginia Woolf made them understandable in the particular way one understands ordinary things. Even extraordinary feelings or experiences are put on the same level by the common object or event to which they are compared.

Battle or war imagery does not connote action either, but rather separation from actual experience. It creates a post-war nostalgia rather than an atmosphere of violent conflict. The army with its blocks of tin soldiers (JR, 155) is introduced to create the tone, not the actuality, of destruction. The lamps of London become burning bayonets (JR, 97), a cottage with its smoke drooping is like a mourning emblem, a flag over a grave (JR, 48), city noises become drums and trumpets (JR, 112-113), marriage becomes a fortress (JR, 8), and life a battlefront (JR, 26).

Subjective imagery varies. Some images express highly personal feelings in concrete terms that have extensive suggestiveness: sounds are like nocturnal women beating great carpets (JR, 45), and the sky is something displaced (JR, 52). Concrete states usually become the equivalents to imprecise things: time is like long white ribbons (JR, 103), the absolute is as flat as a hand (JR, 73); duty, a white thread from the top of a funnel (JR, 162), and life is like "the large yellow globe marked with steamship lines" (JR, 170). Some imprecise states do not receive such concrete treatment: being happy is like pleasure spild [sic] (JR, 46), a clear sky has the cover off (JR, 52), life resembles "something that the courageous mount and ride out to sea on" (JR, 153). Then there are experiences more reflective of individual consciousness: night like a long drawn sigh between hammer strokes (JR, 162), or a deep breath (JR, 163), and Lady Miller's party, a flaw in the column of air (JR, 37).

Virginia Woolf depended heavily on similes and restrained from using metaphoric figures. Since she tried to connect the elements through association with each other, and then with a larger pattern, she preferred more external figures and references, and allusions and apparently trivial details, for her "biography." Isolation, remoteness, death, total subjectivity, play throughout the content, the structure, and the images. It is as if the device of synecdoche were used in its larger aspect, "by basing the structure of the novel on the assumption that the part, when significantly chosen, expresses the whole, so that

a detail or an image of Jacob's character, at a given time, is sufficient to exhibit his entire personality,"⁵⁸ and the basic idea.

The qualitative change in Jacob's Room from The Voyage Out alone distinguishes it from conventional fiction. Virginia Woolf's handling of the main fictional elements shows the shift of concern with character as character to something more abstract,⁵⁹ although the nature and significance of this was still only implied in Jacob's Room. It was, of course, the objection to such abstraction that Virginia Woolf faced in critical evaluation of her work. She notes in her diary,

People, like Arnold Bennett, say I can't create, or didn't in Jacob's Room, characters that survive. My answer is -- but I leave that to the Nation: it's only the old argument that character is dissipated into shreds now; the old post-Dostoevsky [sic] argument. I daresay it's true, however, that I haven't that 'reality' gift. I insubstantise, willfully to some extent, distrusting reality -- its cheapness. But to get further. Have I the power of conveying the true reality? Or do I write essays about myself?⁶⁰

But Virginia Woolf deliberately chose the cinematographic mode and composite point of view in Jacob's Room to reveal insubstantiality and transience. While the exterior passes before the reader's eyes, interior views fill out the picture. The outward view dominates because she did not trace Jacob's stream of consciousness, but depicted him as an isolated and evanescent human being. Character intensity,

⁵⁸Friedman, Stream of Consciousness, p. 191.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 191.

⁶⁰A Writer's Diary, p. 57.

vivid realism, fidelity to naturalistic detail all fall short of her ideal to create a pictorial order with relationships between parts judiciously arranged. The visual image came first; the form emerged from the creative vision transformed into the aesthetic.

Virginia Woolf did not feel that she structured Jacob's Room as tightly as she would have liked. "I expect I could have screwed Jacob up tighter, if I had foreseen; but I had to make my path as I went."⁶¹ She worried before its publication that the reviewers would say it was "a disconnected rhapsody."⁶² Despite fears and doubts about the "myriad changes of style,"⁶³ she recognized that she had found a method. "There's no doubt in my mind that I have found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice; and that interests me so that I feel I can go ahead without praise." Leonard Woolf called it a "work of genius," said it was "unlike any other novel," "very strange," and was "amazingly well-written."⁶⁴ Lytton Strachey praised it highly:

A most wonderful achievement -- more like poetry, it seems to me, than anything else, and as such I prophecy immortal. The technique of the narrative is astonishing -- how you manage to leave out everything that's dreary, and yet retain enough string for your pearls I can hardly understand.⁶⁵

⁶¹A Writer's Diary, p. 54.

⁶²Ibid., p. 46.

⁶³Ibid., p. 30.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 47.

⁶⁵Letters, p. 103.

Like Strachey, Virginia Woolf worried over the romanticism of Jacob's Room; in Mrs. Dalloway, she noted, she wanted "to be more close to the fact . . .: but I think Jacob was a necessary step for me in working free."⁶⁶ This is not an expression of modesty, but a statement of Virginia Woolf's genuine concern to better her achievement and capture and make concrete the vision she saw. She knew that the method fitted closer than ever before, but knew also that the critics were wrong when they said she could find no way of going on after Jacob's Room. "Yet if [Mrs. Dalloway] proves anything, it proves that I can only write along th[e]se lines, and shall, never desert them, but explore further and further and shall, heaven be praised, never bore myself an instant."⁶⁷ Surely, then, the vision she sought as she wrote The Voyage Out became clearer when she looked into the fire in Hogarth House and "made up Jacob's Room."⁶⁸ Surely, too, she knew, when she saw more clearly, there was still much to do to transmute that evanescent vision into design.

⁶⁶ A Writer's Diary, pp. 52-53.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

Chapter III

MAKING FIGURES: THE SHAPING OF THE LYRICAL VISION

Creation, for Virginia Woolf, was exploration. Writing each novel was like discovering a new continent whose topography she only dimly perceived at the outset. After sighting a method by which vision shaped form, Virginia Woolf experimented with various techniques that more significantly combined idea and expression. Mrs. Dalloway, Section II of To the Lighthouse, The Waves, and Between the Acts describe her route. By considering the techniques she developed in them and the particular design she created, one can grasp the larger one expressing her vision of reality.

Mrs. Dalloway first appeared in 1922 as a short, realistic, and satiric sketch entitled "Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street," and was published in the New York Dial in July 1923.¹ Between October 1922 and June 1923, Virginia Woolf envisioned expanding it into a novel, and sketched a preliminary version.² She proceeded, however, without knowing exactly how it would develop. "The little notebook in which an attempt was made to forecast a plan was soon abandoned, and the book grew day by day, week by week, without any plan at all, except that

¹A. J. Lewis, "From the Hours to Mrs. Dalloway," British Museum Quarterly, XXVIII (1964), p. 15. As characters, the Dalloways first appear not only in The Voyage Out (1915), but also in the following three short stories, originally published in Monday or Tuesday (1921), and now published in A Haunted House and Other Stories (London, 1962): "The Man Who Loved His Kind," "Together and Apart," "A Summing Up."

²Ibid., p. 16. See also A Writer's Diary, pp. 48-53.

which was dictated each morning in the act of writing . . . ; it was necessary to write the book first and to invent a theory afterwards."³ That her approach was to pursue images more or less unmethodically until they expanded into a meaningful structure is verified in an unpublished letter to John Lehmann in which she wrote that "most of the work is done before one writes . . . ," that "in actually writing one's mind gets into a trance and the different images seem to come unconsciously. It is very interesting to me, though, to see how deliberate it looks to a critic."⁴

The three volume manuscript of Mrs. Dalloway contains the dates on which Virginia Woolf began each section: July 27, 1923 -- Volume I, April 12, 1924 -- Volume II, July 31, 1924 -- Volume III, October 9, 1924, completed first draft, and October 20, 1924, completed final version of opening. It also contains the various titles with which she experimented: "'The life of a Lady./A lady./ Mrs. Dalloway./ A ladies [sic] portrait./ A lady of Fashion'" and "The Hours," the main alternative to the final "Mrs. Dalloway."⁵ The manuscript includes numerous corrections, deletions, and various jottings, but, more importantly, it contains five variations (including the variation she

³ Virginia Woolf, "Introduction," Mrs. Dalloway (New York, 1928), p. viii.

⁴ Unpublished autographed letter of Virginia Woolf to John Lehmann, Monk's House, 12 August [1935?].

⁵ Wallace Hildick, "In That Solitary Room," Kenyon Review, XXVII (1965), p. 308.

published) of the opening passage.⁶ The shifting focus on the heroine and the subject of time in the variant openings reveal Virginia Woolf's vigorous search for the right method. She commented on her approach in her diary: "It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by installments, as I have need of it. This is my prime discovery so far; and the fact that I've been so long finding it proves, I think, how false Percy Lubbock's doctrine is -- that you can do this sort of thing consciously."⁷

That Virginia Woolf wrote essays and reviews for The Common Reader simultaneously with Mrs. Dalloway⁸ suggests that the intellectual controls of criticism tightened the structure and toughened the style of her previous attempt at poetizing the novel. Blending criticism and fiction during creation enabled Virginia Woolf to create a technique that served both thought and feeling. To consider the "tunnelling process" in Mrs. Dalloway is to see how she began to transform vision into design.

Like Jacob's Room, Mrs. Dalloway⁹ is a biography of spiritual

⁶Wallace Hildick, "In That Solitary Room," pp. 305-317.

⁷A Writer's Diary, p. 61.

⁸Lewis, "The Hours to Mrs. Dalloway," p. 17. Wallace Hildick points out that there are also notes for her essay, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," a nursery story, fragments of an obituary notice and a rough floor plan, presumably of her new Tavistock Square House (pp. 307-309). The nursery story entitled "Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble" has just been published (London, 1966) by the Hogarth Press.

⁹Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (London, 1960). Subsequent references will be to this edition, and will be cited as MD followed by a page number.

development. In the earlier novel, Virginia Woolf detailed Jacob's growth through his room, those many things from which his personality evolved; the room served as symbol and fact. In Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf focused more sharply on the particular personality from which larger themes emerged, and made the novel "more analytical and human," and "less lyrical."¹⁰ The exploration of Clarissa Dalloway's personality and her gradual approach to self-recognition serves as the nucleus from which the themes of time and death arise. Virginia Woolf created Peter Walsh, Clarissa's former sweetheart, and Septimus Smith, Clarissa's unknown double or counterpart, primarily to set off the portrait of Clarissa. Peter's emotional temperament challenges Clarissa's perpetual societal involvement; Septimus's madness and suicide first threatens, then stimulates, Clarissa's affirmation of life. The picture of English society illustrates how Clarissa's acceptance of societal values confirms her real nature. But whereas such acceptance enables her to participate in the life she adores, a sense of its superficiality forces her to evaluate it in relation to the problems of true individuality and isolation. She must confront the problems of death and time, since their spectres violate the images of love, beauty, and immortality that she desires and constantly seeks to affirm. The refocusing of vision Virginia Woolf undertook in Mrs. Dalloway required a lyrical method more fundamental to the book's structure and texture. She attempted this by digging caves behind the

¹⁰ A Writer's Diary, p. 62.

characters. "The idea is that the caves shall connect and each comes to daylight at the present moment."¹¹ The caves reflect all past experiences, the memories, reflections, dreams, belonging to each important character. They illuminate the image they reflect by being woven in various ways into a larger pattern.

Virginia Woolf dug out the caves behind her characters through the indirect interior monologue. She used the characters' inner thoughts to express the book's themes. The psychological perspective enabled her to adjust conventional narrative to its temporal orientation. Time was not only a quantitative phenomenon, perceived as discrete and isolated moments, but it was a qualitative one, perceived as a connected and flowing whole.¹² The qualitative view enabled Virginia Woolf to connect disparate and evanescent experiences and characters meaningfully; the quantitative and empirical view enabled her to place these connections in an objective framework. By establishing time as an individual component and a public form, she used it as an element of narrative and as an image determining lyrical design.¹³

¹¹A Writer's Diary, p. 60.

¹²The nature of time in Virginia Woolf's novels is complex and has been much discussed. Some of the recent treatments are: Maxime Chastaing, La Philosophie de Virginia Woolf (Paris, 1951); Margaret Church, "The Moment and Virginia Woolf," Time and Reality: Studies in Contemporary Fiction (Chapel Hill, 1963), pp. 67-101; James Hafley, The Glass Roof; Virginia Woolf as Novelist (Berkeley or Los Angeles 1954); Shiv K. Kumar, Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel (London, 1962). It is not pertinent to discuss the controversial aspects at this point, but they will be mentioned in the discussion of the metaphysical vision underlying the novels. See Chapters V and VI, passim.

¹³Freedman, The Lyrical Novel, p. 22.

Virginia Woolf treated external time in several ways. She limited the action to one day in mid-June, 1923, and emphasized the progression from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m. through the sounding at various intervals of Big Ben, as well as other clocks and church bells.¹⁴ The three appointments, at 12:00 p.m., 1:30 p.m., and about 9:00 p.m., organize the action around the clock as do those shifts of character that concur with the progressing hours.¹⁵ Frequent comments on the changes in the character's lives also mark external time: in 1923 Sally Seton has five big boys; Peter Walsh is planning a second marriage; Elizabeth Dalloway is seventeen years old. External time accents the present, but it does not delimit the continual flow of memories and feelings belonging to the infinite time of the mind. The personality perceives time both as moving process and arrested instant; it sees itself participating in life and contemplating it:

. . . the experiencing ego, when it rises out of the sea of process and self awareness, defines itself most readily in a series of isolated moments. 'The moment' is the medium for a rounded view of the entire self, ordinarily elongated, distorted, and meshed in half-lights and tangles of mere living;

¹⁴Nathalia Wright, "Mrs. Dalloway: A Study in Composition," College English, V (April 1944), p. 355. In "Towards an Understanding of the Meaning of Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, VI (1965), pp. 214, 227, Anna S. Benjamin points out that Virginia Woolf deliberately did not state the exact time the novel opened and closed. Although various commentators have estimated the length of the day from 10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m., 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 a.m., Miss Benjamin suggests Virginia Woolf sidestepped exact hours because the reader did not need to know them to understand his place in the plot, and more significantly, to emphasize by an open beginning and ending, the idea of the continuity of past, present, and future (p. 217).

¹⁵Ibid., p. 355.

and the endlessly renewed task of selfhood is the creation of static or spatial form out of the insistent change of time 'ou rien ne dure mais ou rien ne cesse'.¹⁶

Memory is the storehouse of the moments in life. Exploration of these moments often yields that crucial insight by which the self is revealed. Hence, all the major characters explore their past, seeking in past actions understanding of the present. When Clarissa tries to understand why she did not marry Peter Walsh, she sees her girlhood romance with him in particular scenes that unfold through associational processes, each memory stimulated by both present and past emotions. A particular retrospect produces an anticipation and that anticipation stimulates another retrospect.¹⁷ Clarissa's understanding of her self proceeds through this continual process of retrospect and anticipation. Mind time, memory, and the qualitative perception of flow and unity, not only define the texture of Mrs. Dalloway, but also establish a counterpoint to the ticking clock. To dramatize that counterpoint, Virginia Woolf experimented with cinematographic techniques, seeking to sustain the image of multiplicity while forging unity.

Of these various techniques Virginia Woolf particularly exploited the montage. Montage generally refers to a class of devices which reflect interrelation or association of ideas so as to express movement

¹⁶Isabel Gamble, "The Secret Sharer in Mrs. Dalloway," Accent, XVI (Autumn 1956), p. 237.

¹⁷David Daiches, Virginia Woolf, 2nd ed. (New York, 1963), p. 63. Anna S. Benjamin (see above, n. 14) considers this process a modification of the flashback technique by which the flashback is presented part by part in non-chronological order, according to the pertinence of each part to the present (p. 218).

and co-existence; it works particularly well in representing non-static and non-focused material.¹⁸ A montage may consist of a rapid succession of images, the superimposition of image on image, or the surrounding of a focal image by a related one.¹⁹ Sergei Eisenstein, the great Russian film-maker, considered montage to be the most powerful compositional means of telling a story.²⁰ From the collision or conflict of independent elements in montage, Eisenstein asserted a new creation would emerge, one not merely the sum of its parts, but a unified whole.²¹ Virginia Woolf used different types of montage to unify events and experiences of past and present as they occur both in the "action" of the plot and the stream of consciousness of the characters, so as to enhance the idea of continuity of time and the expression of personality in time towards which she directed the larger composition. To create a sense of continuous past, and to suggest the actual present through apparent simultaneity of occurrence, she juxtaposed distinct monologues revealing former events.²² She increased the intensity of present experience by connecting isolated monologues through the perception of similar events. The airplane skywriting illustrates this type of space montage (MD, 23-33).

¹⁸Humphrey, Stream of Consciousness, pp. 49-50.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Film Form, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York, 1957), p. 111.

²¹The Film Sense, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York, 1957), pp. 7-9.

²²David Daiches, "Virginia Woolf," The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago, 1939), pp. 176-177. Dr. Daiches' diagrams are helpful in illustrating these alterations and juxtapositions.

The montage begins when one member of a crowd of Londoners outside Buckingham Palace hears a plane. The plane then soars into the clouds out of range and zooms out over "the Mall . . . in the Green Park, in Piccadilly, in Regent's Street, in Regent's Park . . ." (MD, 25).

There Lucrezia Warren Smith points it out to her husband Septimus. The plane dives into the clouds again and appears to Carrie Dempster seated at the other end of the park, then to Mr. Bentley at Greenwich, and then to Ludgate Circus, where a "seedy looking non-descript man" (MD, 32) contemplated entering St. Paul's. Then the plane was so high, it seemed silent.

Not a sound was to be heard above the traffic. Unguided it seemed; sped of its own free will. And now, curving up and up, straight up, like something mounting in ecstasy, in pure delight, out from behind poured white smoke looping writing a T, an O, an F.
(MD, 33)

This skywriting montage provides a cross-view of London and Londoners. It also introduces Septimus Smith and relates him to Clarissa Dalloway, his double, whose perception of the Royal Car speeding down Bond Street to Buckingham Palace (another space montage) initiated the montage. The technique thus establishes broad continuity while it accents present time.

The opening monologue (MD, 5) illustrates how Virginia Woolf used montage to create the past and amplify the present. The first statement establishes the actual situation, Mrs. Dalloway going to buy flowers for her party because her maid Lucy is too busy to do it. The freshness and beauty of the morning compensate Clarissa for a task she would enjoy anyway. The freshness inspires her feeling of being part of life's

essence, which, in turn, evokes her first memory -- the fresh air she felt when she flung open the French windows at Bourton. Rumplemayer's removal of the doors strengthens the evocation since she remembers the squeak of Bourton's French windows. The comparison of the air then and now initiates the second memory -- Clarissa as an eighteen year old girl, feeling solemn and awful, as if something would happen. The third memory -- Peter Walsh, interrupting her meditation with a comment on vegetables, follows immediately, since she now has a more specific past experience in mind. She searches for the exact vegetable, thinks of cauliflowers, and reconstructs the experience on the terrace after breakfast when Peter found her there. This is her fourth memory. The fifth memory, of Peter Walsh himself, is more general -- where he was, when he would come back, how dull his letters were but how sharp his sayings. One of those sayings she remembered. This general image leads to the personal memory of Peter Walsh and those characteristics that distinguished him from all the other men she knew. An almost conscious recognition of the process of memory itself brings the backward movement to a halt; "how strange it was, 'that when millions of things had utterly vanished' -- a few sayings like this about cabbages" remained (MD, 5). Consciousness then takes over because Clarissa must wait on the curb for a van to pass before she can cross the street.

By following associational processes unfolding memories of past inspired by present actions, Virginia Woolf created a montage of past and present time. But these associational processes yielded even more to Virginia Woolf than methods of unifying disparate temporal sequences

and psychological aspects of memory, both of which contributed to the developing organic view of time. They gave her a palette from which she could mix new shades and colours of meaning, idea, and emotion. The images of flowers, air, morning, and water in this opening monologue later become symbolic, reappearing in new and significant contexts. Clarissa goes to buy flowers; she muses over flowers and trees in her Bourton memory; she remembers Peter Walsh calling them vegetables, cauliflowers, that particular morning. Gradually flowers appear to signify, through overtone and function, other things; beauty and fertility, Clarissa in Mulberry's florist shop (MD, 15-16); love expressed without words, the red and white roses Richard brings Clarissa (MD, 127-133), the flower seller singing of eternal love (MD, 90-92), the flowers Sally Seton put in a bowl (MD, 38); isolation and death, the half-dead roses Rezia buys and about which Septimus hallucinates (MD, 103), Septimus's vision of standing, surrounded with roses, in the snow (MD, 76). Virginia Woolf introduces flowers as literal fact and gradually deepens their significance into symbol.

Air stimulates the opening memory sequence initiating the novel's progression. It also places a value on Clarissa's earlier perception, since at Bourton the air was fresher, calmer, stiller, than on the present morning. The earlier experience reminds her how powerful her feelings of joy, vitality, and love were then. That fresh air spelled happiness and fulfillment; she thought she might marry Peter Walsh. Clarissa's self-exploration during the day focuses on her not having married Peter and how this affected the expression of her personality.

Morning extends the notion of promise since it recalls Clarissa's youth. The present parallels the past morning, symbolically represented, because it initiates her evaluation of her life, occurring during the actual present day. It also serves as a polar opposite, for the morning's flower excursion will reach a climax in Clarissa's party, when the natural will turn into artificial light and freshness into death. Water introduces a key metaphor that becomes a symbol appearing in many monologues, particularly those of Clarissa and Septimus. The idea of flowing is basic to the continuous stream of mental associations, both in the past and in the present. It also re-enforces Clarissa's actual walking down the street and into the heart of London. Comparing the air to a wave makes it more immediate and introduces the feeling of freshness that beach and sea offer. The fluidity of a wave, underlined by the rising and falling rocks, suggests continuity and change, significant not only to the monologue, but to the subject of the personality in time developed in the whole novel. Finally, the water and air image suggests death. Bursting open the French windows and plunging into the air is related to Septimus's suicide from Mrs. Filmer's window.

The general movement of the book's idea and design confines the extensiveness of suggestion and overtone arising from these images.²³ In fact, most of the images in Mrs. Dalloway arise from, and refer back to, a central metaphoric nucleus from which individual experiences,

²³Friedman, Stream of Consciousness, p. 198.

interconnected through harmonizing images, achieve value.²⁴ The central metaphoric nucleus is divided into two complementary parts: 1) those words, phrases, and sequences which express the actual process of living, of entering action, of active perception, of being absorbed in successive moments, the exhilarated sense of being part of forward moving processes; 2) and those words, phrases, and sequences which express fear of interruption in this absorbing activity.²⁵ Clarissa and Septimus each reflects one of these parts: Clarissa the living and participating aspect, and Septimus, the separated, isolated aspect.²⁶ Doris Kilman, William Bradshaw, and even Peter Walsh as a lover, act as the interrupters who try to destroy the progressive movement.²⁷ The progressive movement triumphs, the conclusion bringing it to only a temporary stop.

The most obvious examples of the progressive movement concern the passing of time. Day draws towards night, Big Ben strikes the hours, and each character attends to the moments of the present with which memory coordinates the past. Space also suggests progression: the various walking sequences, Clarissa down Bond Street (MD, 5-16), Peter to Regent's Park (MD, 54-62), Richard from Mayfair to Westminster (MD, 123-130), Elizabeth in the Strand (MD, 150-153), Rezia and Septimus to Sir William Bradshaw (MD, 104-105); the different moving

²⁴Reuben Brower, "Virginia Woolf and Mrs. Dalloway," The Fields of Light (New York, 1951), p. 123.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 127-128.

²⁶Ibid., p. 128.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 130-132.

sequences, the Royal Car driving down Bond Street (MD, 15-22), the airplane skywriting (MD, 23-33), Elizabeth riding a London bus (MD, 149-151), and cars driving to Clarissa's party (MD, 180-181). Certain actions also convey the sense of succession: sewing, Clarissa mending her dress (MD, 44-53), Rezia making hats (MD, 157-161); dreaming, Peter on the park bench (MD, 63-65); crossing the threshold, Clarissa at Bourton (MD, 5), Clarissa at her home (MD, 33), Clarissa at her party (MD, 205-213); climbing or descending stairs,²⁸ Clarissa climbing to her attic room (MD, 35), Clarissa descending to her party (MD, 182), the old woman climbing the stairs opposite Clarissa's window (MD, 139).

Beyond the symbolism of water discussed above,²⁹ other meanings related to the idea of progression emerge from the many water images. They range from a semi-literal to a symbolic level. There are images of running water which suggest life: the fountain at Bourton (MD, 71), the kettle on the hob bubbling (MD, 158), Rezia's voice bubbling "drip, drip, drip, like a contented tap left running" (MD, 158), as opposed to the old flower seller "a rusty pump" (MD, 90-91), Peter's tears (MD, 52, 67), Clarissa's reaching out for time "as if to catch the falling drop" (MD, 41), Elizabeth as "running water" (MD, 148). There are direct analogies between movement and water: the flow of cars and cabs to the Dalloway's party (MD, 180-181), the experience of sudden insight like "some pressure of rapture which split its thin skin

²⁸Isabel Gamble, "Mrs. Dalloway," pp. 238-241, discusses in some detail, the significance of threshold and stair in relation to Clarissa's development.

²⁹See p. 73. See also Anna Benjamin, "Mrs. Dalloway," pp. 219-220.

and gushed and poured with extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores" (MD, 36). Images of frozen water counter these, suggesting lack of love, or the failure to give, to flow with feeling: Clarissa is "cold as an icicle" (MD, 90), fearing the "icy claws" of death (MD, 41); Septimus lies under a blanket of snow smitten only by the sun (MD, 29), or withdraws up into the snows (MD, 76). Then there is the image of the Serpentine, into which Clarissa threw a shilling (MD, 202), the lake at Bourton, where she gave her parents her life (MD, 48), and the more extended images such as the "lack of something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together" (MD, 36).

Clarissa and Septimus reflect two opposing sea images that develop in various ways: the mermaid who rides the waves and flourishes in a natural element that brings death or regeneration, and the drowned sailor who tries to master the element really alien to him. Clarissa's relationship to the mermaid image begins with her sewing her favourite dress, a green one, which shone by artificial light but lost its colour in the sun (MD, 42). The green of her dress ³⁰ connects her to Septimus's first sweetheart, Isabel Pole, whose appearance in a green dress haunts him with the pain of lost love and beauty. Peter dreams of visions "like sirens lolloping away on the green sea waves" (MD, 64), and at her party Clarissa seems to realize his dream.

³⁰ Nathalia Wright, "Mrs. Dalloway," p. 357 n. argues that the colours associated with each character are used thematically, but have no independent thematic meaning.

She wore ear-rings, and a silver-green mermaid's dress.
 Lolloping on the waves and braiding her tresses she seemed,
 having that gift still; to be; to exist; to sum it all up in
 the moment as she passed; turned, caught her scarf in some
 other woman's dress, unhitched it, laughed, all with the most
 perfect ease and air of a creature floating in its element.
 But age had brushed her; even as a mermaid might behold in her
 glass the setting sun on some very clear evening over the waves.
 (MD, 191)

Septimus sees himself isolated from the world, "high on his rock, like a drowned sailor on a rock. I leant over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought . . . I went under the sea . . . " (MD, 77); he feels like the "outcast who gazed back at the inhabited regions, who lay, like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world" (MD, 103). The drowning images also evoke positive connotations. Similar to T. S. Eliot's figure of Phlebas the Phoenician in The Waste Land, whose death by water brings fertility to the arid plain, Septimus's death enables Clarissa to integrate the disparate parts of her personality, to melt the ice which prevents her from being whole.

The bird images, too, reflect connection, as well as movement, particularly through the idea of flight. Clarissa is the jay, "blue-green, light, vivacious" (MD, 6), whose contact with the concrete world exhilarates her, but whose fear of death makes her crouch "like a bird" (MD, 203). Septimus sees sparrows flying in patterns in the trees (MD, 26), and singing Greek words from a tree in a meadow beyond a river where death is non-existent (MD, 28). Rezia is a "little hen" (MD, 164), a "bird sheltering under the thin hollow of a leaf" (MD, 73); her mind was "like a bird, falling from branch to branch, and always alighting quite rightly" (MD, 161), and Septimus is a young hawk or crow

(MD, 163) that ultimately flings itself into the air, out of life (MD, 163-164).

Aside from the floral imagery discussed above,³¹ trees, gardens, and parks suggest the ideal and idea of growth. Septimus says trees are all alive; their leaves are "connected by millions of fibres with his own body" (MD, 26), and, therefore, "men must not cut down trees" (MD, 28). Clarissa calls the soul "the leaf encumbered forest (MD, 15), imagines herself becoming part of the trees when she dies (MD, 11), sees her intimacy with Peter as if "he had set light to a grey pellet on a plate and there had risen up a lovely tree in the brisk, sea-salted air . . ." (MD, 51), and feels "the brandishing of silver-flashing plumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast" (MD, 52) when Peter bends down to kiss her. Peter finds life like "an unknown garden" (MD, 167); in a garden Clarissa establishes her own identity by refusing to marry Peter (MD, 70-71); in a terrace overlooking the garden, Clarissa recognizes her love for Sally Seton (MD, 40). In St. James Park, Clarissa meets Hugh Whitbread (MD, 7), the classic symbol of her important social world; Lucrezia and Septimus sit in Regent's Park so as to keep Septimus in touch with the real world (MD, 25); in that same Park, Peter dozes and dreams of his real life and his desires (MD, 63-65); it is through Green Park that Richard walks on his way to express his love to Clarissa (MD, 128). And it is Bourton that stands as a harmonious antithesis to the city,

³¹See p. 72 above.

for Bourton is the "white dawn of the country" (MD, 11), Clarissa's youth, promise, the beginning of her affirmation.

Sequences that reflect fear and interruption range from the simple cessation of an action to significant attempts to stifle or destroy. Peter's visit momentarily interrupts Clarissa's sewing (MD, 45). Elizabeth interrupts Peter and Clarissa's conversation (MD, 53); Doris Kilman attempts to redirect Elizabeth from her Mother's world (MD, 136-139); Bradshaw attempts to commit Septimus to a sanitorium (MD, 108); Septimus kills himself (MD, 164). One image illuminating and extending this idea relates to Clarissa and comes from the religious world she detests. As she enters her house, "cool as a vault" (MD, 33), "she felt like a nun who has left the world and feels fold around her the familiar veils and the response to old devotions" (MD, 33); she withdraws "like a nun" (MD, 35) to her attic room where "the sheets were clean, tight-stretched in a broad white band from side to side. Narrower and narrower would her bed be" (MD, 35). She felt in her "a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet" (MD, 36), and when Peter interrupts her sewing, "She made to hide her dress, like a virgin protecting chastity, respecting privacy" (MD, 45). With her youth gone, Clarissa fears age and death. "The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow. She had gone up into the tower alone and left them blackberrying in the sun. The door had shut . . ." (MD, 52). This cluster of images, linked with the images of coldness (MD, 55), of a diamond (MD, 42-43), of impenetrability (MD, 68), contrasts particularly with those images which reveal her other aspect,

the bird (MD, 6), the dart (MD, 42), the hostess (MD, 69), poking in and out of people's lives and life's corners.

Language illustrates the progressive and interrupting rhythms too. Verbal repetitions, assonances, alliterations, are numerous,³² but the motifs woven throughout emphasize the two rhythms more significantly. Psychologically the motifs represent the mental suspension of thought until either repression of it or resolution into full meaning occurs. Poetically they act as a symbolic shorthand for related ideas and feelings in one or more characters.

The lines from a song in Shakespeare's Cymbeline, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun/Nor the furious winter's rages," illustrate both levels. The lines are from the dirge Guiderius and Arviragus sing over the apparently dead Fidele, and signify several things in the play: the loss of innocence and youth; mutability and death; death as a positive escape from the world, "the heat o' the sun" and "the furious winter's rages"; the regeneration of spirit; the nature of reality as opposed to appearance. The motif sounds for the first time in Clarissa's mind as she reads the lines in an open book in a shop window. They remind her of an "image of white dawn in the country" (MD, 12). The image is of the Bourton she remembered some minutes earlier and of her youth and innocence. Although Clarissa's sentimental reflection about the post-war

³²Virginia Woolf's style is replete with all types of verbal devices: alliteration, assonance, repetition, balance, antithesis, accumulation, oxymoron, and anaphora. The abundance and density of figures make it impossible to introduce the topic without digressing from the issue at hand. A study could be done on the skillful and creative way with which Virginia Woolf worked language to serve her larger ends.

world undercuts her feeling of the loss of innocence and youth, the associative process that will inevitably lead her to confront the idea of death, the final interruption in life, has begun. The next motif appears when Clarissa returns home and discovers that she had not been invited to lunch with Richard and Lady Bruton. The social rejection evokes feelings of death and age: "she feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton's face, as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone, the dwindling of life . . ." (MD, 34). She felt "suddenly shrivelled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which now failed . . ." (MD, 35). What at first was a vague apprehension now rises to the surface of Clarissa's consciousness. The third appearance comes when Clarissa mends her dress. The rhythm of her sewing suggests the image of the waves rising and falling.

So on a summer's day waves collect, overbalance, and fall; collect and fall; and the whole world seems to be saying 'that is all' more and more ponderously, until even the heart in the body which lies in the sun on the beach says too, that is all. Fear no more, says the heart. Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects, lets fall. And the body alone listens to the passing bee; the wave breaking; the dog barking, far away barking and barking. (MD, 44-45)

The next appearance resembles this in its context and resigned tone.

It occurs during Septimus's hallucination of death by drowning.

Outside the trees dragged their leaves like nets through the depths of the air; the sound of water was in the room, and through the waves came the voices of birds singing. Every power poured its treasures on his head, and his hand lay there on the back of the sofa, as he had seen his hand lie when he was bathing, floating, on the top of the waves, while far away on the shore he heard dogs barking and barking far away. Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more. (MD, 153-154)

The fifth appearance is by implication. Just as Septimus is about to fling himself from the window he thinks, "He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings?" (MD, 164). Here Septimus expresses the disturbing paradox that while life seemed good, "the sun hot," it was in reality evil; since it had burned and scarred him so badly that he could no longer live in it. Was it only human beings, he asked? Was there nothing else? The final appearance of the motif occurs when Clarissa contemplates Septimus's death during her party. She intuitively identifies with him and understands that his action somehow made her belief in life more real. Ultimately Septimus held onto life and deprived those who would take it from him. "She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living" (MD, 204). Actual death forces Clarissa to harness her fears about death itself and to reaffirm her joy in life. It also enables her to confirm her choice in life, since like Septimus, she has had to define her particular self in the face of human destruction. "Fear no more the heat of the sun" at last means the salvation of the soul, the regenerative aspect to which the dirge actually looks forward.

Two other significant motifs serve thematic unity. The first is the line from Shakespeare's Othello, "if it were no to die, 'twere now to be most happy." It appears first when Clarissa is young and loves Sally Seton (MD, 39), and second, at her party, when she thinks of Septimus's death (MD, 202). In the first instance, it expresses Clarissa's identification with Othello and the feelings of fulfillment love for Desdemona brings him, and it touches the undercurrent of love

between women that Virginia Woolf alludes to throughout the novel. It indicates Clarissa's total abandonment to a spontaneous feeling, something she never expresses in love again. When Clarissa contemplates Septimus's death, these words come suddenly into her mind. His action has inwardly enabled Clarissa to recapture a part of that spontaneous and giving aspect of herself and integrate it with the outwardly giving social self. If she were to die directly after she acknowledges this real feeling, like Othello, she would have the sense of having achieved wholeness.

The other motif occurs when Big Ben strikes; it introduces the contrast between external time and psychic time, which plays a crucial part in the book's structure. "The leaden circles dissolved in the air" declares the passing of time, the destruction of the present moment, which, although one feels it so intensely, evaporates almost immediately into nothingness. It contrasts Clarissa's love of life, expressed particularly by her love of London, with her need to transcend the limitations life, and she as a person, reflect. The motif occurs when Peter leaves Clarissa's house and thinks of her infernal parties (MD, 54). The juxtaposition reveals his ambivalence towards Clarissa and her mode of life, her potential for love, and her pursuit of society in which "she frittered her time away . . . blunting the edge of her mind, losing her discrimination" (MD, 87). It appears in a parenthesis when Septimus and Rezia go to Sir William Bradshaw (MD, 104) and suggests the brief time left to Septimus to endure his horrors. It appears finally when Clarissa accepts what she is and concludes her self-exploration with

affirmation. (MD, 204-205).

By patterning images and motifs in these ways, Virginia Woolf tightened the structure already unified by time, place, action, and the Dostoevskian technique of the double.³³ The party synthesizes all elements, serving in many ways as a microcosm of the whole book.³⁴ All characters come together there, interlocking, through their particular personalities, the themes of self, time, and death, with the purely social, communal phenomenon whose brightness these themes, to some extent, diminish. But Clarissa's final recognition of her own self enables her to transcend these spectres for the moment and triumph by simply existing in affirmation. Her re-integration produces a like effect in the experience of the book,³⁵ whose total effect is as if all that transpired successively transpired simultaneously in an eternal present moment. Virginia Woolf succeeded in creating "something central which permeated" through various structural devices and images and the omniscient point of view superimposed on the whole.

Coherence and unity result primarily from the point of view of the omniscient author rather than from the psychological exposition of the characters themselves. The omniscient author not only guides the monologues of diverse personalities into a unified image, but also

³³See below, Chapter V, pp. 231-232.

³⁴Isabel Gamble, "Mrs. Dalloway," p. 251.

³⁵Frances L. Mollach, "Thematic and Structural Unity in Mrs. Dalloway," Thoth, V (Spring 1964), p. 67.

establishes the angle of vision from which the reader can see the over-all design. Virginia Woolf emphasized artifice, not psychological realism, to create the formal portrait of Clarissa and her society.

Although Virginia Woolf varied her method in Jacob's Room and Mrs. Dalloway, in both she aimed at revealing character, but since she sought the essence of character, what made Mrs. Brown particularly herself, she continually distilled Jacob Flanders and Clarissa Dalloway into symbolic representations of themselves. The omniscient perspective and the interior monologue enabled her to trace essential aspects of her characters' psyches, and yet remain above them. Ultimately through this method, she moved away from particular personality and particular reality to personality and reality themselves. The "I" and the "he" become the lyrical point of view through which the mind relates to general ideas, and creates its "soliloquy in solitude."³⁶ Peter Walsh's dream (MD, 63-65) and the flower seller's song (MD, 90-92) illustrate, in isolation, this process of depersonalization, but Section II of To the Lighthouse illustrates its first expanded presentation. After this latter experiment, she extended the method into a whole novel.³⁷

³⁶Granite and Rainbow, p. 19.

³⁷See John Graham, "The 'Caricature Value of Parody' and Fantasy in Orlando," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXX (1960), pp. 345-366, discusses Virginia Woolf's treatment of the narrator as biographer in Orlando (1928) as an important step in the evolution of the "mind in solitude" ideal she experimented with in To the Lighthouse, and epitomized in The Waves.

"Time Passes"³⁸ contains no fusion of interior monologue and omniscient point of view because, except for the fleeting appearance of the housekeepers, no characters appear. Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast do not function as characters needed for psychological or spiritual exploration; they serve as links between the preceding and following sections, and complement, by their own memories, the general memory of the Ramsays. The omniscient point of view, alone creates the "impersonal thing," the "flight of time," which Virginia Woolf's friends dared her to write,³⁹ and details the natural changes befalling the deserted Ramsay house over the ten year time span that the ten divisions suggest. The omniscient author guides the movement of the years as they flow from pre-war harmony to post-war disillusion. Details suggesting seasonal alteration indicate the general progression from one autumn to another, although the occasional references to an ensuing season during a particular one indicates the attempt to blur distinctions in nature to emphasize the flow of time. As in Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf introduces the distinction between clock and calendar time and psychic time. During the span between the evening with the Ramsays and the morning when Mr. Ramsay goes to the lighthouse and Lily Briscoe paints her canvas on the lawn, Mrs. Ramsay dies, Prue Ramsay marries and dies, Andrew Ramsay goes to war and dies, Mr. Carmichael publishes a

³⁸Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (New York, 1927), pp. 189-214. Subsequent references will be to this edition, and will be cited in the text as TL followed by page numbers.

³⁹A Writer's Diary, p. 80.

successful book of poems. These facts appear bracketed⁴⁰ in the text because they tell nothing about the real meaning of the events. They stand in the text as they do in life, as artificial boundaries that determine where a personality begins and ends. This point becomes more evident when the narrative in Section I resumes in Section III. Although external time has destroyed the high hopes of that evening, it has done nothing to destroy the feeling that what really matters can be neither measured by, nor remembered in, time, that what really matters exists only so long as its affects are felt. By focusing on change and destruction, "Time Passes" evokes this sense of timelessness, and by presenting the problems of time and timelessness through an impersonal omniscient author and an empty house, the nature of personality itself emerges more clearly. Neither death nor life limits Mrs. Ramsay's influence; so long as that influence endures, her personality endures. Mr. Ramsay's excursion to the lighthouse and Lily Briscoe's painting reflect this influence and express this idea.

"Time Passes" struck Virginia Woolf as a new challenge: "That passage (I conceive the book in three parts 1. at the drawing room

⁴⁰It is interesting to note a development of this method in recent French fiction. The writer of the Front of the Times Literary Supplement June 23, 1966, p. 546, says in le nouveau roman, language is used not as a "transfer of an objective content from one mind to another," but a "vitalization, or a revitalization, in the subject of his own associational system, and that at the extreme, 'subject matter is put in parenthesis' . . ." Some French critics object to this excessive "solipsism" because it "casts a blight of non-significance over so many 'new novels.'" It is this very objection that many English critics have levelled against Virginia Woolf's fiction. Cf. the relegation, to the middle of Mrs. Dalloway, of Peter Walsh's letter, which is, as Anna S. Benjamin, "Mrs. Dalloway," p. 219, points out, the fact that first initiates the novel's action.

window; 2. seven years passed; 3. the voyage) interests me very much. A new problem like that breaks fresh ground in one's mind; prevents the regular ruts."⁴¹ She said as she worked it, "I cannot make it out -- here is the most difficult abstract piece of writing -- I have to give an empty house, no people's characters, the passage of time, all eyeless and featureless with nothing to cling to"⁴² However much Virginia Woolf worried, she created a whole to cling to, particularly by linking images, ideas, and structural and stylistic devices, within the section and throughout the book. The various stylistic devices she used, -- personification, verbal repetition, and parenthesis, -- figure importantly in creating the internal meaning and rhythms. The almost deserted house becomes inhabited by "certain airs" that "entered the drawing room questioning and wondering, toying with the flap of hanging wall-paper, asking, would it hang much longer, when would it fall?" (TL, 190). These "sea airs" (TL, 195), which, "nosing, rubbing, . . . went to the window on the staircase, to the servants' bedrooms, to the boxes in the attics; descending, blanched the apples on the dining room table, fumbled the petals of roses, tried the picture on the easel, brushed the mat and blew a little sand along the floor" (TL, 191). These personified phantoms asked unanswered questions of jugs, chairs, clothes, the Waverley novels, "'Will you fade? Will you perish?'" (TL, 195); the seventy year old Mrs. McNab thought these questions too, "How long,

⁴¹ A Writer's Diary, pp. 80-81.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 88-89.

. . . , creaking and groaning on her knees under the bed, dusting the boards, how long shall it endure?" (TL, 197); and the omniscient author put the decidedly unanswered questions in the broadest context, "Did Nature supplement what man advanced? Did she complete what he began?" (TL, 201-202).

Repetition of key words helps to organize the multiplicity. Of the many examples, the words "lurched" and "leered" associated with Mrs. McNab illustrate Virginia Woolf's technique. Both reappear, sometimes in the same, sometimes in different grammatical forms, but always in connection with Mrs. McNab. She "lurched" around the room (TL, 197) and "leered" around the room (TL, 196), she rubbed the looking glass, "leering sideways at her swinging figure" (TL, 196), she "lurched about . . . like a tropical fish" (TL, 200), and, finally, when the omniscient author speaks of "a force working; something not highly conscious; something that lurched" (TL, 209), one expects Mrs. McNab.

Parentheses serve a double function: to supplement description with fact and to create a colloquial tone. Wind and darkness invade the deserted house, but it "(was ramshackle after all)" (TL, 190), and when it is rehabilitated, "(the house was full again; Mrs. Beckworth was staying there, also Mr. Carmichael)" (TL, 213); night and emptiness still, however, surround it, but "(Lily was tired out with travelling and slept almost at once; but Mr. Carmichael read a book by candle-light)" (TL, 214). A colloquial tone underlines the undercurrent narrative. It increases the reader's identification with the omniscient author, whose commentary on decay re-enforces the generalizing point of

view. Chaos seemed unleashed as the war began "(for night and day, month and year ran shapelessly together)" (TL, 203); destruction precludes the attempt to sustain oneself on dreams and values of truth and love: "Impatient, despairing yet loth to go (for beauty offers her lures, has her consolations), to pace the beach was impossible; contemplation was unendurable; the mirror was broken" (TL, 202).

This last sentence introduces the image whose extension throughout "Time Passes" does much to unify the metaphysical meaning, which, in turn, focuses on the events of the narrative itself. It is the image of the solitary figure walking the beach, plunged in contemplation, seeking answers to unanswerable questions. It appears in various forms throughout the Section, although not always without irony. In passage iii, it is the sleeper who rises "fancying that he might find on the beach an answer to his doubts, a sharer of his solitude" (TL, 193), and goes down to the sand, but "no image with semblance of serving and divine promptitude comes readily to hand bringing the night to order and making the world reflect the compass of the soul" (TL, 193). Later, in passage v, "The mystic, the visionary, walking the beach on a fine night, stirring a puddle, looking at a stone, ask themselves, 'What am I,' 'What is this?'" (TL, 197-198). In passage vi, it is "the wakeful, the hopeful, walking the beach, stirring the pool, imaginations of the strangest kind" (TL, 198). In the very next passage, the sleepers, confused by the terrors of war, "had gone down to pace the beach and ask of the sea and sky what message they reported or what vision they affirmed had to consider among the usual tokens of divine bounty --

. . . something out of harmony with this jocundity and this serenity" (TL, 201).

Reflecting images, mirrors, pools, lights, play off against others that are opaque and shadowy. In general, lights suggest life; the shadows, death; and the mirrors and pools, whatever the thinker projects. The lighthouse beam penetrating the disintegrating house signifies that only re-inhabitation can prevent further decay. The house, symbolizing man in the natural time cycle, testifies to inevitable impersonality. References to the narrative of Section I emphasizes the transience of the personal and the immediate. Mrs. McNab remembers the Boeuf en Daube party with "twenty staying" (TL, 211), Mrs. Ramsay in "the old grey cloak she wore gardening" (TL, 204), Mr. Ramsay "lean as a rake, wagging his head" (TL, 210), the old shawl (TL, 196), the old skull (TL, 211), the Waverley novels (TL, 209), and the "stroke of the Lighthouse" (TL, 199).

The sense of the past, the temporal form of impersonality, arises from the integration of events befalling the characters of the narrative during this ten year span with those befalling the house. For example, the image of noise exploding silence signifies Andrew Ramsay's death in the war. The fact appears in brackets; the preceding paragraph introduces the idea of falling through the random noises of the silent house:

But slumber and sleep though it might there came later in the summer ominous sounds like the measured blows of hammers dulled on felt, which, with their repeated shocks still further loosened the shawl and cracked the tea-cups. Now and again some glass tinkled in the cupboard as if a giant voice had shrieked so loud in its agony that tumblers stood inside a cupboard vibrated too. Then again silence fell; and then, night after night, and sometimes in

plain mid-day when the roses were bright and light turned on the wall its shape clearly there seemed to drop into this silence, this indifference, this integrity, the thud of something falling. [A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous.] (TL, 200, 201)

This structuring device occurs before each bracketed phrase, providing unifying connections between part and whole, and juxtaposing the different levels of reality that the whole novel blends.

By formalizing an extended natural process in "Time Passes," Virginia Woolf created a self-contained design that expressed life itself, though belonging to a realm of experience that is thought but rarely observed. The flight of time led Virginia Woolf beyond character in time, beyond the tunnels she explored in Mrs. Dalloway; "Time Passes" led her to extend abstraction to its ultimate in The Waves.

The Waves⁴³ is Virginia Woolf's "novel about Silence." In it, she pushed the "eyeless" method of "Time Passes" to an extreme by eliminating character in purely descriptive interludes and by using character to express and to symbolize abstract states and modes of being. Narrative results from the reader's perception of the image patterns shaping the six main characters' soliloquies and the interludes. It serves as a means of unifying diverse elements rather than as a sequence unfolded for its own sake. In The Waves Virginia Woolf sought the total externalization of her internal vision, a design which was the vision

⁴³Virginia Woolf, The Waves (New York, 1960). Subsequent references will be to this Harvest edition, and will be cited in the text as W followed by a page number.

itself. The descriptive interludes express this most directly.

The interludes suggest the impersonal perspective of "Time Passes." They describe events in nature and contain no characters and no authorial intrusions. They create a sense of immediacy and distance, of objective observation of a scene; emotion and contemplation, rather than dramatic action, determine the impersonal mood. The interludes progress from dawn to sunset; the sun rises slowly, the birds flutter about the trees, the light pushes the shadows back, the waves pound the shore; then the sun slowly sinks, the birds grow silent, the shadows re-emerge, but the waves pound ceaselessly on. The interludes also progress through the seasons, from spring to winter. Flowers begin to bloom and birds to chase each other in the sky; apple trees fill with pink blossoms; the underground is alive with wet smells; the corn is burnished, then cut, the currants and plums hang full, the petals fall, the flowers droop, the leaves wither, the birds grow silent, the apples rot, snow covers the mountain tops.

Virginia Woolf conveys the organic unity of the cycles of nature by weaving major and minor motifs in and out of these interludes. Sun, sea, sky, garden, trees, birds, house, window, curtain, flowerpot, knife, plate, and chair are the major motifs whose variation reveals the unified progression of time. Colours, lights, and movements, kindle into a "mosaic of single sparks" (W, 194), then into a whole that darkness finally obliterates. The minor motifs vitalize the abstract and timeless world of time with concrete pictures, each one drawn from that quarter of life which best expresses a certain time of day or year.

Among the most notable of these motifs are the apple blossoms and kitchen smells in spring and mid-morning, the rocks, red with summer heat, the southern landscapes with pink and white houses and gilt mosques at noon, the cornfields in autumn and afternoon, the roads and hills in winter and sunset. The natural progression parallels the development of the six characters, whose soliloquies dominate the book, by enlarging the imaginative effect of time passing and by providing a parable of their lives.⁴⁴ The parallel proceeds as follows: Interlude I describes creation through the emergence and separation of form from an indistinct mass, characterized by the evolution of greyness to black and white, to greens, yellows, red, blues, golds and the sun appearing on the horizon; Section I dramatizes first consciousness and early childhood; Interlude II suggests the fluidity, plasticity, flexibility of nature, everything "softly amorphous" (W, 194), not shaped into a whole, light kindling everything, and the sun increasing its magnitude: Section II depicts school life; Interlude III reveals nature's growth and inevitable death with things poised and darting, living and growing more distinct, destruction apprehended, and the sun rising: Section III describes the university and the world; Interlude IV accents the brightness and intensity of the day and the season, white light, no shadows, and the sun shining: Section IV details the search for individual identity.

Interlude V epitomizes nature's fullness, bareness, steady burning,

⁴⁴Unpublished autographed manuscript: John Lehmann "Notes for a Study of Imaginative Method in 'The Waves'" (1932-1933), p. 7.

exposure, the rocks cleft with red heat, everything containing the full measure of colour, and the sun in its zenith: Section V expresses maturity; Interlude VI shows nature's decline, and all things drooping and fluttering, the birds, petals, the ripening corn, the curtain, "as if a great moth sailing through the room had shadowed the immense solidity of chairs and tables with floating wings" (W, 303), and the sun sinking in the sky: Section VI illustrates early middle age; Interlude VII describes solidity disintegrating, portentousness taking over, randomness and dullness pervading, "the hard stone of the day was cracked and light poured through its splinters" (W, 320), and the sun sinking lower: Section VII reflects the decline of life and late middle age; Interlude VIII introduces darkness and indistinctness and waves of darkness, like the waves around a sunken ship, waiting for the final dissolution, and the sun sunk: Section VIII reveals old age; Interlude IX dramatizes nature's last decree, and the waves breaking on the shore, performing the final act of dissolution, so that nothing that has been will remain: Section IX discloses death.⁴⁵

Virginia Woolf interweaves the interludes with the soliloquies so as to attain a unity between human and natural impersonality. She aimed at creating a "continuous stream," "not solely of human thought, . . . all flowing together."⁴⁶ She expressed this desire for unity again and

⁴⁵For variant readings of this scheme see Robert J. Collins, Virginia Woolf's Black Arrows of Sensation: The Waves (Ilfracombe, Devon, 1962), pp. 11-14; Josephine Schaefer, Nature of Reality, pp. 138-139, n. 4; and N. C. Thakur, Symbolism, pp. 114-117.

⁴⁶A Writer's Diary, p. 108.

again. In the formative stages, she wrote in her diary, "A mind thinking; They [the moths] might be islands of light -- islands in the stream that I am trying to convey; life itself going on"⁴⁷; in the reorganizing stages, she wrote:

What it wants is presumably unity; . . . Suppose I could run all the scenes together more? -- by rhythms chiefly. So as to avoid those cuts; so as to make the blood run like a torrent from end to end -- I don't want the waste that the breaks give; I want to avoid chapters; that indeed is my achievement, if any, here; a saturated unchopped completeness; changes of scene, of mind, of person, done without spilling a drop. Now if that could be worked over with heat and currency, that's all it wants.⁴⁸

By establishing organic connections between the natural cycles of the interludes and the human cycles of the soliloquies, Virginia Woolf proceeded towards the unity she desired.

Each group of soliloquies reveals continuity. Except for Sections V, VI, and IX, each section contains at least one soliloquy, which reflects a new aspect of character or develops and modifies one previously expressed, generally in keeping with the main idea expressed by the interlude. Primarily Virginia Woolf used comparison and contrast of character or theme to connect the various soliloquies. In Section III, for example, Bernard, who speaks first, as he does in all Sections except V and VI, questions the nature of personality. Neville's soliloquy on the same subject follows. Then Bernard, and then Neville speak, as if in conversation. An image directs Bernard's thoughts to Louis, whose soliloquy on the subject of his identity follows. In this

⁴⁷A Writer's Diary, p. 143.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 163-164.

way the contrast among the three men develops. Louis thinks of Susan, whom he admires, although her personality wholly differs from his. This effects the transition to the three women's soliloquies separated from the male soliloquies by a space in the text. Virginia Woolf emphasizes a cleavage because the different attitudes of the women and the men grow partly out of their educational differences. A true fusion of male and female worlds occurs only in childhood, and perhaps in old age; in maturity, artificial communication covers the socially contrived gap. Susan continues the self-evaluation, focusing on her need for self-fulfillment through nature, contrasting herself to Jinny, whose soliloquy ensues. Jinny seeks constant admiration from the social world. Her emotional freedom contrasts to Rhoda's extensive morbid fears about contact with others. Rhoda's soliloquy, following Jinny's, suggests that her distrust of others comes from personal anxiety. Thus the fear of the self concludes Section III, which develops the subject of the search for individuality.

The minor differences detailed in the soliloquies also serve to connect them. In Section I, the dramatization of a specific event influencing and symbolizing each character's life develops in a parallel fashion. These events also establish relationships between the characters that connect their widely ranging feelings and thoughts: the physical contact of Jinny's kiss frightening Louis, Susan's jealousy over Jinny's touching Louis, Bernard's pursuit of Susan with consolation through imaginary escape, Neville's isolation when Bernard departs. In Section IV, Virginia Woolf treats the matter differently, since the

whole Section marks the climax of the book's upward progression. Gathered at a restaurant for Percival's farewell dinner, each character soliloquizes on his life. Each ask the same questions, what was I, what am I, what will I become. They all fear dispersion when Percival departs for India because Percival has somehow unified them. All the soliloquies thus focus on Percival, his arrival at the restaurant, his physical presence, and his final departure. As the characters relate to Percival, the complex nature of their relationship with each other and to the themes of time, death, and love, becomes more apparent. Percival is each character's hero, a figure worthy of exceptional devotion. Yet each character gathers Percival to himself in a way which reflects his own needs.

To Bernard, Percival is the centre of everything, "the grand master of the art of living" (W, 284), Bernard's opposite; to Louis, he is a medieval commander, followed by all, inspiring poetry, and a man of whom Louis is jealous because he feels superior to Percival (W, 202); to Neville, Percival is the object of love, the monolithic pagan epitomizing all that was beautiful in the past, all that is beautiful in the present; to Rhoda, he is will, the force she lacks, leading to the attainment of beauty. Percival enables them to unite momentarily, to shed their differences for a common feeling, which Jinny describes as a globe "whose walls are made of Percival, of youth and beauty, and something so deep sunk within us that we shall perhaps never make this moment out of one man again" (W, 276). Percival's departure threatens them with dissolution. Neville says, "We are walled in here. But India lies

outside" (W, 269). They must maintain the circle, by shedding differences, says Louis, by fighting individual conflicts, says Bernard. The globe must remain entire even though India lies outside the "loop of time" (W, 189).

Sections V, VI, and IX differ from the others in not having all the characters present. Section V deals with Percival's death, and thus outwardly manifests what each character fears. It contains soliloquies by the three characters who are directly affected by Percival's death and who can express its significance in their lives. For Neville, Percival's death means almost absolute inability to love; for Bernard, since his son is born at the same time, the lack of absolute emotional truth; for Rhoda, it means the final sacrifice of will, and the submission to the horrors of the world outside herself. In Section VI, the soliloquies of Louis, Susan, and Jinny describe the personal involvement that prevented a display of grief for Percival. Neville's soliloquy rounds off the thematic symmetry of the two sections, since Percival's death means his loss of ideal love and the necessity of substituting earthly love; his affair with Jinny expresses his search for wholeness, beauty, and purity through the love of one person alone. Section IX contains only one soliloquy. It is Bernard's summing up of all that has occurred in the lives of the characters (I-VIII); it is the story he always wanted to write. It weaves into one whole the many threads of character, idea, and image developed throughout the soliloquies and the interludes.

Bernard's soliloquy also illustrates the method of interlocking images Virginia Woolf used in The Waves. It works in various ways: by providing descriptive unity, by setting the stage in the interlude for forthcoming "events"⁴⁹ in the soliloquy in a manner similar to the one used in "Time Passes",⁵⁰ and by charging metaphors with symbolic significance, relevant first to the development of the character's identity, and then to the explication of the theme these metaphors work to express. A few examples will illustrate Virginia Woolf's technique.

Of the descriptive images there are the cascades of red currants outside the house (W, 279) that provide Bernard with a canopy for his imaginary escapade (W, 189) and that he recalls in his summing up (W, 342); the spikes of sea holly that the waves encircle (W, 194) and that Rhoda sees herself mailed on (W, 265); the solos and choruses of birds singing in the mid-morning sunlight (W, 225), which Susan remembers when she hears similar solos and choruses outside her country house (W, 242). The images of the turbaned men with assegais appear in the interludes (W, 227, 250, 251), and suggest the evil disguised in the ceaseless pounding of the waves. Variations of this idea appear in both Louis and Rhoda's soliloquies (W, 182, 171), signifying the similar idea of an unknown force underlying appearances. Waves thudding on the shore relate to the thud of the beast stamping throughout Louis's

⁴⁹Lehmann, "Notes," pp. 7-8.

⁵⁰See above, p. 90.

soliloquies (W, 180-181, 215, 221, 263, etc.). Among other things, it suggests the rhythm of something eternal in one life and in all life; it expresses the relentlessness of a fury that can never be released or overcome. The comparison to "horse's hooves on the turf" (W, 250) links it to the recurrent horse images, and the motif of the hunting song associated with Percival, and woven throughout.

These images radiate from the literal fact of Percival's accidental death from a fall from a horse. The waves-horse relationship directly connects Interlude V and Section V. Interlude V concludes: "The waves were steeped deep-blue save for a pattern of diamond-pointed light on their backs which rippled as the backs of great horses ripple with muscles as they move. The waves fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stamping" (W, 280). Section V begins: "'He is dead', said Neville. 'He fell. His horse tripped. He was thrown. The sails of the world have swung round and caught me on the head. All is over. The lights of the world have gone out . . .'" (W, 280). The blending of the two images fuses the natural and human cycles juxtaposed throughout the book. The waves pounding the shore symbolize the timeless cycles of the hours, the seasons, the lives of men, cycles which no human action can alter; the horses exemplify human action that attempts to defy this inevitability and death. Percival, the symbol of life, dies in his prime after a horse's fall; this death signifies the enemy threatening each human action and each human life. When Bernard, speaking for all the characters, flings himself against the enemy, he has acknowledged the meaning of Percival's life and death:

'Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's, when he galloped in India. I strike my spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!'

The waves broke on the shore. (W, 383)

Another interlocked image is particularly striking for its symbolic overtones. It first appears in the sixth interlude and refers to a wave of light passing suddenly in the garden "as if a fin cut the green glass of a lake" (W, 302). It appears then in Section VI.

Bernard says:

'Leaning over this parapet I see far out a waste of water. A fin turns. This bare visual impression is unattached to any line of reason, it springs up as one might see the fin of a porpoise on the horizon. Visual impressions often communicate this briefly statements that we shall in time come to uncover and coax into words. I note under F., therefore, 'Fin in a waste of waters.' I, who am perpetually making notes in the margin of my mind for some final statement, make this mark, waiting for some winter's evening.' (W, 307)

It appears three times in Bernard's final soliloquy. The first time occurs when Bernard considers Neville's scholarly life and its dullness that he and Neville as boys envisaged: "And immense dullness would descend unbroken, monotonous. Nothing, nothing, nothing broke with its fin that leaden waste of waters" (W, 346). The second occurrence again relates to Neville, but refers to Bernard's mature satisfaction in talking and meditating over poetry with him: "So we shared our Pecks, our Shakespeares; . . . and then sank into one of those silences which are now and again broken by a few words, as if a fin rose in the wastes of silence; and then the fin, the thought, sinks back into the depths spreading round it a little ripple of satisfaction, content" (W, 366).

The third occasion precedes Bernard's final affirmation, when he has reached the lowest fall of the wave: "Now there is nothing. No fin breaks the waste of this immeasurable sea" (W, 374).

The fin is a positive symbol. It suggests the vital aspects of life, movement, exploration, discovery. As a synecdoche for fish,⁵¹ it indicates the entire being created beneath the surface of the sea, the necessity of seeking profound depths; it illustrates that what is above the water is a guide to the vast mystery below. The water represents reality itself. It is a waste of waters, an immeasurable sea, the green glass of a lake because it is implacable, eternal, desolate, which only the movement of the fin relieves. Everything hinges then on perceiving the fin's sudden appearance, and on acknowledging that it is the key to endurance as well as to understanding.

The image of the fin appeared in Virginia Woolf's diary before she even began The Waves. She spoke of her mystical mood while finishing To the Lighthouse and her sense of something "that is frightening and exciting in the midst of my profounder gloom, depression, boredom, whatever it is. One sees a fin passing far out." She sought an image to convey what she felt about life, which is "soberly and accurately, the oddest affair" and "has in it the essence of reality."⁵² The fin

⁵¹ Cf. the idea of the fish treated below, Chapter VI.

⁵² A Writer's Diary, p. 169. In "The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia," The Second Common Reader, p. 34, Virginia Woolf notes the phrase of Sir Philip Sidney's, "and a waste of fire in the midst of waters" as particularly haunting. The similarity of her own image to Sidney's suggests something of the way one imagination nourishes another.

becomes her book, something which momentarily transcends the ceaseless change of the waves of reality, something which comes up to the surface only occasionally. Like Bernard, Virginia Woolf put the image away until she understood its meaning, until she completed her book. On February 7, 1931, she finished The Waves and noted in her diary: "I have netted that fin in the waste of water which appeared to me over the marshes out of my window at Rodmell" Considering her use of symbols, she realized that they emerged from below the surface, just as the image suggested.

What interests me in the last stage was the freedom and boldness with which my imagination picked up, used and tossed aside all the images, symbols which I had prepared. I am sure that this is the right way of using them -- not in set pieces, as I had tried at first, coherently, but simply as images, never making them work out, only suggest. Thus I hope to have kept the sound of the sea and the birds, dawn and garden subconsciously present, doing their work under ground.⁵³

Virginia Woolf treated the six characters in The Waves in this "under ground" method of image and symbol. Each character has a cluster of images which define and reveal him. Bernard is the maker of

⁵³ A Writer's Diary, p. 169. N. C. Thakur, Symbolism, p. 4, uses this passage to support his conclusions that Virginia Woolf invented symbols rationally, and that she proceeded consciously rather than allowing the unconscious to perform its work. This seems like a misreading of the Diary passage. Mr. Thakur says "Virginia Woolf's symbols are aesthetic symbols rationally created to suggest and give insight into the ineffable in human thought and feeling or to heighten and make splendid the desired emotions and ideas; hence they are easy to interpret in light of the thoughts and feelings in her literary criticism, diary, and other writings." This awkward statement misleads the reader into thinking Virginia Woolf did not explore the unconscious processes by which image could suggest symbolic meaning. The Diary passage and Virginia Woolf's remark in her letter to John Lehmann on images arising unconsciously as one writes quoted above, p. 63, contradict this view.

phrases who keeps "the arrows of sensation" (W, 254-255), by which he perceives the world, in notebooks, and who winds them finally into rings of words. He transforms the words into images of Neville, Louis, Bernard, Rhoda, Jinny, and Susan, and through them expresses love, time, and death, the subject of his book. Neville is the austere scholar who "follows perfection through the sand" (W, 235-236), who was seared in childhood by a man's violent death in the apple trees (W, 191), who admires nature and beauty from afar because of his own weakness and ugliness, who hides behind a book and only peeps out at life (W, 216). Louis resents his chosen involvement with the world; he feels the great beast's foot chained and stamping (W, 180) because his father was a banker in Brisbane and spoke with an Australian accent (W, 187-195). He belongs to another time. His roots go down into the depths of the world (W, 182); he is a stone figure with lidless eyes who sees women with red pitchers going to the Nile (W, 182); his "roots are threaded, like fibres in a flowerpot, round and round, about the world" (W, 188), and "wrap round some hardness at the center" when he becomes a figure in the procession, "a spoke in the huge wheel turning" (W, 198).

Like Louis, Rhoda lives outside the "loop of time" (W, 189); she has "no face" (W, 197) and "no body" (W, 189, 219); she seeks refuge in dreams (W, 203-205, 258-271). The white petals she floats in a brown basin become her armadas, that fleet of ships which sails into exotic worlds, to pools into which swallows dip, and from which marble columns reflect, the present moment, where the "tiger" does not leap (W, 219).

She is the antithesis of Jinny, who dances, ripples, quivers through life; Jinny pirouettes in and out of love in her red dress (W, 197), and in her yellow dress, fiery, and fulvous (W, 188). Jinny sits on gilt chairs with her veils billowing around her and sees the future, like Clarissa Dalloway, as a hoard into which she has not broken (W, 213), a party into which she makes a perpetual entrance. Susan is a field, a barn (W, 242), the seasons (W, 243), someone who wants to give and be given, to unfold, to wear a blue apron (W, 243), and to stitch silently by the window dreaming of golden hams and glistening onions (W, 295), who seeks nature rather than school and London, where she screwed her handkerchief tight into a ball (W, 183). Variations of these images occur throughout each character's soliloquies, developing and refracting the aspects of character they reveal. Variations also appear in other character's soliloquies, in both comparison and contrast.

Rhoda assumes the mask of great people like the Empress of Russia (W, 213), and Louis identifies with great historical figures (W, 210), because both have "no face." Rhoda imitates others: "I pull on my stockings as I see them pull on theirs. I wait for you to speak and then speak like you" (W, 266). Louis repeats his Latin verbs only after he hears Bernard say them: "I will not conjugate the verb . . . I speak with an Australian accent. I will wait and copy Bernard. He is English" (W, 187). But Louis plays with the present world, "the caged tiger" (W, 264), which Rhoda fears will spring; he works in an office, signing his name, "clear, firm, unequivocal" (W, 291), while Rhoda says I "flutter unattached, without anchorage, anywhere,

unconsolidated, incapable of composing any blankness or continuity or wall . . . " (W, 259). Neville keeps a notebook like Bernard, but in it he enters "curious uses of the past participle" (W, 235), whereas Bernard enters phrases and images (W, 199) against the time when he will write his novel. Neville loves the order and distinctions of language (W, 188), but fears he will be a "clinger to the outsides of words all his life" (W, 207), a lover of words which gallop, but one who "cannot give himself to their backs" (W, 232), for they bring out "foam and falsity" (W, 232). Words bring Bernard to the "unsubstantial territory" (W, 275) of the imagination, where a word, "like a balloon that sails over tree tops" (W, 256), can create "people, create experiences" (W, 255), can elaborate himself, where he can make sequences which sum up all that he is (W, 285), find "a line that runs from one to another, and a summing up that completes" (W, 255).

Jinny lives with her body, which lives a life of its own (W, 218); she streams "like a plant in the river, flowing this way, flowing that, but rooted . . . " (W, 246). Susan lives by her body, too, but barely and naturally. She is "like a field bearing crops in rotation" (W, 266) that will "be lifted higher than any . . . on the backs of the seasons" (W, 266), and "shall be debased and hidebound by the bestial and the beautiful passion of maternity" (W, 267). In the looking glass Susan sees "the farm wagons" (W, 202), "the hay waves over the meadow" (W, 202), while Jinny sees her "thin legs ripple like a stalk in the wind" (W, 203), and the way she catches fire "even from women's cold eyes" (W, 203).

Comparisons arise also as each character responds to something outside himself, to something more objective than emotions and thought. The ways they do sums (W, 188-189), eat bread (W, 192), respond to their summer holidays (W, 216-219), or Mr. Crane, the headmaster (W, 196), suggest some of the differences. Reactions to the sea in its various manifestations epitomize this method. All the characters use images that pertain to the sea, although Rhoda's soliloquies contain the greatest number. Bernard's final soliloquy also contains many, but that is partially because he assumes the role of all characters and incorporates their usage into his own.

To each character, the sea represents that aspect of his identity which he considers most real or true about himself. Jinny associates the active social and sexual life with being in the waves (W, 206), and dancing with a current (W, 246); she feels herself like a gull on a wave (W, 248). Neville relates the rise and fall of the waves to the words he tries to seize but cannot (W, 231) and perceives the uproar of the city into which he would like to fling himself as the surge of the sea heard through a glass roof (W, 224). Susan feels nature's cycles of growth and return like waves under her (W, 266). Louis views his more carefree childhood days as waters (W, 221); he sees man following his destiny "like twigs in a stream" (W, 195). Rhoda turns petals into ships that float to exotic lands (W, 247-248); she considers life a sea on which she rides rough waters and into which she ultimately sinks (W, 286); she is like a cork in that rough sea (W, 249), like foam on a wave (W, 249), and when falling asleep she imagines she is falling into water

(W, 193). Bernard compares his childhood's imaginary excursions to swimming in air (W, 185); he thinks of life as a boat (W, 237) and of the necessity of one rowing one's way through crowds (W, 282); when he falls asleep, light seems like water (W, 193), and the revelation of one's true self "like a long wave, like a roll of heavy waters . . . laying bare the pebbles on the shore of his soul" (W, 236). The continued appearance of the sea in the soliloquies corresponds to the waves beating on the shore in the interludes. Continuity thus develops through content as well as theme.

Various verbal and rhythmic devices, together with the images, create a deliberately artificial speech "as if it were not 'interior' at all, but spoken . . . dramatically."⁵⁴ Psychological realism is almost totally abandoned and the six characters are presented in identical modes of conception expressed in similar language.⁵⁵ The highly stylized speeches illustrate the search for self conducted on an aesthetic and abstract level; individual consciousness is turned inside out and ultimately becomes part of the larger pattern, which expresses human consciousness in general. The soliloquies represent a further departure in Virginia Woolf's uses of the interior monologue, for more than in the previous novels, she emphasized an aesthetic rather than a psychological end. Instead of creating characters whose consciousnesses

⁵⁴ John Lehmann, "Virginia Woolf," The Open Night (London, 1952), p. 30.

⁵⁵ Collins, Black Arrows of Sensation, p. 9. Both Collins, p. 9, and Friedman, Stream of Consciousness, p. 206, maintain that The Waves is not a stream of consciousness novel at all because of this factor.

were explored through analysis of actions, memory, and various networks of images, she created a soliloquy technique, composed almost entirely of formal image patterns, to depict representative types of consciousness signifying consciousness itself. The soliloquy reflects the self as an object of its own contemplation, and illustrates awareness itself. Objects and motifs replace actual life and become images symbolizing experience; elaborate image structure and poetic language recreate poetry from speech.⁵⁶ "The soliloquies are poetic constructions of subjects to which they refer. Suppressing all experience, they exist only as inference. All speech, internal as well as external, is displaced by artificially 'silent' monologues which present the sounds and actions of life by implication."⁵⁷ In this way, Virginia Woolf heightened the mood of impersonality expressed in the interludes. Rather than personal apprehension expressed through interior monologue, she developed the impersonal point of view that wove character directly into the larger design.

The soliloquy technique differs from the interior monologue particularly in the type and level of consciousness presented. Whereas the interior monologue follows the streams of thought through many layers of consciousness, and through time and memory to reveal a character's psyche, the soliloquy attempts to represent psychic content and processes closer to the surface of consciousness, with the end of communicating

⁵⁶Friedman, The Lyrical Novel, pp. 258-259.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 257.

distinct ideas and emotions.⁵⁸ The soliloquist speaks as if alone although tacitly conscious of an audience,⁵⁹ while the interior monologue exposes the psyche as the character participates in a narrative or symbolic action. Both direct and indirect interior monologues provide a more private and intimate picture than the soliloquy, which emphasizes the speaker's objective perspective of himself.⁶⁰ The soliloquist speaks so others will understand him.⁶¹ He speaks deliberately, seeking images that express his relation to a general idea rather than those which would particularly stress him.⁶² By emphasizing the approach of soliloquy, Virginia Woolf deepened the impersonal image of the natural world the interludes reveal. The "I" of the soliloquies is as impersonal as the omniscient point of view of the interludes. It is the "I" of the lyric poem which belongs not to the poet, but to the generalized image of the self reflecting the larger point of view the poet projects. Just as the "I" of the lyric poem is a formal presentation of the poet's self, his persona or mask, the "I" of the soliloquies acts as a formal presentation of the characters' selves. While the individual voices express unique perceptions, emotion, and thoughts,

⁵⁸Humphrey, Stream of Consciousness, p. 36. Cf. Virginia Woolf's use of the soliloquy to William Faulkner's in As I Lay Dying (1930).

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition (New York, 1957), p. 146.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 148.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 160-161.

they also express more generalized ones. By balancing the poet's lyrical "I" with the novelist's omniscient point of view⁶³ by means of interlude and soliloquy, Virginia Woolf established a generalized perspective. She attempted what she thought Emily Brontë achieved in Wuthering Heights, "to free life from its dependence on facts; with a few touches indicate the spirit of a face so that it needs no body; by speaking of the moor make the wind blow and the thunder roar," "to say something through the mouths of her characters which is not merely 'I love' or 'I hate', but 'we, the whole human race' and 'you the eternal powers'"64

In The Waves, the six voices become one voice belonging to an idealized human consciousness. It is the silent voice of reality itself, the lyrical voice in which inner and outer experience fuse, and "in which private awareness becomes external fact and external fact becomes general idea and value."⁶⁵ By making The Waves "an abstract mystical eyeless book: a playpoem . . . ,"⁶⁶ she sought to capture the dramatic generality that she said in "Notes on an Elizabethan Play" novelists lack. "The play is poetry . . . the novel prose" This makes for crucial differences: "the long leisurely accumulated novel; the little contracted play; the emotion all split up, dissipated

⁶³ Freedman, The Lyrical Novel, p. 202.

⁶⁴ Virginia Woolf, "'Jane Eyre' and 'Wuthering Heights,'" Common Reader, pp. 164-165.

⁶⁵ Freedman, The Lyrical Novel, p. 188.

⁶⁶ A Writer's Diary, p. 137.

and then woven together, slowly and gradually massed into a whole, in the novel: the emotion concentrated, generalized, heightened in the play"

The extremes of passion are not for the novelist; the perfect marriages of sense and sound are not for him; he must tame his swiftness to sluggardry; keep his eyes on the ground not on the sky; suggest by description, not reveal by illumination. Instead of singing 'Lay a garland on my hearse/Of the dismal yew . . . ,' he must enumerate the chrysanthemums fading on the grave and the undertakers' men shuffling past in four-wheelers.

The novelist reveals "the individual" and makes one "recognise the real," but "the dramatist goes beyond the single and the separate, shows us not Annabella in love, but love itself; not Anna Karenina throwing herself under the train, but ruin and death and the 'soul, like a ship in a black storm, . . . driven, I know not whither.'"⁶⁷ She states her desire to infuse a dramatic poetic mode into her fiction:

I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment; this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner: it is false, unreal, merely conventional. Why admit anything to literature that is not poetry -- by which I mean saturated? Is that not my grudge against novelists? that they select nothing? The poets succeeding by simplifying: practically everything is left out. I want to put practically everything in: yet to saturate. That is what I want to do in The Moths [The Waves]. It must include nonsense, fact, sordidity: but he made transparent.⁶⁸

Transparency could come from depersonalization, but "nonsense, fact, sordidity" could only come from the inclusion of things from different

⁶⁷Common Reader, pp. 54-55.

⁶⁸A Writer's Diary, p. 139.

spheres. That she felt had accomplished the first part of her goal in The Waves is apparent from her comment that with that book, she could "embody at last the exact shapes her brain held."⁶⁹ But she had to go further to accomplish the second part. Her last, and posthumously published novel, most clearly indicates this achievement.

In Between the Acts,⁷⁰ Virginia Woolf modulated the "eyeless" design of The Waves by a less abstract though still impersonal vision. Starting with the desire to write something "random and tentative," without a "scheme," without "all the cosmic intensities," she approached the new novel with an inclination to explore whatever ideas would swim up. She established a centre in "Poyntzet Hall," decided literature should be discussed as well as "real little incongruous humour . . . and anything that [came] into her head."⁷¹ What was crucial, however, was to maintain the impersonal poetic mode that she had discovered. She extended the range of generality, however, by substituting "we" for "I", by making the lyrical self all people without the abstraction she used in The Waves.

'I' rejected; 'We' substituted: to whom at the end shall be an invocation? 'We' . . . the composed of many things . . . we all life, all art, all waifs and strays -- a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole -- the present state of my mind?

⁶⁹A Writer's Diary, p. 176.

⁷⁰Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts (London, 1960). Subsequent references will be to this edition, and will be cited in the text as BA followed by a page number.

⁷¹A Writer's Diary, p. 289.

And English country; and a scenic old house -- and a terrace where nursemaids walk -- and people passing -- and a perpetual variety and change from intensity to prose, and facts -- and notes.⁷²

She could only achieve such generalization by introducing various layers of life, by juxtaposing a myriad of people, places, thoughts, and events, by blending poetry, prose, and dialogue, all of which would ultimately coalesce into meaning. These different layers would also enable her to include the fact and nonsense vital to her ideal for the novel. Vision focused the subject; actual life furnished the design so that the whole reflects a lyricism combining fact and feeling.

Since she generalized the focus of Between the Acts differently from The Waves, she had to modify her method of character depiction once again. Neither soliloquy nor interior monologue, as she formerly wrote it, would do. She required a method less individual, less personal, one that would, without eliminating personality altogether, suggest a symbolic figure struggling against powerful forces. By sidestepping the technique of association in memory, to a great degree, and by concentrating on what the character felt and thought in the present of the book and not in the past, Virginia Woolf created a type of interior monologue that was accessible to the more conventional methods of narration.

The interior monologue varied according to the particular nature of the central characters and the role they played in the central design. To Isa Oliver belongs the most unusual and extensive group of

⁷²A Writer's Diary, pp. 289-290.

monologues. Primarily poetic, they range from random phrases and lines, to whole passages, both from her own imagination and from literature. As Isa wanders through Pointz Hall, she murmurs poetry. "'Where we know not, where we go not, neither know nor care'" (BA, 21). She starts a line and leaves it unfinished because she suddenly becomes conscious of what she is doing and feels guilty for its implications: "'Flying, rushing, through the ambient incandescent, summer silent . . . '" (BA, 21). But her conscious control does not impede either the poetry from coming or her true feelings from emerging. She says, "'To what dark antre of the unvisited earth, or wind brushed forest, shall we go now? Or spin from star to star and dance in the maze of the moon. Or . . . '" (BA, 64), and thus contrasts the unreal world of her dreams with the reality of the domestic life in which she feels imprisoned. "'What do I ask? To fly away, from night and day, and issue where -- no partings are -- but eye meets eye -- and -- '" (BA, 101). "'Fly then, follow . . . the dappled herds in the cedar grove, who, sporting, play, the red with the roe, the stag with the doe. Fly, away, I grieving stay . . . '" (BA, 134). She incorporates the line "Dispersed are we," from the pageant into her own monologues and envisages death as a solution. "'Let me turn away . . . from the array'" (BA, 123). She speaks her part and imagines "from her bosom's snowy antre drew the gleaming blade , . . 'Faithless!' she cried. Knife, too! It broke. So too my heart" (BA, 135). Isolated, alone, she thinks, "'Now may I pluck, . . . , my single flower. The white or the pink? And press it so, twixt thumb and finger'" (BA, 181). But then she asks:

'Where do I wander?' . . . 'Down what draughty tunnels?
Where the eyeless wind blows? And there grows nothing for
the eye. No rose. To issue where? In some harvestless
dim field where no evening lets fall her mantle; nor sun
rises. All's equal there. Unblowing, ungrowing are the
roses there. Change is not; nor the mutable and lovable;
nor greetings nor partings; nor furtive findings and
feelings where hand seeks hand and eye seeks shelter from
the eye.' (BA, 181)

She imagines herself as a little donkey who bears an enormous burden on his back, a burden of memories placed there at birth. She re-iterates the imperative, "'On, little donkey . . . crossing the desert . . . bearing your burden . . . '" (BA, 205), while waiting to act for death or life.

Isa's monologues aptly illustrate a handling different from the soliloquies of The Waves because they function largely through constantly varying rhythms rather than through static clusters of images. Although like the soliloquies, they are formal equivalents for a state of mind, the rhythmic alteration creates a natural not a stylized presentation of the psychic state. From the hesitating and fragmented words, phrases, and rhymes, the image of a modern woman struggling with her passions becomes clear.

Isa's monologues differ particularly, though not generally, from those of the other characters. Giles Oliver has monologues considerably more limited in scope. Like Isa's, however, they reveal the disparity between outward demeanour and inner feelings. From this, Giles's position as a man whose traditional role thwarts his real desire for social action becomes clear. The toad caught in the mouth of the snake appropriately symbolizes Giles's dilemma (BA, 119). That he kills the

perverted beast suggests the violence that he will have to experience to acknowledge his real nature. The monologues of Miss La Trobe, William Dodge, and Mrs. Manresa work similarly to those of Giles. Virginia Woolf handled them as Jane Austen might have handled dialogue for "flat" characters, for each of these three characters represents a particular point of view around which almost all Giles's monologues are designed. Miss La Trobe never speaks out of the context of her pageant. Her often cryptic comments serve as personal responses to her own creation. Her declamations against self, audience, and the substance of her pageant illustrate how external devices, too, reveal her nature. The consistently superficial nature of Mrs. Manresa's monologues indicates how her words are really asides to the actions she wants to perform and does not, and the fragmentary nature of William Dodge's monologues suits his personal sense of inadequacy in establishing satisfying social relationships; they illustrate his "outsider" personality.

The monologues of Lucy Swithin convey a different, dreamy other-worldliness from those of Isa Oliver. They disclose Lucy's relationship to more external elements, although these elements are still subjective. Bound by religious belief, Lucy moves through the afternoon at Pointz Hall relating people, things, and events to that large design whose meaning makes everything else clear. She tries to combine people and nature, past and present, love and aggression in a "private vision; of beauty which is goodness; the sea in which we float" (BA, 240). Pointz Hall symbolizes her vision and her life, and her civilization's past, and she shows it happily, proudly, sentimentally, to William Dodge:

"'Come and see my sea weeds, come and see my sea shells, come and see my dicky bird hop upon its perch'" (BA, 87). From a different world than Isa, Lucy Swithin is all that religion, family, and tradition have made her. She floats through Pointz Hall on a cloud of her own and her world's devising. Her monologues show the past through her non-modern responses to the present world. Her interest and involvement in the pageant and its related activities vitalize her particular imaginative nature, just as the integration of her monologues with the running narrative ties her visionary quality to fact.

The monologues, as one critic suggests, "blend into an intermittent unspoken colloquy" that echoes as a type of "'world voice,'" expressing all experiences and idioms in one.⁷³ It is like the voice in The Waves that reconciles nature and personality into impersonality. The omniscient author hovering over Between the Acts, as in Virginia Woolf's previous stream of consciousness novels, unifies the various monologues into the semi-conventional framework of a plot, the presentation of an annual pageant put on by the villagers at Pointz Hall, the old manor house of the Oliver family. The omniscient author describes Pointz Hall (BA, 11-12), its Barn (BA, 34), its view (BA, 64-66), because their objective presentation falls outside the range of particular monologues. The omniscient point of view also extends conventional description onto a symbolic level, as when the butler, Candish, pauses in the dining room and adjusts a yellow rose (BA, 45-47).

⁷³Don Summerhayes, "Society, Morality, Analogy: Virginia Woolf's World Between the Acts," Modern Fiction Studies (1964), p. 331.

He contemplates the pictures hanging there, imagines the personalities of the subjects, and evokes the past. His thought, "The room was empty," concludes his meditation. The narrator, then, proceeds: "Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent. The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence" (BA, 47). The actual, the ordinary, becomes a symbol of time past, of the themes of death and change sounding throughout the whole book.

In addition to monologues and omniscient author, Virginia Woolf used the pageant as a third angle of vision. Juxtaposition of these three perspectives creates the simultaneous effect characteristic of spatial form. In the luncheon scene (BA, 58-64), Isa's, Giles's, and Mrs. Manresa's monologues create such a simultaneous effect, but without the extended irony of the more complex juxtaposition. By setting the monologues and Miss La Trobe's comments on, and the audience's attitudes towards, the pageant into the natural scene of cows, swallows, and landscape, in which the pageant is performed, Virginia Woolf created an ironic effect equivalent to Flaubert's achievement in the county-fair scene.

Before the Restoration sequence the audience gossips about miscellaneous things: Russia, Rome, the Elizabethans, the Duke of Windsor, Jewish Refugees (BA, 144-145). The performance begins, and Reason and Commerce, trailed by villagers symbolizing the joys and profits of the pastoral life, speak the Prologue (BA, 145). As the

playlet proceeds, Miss La Trobe admonishes her actors to keep things moving, and mutters hostile comments to the audience she detests, and yet must please (BA, 163-165). Simultaneously, Bart Oliver attacks the rationalism of the so-called Age of Reason (BA, 157), and Lucy, the too realistic mode of presentation (BA, 167); Mrs. Manresa preens before her mirror, unconsciously fitting herself into the dramatized vanity (BA, 158); Giles searches for moral truth in the title, "Where there's a Will there's a Way," ignoring its more mundane application for his own needs (BA, 174); and Isa seeks to escape (BA, 181). The cows re-enforce the idea conveyed by the view: "how after toil men rest from their labours; how coolness comes; reason prevails; and having unharnessed the team from the plough, neighbors dig in cottage gardens and lean over cottage gates" (BA, 159). Even the cows finally participate, substituting their natural for the gramophone's mechanical bellowing.

From cow after cow came the same yearning bellow. The whole world was filled with dumb yearning. It was the primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment . . . The cows annihilated the gap; bridged the distance; filled the emptiness and continued the emotion. (BA, 165-166)

The present day sequence epitomized this interweaving technique. The ten minutes of silence, the mirrors, the music, and the anonymous, megaphonic voice, conclude the drama unconsciously performed throughout the afternoon. All the characters have been both actors and audience. They have been past as well as present; the mirrors disclose the truth, although, ironically, not to all who stare at the reflections. The method has become the meaning. The audience's point of view becomes

part of the pageant's, which belongs first to local history. It is the point of view of the old families all listed in the Domesday Book, the point of view of those whose houses have Norman arches, whose lily ponds have ghosts, whose larder was a chapel before the Restoration, whose listing in Figgis' Guide Book of 1883 is nothing extraordinary, but something perfectly natural. The pageant illustrates the particular English heritage of the audience. Through the development of English literature, the high style and the low, the humour and the satire, the romantic idealism and the realism, their England's tale is told, and through England's, all of civilization's. It is that civilization, however, which the airplane, zooming overhead, threatens to destroy, the civilization which received its earliest expression in myth (BA, 32, 144). The Outline of History Lucy Swithin reads at various intervals sets the idea on its most general plane.

Both civilized present and past belong to universal evolutionary development. Once there were rhododendron forests in Piccadilly. The continent was undivided, and was populated by monsters, iguanadons, mammoths, and mastodons (BA, 13-14). England then turned swamp; thick forests covered the land; birds sang on the top of the matted branches (BA, 254). Finally, "Pre-historic man, . . . , half-human, half-ape, roused himself from his semi-crouching position and raised great stones" (BA, 255). The pageant projects a vision of the present, the airplanes, the immediate future. But the vision of the book itself belongs to a more distant future, the one that can never be realized without human recognition and understanding. Thus Giles and Isa face

each other at the end:

Alone, enmity was bared; also love. Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night.

Isa let her sewing drop. The great hooded chairs had become enormous. And Giles too, and Isa too against the window. The window was all sky without colour. The house had lost its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks. (BA, 255-256)

The texture of Between the Acts extends the ideas the multi-layered structure expresses. Although narrative, interior monologue, and dramatic dialogue, each demanded a different mode of expression, Virginia Woolf blended the "scraps, orts, and fragments" (BA, 145) into unity by the interweaving of images, symbols, and rhythms, characteristic of her lyrical method. But as Bernard Blackstone says, "The book has the looser texture which characterizes verse. It flows from part to part, it is not built up, it has a natural rather than an artificial rhythm."⁷⁴ Rhythm is, in fact, the most remarkable aspect of Between the Acts. Traditional and original poetry, allusions, refrains, tags, nursery rhymes, and children's songs interfuse the many layers of the book. Literary references range from Sappho to Yeats. Shakespeare, the anonymous author of Gammer Gurton's Needle, Cowper, Byron, Matthew Arnold, Meredith, represent the actual line of English literature, and express literary reality in its various manifestations. Allusions to

⁷⁴Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf, A Commentary (New York, 1949), p. 241.

Prometheus (BA, 74), the Duchess of Malfi (BA, 111), Prufrock (BA, 200), amplify the ideas of imprisonment, death, vacillation, and regeneration. Rule Britannia and Home Sweet Home, "Tinker, Tailor" (BA, 63-64), "Hark, hark the dogs do bark" (BA, 139), and "The King in his Counting House" (BA, 146) illustrate the extent and range of English culture, and blend with symbolic refrains, such as "roses left over from the Coronation" (BA, 119), and "scraps, orts, fragments," (BA, 145), to deepen the themes. These elements, added to the poetry of Isa's monologues, and the dramatic poetry largely parodied in the pageant, produce the rhythms which echoed in Virginia Woolf's mind as she wrote Between the Acts: "it is the rhythm of a book that, by running in the head, winds one into a ball; and so jades one. The rhythm of P. H. [Pointz Hall] (the last chapter) became so obsessive that I heard it, perhaps used it, in every sentence I spoke"75

She emphasized deeper rhythmic relationships through images and symbols. Particular images, symbols, and rhythms reappear in the narration, in the interior monologues, in the dramatic dialogue, and in the dialogue of the central characters and audience. Nature images, particularly animals and flowers, dominate. Images of roses appear throughout the whole book. White and red paper roses left over from the Coronation adorn the Barn where the pageant might be held (BA, 35); Candish adjusts a yellow rose in the empty Pointz Hall dining room (BA, 45); roses grow by the wall of the terrace (BA, 177); Isa imagines

⁷⁵A Writer's Diary, p. 359.

herself a pink rose (BA, 181); she rushes past the nursery window where words do not grow or "roses either" (BA, 243), and she feels the cold night air from which "the roses had withdrawn" (BA, 253). Rhododendrons bloomed in Piccadilly, lilies grew self-sown in and around the lily pond (BA, 54-55, 239); the bitter leaf, Old Man's Beard, grew instead of roses (BA, 134, 243); Cobbet of Cobbs Corner waits for the end of the pageant to water his plants (BA, 118) and observes the flower beds containing carnations, zinnias, geraniums; Mrs. Chalmers, one of the "women in the cottages with red geraniums," (BA, 247), puts "pinks" on her husband's grave after removing the "dead flowers" (BA, 245); Isa broods on the pageant and observes how the "flowers flashed before they faded" (BA, 202). A may tree (BA, 125), a nut tree (BA, 125), fruit trees (BA, 65), and a tree full of "hard green pears" (BA, 182) appear in Isa's monologues, and a tree full of starlings inspires Miss La Trobe's vision for a new play (BA, 244-245). The greenhouse, with its fig tree, blue hydrangeas, and little grapes (BA, 135), gathers these various floral images into larger symbolic meaning. The roses -- symbolizing England,⁷⁶ death and love, the rhododendrons, the prehistoric world, and the lilies, chastity and undeveloped fertility, all unified by the greenhouse, the place where Isa takes William Dodge, sensing their mutual disillusion, and where Giles takes Mrs. Manresa, when he tries to overcome his agitation. Although death and chaos threaten people and life in general, the greenhouse is the first

⁷⁶ Barbara Seward, The Symbolic Rose (New York, 1960), pp. 130-131.

step towards regeneration. It suggests that some order may be restored.

Isa may express her real love, Giles may pursue an ideal.

The stable is the symbol parallel to the greenhouse, balancing the idea of fertility with the idea of strife and survival the various animal images suggest. Isa goes there after her visit to the greenhouse, and as the donkey image suggests, accepts her moral responsibilities; she leaves the stable and passes the greenhouse, but has no reason to stop now, since she has passed the level of development the greenhouse represents. Fish swim in the lily pond and appear suddenly on the surface, bearing bright colours, "Ourselves," says Lucy (BA, 239); catching fish made Isa recognize her love for Giles (BA, 59); fish remind Lucy and Bart of their childhood by the sea (BA, 28, 37-38); eating fish for luncheon is the beginning of the struggle between man and man (BA, 21, 40-42, 59-62). Outside the stable and beyond the lily pond cows dot the lovely view (BA, 66); they intensify the level of reality the pageant initiates (BA, 165); they signify the dumb pre-historic beasts that lumbered across the once undivided continent (BA, 165, 215). Birds sing in the garden's trees (BA, 14), as they did when England was a swamp; starlings sing "life, life, life" to Miss La Trobe (BA, 244-245); swallows fly across the pageant stage, migrating to Africa, Lucy says (BA, 123), and signifying the same reality the cows do (BA, 192). Bart identifies Lucy with the swallow as he murmurs Swinburne's lines (BA, 137-139). Giles is identified with a fish (BA, 60), and Isa with the donkey, the kin to the cow (BA, 182). Reference to insects, horses, dogs, and mud underline the idea of

evolutionary survival, and the image of the toad stuck in the throat of a snake, crushed by Giles, suggests the violence that occurs when natural evolutionary progress ceases. This image particularly emphasizes the state of man approaching total war.

The barn yokes flower and animal images; it is festooned with roses, smells of hay (BA, 35); it is a church without a steeple (BA, 34), and, to those who had been to Greece, a temple (BA, 34). A substitute for nature itself, it is the place where the pageant would be held if it rained, and the place where the Olivers serve tea, and the meeting place of the villagers, the nouveau riche, and the gentry. The barn is the vital adjunct to Pointz Hall, the symbol of past and passing traditions and attitudes, doomed to destruction by its owners, by war, and by time. That Virginia Woolf altered the title from "Pointz Hall" to Between the Acts⁷⁷ suggests not only that Pointz Hall is its central symbol, but that Virginia Woolf saw Pointz Hall as part of the larger historical process. Through the timeless present, the moment between the acts when no action occurs, "at the still point of the turning world,"⁷⁸ that historical process can best be seen and understood. The present, composed in Mrs. Dalloway of retrospect and anticipation, is, in Between the Acts, static, simply an extended gloss on what is past and what is to come. As the book ends, the still point

⁷⁷Virginia Woolf referred to Between the Acts as Pointz Hall until February 26, 1941, when she called it, upon completion, Between the Acts. See A Writer's Diary, p. 365.

⁷⁸T. S. Eliot, "'Burnt Norton' The Four Quartets," The Collected Poems and Plays, 1909-1950 (New York, 1952), p. 119.

dissolves, and the action begins. "The curtain rose. They spoke" (BA, 256). Thus the central device of the book, the pageant, becomes the metaphor for reality, coalescing through its function in the novel and its subject, the various levels of reality Between the Acts explores. As illusion, it serves the cause of truth better than life itself, as the failure of Miss La Trobe's ten minutes of reality indicates.

By using an art form for method and meaning, Virginia Woolf succeeded in achieving the fusion between her vision and her mode of design. Like the pageant, her novels attained that unity because she moulded the novel into a form that reflected her vision. The form she created grew from a conception of self-containment and purity, from an image of text illuminating texture, texture illuminating text. As this conception became embodied, Virginia Woolf's novels resembled the conventional novel less and less. They transformed the picture of society and personal relationships into an impersonal image of the mind contemplating general ideas, but, because of the omniscient author, the general narrative approach, and the prose style, they were still novels and not poems. Aesthetic impersonality, however, implied even more than the self-contained and abstract design. It implied a profound vision of the larger design of reality. To understand Virginia Woolf's lyrical novels, it is essential to explore the implications of the lyrical method as they appear in those images of society and self that most dramatically reflect them. Then, their significance in shaping Virginia Woolf's belief in the value of art may be understood.

Chapter IV

THE LOOP OF TIME: THE TOE IN LIVERPOOL

'The clock ticks. The two hands are convoys marching through a desert. The black bars on the clock face are green oases. The long hand has marched ahead to find water. The other painfully stumbles among hot stones in the desert. It will die in the desert. The kitchen door slams. Wild dogs bark far away. Look, the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with time; it holds the world in it; I begin to draw a figure and the world is looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop; which I join -- so -- and seal up, and make entire. The world is entire, and I am outside it, crying, "Oh, save me, from being blown for ever outside the loop of time!"' (W, 189)

This early passage from The Waves expresses Rhoda's distrust and dislike of external reality. She withdraws from it by creating another reality in which the clock tells a non-temporal tale. The difference between Rhoda's reading of the clock and a more ordinary one signifies the difference between the inner and outer view of reality informing Virginia Woolf's fiction. In the inner view, reality is a subjective, mental phenomenon, whereas in the outer view, it is an objective, external one. Virginia Woolf accepted neither extreme as the true approach to, and an apt reflection of, reality. A combination of the two seemed more reasonable to her. In "Notes on an Elizabethan Play," she wrote that

reality is a chameleon quality, the fantastic becoming as we grow used to it often the closest to the truth, the sober the furthest from it, and nothing proving a writer's greatness more than his capacity to consolidate his scene by the use of what, until he touched them, seemed wisps of cloud and threads of gossamer. Our contention . . . is that there is a station, somewhere in mid-air, whence Smith and Liverpool can be seen to the best advantage; that the great artist is

the man who knows where to place himself above the shifting scenery; that while he never loses sight of Liverpool he never sees it in the wrong perspective.¹

The "wrong perspective" to Virginia Woolf was the external one, although she heartily acknowledged that to understand personality and life, she had to deal with externality and with concrete fact. "One test of poetry . . . ," she wrote to Vita Sackville-West, "is that without saying things, indeed saying the opposite, it conveys things So if your poem is . . . about the wooly aphis, I may come away from it dreaming of the stars and the South Sea."² Nevertheless, Virginia Woolf viewed concrete fact and "the world within the loop of time," circumspectly, for she found that they often distorted the values she revered.

Society, Virginia Woolf's metaphor for the outer external world, frightens Rhoda by its self-contained impersonality. Government and law, social convention and logic, provide its values, and clock and calendar impose order on its movement. They determine how man perceives and understands reality. They offer objective, verifiable, uniform, and public means to synchronize private experience for all social action and communication.³ As a result, man's perception and conception of self become circumscribed by the social order in which he exists.

¹The Common Reader, p. 51.

²Aileen Pippett, The Moth and the Star A Biography of Virginia Woolf (New York, 1957), p. 210.

³Hans Meyerhoff, Time in Literature (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), p. 5.

Having acknowledged the limitations of this order, Virginia Woolf, like Rhoda, rejected its conception of the true nature of man and reality. G. E. Moore had previously expressed the same view. Rather than societal aims and values, Moore claimed, "By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects."⁴ Moore believed that

it is only for the sake of these things -- in order that as much of them as possible may at some time exist -- that anyone can be justified in performing any public or private duty; . . . they are the raison d'être of virtue; . . . it is they -- these complex wholes themselves, and not any constituent of characteristic of them -- that form the rational ultimate end of human action and the sole criterion of social progress⁵

In the spirit of Moore and the Cambridge Apostles later turned Bloomsbury,⁶ Virginia Woolf repudiated the faith in social action, power, politics, success, wealth, ambition, and all Benthamite utilitarianism upheld by the Victorians.⁷ Although she believed, like them, that some material qualities were essential to the achievement of an ideal, and that "to deny and exclude matter is to deny and exclude the best we know,"⁸ she believed that a society would be superior if its

⁴G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge, 1962), p. 188.

⁵Ibid., p. 189.

⁶See Noel G. Annan, Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to his Time (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 123-126, for a discussion of the relationship among the Clapham Sect, Bloomsbury, and Cambridge.

⁷John Maynard Keynes, "My Early Beliefs," Two Memoirs (London, 1949), p. 96.

⁸Moore, p. 207.

goods were mental and spiritual rather than material. She accepted the significance of material qualities, acknowledged the importance of fact, and enjoyed the hum of concrete life, but she proferred values more timeless, passionate, and contemplative than society could offer. Through an individual belief in spiritual and mental goods, through more penetrating individual human understanding, and through the image of the complete human person, she envisaged the possibility of a new social order.⁹ By refocusing the societal, material, outer mode of vision onto a more individual, spiritual, inner one, she hoped to inspire the fusion that she believed should exist between individual and society and that failed to exist because of the materialist society's strenuous demands. Katharine Hilbery expresses this failure in Night and Day:

. . . in her thought she was accustomed to complete freedom, why should she perpetually apply so different a standard to her behaviour in practice? Why, she reflected, should there be this perpetual disparity between the thought and the action, between the life of solitude and the life of society, this astonishing precipice on one side of which the soul was active and in broad daylight, on the other side of which it was contemplative and dark as night? Was it not possible to step from one to the other, erect, and without essential change?¹⁰

Virginia Woolf repeatedly singled out aspects of the outer social world that revealed a failure to recognize the significance of the inner spiritual one. She particularly attacked (usually through the

⁹A. D. Moody, Virginia Woolf (London, 1963), p. 15.

¹⁰Virginia Woolf, Night and Day (London, 1960), pp. 358-359. Subsequent references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text as ND followed by a page number.

external perspective of satire) social conventions, feminism, religion, and intellectual professions. She used fact, observation, and description rather than image and dream to illustrate in a detached manner their illusory values. After considering these four social expressions in the light of irony, wit, or fantasy in which Virginia Woolf set them, and after considering them against the larger background of time, one may understand why Virginia Woolf thought the outer point of view reflected transient values.

Virginia Woolf criticized the stupidity and superficiality of the values social conventions upheld and defined many of her own values through reaction to the failures of polite society. She criticized the stranglehold on individual expression of social intercourse and manners; she reacted against "the boredom of fashionable life,"¹¹ and "the prudery, insincerity, and that kind of 'good manners' that consists of evasion and concealment" that makes "honest friendships impossible."¹² She objected to pomposity because "it veils one from oneself and from others"; she attacked the desire for worldly success and honours, "not only because . . . it might lead to a misdirection of energy, but because . . . robes and titles, medals and distinctions surround one with barriers that are difficult to penetrate and often pass current for character itself."¹³ For those attitudes or conventions that

¹¹Monique Nathan, Virginia Woolf, trans. by Herma Briffault (New York, 1961), p. 15.

¹²Johnstone, Bloomsbury Group, p. 33.

¹³Ibid.

suggested petty weaknesses, Virginia Woolf adopted a Horatian type of mockery, finding the subject suitable to the urbane, detached perspective that ridiculed foibles with discretion and undercut sentimentality with delicacy. To effect this end successfully, she incorporated the informal essay, in which she excelled into her novels. The reflective essay offered her the external vantage point and the light critical tone she wanted for satirizing limited social attitudes and conventions. Generally, the essays have true functional relationships to the narrative, although the connections are often so subtle that they seem oblique and tangential. A brief essay on letter writing in Jacob's Room¹⁴

illustrates one central satiric approach, that of seeing her subject in different perspectives. The essay follows Jacob and Florinda's love-making (JR, 92-94). Its placement undercuts the romantic aspects of their affair by a contrasting tone and subject; it serves the general function of social criticism and the particular function of linking the narrative elements lightly outlined.

Instead of ironically recounting the contents of Mrs. Flanders' letter to Jacob, Virginia Woolf dramatizes Mrs. Flanders' failure to communicate with, or to understand Jacob, by having him open the letter after his love-making, and by substituting a general essay on inadequate communication. The essay also implies the irony of Jacob and Florinda's

¹⁴ Some other examples of short essays are: class relationships (JR, 68-69) the pace of London (JR, 112-113) Athens (JR, 147-148), and the ancient world versus the modern (JR, 161-163).

attempt to communicate. Letters are "speech attempted," "venerable" and "valiant" like the telephone, "for the journey is a lonely one, and if bound together by notes and telephones we went in company, perhaps -- who knows? -- we might talk by the way" (JR, 93). Since the content is trivial, however, "doubt insinuates itself; is this the way to spend our days?" drinking the tea the letters invited one to? Byron and Cowper wrote letters, trying to say more than this, but their gifts were passed down to Mrs. Flanders, Mrs. Jarvis, Mother Stuart who scented her pages, to Florinda whose "spelling was abominable," whose "sentiments infantile," who "crossed out and cried, whose letters suggested she cared" (JR, 94). Florinda's infidelity illustrates the final irony of this form of communication. By offsetting the particular satire with general, Virginia Woolf effects an objectivity that mocks Jacob's naivete and romantic illusions. The detachment from the hero through such indirection emphasizes the reader's separation from Jacob just as Jacob is separated from all others in the book. After the reader identifies with Jacob, he suddenly perceives just how blind Jacob is and how blind he has been for not previously perceiving it.

Virginia Woolf varied her essay method for satirizing social conventions as Mrs. Hilbery's letter to Mrs. Milvain in Night and Day (146-148) and the essay on proportion and conversion in Mrs. Dalloway (110-113) indicate, but she developed it most significantly in her "essay-novel."¹⁵

¹⁵A Writer's Diary, p. 189.

Since The Years¹⁶ was to be a "novel of fact," and "external novel," "more general, less personal" and not "too sarcastic,"¹⁷ the essay technique, more carefully integrated into the structure, seemed the best method and point of view for the task. That she contemplated the use of letters, plays, and poems¹⁸ in addition to essays, illustrates her desire to make their concreteness serve her external perspective. She wrote the descriptive preludes to each section of narrative as she had written them in The Waves, but in this book treated the pageant of the busy city through time and weather. The irony of time undermines the straightforward description of social change. By emphasizing particular details of life lived at a particular period, Virginia Woolf shows how one tends to believe that a particular present is the real present; the change from one present to another between 1880 and 1936-1937 illustrates the illusory nature of this confidence. The inclusion of some character action in the preludes (Y, 94-96, 138-141) not only sets the stage for the ensuing action as it had set it through image and language, in The Waves, but also illustrates the blending of general and particular narrative. This fusion makes both kinds ironic since the larger scheme overshadows the particular and the particular reduces the general to its own dimension. Sometimes she placed the preludes in the middle of the narrative, emphasizing the irony by contrast. The passages on the rain in

¹⁶Virginia Woolf, The Years (London, 1958). Subsequent references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text as Y followed by a page number.

¹⁷A Writer's Diary, pp. 189-190.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 197.

England connecting London and Oxford in the 1880 section (Y, 49-50) and the flower seller and her customers in the 1907 section (Y, 187-188) illustrate this method. The external and detached perspective in the essays on social change shows how fundamental the method became to the whole conception. In Jacob's Room, she used an essay to connect narrative elements and to emphasize their graphic nature; in The Years, she used various types of essays to express, through irony, one aspect of the philosophic meaning.

When Virginia Woolf added character portraits to the interpolated essays, she more vividly expressed her criticism of social conventions. She used both the type and the individual portrait, painting character in a group, in a setting, or by itself. The darker the satire became, the less exterior the portrait; the more complex the personality, and the more critical the commentary on ethics; the lighter the satire became, the more external and general the portrait and the greater its relationship to the social aspect of the theme. The hotel guests in The Voyage out illustrate the latter approach. The guests form a group whose social cohesiveness reveals the necessities of social convention rather than individual likes and dislikes. As a group, they stand in antithesis to the four characters interiorally analyzed and associated with the villa, Rachel, Helen, St John Hirst, and Terence Hewet. Virginia Woolf describes the individual actions of the hotel guests in considerable detail, but particularly emphasizes the trivial aspects of their behaviour. In this way she creates the humorous comic ballet that they unwittingly perform. By keeping the general and external

perspective uppermost, by sidestepping psychological observation, Virginia Woolf transforms individuals into types: Mr. Pepper, Mrs. Flushing, and Evelyn Murgatroyd become respectively the pedant, the unconventional aristocrat, and the romantic heroine. Instead of sympathy then, there is mockery; instead of sentimentality, there is laughter. Virginia Woolf satirizes them as a group composed of types who individually have weaknesses and foibles, and who together have a moral narrowness and an incapacity to transcend petty deeds and desires for greater understanding. Her caricature emphasizes her conviction that "people have resources more profound than the social world allows them to perform."¹⁹

In Night and Day, Virginia Woolf extended this type of group portraiture to the whole upper-middle class, polishing minor details into a surface brilliance that suggests the mood of drawing room comedy. She particularly aimed at depicting the ritualized performance of certain conventions performed in different social classes,²⁰ not only to satirize the marked artificiality of the upper-middle class, but to mock the arch seriousness with which they act. Afternoon tea demonstrates this particularly well. Witty conversation among poets, lawyers, socialites, makes an afternoon tea at the Hilbery's a stimulating

¹⁹Moody, p. 12.

²⁰Irma Rantavaara, Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury, p. 8, says that the class structure in Virginia Woolf's novels is essentially organized around the aristocracy, landed gentry, the professional class, and the poor, but that through her spiritual vision, these groups gradually get mixed and divided into different sets of people called highbrows, middlebrows, lowbrows, consisting of both sexes and beginning to consist of people from all stations of life.

experience for the guests and Mrs. Hilbery herself, the daughter of a poet, the wife of a scholar, and a member of the upper class elite. Her daughter Katharine performs graciously, although bored with such intercourse; but when tea time comes, if she is not at home, she very carefully considers the right atmosphere in which she will take it.

The question of tea presented itself. The street lamps were being lit already, and as she stood still for a moment beneath one of them she tried to think of some neighbouring drawing-room where there would be firelight and talk congenial to her mood. That mood, owing to the spinning traffic and the evening veil of unreality, was ill-adapted to her home surroundings. Perhaps, on the whole, a shop was the best place in which to preserve this queer sense of heightened existence. At the same time she wished to talk. (ND, 81-82)

Her tea and conversation with the social reformers, Mary Datchet, Mrs. Seal, and Mr. Clacton, contrasts with the appropriate Sunday afternoon commentary at her home, and Katharine feels, almost painfully, the separation between the two, one so cultivated, refined, nonchalant, the other so eager, enthusiastic, determined. Tea at home causes Katharine to daydream, to perform the tea-pouring, bread-slicing motions politely but mechanically; tea at Mary's office puzzles her into believing, momentarily, how frightful working for one's living must be.

Tea at William Rodney's contrasts with tea at Mary's office, with its disparity of cups and its plain food (ND, 83). Rodney

had been occupied for over an hour in making things ready for [Katharine], and he now had his reward in seeing her look right and left, as she slipped her cloak from her shoulders, with evident satisfaction, although she said nothing. He had seen that the fire burnt well; jam-pots were on the table, tin covers shone in the fender and the shabby comfort of the room was extreme. (ND, 138-139)

Rodney belongs to Katharine's class, and with him Katharine sinks into its comforting folds. William and Katharine show their background in dropping in on Mary for tea on another occasion and attempting to make tea for themselves (ND, 179-180). Other notable tea scenes illustrating class contrasts are the tea for American visitors at the Hilberys' (ND, 333-338), Katharine's tea with Ralph Denham's large family in Highgate (ND, 395-406), the tea Cassandra and William carry off in the midst of emotional difficulties (ND, 464), and the tea of the penultimate scene, when all emotional disparities achieve resolution (ND, 528-529).

The social gathering of young people in Mary's room contrasts with the tea table milieu.

The room . . . contained between twenty and thirty people, who found seats for the most part upon the floor, occupying mattresses, and hunching themselves into triangular shapes. They were all young and some of them seemed to make a protest by their hair and dress, and something sombre and truculent in the expression of their faces, against the more normal type, who would have passed unnoticed in an omnibus or an underground railway. It was notable that the talk was confined to groups, and was, at first, entirely spasmodic in character, and muttered in undertones as if the speakers were suspicious of their fellow-guests. (ND, 46-47)

The young people, one by one, "attempted to hew out [their] conception of art a little more clearly," making such a terrific noise about the Elizabethans, the Insurance Bill, and women's professions. Together they became "rather debauched and hilarious," and, although they scarcely knew each other, made use of "Christian names with apparent cordiality, and had reached that kind of gay tolerance and general friendliness which human beings in England only attain after sitting together for

three hours or so, and the first cold blast in the air of the street freezes them into isolation once more" (ND, 59). This gathering, similar in many ways to the descriptions of Bloomsbury gatherings,²¹ sharply contrasted to that in the Hilbery "all silver" drawing room, "where the candles were grouped on the tea table, and ruddy again in the firelight" (ND, 2), where "the animation observable on [the] faces, and the amount of sound they were producing collectively, were very creditable to the hostess" (ND, 1), and where Mrs. Hilbery mourns the "big gardens and the dear old ladies in mittens, who read nothing but the Spectator, and snuff the candles" (ND, 4) to the eminent novelist, Mr. Fortescue. The world of the tea table never changes in Night and Day, although the heroine moves further away from all it symbolizes; the world of the young intellectuals does not develop further either, although both protagonists incline towards greater freedom.

After direct satiric attack on such conventions in Night and Day, Virginia Woolf turned to a more subtle method. Aside from the different handling of a similar subject in The Years (1911, 1914, 1917, Present), she used various types of social gatherings as an index of class and societal peculiarities, satirizing their artificiality and superficiality, while using them to dramatize her characterizations. Clarissa's party in Mrs. Dalloway, the Boeuf en Daube dinner in To the Lighthouse, the dinners in The Waves, Delia's party in The Years, illustrate this method. The conventional figure of the hostess and her

²¹See Rantavaara above, pp. 53, 92, et passim; J. K. Johnstone, pp. 6-7, et passim; R. F. Harrod, The Life of John Maynard Keynes (New York, 1951), pp. 174-191, et passim.

superficial social role in social gatherings indicate Virginia Woolf's attitude and her variant treatment of types and individual character portraits.

The caricature of the bluestocking hostess in Orlando²² illustrates the former extreme. Orlando observes the way in which a famed blue-stocking gathers notables in her salon:

She found a company already assembled in a semicircle round the fire. Lady R., an oldish lady, of dark complexion, with a black lace mantilla on her head, was seated in a great armchair in the centre. Thus being somewhat deaf, she could control the conversation on both sides of her. On both sides of her sat men and women of the highest distinction. Every man, it was said, had been a Prime Minister and every woman, it was whispered, had been the mistress of a King. Certain it is that all were brilliant, and all were famous. Orlando took her seat with a deep reverence in silence After three hours, she curtsayed profoundly and left. (0, 198-199)

At its inception, the wittiest conversation in the world appeared to be little enough; two centuries later even less remained.

The truth would seem to be -- if we dare use such a word in such a connection -- that all these groups of people lie under an enchantment. The hostess is our modern Sibyl. She is a witch who lays her guests under a spell. In this house they think themselves happy; in that witty; in a third profound. It is all illusion (which is nothing against it, for illusions are the most valuable and necessary of all things, and she who can create one is among the world's greatest benefactors, but as it is notorious that illusions are shattered by conflict with reality, so no real happiness, no real wit, no real profundity are tolerated where the illusion prevails The beautiful counterpane of illusion . . . lay unbroken on the circle of Lady R. The guests thought that they were witty, thought that they were profound, and as they thought this, other people thought it still more

²²Virginia Woolf, Orlando A Biography (New York, 1928). Subsequent references will be to this edition, and will be cited in the text as 0 followed by a page number. "He/she" will refer to Orlando the personality in general and at any time; "he" and "she" will refer to Orlando as a member of a specific sex, or a particular era.

strongly; and so it got about that nothing was more delightful than one of Lady R's assemblies; everyone envied themselves because other people envied them; and so there seemed no end to it (O, 199-200)

Orlando herself attempts the bluestocking role and entertains [the] company of men of genius (O, 208), "pours out tea for them all" (O, 211), and remarks to herself, "How future ages will envy me" (O, 213). The voice of doubt rings in her ears, however: "Was this life quite so exciting as it sounds when the memoir writer has done his work upon it? For one thing, Orlando had a positive hatred of tea" (O, 213); she hardly respected the intellect when it disregarded the other faculties, disliked the egotism of the poets, and the "enmities, injuries, envies, and repartees, in which they are constantly engaged" (O, 213), and especially the sympathy they demanded, so that pouring out tea became "a more precarious and, indeed, arduous occupation than is generally allowed" (O, 213).

More individualized portraits more clearly illustrate the hostess's own ambivalence to her role. Lady Lasswade, in The Years, "Formal; fashionable; with a dash of red on her lips" (Y, 268), hates parties and women (Y, 276-281) and resents her participation in a boring activity she does not perform well. The women called her the "grenadier" (Y, 268) behind her back because of her inelegant gestures and mannish movements. Kitty acts the role befitting her class, befitting the wife of a nobleman, befitting the daughter of an eminent historian, but longs for her release from the tedious occupations of the upper class lady of fashion. Her midnight excursion to north country solitude indicates her

desire to escape to a world where it did not matter "What people said. Criticism would [seem] light as smoke What did it matter what he said, what anybody said, since she had a whole day to herself? . . . since she was alone?" (Y, 298). At her party Kitty behaves politely enough, but seemed "like a different person," "the person she liked being" (Y, 288). This was the person who fled swiftly across the countryside in a new car, who smoked cigarettes and strode in "thick soled shoes" on private paths, and who threw herself on the ground and watched the land and sea till "Time had ceased" (Y, 300).

Like Lady Lasswade, Mrs. Hilbery performs her social duties under some strain, but for Maggie Hilbery the strain is a practical one, concerning the difficulties of pouring tea, slicing bread, and organizing personal memories into a coherent account of her father's accomplishments. Romantic and exquisitely feminine, Maggie Hilbery had known all the poets, all the novelists, all the beautiful women and distinguished men in her time (ND, 31), and constantly strove to press all that loveliness and beauty into her tiny tea parties and her love for Spring and Shakespeare (ND, 321-326). She attempted to infuse the vitality of the Victorian days into her daughter's imagination, and although she successfully created the aura of grace, charm and beauty, she reflects all that is sentimental and limited in revering the past.

The most individualized portrait of a hostess is Clarissa Dalloway. Like Maggie Hilbery's sentimental reflections on the past, Clarissa's respect for the conventions of the past prevents her from following the spiritual and social avant-garde of her generation. She rejects the freedom of Sally

Seton and the "immorality" of the housemaid who had an illegitimate child (MD, 66). Secure in her upper-middle-class conventionality, she stands at the top of the stairs and welcomes Prime Ministers. To her girlhood sweetheart, Clarissa always seemed "the perfect hostess" (MD, 69), and although this enraged Peter Walsh, he "admired her for it. He admired her courage; her social instinct; he admired her power of carrying things through" (MD, 69). Whatever profundity Clarissa's spiritual growth expresses, her emotional limitations, to a great degree, illustrate the limitations of her social world. Her success marks both her superficiality and her understanding; she greets everyone with a false "How delightful to see you!" (MD, 184), yet

her severity, her prudery, her woodenness all warmed through now, and she had about her as she said good-bye to the thick gold-laced man who was doing his best, and good luck to him, to look important, an inexpressible dignity; and exquisite cordiality; as if she wished the whole world well, and must now, being on the very verge and rim of things, take her leave. So she made him think. (MD, 191).

She objected, however, to her own effusions. "Why, after all, did she do these things? Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? Might it consume her anyhow! Burn her to cinders! Better anything, better brandish one's torch and hurl it to earth than taper and dwindle away . . . " (MD, 184). Clarissa did "think it mattered, her party, and it made her feel quite sick to know that it [might] all [go] wrong, all fall [] flat" (MD, 185).

The beauty of Virginia Woolf's portrait of Clarissa Dalloway lies precisely in her heroine's double vision. Clarissa's personal strength comes from the affirmation of her social self, the acceptance of her

limited inner, and intense outer, visions. She has neither the insight of Septimus Smith nor the emotional range of Peter Walsh, and, although she rejects Bradshaw as Septimus does, she does so for different reasons. "What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself. And they talked of it at her party -- the Bradshaws talked of death" (MD, 202). Bradshaw seemed to Clarissa "a great doctor, yet . . . obscurely evil, without sex or lust, extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage -- forcing your soul that was it . . . " (MD, 203). She slowly perceives what effect Bradshaw might have had on the unknown dead boy. It gradually affects her own self-acceptance, the self-acceptance that differentiates her from those who criticize her way of life. That Clarissa is less attractive because she is a snob and because she affirms the snobbish, materialistic, superficial world that Virginia Woolf satirizes throughout the novel does not destroy Clarissa's significance. Mrs. Dalloway suggests value precisely because she asserts her personality and adjusts to the fashionable world to which she belongs. Furthermore, she reflects greater value when opposing points of view are set against hers. The religious fanaticism of Doris Kilman, the political narrowness of Richard Dalloway, the social triviality of Hugh Whitbread, the aristocratic enthusiasm of Lady Bruton, the emotionalism of Peter Walsh, the poetic delusions of Septimus Smith, offer less complete alternatives than even Clarissa's flawed appreciation of life.

Virginia Woolf acknowledged the difficulty for the artist, as well as for the reader, in responding to some one like Clarissa, but astutely

commented that "one must dislike people in art without its mattering, unless . . . certain characters detract from the importance of what happens to them."²³ The portraits of the working woman, which she sets against the hostess figures, illustrate this difficulty too.

In general, the working woman Virginia Woolf draws is a reformer, usually involved in women's rights. She satirized the reformer heavily, although she favoured the freedom her reformers desire. Her ambiguous attitude appears in almost all the feminist portraits, and it illustrates that, although Virginia Woolf decried the unequal position of women in society, she decried the sacrifice of the feminine point of view equality implied. "Mrs. Woolf admired the dedication of feminists but stood back from their typewriter and placard absurdities"²⁴ She supported legislation and change that would give women the intellectual, artistic, social, and economic freedom they had traditionally been denied. With such freedom, with £500 and a room of her own,²⁵ a woman could accomplish what she alone could do. Virginia Woolf held that the intrinsic differences between masculine and feminine natures had to be acknowledged, but treated fairly. That is to say, women were to be given the same opportunity as men to live, and to write freely, but they should do so as women. The feminine point of view differed from the masculine in its fundamentally intuitive and emotional nature.

²³A Writer's Diary, p. 79.

²⁴Carl Woodring, Virginia Woolf, Columbia University Essays on Modern Writers, No. 18 (New York, 1966), p. 14.

²⁵Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (London, 1963), pp. 39, 108.

The female accepted and sympathized, and although she could reason well, preferred to follow her instinctive understanding in trying to solve life's problems. Virginia Woolf saw the rational and intellectual perception of life as inherently male and, in a characteristically feminine way, distrusted it, and criticized the emotional blindness its dedication to absolute truth created.

Virginia Woolf believed the failure of the feminist lay in the cultivation of those male attributes needed to attain her goal in the man's world. The feminist viewed her occupation as a rebellious act. Societal resistance hardened her highminded idealism into fanaticism and her female malleability into defensiveness. Instead of cultivating the differences between masculine and feminine points of view so as to enrich personal and social vision, the feminist hid her femininity behind a masculine starkness and became a martyr to her cause. Heavy Oxford shoes and black bonnet became her uniform and dowdiness her banner. Rose Pargiter, for example, "exactly like the picture of old Uncle Pargiter of Pargiter's horse" (Y, 169), sees herself in a tailor's window and thinks it's a pity "not to dress better, not to look nicer. Always reach me down coats and skirts from Whateleys. But they saved time . . . " (Y, 173); Doris Kilman in her green mackintosh, "Year in year out . . . wore that coat" (MD, 14); and Mary Datchet, although only

twenty-five years of age . . . looked older because she earned, or intended to earn, her own living, and had already lost the look of the irresponsible spectator, and taken on that of the private army of workers. Her gestures seemed to have a certain purpose; She had contracted two faint lines between her eyebrows, not from anxiety but from thought, and it was quite evident that all the feminine instincts of pleasing, soothing, and charming were crossed by others in no way peculiar to her sex. (ND, 42-43)

A working woman becomes "stridently sex-conscious,"²⁶ expends more energy in defending herself as a woman instead of unself-consciously being accepted as one. Not only does this increase the irony of the feminist portrait, but it also suggests an aspect of Virginia Woolf's ideas on androgyny.²⁷

Mixed with this criticism of the feminist is Virginia Woolf's criticism of the doctrine of work, which when supported by women, struck her as particularly unpleasant. The working woman resented the leisure class, who luxuriated in thought rather than action, and enjoyed the gifts the black-bonneted feminists worked to bestow on the whole sex. Virginia Woolf believed in a civilization in which work and money were the means to more refinement, and in which contemplation and creation could overcome the iniquities large families, little money, and lack of privacy afforded. She rejected the bourgeois goal of work for its own sake, and attacked those people who begrudged the non-working and cultivated woman her material freedom. These attitudes, which stimulated numerous attacks on Virginia Woolf's own upper middle-class position, social snobbism, narrowminded ivory-tower views, and position as a writer,²⁸ went into the portraits of working women in the novels, although

²⁶A Room of One's Own, p. 97.

²⁷See below, Chapter VI, pp.

²⁸See Q. D. Leavis, "Caterpillars of the Commonwealth, Unite," The Importance of Scrutiny, ed. Eric Bentley (New York, 1948), pp. 382-391; F. R. Leavis, "After To the Lighthouse," Scrutiny, X (1942), pp. 295-298; Mark Schorer, "The Chronicle of Doubt," Virginia Quarterly Review, XVIII (Spring, 1942), pp. 200-215; see also Chapter VI, n. 49, for further references. See Clive Bell, Civilization An Essay (London, 1928) for a full account of Bloomsbury attitudes on this subject.

Virginia Woolf rarely analyzed her characters in this way. She preferred instead the stereotyped image created by concentration on externals and contrast with other types of women. Virginia Woolf did not wholly reject the working woman just as she did not wholly accept the snobbishness of Katharine Hilbery and Clarissa Dalloway. She pointed up the weaknesses of both so as to establish a broader attitude which would prevent mediocrity from eliminating differences or hardening them into permanent distinctions. She aimed primarily at deepening the individual's understanding of her social role since her relation to a deeper view of reality depended on it.

In Night and Day, Virginia Woolf satirizes the feminist working woman in a straightforward manner. She blunts the sharpness of the satire, however, by analyzing Mary Datchet's thoughts and feelings in considerable detail. She shows Mary Datchet from several sides, elaborating on the reasons that ultimately lead Mary to sacrifice love for a social vision. Until this vision diminishes different aspects of Mary's personality, Virginia Woolf treats her more as a fully developed character than a satiric stereotype. By means of emphasis and repetition, subtle overstatement and metaphor, she indicates the complex personality hardening into a type, her technique balancing the psychological changes in Mary herself. Ultimately, Mary Datchet becomes "a light burning behind a thin yellow blind" (ND, 535).

At the outset, Mary proudly leaves her flat in the morning, since "to have sat there all day long, in the enjoyment of leisure, would have been intolerable" (ND, 75). She identifies gladly with the

workers who "take their way in rapid single file along all the broad pavements of the city, with their heads slightly lowered, as if all their efforts were to follow each other as closely as might be" (ND, 75). She feels kindly towards shopkeepers and bank clerks and, "regards all who slept late and had money to spend as her enemy and natural prey" (ND, 75). Although a volunteer, Mary Datchet decides to become a great organizer, and "had already doomed her society to reconstruction of the most radical kind" (ND, 76). She fears, however, that she is changing, "thinking the same thoughts every morning at the same hour" (ND, 76), associating the houses on Russell Square, and her co-workers, Mr. Clacton and Mrs. Seal, with office economy (ND, 76).

Mary still cared about "the precious substance" (ND, 76), her womanhood: "What was the good, after all, of being a woman, if one didn't cram one's life with all sorts of views and experiments?" (ND, 76). But in work, Mary forgets this and envisions revolutionary changes. As the pile of letters on which she worked grows, she feels "that she [is] the centre ganglion of a very fine network of nerves which fell over England, and one of these days, when she touched the heart of the system, would begin feeling and rushing together and emitting their splendid blaze of revolutionary fireworks . . . ," and when leaving a lunch companion thinks "that they were stepping once more into their separate places in the great and eternally moving pattern of human life" (ND, 79). Through these images, Virginia Woolf indicates how Mary is losing the right perspective on the significance of her work. Mary's growing sense of personal social duty overshadows

marital thoughts.

She did not want to marry at all. It seemed to her that there was something amateurish in bringing love into touch with a perfectly straightforward friendship, such as hers was with Ralph, which, for two years now, had based itself upon common interests in impersonal topics, such as the housing of the poor, or the taxation of land values. (ND, 81)

The differences between Katharine Hilbery and Mary dramatize the evolving image of the feminist. Mary confronts Katharine with social questions and social responsibilities about which Katharine is unaware. Unlike her, Mary defines herself precisely in relation to these questions. She tries to maintain Ralph's friendship on such terms even when she learns Ralph loves Katharine for those natural feelings she herself denied. Mary realizes how she has moved away from developing the "precious substance" that had been her pride. Mary's impersonality causes Ralph to conclude that "women have no sense of romance" (ND, 134), and he advises Mary to read more poetry. She reacts negatively to this: "For some reason, no one likes to be told that they do not read enough poetry . . . " (ND, 135). Ralph even tells Mary not to lose sight of larger goals in the "'feminine habit of making too much of details'" (ND, 135). The irony of his comment lies not only in his blindness to Mary's real nature, but to the problems career women face. To achieve the level of abstraction vital to the formulation of broad ideals implies a sacrifice of instinctive feminine habits of thought and desires. Mary limits her concern for details and romance for "a fragment of . . . truth" (ND, 265), thinking it to be the "great chance in this world" (ND, 263), but she does so at the cost of her instinctive desires

for love and marriage: "'What do I matter compared with the cause?'" (ND, 174).

Mary gradually eliminates all personal relationships unconnected to her social endeavour. She works with Mr. Basnett, who had "drawn up a scheme for the education of labour, for the amalgamation of the middle class and the working class, and for a joint assault of the two bodies combined in the Society for the Education of Democracy upon Capital" (ND, 376). She joined his cause and turned her vision into "'our views,' 'our society,' 'our policy'," which she felt stood for something "quite definitely segregated from the main body of society in a circle of superior illumination" (ND, 377). Although marriage had been "assigned an honourable place in their scheme of life" (ND, 379), instead of becoming a wife, Mary becomes the secretary of the new society (ND, 410) and finally relinquishes herself to her vision.

From an acute consciousness of herself as an individual, Mary passed to a conception of the scheme of things in which, as a human being, she must have her share Her vision seemed to lay out the lines of her life until death in a way which satisfied her sense of harmony Already her suffering as an individual was left behind her. (ND, 273)

She wanted to be true to herself, and she perceived herself becoming part of her ideal.

She saw to the remote spaces behind the strife of the foreground, enabled now to gaze there, since she had renounced her own demands, privileged to see the larger view, to share the vast desires and sufferings of the mass of mankind. She had been too lately and too roughly mastered by facts to take an easy pleasure in the relief of renunciation; such satisfaction as she felt came only from the discovery that, having renounced everything that made life happy, easy, splendid, individual, there remained a hard reality, unimpaired by one's personal adventures, remote as the stars, unquenchable as they are. (ND, 275)

Mary's vision expresses the idea of "the common life which is the real life and not . . . the little separate lives which we live as individuals"²⁹ that Virginia Woolf sought to express through lyricism. For Mary Datchet, the sacrifice of self to the common life was to trade individual for social meaning, but to Virginia Woolf, the common life had a metaphysical value that could not be attained except through the assertion of individuality. This dissimilarity gives Mary's portrait its final irony.

The portrait of Doris Kilman in Mrs. Dalloway illustrates a similar dissonance differently treated. Virginia Woolf opposes the penetrating interior monologues to a more external view of character, using the former to explore the nature of the protagonists and the latter to set off the limitations of the antagonists. Although Doris Kilman is not simply a stereotype, she is far less a human being than Mary Datchet, and far more the malignant force that threatens the affirmative spirit Clarissa strives to retain. Her cause is God, not women's rights, but, in her, Virginia Woolf sees many characteristics of the working feminist as well.

Miss Kilman directs Elizabeth Dalloway towards the ideals of a profession: "Law, medicine, politics, all professions are open to women of your generation" (MD, 144), she tells her; Elizabeth must not trifle her life away as the "rich, with a smattering of culture . . . expensive things . . . pictures, carpets, lots of servants" (MD, 136).

²⁹A Room of One's Own, p. 112.

Partially because of Doris Kilman, Elizabeth does think about the poor, does think about being a doctor, a farmer, does want "to have a profession (MD, 150). Miss Kilman, similar in many ways to Miriam Henderson in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage,³⁰ carried a "satchel," had a knowledge of modern history that was more than respectable, and was a "woman who had made her way in the world" (MD, 146). But to Elizabeth, a profession did not mean a sacrifice of all that was beauty and womanhood. Although she felt small when Miss Kilman spoke of the poor, and she remembered her mother having breakfast in bed, when Miss Kilman "squashe[s] the flowers all in a bunch" (MD, 144), or has to be guided "in her abstraction as if she had been a great child . . . " to buy a petticoat (MD, 143), Elizabeth rejects her. Elizabeth's excursion in the Strand ultimately does more than any of the books Miss Kilman had lent her, "to stimulate what lay slumbrous, clumsy, and shy on the mind's sandy floor, to break surface, as a child suddenly stretches its arms . . . " (MD, 151). Elizabeth might blend her mother's vision with a new one of her own, "For no Dalloway came down to the Strand daily; she was a pioneer, a stray, venturing, trusting" (MD, 152). Her response to London surpasses Miss Kilman's and, in some respects, even her mother's: "this life; this procession; would wrap them all about and carry them on, as in the rough stream of a glacier the ice holds a splinter of bone, a blue petal, some oak trees, and rolls them on" (MD, 152).

³⁰(New York, 1938).

Virginia Woolf satirizes Doris Kilman's religious effusions, even to her name, emphasizing from the outset, the discrepancy between Doris Kilman and true charity. When viewed through Clarissa's eyes, the destructive aspects of Doris's fanaticism increases. Although summarizing Doris's reasons for conversion, ironically noted as "two years three months ago" (MD, 113), Virginia Woolf introduces Clarissa's hostile attitude prior to this, so that when Doris first appears, she makes an antipathetic impression. "She wore a mackintosh" because "it was cheap" because "she was over forty; and did not dress to please," because she "was degradingly poor" (MD, 136), and because "she had been cheated" and "had never been happy," had German origins and disliked having to work where and at what she did not like (MD, 136-137). All this, however, cannot eliminate the unpleasant feeling Clarissa's harshness arouses. Clarissa thinks of her daughter "sitting mewed in a stuffy bedroom with a prayer book" (MD, 14) with Doris Kilman influencing her dress, manner of treating people, and spiritual values (MD, 14).

Clarissa felt that "religious ecstasy made people callous (so did causes); dulled their feelings . . . " (MD, 14). She believed that "Miss Kilman would do anything for the Russians, starved herself for the Austrians, but in private inflicted positive torture, so insensitive was she, dressed in a green mackintosh coat" (MD, 14). Clarissa saw her soul "rusted with that grievance sticking in it, her dismissal from school during the War -- poor, embittered, unfortunate creature! For it was not her one hated but the idea of her . . . " (MD, 14). Doris Kilman is one of the "dominators and tyrants" (MD, 15) who Clarissa

feels "suck up all the pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful" (MD, 15). Clarissa's own limitations flaw her argument and give some truth to Doris's unspoken castigations of her, but Clarissa's soul-searching merits more esteem than Doris's rancorous religion. Although the "hot and turbulent feelings which boiled and surged in her" were assuaged by religion's sudden solace, and her grudge against the world helped by God (MD, 137), Doris Kilman had

an overmastering desire to overcome [Mrs. Dalloway]; to unmask her. If she could have felled her it would have eased her. But it was not the body; it was the soul and its mockery that she wished to subdue; make her feel her mastery. If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her; bring her to her knees crying, you are right! But this was God's will, not Miss Kilman's. It was to be a religious victory. So she glared. So she glowered. (MD, 138)

In Doris Kilman, religious fanaticism not only perverts the true feminine instinct but rationality as well. Clarissa rejects the religion based on personal limitations and perpetuated by superstitions. She rejects it as she rejects love, "How detestable, how detestable they are!" (MD, 139).

The cruellest things in the world . . . seeing them clumsy, hot, domineering, hypocritical, eavesdropping, jealous, infinitely cruel and unscrupulous, dressed in a mackintosh coat, on the landing; love and religion. Had she ever tried to convert any one herself? Did she not wish everybody merely to be themselves? (MD, 139)

To Clarissa, as she watched in the window opposite, the miracle and mystery were in the old lady across the way, not in Doris Kilman's religion or even in Peter Walsh's love: " . . . here was one room; there another. Did Religion solve that, or Love?" (MD, 141).

Clarissa's rejection of Doris Kilman's brand of faith and charity is not Virginia Woolf's only criticism of religion's illusions. Like most of Bloomsbury, Virginia Woolf thought any form of doctrinal religion "the worst sort of conformity . . . enslaving the minds of people."³¹ In an unpublished letter to Hugh Walpole she wrote, "Here the church bells begin ringing and I am plunged into anger or confusion -- I hate to be disturbed; I hate the arrogance and monopoly of Christianity (and I am writing to the son of a Bishop too!)"³² Her hatred of Christianity stemmed partially from her agnostic background, and partially from her hatred of all hypocrisy. She could not reconcile the disparity between the simplicity of Christ's teaching and the wealth and pomps of the church,³³ between the tolerance and love it preached and the fanaticism and intolerance it practiced, between the concept of a benevolent god and an absurd universe. Her most stringent attack against superstitious belief and Christianity's false inner vision comes in the creation of the non-traditional "spiritual exercises"³⁴ of her novels and spiritual characters like Mrs. Ramsay, Eleanor Pargiter, and

³¹Nathan, p. 105.

³²An unpublished autographed letter, Virginia Woolf to Hugh Walpole, Monks House, August 25, 1929. Cf. F. W. Maitland, The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen (London, 1906), pp. 211-212. Stephen wrote to James Russell Lowell, January 3, 1869, that his window viewed the back of a dissenting chapel but the chapel did not interfere with his comfort. "I listen with composure even to their bells, and have somewhat got the better of the bitterness I used to feel towards all denominations of Christians before I had quite shaken off my white tie."

³³Blackstone, pp. 207-209.

³⁴Nathan, p. 108.

Lucy Swithin, although the last reflects a modified traditional attitude; more direct criticism appears in her characterizations of clergymen.

The Anglican service in The Voyage Out (274-283), the funeral service in The Years (89-93), and the collection speech in Between the Acts (221-228) vividly illustrate Virginia Woolf's main disgruntlements, and her way of treating them in her fiction. She presents each scene through the eyes of at least one sensitive observer whose honesty helps to isolate the words and actions from their background and cause them to appear conventional, dull, and deadening to the spirit. Mr. Bax performs the Anglican service in an old Monk's Chapel in Santa Marina. Rachel Vinrace listens critically to what Mr. Bax says "instead of slipping at once into some curious pleasant cloud of emotion, too familiar to be said" (VO, 277). She gradually perceives her "acute discomfort" (VO, 277-278); Mr. Bax spoke with the "clumsy insensitiveness of [a] conductor, who put stress on the wrong places" (VO, 278), and the audience listened like "a vast flock . . . tamely praising and acquiescing without knowing or caring" (VO, 278). "All around her were people pretending to feel what they did not feel, while somewhere above her floated the idea which they could none of them grasp, which they pretended to grasp . . . " (VO, 278). Mr. Bax seemed to epitomize all the vices of his service, "the blundering effort and misunderstanding" in all "the churches all over the world," the "voice of Mr. Bax saying things which misrepresented the idea, and the patter of baaing inexpressive human voices . . . ," the worshipping satisfaction of the nurse sitting near her whose slavish acquiescence arose from "no splendid

conception of God within her" (VO, 278-279). As Rachel suddenly perceives why Helen Ambrose and St John Hirst hate Christianity, the point of view shifts to Hirst and Hewet and their more sophisticated response to religious illusion.

Hewet stares at the roof, "for as he had never tried to make the service fit any feeling or idea of his, he was able to enjoy the beauty of the language without hindrance" (VO, 279). He thinks of Rachel. Hirst meanwhile reads in a "thin pale-blue volume" (VO, 280) of Sappho, in Greek and in Swinburne's English translation. Mrs. Flushing looked at Hirst's book.

[She] could not resist such an opportunity. She gulped down the Ode to Aphrodite during the Litany, keeping herself with difficulty from asking when Sappho lived, and what else she wrote worth reading, and contriving to come in punctually at the end with 'the forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection of the body, and the life everlastin'! Amen.'
(VO, 280)

Mr. Bax's sermon epitomizes the emptiness of his actions; his theme of the common life into which all individuality falls highlights the irony of the stultifying ritual with its image of the "drop of water, detached, alone, separate from others," which ultimately "alters the configuration of the globe and the lives of millions of sea creatures" (VD, 282).

Cousin James's words in the funeral service in The Years repeat the same error. Heard through the ears of the one child who admitted

ambivalent feelings towards the death of her mother, Delia,³⁵ the words of Cousin James, the service and attendant feeling, illustrate an abrupt honesty that undermines the family's grief with irony. Delia does not know the way she should act; she is yet unaware of the conventional mask she can adopt, specifically designed for such occasions. She approaches the death and the ceremony honestly, and consequently, thinks and feels other things than grief. When the carriage pulls forward through the street she realizes that her tragedy was limited and personal: "Men walk briskly and unconcernedly along the pavement" and "shops are already gay with spring clothing; women passed and looked in at the windows" (Y, 89). Like Susannah in Tristram Shandy, who thinks of her mistress having to discard her green satin nightgown for mourning when Obadiah announces Master Bobby's death,³⁶ Delia observes that [her] family would have to wear nothing but black all summer . . . " (Y, 89). She constantly fights back her desire to think of a "tall man, a man in a frock coat . . . Parnell" (Y, 90) until the ceremony was over. Observing too that somehow the family changed towards each other, Delia realizes that she has to make an effort to act properly. She believes, however, that her father remains outside grief as she does. "When Martin suddenly burst out laughing at tea, and then stopped and looked

³⁵Cf. A Writer's Diary, p. 224 in which Virginia Woolf indicates the autobiography that went into Delia's portrait. Aileen Pippett, in her biography of Virginia Woolf, p. 23, et passim, says that Delia's dispassionate attitude like Virginia Woolf's served as protection for hypersensitivity.

³⁶Laurence Sterne, Tristram Shandy (New York, 1950), p. 374.

guilty, she felt -- that is what Papa would do, that is what I should do if we were honest" (Y, 90).

When James begins the service she thinks the words beautiful and feels suddenly relieved of some of the pent-up emotion death and the "half-lit house which smelt of flowers" (Y, 90) created. Directly her "Cousin James seemed to hurry" (Y, 91), and did not seem altogether to "believe what he was saying. He seemed to pass from the known to the unknown; from what he believed to what he did not believe; even his voice altered. He looked clean, he looked starched and ironed like his robes. But what did he mean by what he was saying?" (Y, 91). Standing at the graveside, Delia struggles with her feelings, but gradually has a "sense of something everlasting; of life mixing with death, of death becoming life. For as she looked she heard the sparrows chirp quicker and quicker; she heard wheels in the distance sound louder and louder; life came closer and closer . . . " (Y, 92). The next moment Cousin James's prayer for the deliverance of the soul from the sinful world intruded a false note: "What a lie! . . . What a damnable lie! he had robbed her of the one feeling that was genuine; he had spoilt her one moment of understanding" (Y, 93). The religious convention did not represent true understanding just as her father's stiff and rigid behaviour did not represent true feeling. "He's overdoing it. None of us feel anything at all, she thought: we're all pretending." (Y, 93). Delia's final rejection comes when she wonders whether to thank someone for coming, as her brother had thanked them, but "The

graves made it difficult" (Y, 93). The image of the family stepping in and around gravestones to extend thanks makes the whole ceremony a ridiculous or even absurd affair. The ironic attack through the innocent-eye observer gives the satire its final touch.

Reverend Streatfield's speech in Between the Acts produces its sting by its position in the narrative and the counterpoint of ludicrous and serious words it reveals. Coming hard on the heels of the concluding confusions of the pageant's Present Day scene, the Reverend's remarks diminish in importance:

What an intolerable constriction, contraction, and reduction to simplified absurdity he was to be sure! Of all the incongruous sights a clergyman in the livery of his servitude to do the summing up was the most grotesque and entire O Lord, protect and preserve us from words the defilers, from words the impure! (BA, 221-222)

Having been exposed to the reality of themselves by Miss La Trobe, the audience wonders what Reverend Streatfield could do for them, what truths he could tell, what answers he could give.

The whole lot of them, gentles and simples, felt embarrassed, for him, for themselves. There he stood, their representative; their symbol; themselves; a butt, a clod, laughed at by looking glasses; ignored by the cows, condemned by the clouds which continued their majestic rearrangement of the celestial landscape; an irrelevant forked stake in the flow and majesty of the summer silent world. (BA, 222)

Although Reverend Streatfield proclaims he is not a critic, he assumes the critic's responsibility of interpretation; he looks for the message "'our pageant meant to convey'" (BA, 223). He subjects the reality of art to his own:

'To me at least it was indicated that we are members of one another. Each is part of the whole We set different parts: but are the same . . . Dare we . . . limit life to ourselves? May we not hold that there is a spirit that inspires, pervades . . . ' (the swallows were sweeping round him. They seemed cognizant of his meaning. Then they swept out of sight). (BA, 224)

The parenthetical remark undercuts the Reverend's tentative gropings into art's reality, just as his forefinger, 'stained with tobacco juice" (BA, 222) and raised for admonition, reduces his immanence to a "piece of traditional church furniture; a corner cupboard; or the top beam of a gate, fashioned by generations of village carpenters after some lost-in-the-mists of antiquity model" (BA, 222). His position as "Treasurer of the Fund" for "our dear Church" (BA, 225) accents his humanness and his ridiculousness even further. He speaks before the collection boxes circulate, and the village idiot passes among the crowd collecting the outward signs of inward grace in an "aluminum saucepan without a lid" (BA, 226). The zoom of "twelve aeroplanes in perfect formation" (BA, 225) interrupts the human contribution to eternity, the "distant music" of actual reality enhances "the natural desire of the natural man," and the congregation feels creepy when Alfred comes by, although "he too, . . . is part of ourselves" (BA, 226-227). Reverend Streatfield cuddles his pipe lighter while waiting for his release. It comes in the form of God Save the King: "Standing the audience faced the actors; who also stood with their collecting boxes quiescent, their looking-glasses hidden, and the robes of their various parts hanging stiff" (BA, 228).

The generalized point of view of both audience and omniscient author adapts Reverend Streatfield's significance to the whole vision

and makes him a suitable footnote to the final scene of the pageant. By incorporating dissonant notes of religion into a dissonant play, Virginia Woolf focused her satire more sharply than detailed description had previously. In The Voyage Out, the scene, like Sunday in the week, is set apart as something to attend to, something to iron out the wrinkles in; the satire comes in the details of the "stiff shirt-fronts," the "red-leaved books," the "sweet chords . . . from a harmonium . . . struck . . . with uncertain fingers," the "childlike babble of voices," the turning of pages and reading of the "Old Testament about making a wheel, very much as school boys translate an easy passage from the Anabasis when they have shut up their French grammar" (VO, 274-277). The whole well-written satire against dogma, superstition, and ritual in The Voyage Out differs from the scenes in Between the Acts and The Years, in which Virginia Woolf transformed her liberal attitudes into ways of seeing. Delia does not get the same total sympathy from the reader as Rachel gets in her anger; Delia's attitude contains the mockery she sees and projects outside of her. One sees the object of derision through her flawed personality; in this way, however, she establishes the slightly jaundiced view she tried to attain through juxtaposition of different attitudes in The Voyage Out. In the dim moments of the play's end, the actual and the imaginary blend, and Reverend Streatfield's religious sanctity loses significance in his ordinariness. Christianity's inner view is satirized like the audience's outer one, and which, like the social reformers' view, distorts the true and false.

Intellectual illusions oppose religious ones. Although Virginia Woolf did not reject reason and common sense, she did decry their exclusive use in interpreting man and the universe. Reason was but one approach to reality, and to Virginia Woolf, the complete individual had to balance it with intuition. Virginia Woolf identified rationalism, with its faults and virtues, with the masculine temperament. She almost always portrayed the external world of fact and the ideal world of abstraction in terms of the egoistic, aggressive, and emotionally myopic male, whether physician, professor, editor, scholar, biographer, or philosopher. In novels concerned with rationalism or intellectuality as an approach to reality, she usually created characters possessing different aspects of intellect and intuition and played them off one against the other. She also explored characters of each kind, in the earlier novels through action or argument, in the later ones through psychological analysis or metaphoric description. The male portraits usually reflect limited depth because of Virginia Woolf's feminine predilection and because superficial characters were easier to satirize.

She levelled one of her most scathing attacks against doctors, the representatives of rationalism in its most practical mood. The most notable example appears in Mrs. Dalloway, although a minor sketch appears in The Voyage Out and wry comments appear in Orlando.³⁷ In Dr. Holmes

³⁷In The Voyage Out, pp. 406-432, Virginia Woolf criticizes the physician who treats Rachel Vinrace for his want of skill and knowledge, and emphasizes the bitter frustration of those laymen who must stand helpless around him. In Orlando, p. 67, she attacks the doctor who showed his ignorance in diagnosing Orlando's long sleep: "But the doctors were hardly wiser than they are now, and after prescribing rest and exercise,

and Sir William Bradshaw, Virginia Woolf attacks the failure of practical reason to come to terms with an illness it cannot logically understand, and to act humbly in the face of it. Septimus Smith is the victim of both physicians and their false pride; the delicate fluctuations of his personality bear the blows of common sense and insidious misunderstanding. Seen largely through Septimus's diseased and Rezia's apprehensive point of view, Bradshaw and Holmes assume the ghastly proportions of those evil forces that destroy life rather than cure its illnesses. When Septimus acknowledges his need for help, he considers his position as a surrender (MD, 100). When "Mrs. Filmer's Dr. Holmes" (MD, 100) appears and finds nothing wrong with him, Septimus realizes his surrender is true defeat. When Dr. Holmes felt as Septimus did, "he went to the Music Hall He took a day off with his wife and played golf. Why not try two tabloids of bromide dissolved in a glass of water at bedtime?" (MD, 101). Dr. Holmes suggests a hobby, more food, and a rousing, "'Didn't one owe perhaps a duty to one's wife? Wouldn't it be better to do something instead of lying in bed?'" (MD, 102). Then Septimus feels that "Human nature . . . was on him . . . Holmes was on him" (MD, 102). The general practitioner, common sensical, domesticated and friendly, becomes an ogre through his lack

starvation and nourishment, society and solitude, that he should lie in bed all day and ride forty miles between lunch and dinner, together with the usual sedatives and irritants, diversified, as the fancy took them, with possets of newt's slobber on rising, and draughts of peacock's gall on going to bed, they left him to himself, and gave it as their opinion that he had been asleep for a week."

of insight. He is so confident in his common sense remedies that a non-physical ailment blinds him.

Depicted through the "flat" method, and rounded only by Septimus's distorted point of view, Holmes is an easy target for criticism and an apt predecessor to one for Virginia Woolf's more bitter attack. The negative feeling he arouses is transferred easily to the more exclusive physician, Sir William Bradshaw, noted particularly for his treatment of cases like that of Septimus. Virginia Woolf begins her portrait by detailing the signs of Sir William's status and achievement. "The low grey motor car with plain initials interlocked on the panel" stands before his Harley Street office. Its greyness matches "its sober suavity" and "the grey furs, silver grey rugs" that "keep her ladyship warm while she waited" for her husband. Her ladyship's responsibilities rest on "large dinner-parties every Thursday night to the profession; and occasional bazaar to be opened. Royalty greeted." She did all this for the great physician himself whose "weariness" and "grey hairs increased the extraordinary distinction of his presence and gave him the reputation (of the utmost importance in dealing with nerve cases) not merely of lightning skill and almost infallible accuracy in diagnosis, but of sympathy; tact; understanding of the human soul" (MD, 104-106). Directly Sir William sees Septimus, he understands his symptoms and prescribes "rest, rest, rest; a long rest in bed" in "a beautiful house in the country," with "admirable nurses" and "Sir William [to] visit him once a week" (MD, 107).

Virginia Woolf describes Septimus's visit to Bradshaw externally,

showing that all Sir William's personal questions are merely stereotypes. She magnifies the external view by taking Bradshaw's values out of context and giving them some of the caricature value she exploited fully in Orlando. She achieves this first by maintaining distance from Sir William's own mind through the omniscient author. The omniscient author notes that Sir William's particular distaste for Septimus probably arose from his own low background, and "a grudge, deeply buried, against cultivated people who came into his room and intimated that doctors, whose profession is a constant strain upon all the highest faculties, are not educated men" (MD, 108). Then the omniscient author focuses on Sir William's sense of proportion, marked by the "three quarter's of an hour" he gives to his patients, and his conscious avoidance of calling a mad person mad (MD, 107-109). Then a parody of his reverence for Proportion follows.

Health we must have; and health is proportion; so that when a man comes into your room and says he is Christ (a common delusion), and has a message, as they mostly have, and threatens, as they often do, to kill himself, you invoke proportion; order rest in bed; rest in solitude; silence and rest; rest without friends, without books, without messages; six months' rest; until a man who went in weighing seven stone six comes out weighing twelve. (MD, 110)

By making the parody more abstract, the omniscient author illustrates Sir William's belief in Proportion's divinity.

Proportion . . . was acquired by Sir William walking hospitals, catching salmon, begetting one son in Harley Street by Lady Bradshaw, who caught salmon herself and took photographs scarcely to be distinguished from the work of professionals. Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself, but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their view until they, too, shared his

sense of proportion Sir William with his thirty years' experience of these kinds of cases, and his infallible instinct, this madness, this sense; his sense of proportion. (MD, 110)

As for Conversion, she too dwells "in Sir William's heart, though concealed, as she mostly is, under some plausible disguise: some venerable name; love, duty, self-sacrifice." Conversion "feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose, adoring her own features stamped on the face of the populace" (MD, 111).

Naked, defenceless, the exhausted, the friendless received, the impress of Sir William's will. He swooped; he devoured; he shut people up. It was this combination of decision and humanity that endeared Sir William so greatly to the relations of his victims. (MD, 113)

The final result of this diatribe is the transformation of Sir William into the abstraction into which his complacency and human blindness have already deformed him.

The portrait of the doctor in The Years indicates some modification in handling, although contempt for the false idol society has made of the physician is still evident. In Peggy Pargiter, Virginia Woolf illustrates the substitution of all instinctive, emotional, and intuitive qualities for the rational, intellectual ones demanded by her profession. Unmarried and involved in a career, Peggy is isolated from both male and female members of the Pargiter family. Her Aunt Eleanor, a representative and a symbol of an age of positive belief, constantly sets her aback with her language, her vitality, and her vision. Peggy observes her with something of a clinical eye, seeing elements of her behaviour which she can bring back to the hospital as unique. As opposed to the less educated, more visionary Eleanor, Peggy finds

herself peculiar. "hard; cold; in a groove already; merely a doctor" (Y, 381). Illustrating the truth of Sir William's deeply buried grudge against cultivated people, Peggy expresses her inability to describe people themselves. "I'm good . . . at fact-collecting. But what makes up a person -- (she hollowed her hand) the circumference, -- No, I'm not good at that" (Y, 380). Unlike Bradshaw and Holmes, however, Peggy did not revere science as a golden calf. In fact, she felt "it was her line to disabuse her elders of their belief in science . . . " (Y, 354), and she responds to Eleanor's queries about dreams with "'My dear Nell, . . . , how often have I told you? Doctors know very little about the body; absolutely nothing about the mind'" (Y, 415). Unlike Sir William, Peggy applies post-war cynicism and disillusion to the profession that modern society had long over-reverenced. By putting the dissatisfaction into the words of a disillusioned person who happens to be a doctor, Virginia Woolf undermines the false god in a more subtle and dramatic manner. Peggy reveals the failure of physicians to practice the art of healing through sympathy and understanding as well as drugs. Buoyed up with new scientific techniques, harnessed by the clock, rewarded by social prestige and wealth, the modern doctor not only seems to care little for his patient's human needs, but also to be unable to minister to them.

Materialist interests led literature, too, from its right home to Grubb Street and to Oxbridge lecture halls. In Orlando, Virginia Woolf satirized the critic who deadens literature by his theoretical and pedantic reverence for it. Orlando "thought of literature all these

years (her seclusion, her rank, her sex must be her excuse) as something wild as the wind, hot as fire, swift as lightning; something errant, incalculable, abrupt and behold, literature was an elderly gentleman in a grey suit talking about duchesses" (O, 279-280). The elderly gentleman, "the most influential critic of the Victorian age," "the author of a score of volumes" is a "knight," a "Litt. D.," a "Professor." From his appearance and from his "air of respectability," Orlando surmises that "literature had been a prosperous pursuit" (O, 276-279). The critic disapproves of contemporary writers of the degenerate times, who "are in the pay of booksellers," who "turn out any trash that serves to pay their tailor's bills" (O, 278). The respectable Sir Nicholas, it seemed, had forgotten his own Grubb Street origins in that Elizabethan age he once deplored, and in which he favoured Greek literature. Now he favours those Elizabethans and deplores the modern page; such are the tides of literary taste.

It is the same Nick Greene who, three hundred years before, Orlando considered the poet he/she wanted to be. Eager to decide whether his own talents made him "the divinest genius or the greatest fool in the world" (O, 82), Orlando invited the poet to his estate. He then learned that the poet's highmindedness concealed a venomous spleen and that he detested the present, and its "precious conceits and wild experiments" (O, 89), all of which Orlando adored. Nick Greene believed that the great age in literature belonged to the Greeks, whose divine ambition was "La Gloire (he pronounced it Glawr . . .)," and he believed, too, that to succeed, a writer had to model himself

after the ancients and write "not for pay but for Glawr." For himself, he said, "Had I a pension of three hundred pounds a year paid quarterly, I would live for Glawr alone" (0, 90). It is this same Nick Greene who drank Orlando's wine, slept in Orlando's house, and then disabused the world of the life of nobility by writing a pamphlet, which ran into several editions, on "A Noble Lord at Home." He went so far as to identify the Lord he ridiculed by including in his pamphlet, passages from Orlando's aristocratic tragedy, "The Death of Hercules" (0, 95).

Along with the Grubb Street pamphleteer turned respectable critic, Sir Litt. D., Virginia Woolf attacked the biographer into whose hands she placed Orlando's precious life. The biographer illustrates a materialism of another sort as well as a rigidity which limits the honesty of his work. He maintains a childish faith in facts, dates, documents, "evidence," reduces "truth to the logical conclusions drawn from evidence, assumes an air of pompous self-importance, and abjures dealing with the nebulous aspects of life as passion, dream, imagination.³⁸ Furthermore, he sought to write "two fat commemorative volumes,"³⁹ as his Victorian predecessors did, which not only distorted the truth by flattery, but destroyed the essence of the personality it sought to catch. Since Virginia Woolf felt, like Pope, that "Some

³⁸ John Graham, "Orlando," p. 353.

³⁹ Lytton Strachey, "Preface," Eminent Victorians (London, 1921), p. viii. Virginia Woolf's criticism of Victorian biographers includes Sir Leslie Stephen, since his great achievement, the Dictionary of National Biography, epitomized the kind in which facts were chosen over impressions of personality.

wand'ring touches, some reflected light/Some flying stroke, alone can hit 'em right,"⁴⁰ she criticized the post-Boswellian and pre-Stracheyian biographer who sought to reveal Orlando by chronicling his/her life from birth to death, without accounting for the more real, if evanescent, qualities of his/her nature. The biographer grappled for fact in the escapades of Orlando's life over three centuries only to be replaced by the introspective musings of the hero/heroine. By turning the biographical method upside down through parody and by introducing a Scriblerian biographer who finally disappears into the protagonist's self-analysis, Virginia Woolf hinted that the truth of character might be more easily found in fantasy and exaggeration than in the overly-documented, authenticated outline the Victorian biographer gave character.

Besides Grubb Street critics and respectable biographers, Virginia Woolf satirized various academic professions. The academic cloister often prevented its adherents from seeing life in the whole way it intended to because it fostered rigid thinking and suffocated feeling. It falsely cultivated the pursuit of means instead of ends, attributing to knowledge itself the intrinsic value belonging only to the higher good. Circumscribed by curriculum, isolated from human relationships in an ivory tower, a scholar such as Edward Pargiter turns from an

⁴⁰Alexander Pope, "'Epistle to a Lady,' Moral Essays," The Complete Poetical Works of Pope, ed. Henry W. Boyton (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), pp. 163-164, ll. 153-154.

idealistic passionate spirit into "an insect whose body has been eaten out, leaving only the wings, the shell" (Y, 437), that moves from "habit, not from feeling" (Y, 437). Virginia Woolf drew various portraits of the professor and rationalist scholar. In her first novel, she depicted Ridley Ambrose editing Pindar in his secluded villa in South America (VO, 200), blind to the emotional tempests of his young niece and her new companions, and in her second novel, Mr. Hilbery, who edits a review. Mr. Hilbery works at

placing together documents by means of which it could be proved that Shelley had written 'of' instead of 'and,' or that the inn in which Byron had slept was called the 'Nag's Head' and not the 'Turkish Night,' or that the Christian name of Keats's uncle had been John rather than Richard, for he knew more minute details about poets than any man in England, probably, and was preparing an edition of Shelley which scrupulously observed the poet's system of punctuation. (ND, 108-109)

Mr. Hilbery "saw the humour of these researches, but that did not prevent him from carrying them out with the utmost scrupulosity" (ND, 109).

In Jacob's Room, Virginia Woolf set three satiric portraits against the background of the University itself.

If any light burns above Cambridge, it must be from three such rooms; Greek burns here; science there; philosophy on the ground floor. Poor old Huxtable can't walk straight; -- Sopwith too, has praised the sky any night these twenty years; and Cowan still chuckles at the same stories. It is not simple, or pure, or wholly splendid, the lamp of learning, since, if you see them there under its light (whether Rossetti's on the wall, or Van Goch reproduced, whether there are lilacs in the bowl or rusty pipes), how priestly they look! How like a suburb where you go to see a view and eat a special cake. 'We are the sole purveyors of this cake.' Back you go to London; for the treat is over. (JR, 39-40)

Old Huxtable sets to his work and "The whole flesh of his face then fell into folds as if props were removed." As he read,

a procession tramps through the corridors of his brain, orderly, quick-stepping, and reinforced, as the march goes on, by fresh runnels, till the whole hall, dome, whatever one calls it is populous with ideas. Such a muster takes place in no other brain. Yet sometimes there he'll sit for hours together, gripping the arm of the chair like a man holding fast because stranded, and then, just because his corn twinges, or it may be the gout, what execrations, and, dear me, to hear him talk of money, taking out his leather purse and grudging even the smallest silver coin, secretive and suspicious as an old woman with all her lies. (JR, 40)

Sopwith talked to undergraduates "as if everything could be talked," "twining stiff fibres of awkward speech -- things young men blurt out -- plaiting them round his own smooth garland, making the bright side show, the vivid greens, the sharp thorns, manliness" (JR, 41). Cowan "sipped his port alone, or with one rosy little man, whose memory held precisely the same span of time; sipped his port, and told his stories, and without book before him, intoned Latin, Virgil and Catullus, as if language were wine upon his lips" (JR, 41). Cowan travelled abroad "with a French novel in his pocket, a rug about his knees," but always was happy to come home and hold "in his snug little mirror the image of Virgil, all rayed round with good stories of the dons of Trinity and red beams of port" (JR, 42).

This "light of Cambridge" (JR, 42) dims more dramatically when Jacob lunches with the Plumers (JR, 33-35). Professor Plumer is intolerant about Jacob's lateness; Mrs. Plumer perfunctorily serves her guests, concerned more about the end of such a gathering than its present

success. Jacob mentally attacks the Plumers for the Shaw, Wells, and sixpenny weeklies on the table, convinced that knowledge is more than these: "Had they never read Homer, Shakespeare, the Elizabethans?"; to him truth was "the moors and Byron; the sea and the lighthouse; the sheep's jaw with the yellow teeth in it" (JR, 35-36). Jacob reads poetry not only to add to his store of knowledge, but to learn from it how to see things more perceptively. Like Terence Hewet and Septimus Smith before the war, like the youthful Orlando, like Bernard, Jacob believes knowledge is the attempt to expand and to deepen civilization, and to make something new. The critical pursuits of Edward Pargiter, St John Hirst, and Neville in The Waves oppose this creative attitude. Although involved in work of value, they chase "the backs of words" (W, 232) instead of penetrating to their real life; they pursue knowledge for its own sake.⁴¹

In To the Lighthouse, Virginia Woolf dramatizes the distinction between true and false knowledge. First she depicts the false adulation of knowledge acquired through academic study, particularly in Charles Tansley, one of Mr. Ramsay's disciples. The children thought Tansley "a miserable specimen . . . all humps and hollows," who "couldn't play

⁴¹Neville and St John Hirst are not scholars who desired critical rather than creative pursuits; such is the nature of their talents. Although Virginia Woolf does not criticize them for this, she implies that she puts greater value on the purely imaginative activity. Cf. the frustration of Starwick in Thomas Wolfe's Of Time and the River (New York, 1935), for his lack of real creative ability. Cf. also the particular talent and personality of Lytton Strachey on whom Neville and Hirst were probably modelled.

cricket," who "poked," "shuffled," and was a "sarcastic brute." Tansley liked best

to be for ever walking up and down, up and down, with Mr. Ramsay, and saying who had won this, who had won that, who was a 'first-rate man' at Latin verses, who was a 'brilliant but I think fundamentally unsound,' who was undoubtedly the 'ablest fellow in Balliol,' who had buried his light temporarily at Bristol or Bedford, but was bound to be heard of later when his *Prolegomena*, of which Mr. Tansley had the first pages in proof with him if Mr. Ramsay would like to see them, to some branch of mathematics or philosophy saw the light of day. That was what they talked about. (TL, 15)

Charles Tansley triumphed over his working class background to enjoy this privilege. He came from a large family, had a father who kept a shop, and was unable to "return hospitality" at college (TL, 22). He "smoked the cheapest tobacco" and worked -- seven hours a day; his subject was now the influence of something upon somebody . . . " and through his dissertation, he sought a fellowship . . . readership . . . lectureship" (TL, 22). To the wife of the "greatest metaphysician of the century," Tansley's triumph meant little; it was more important to her that he had not been to circuses as a child (TL, 21). Mrs. Ramsay's sentiment is more than charitable, however, since it suggests her distaste for "ugly academic jargon" and academic ambition (TL, 22). That she expresses the feeling about the circus in the midst of Tansley's daydream of himself, ("gowned and hooded, walking in a procession" (TL, 20), showing off to Mrs. Ramsay) mocks the importance of the academic world too.

Mrs. Ramsay extends hospitality to Tansley and tries to soften her children's harsh attitudes, but laughs at his self-consciousness and

imitation of her husband. "All these young men parodied her husband . . . ; he said it would rain; they said it would be a positive tornado" (TL, 27). Mrs. Ramsay's indulgent and patronizing attitude towards Tansley and his academic vision foreshadows this aspect of her relationship with her husband. Virginia Woolf's caricature of certain features of Mr. Ramsay's behaviour illustrates the limitations of the intellectual perspective.

Virginia Woolf depicts Mr. Ramsay from the varying points of view of his intuitive and practical wife, his sensitive son and daughter, his neighbor and former close friend, his disciple, and his house guest, a spinster artist. Although impressive from all points of view, Mr. Ramsay is not always attractively so. Mrs. Ramsay reveres and resents him. She respects "Universities and people wanting him, lectures and books and their being of the highest importance" (TL, 61-62), but she dislikes both his display of emotional dependence on her and his resistance to the practical truth of daily affairs, particularly because he demanded ideal truth most rigourously. "To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilisation so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency . . . " (TL, 51). Mr. Ramsay firmly believes in the validity of facts and prides himself in observing and recording them accurately. Consequently his judgment is accurate. "What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact," but so uncompromising was his

reverence for facts that he "never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all his own children, who, sprung from his loins, should be aware [sic] from childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising . . . " (TL, 10-11).

To Lily Briscoe, Mr. Ramsay's rigour is tyrannical. He is "selfish, vain, egotistical," and in his "fiery unworldliness" knows "nothing about trifles" (TL, 40). Whereas the physician worships practical reason, the philosopher worships abstract reason. Mr. Ramsay's work, "Subject, and object and the nature of reality" was in his son's image a "scrubbed kitchen table" and to Lily Briscoe, the table was "grained and knotted . . . its four legs in air," unattractive and unseen by anyone (TL, 38). Yet Lily profoundly respects Mr. Ramsay's mind and likes his letting "Mrs. Ramsay trim his hair into a pudding basin" (TL, 41). William Bankes, a botanist, "well-brushed, scrupulously exact, exquisitely judicial" (TL, 39) views Mr. Ramsay as "(a great man in his own way)" (TL, 35). He qualifies the praise he once gave to the young Ramsay, "striding along a road by himself hung round with that solitude which seemed to be his natural air" (TL, 34), partly because marriage had weakened their friendship, partly because Ramsay's limitations diminished his ideal. Bankes said

'Ramsay is one of those men who do their best work before they are forty.' He had made a definite contribution to philosophy in one little book when he was only five and twenty; what came after was more or less amplification, repetition. But the number of men who make a definite contribution to anything whatsoever is very small (TL, 39)

The wonder of it, furthermore, was his managing "to feed eight

children on philosophy" (TL, 36).

Mr. Ramsay believes his pursuit of truth a sacred endeavour, "his fate, his gift." Whereas he sees himself alone on the shore, the "desolate sea-bird" facing "the dark of human ignorance, how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on . . .," his wife, Charles Tansley, and William Bankes see him "as a stake driven into the bed of a channel upon which the gulls perch and the waves beat inspires in merry boat-loads a feeling of gratitude for the duty it is taking upon itself of marking the channel out there in the floods alone" (TL, 68-69). His vigil, "which spares no phantom and luxuriates in no vision" (TL, 69), gains him respect for desired isolation and austerity, but he cannot support that role if his wife and family do not stand behind him. He depends even more on receiving tributes "from Swansea, Cardiff, Exeter, Southampton, Kidderminster, Oxford, Cambridge," but has to disguise his feelings, his desire to give lectures, as "'some nonsense' to the young men of Cardiff about Locke, Hume, Berkeley, and the causes of the French Revolution" (TL, 70). He has to disguise his feelings "because, in effect, he had not done the thing he might have done" (TL, 70). He viewed "the energies of his splendid mind" (TL, 53) first with delight, and then with regret.

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 these 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 But after Q? What comes next? After Q there are a number of letters the last of which is

scarcely visible to mortal eyes, but glimmers in the distance. Z is only reached by one man in a generation. Still, if he could reach R it would be something. Here at least was Q. He dug his heels in at Q. Q he was sure of. Q he could demonstrate. If Q then is Q -- R -- Then R (TL, 53-55)⁴²

The blending of the perspectives of the omniscient author and Mr. Ramsay create a metaphorical picture of Mr. Ramsay's mind that suggests the limitations of his personality and his point of view. The progressive movement of his mind parallels his stalking up and down the garden. He envisions himself leading a charge and so the Battle of Balaclava forms the right background to his speculations. His "endurance and justice, foresight, devotion, skill" (TL, 54) are better suited to a battle or to a Polar expedition than to philosophy, it seems, as he constantly rams the stone wall of his problem. "A shutter, like the leathern eyelid of a lizard, flickered over the intensity of his gaze and obscured the letter R" (TL, 54). Perseverance would not do more than frustrate the plodder who, by repeating "the whole alphabet in order, twenty-six letters in all, from start to finish" tried to match "the gifted, the inspired who, miraculously lump all the letters together in one flash" (TL, 55). Mr. Ramsay sees only in the one direction fact leads him. Alternative directions irk him, especially irrational ones which support the truth that "delighted, eased, sustained -- falsely perhaps" (TL, 46).

⁴²The inspiration for this well-known image might be found in the fact of Sir Leslie Stephen's plodding down the alphabet to write biographies for his great Dictionary. He was haunted by the fact that there were 1000 A's for example. To reach R then, if not Z, might indeed seem an insuperable task.

To Virginia Woolf, then, an exclusively intellectual, rational vision limited and distorted the nature of things. She did not feel the flux of life, the despair of human isolation, the inadequacy of human communication, altered meaningfully by the kind of order exclusive rationalism, materialism, or conventions imposed on individuals. Rather, "external" modes usually prevented man from coming to grips with the problems at all. Consequently, his worldly pursuits and abstract speculations seemed of even more transitory value. In the short story, "Solid Objects,"⁴³ Virginia Woolf implies this as an ironic contrast to the theme. Although collecting discarded objects seems more significant than ordinary human engagements, and substitutes an "inhuman and morally irresponsible world for an outer world which lacked all human values,"⁴⁴ solid objects also symbolize the alienation from all external meaning and locate the individual outside the loop of time. They represent the lack of communication between the two friends with which the story began, and they symbolize, by their isolation from meaning, the final destruction in the inevitable calumny of time.

Houses illustrate this particularly well since man builds them in which to live and to monumentalize himself. When Mr. Ramsay returns to his summer house after ten years, everything only seems the same.

⁴³A Haunted House and Other Stories, ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1962), pp. 79-85.

⁴⁴See an interesting article by Marjorie Brace, "Worshipping Solid Objects: The Pagan World of Virginia Woolf," Accent Anthology, ed. Quinn and Shattuck (New York, 1946), pp. 489-495.

Even when the house has been precariously snatched back from oblivion, cleaned, restored, reopened . . . we understand clearly that this does not imply a restoration of the family life that had inspirited the place in the years before. We understand indeed, that only by the merest accident, not by any guarantee of fate, is anything at all saved. Just as easily . . . it could have gone the other way, the house, the island itself, could have been obliterated. There is no reason to assume that man and his world should even endure, not to speak of surviving, in the fullest sense of prevailing Few of the group introduced in 'The Window' have returned. And even they have little to say to one another. Each has withdrawn all but entirely into himself.⁴⁵

The great house in Orlando, Pointz Hall in Between the Acts, and Abercorn Terrace in The Years amplify this idea.

The great house in Orlando, based on Knole, the house of the Sackville family,⁴⁶ and Pointz Hall, extend the calendar across the centuries, symbolizing the aristocracy's stand against time. With its three hundred and sixty-five rooms, its fifty-two galleries and gardens, Orlando's great house remains apparently more stable through time than its owner. Only the functions of the house, not the house itself, seem to change with the demands of each age. The subtle changes do not show, and it seems like a truly "solid object," suited to oppose flux and disintegration. Orlando's house endures greater lengths of time than

⁴⁵J. E. Hardy, "To the Lighthouse; Vision Without Promise," Man in the Modern Novel (Seattle, 1964), p. 112.

⁴⁶See Victoria Sackville West, Knole and the Sackvilles, 4th ed. (London, 1958) on which Orlando's house is modelled. See also, Harold Nicholson, Diaries and Letters 1930-1939, ed. Nigel Nicholson (New York, 1966), pp. 30, 32, et passim for reference to Virginia Woolf's approach for information from Lady Nicholson for Orlando, and for biography of the real "Orlando." Cf. also the house, Howards End, in E. M. Forster's novel, Howards End (New York, 1921).

man's own memory can contain. In the Elizabethan age, it shelters innumerable servants who tend the young Orlando with scrupulous care and suffer his volatile shifts in temperament. In the eighteenth century, it receives the Lady Orlando with ample courtesy, and provides decorous drawing rooms to entertain Pope, Swift, and Addison. In the twentieth century, it provides the modern poetess and aristocrat with a sanctuary from the dramatic contrasts of the present world. When viewed from the perspective of time, the house appears as the illusory solid object it is.

Pointz Hall recapitulates this experience in a different key. Although having a longer past than even Orlando's house, Pointz Hall has occupants only during the narrative present. Since most of them do not see themselves at first as links with the past, they can more easily see the changes of the house and establish its place in history. Hence, when the omniscient author reads a description of it from an one hundred year old guide book (BA, 65), and when someone mentions its Norman arch and its sixteenth-century chapel (BA, 41-42), Pointz Hall assumes its proper place in the past. In its landscape, it symbolizes what civilization has been, but the threat of aeroplanes zooming overhead, dramatically indicates the irony of this apparent progress, and how the modern version of evolution could eclipse with a wink everything that seemed stable and permanent.

In a more circumscribed way, Abercorn Terrace illustrates this illusion. Between 1880-1937, its significance as a stable social

force dwindles. Not only did its sale in 1913 indicate the alteration of Victorian-Edwardian mode of life, but it also suggested the final disintegration of the unity that family life implanted in the individual. Values, like solid objects, change with the generation. In The Years, Virginia Woolf used a specific period to tell the story of the final illusion of time. Like certain types of biography, history emphasizes the facts that illustrate that all worldly pursuits lead man to no lasting goal and that all he builds for eternity -- houses, cities, and civilizations -- perish. Only by freeing himself from the illusions of time can he hope to discover other ways to live and find another truth outside of the realm of external value. Eleanor Pargiter sells Abercorn Terrace, travels to Spain, Greece, and India, and anticipates visiting China. Only after she has submitted to the relentless repetition and change of the years does she achieve freedom from the customs and ceremonies imposed on her childhood, youth and maturity; in her old age she can live the life that opposes the clock's limitations. In the present she perceives the irony of time and seeks meaning only in the pattern unfolding around her.

Eleanor's reconciliation with time enables her to ask, "'And now?'" (Y, 469) when she sees the dawn. Her optimistic hope for the future illustrates, in some ways, what John Maynard Keynes saw in the early Cambridge-Bloomsbury support of non-temporal values: "Indeed it is only states of mind that matter provided we agree to take account of the pattern of life through time and give up regarding it as a series

of instantaneous flashes"⁴⁷ Whereas Eleanor has accepted the tyranny of time and denied it finality, the younger generation, represented by her niece and nephew, has not.⁴⁸ Eleanor shines in her red Indian cloak and dreams of a world of golden lights, but North and Peggy brood on the social reality that nails them to the world. They see life as a "disorderly procession," flux, full of annihilation and despair (W, 239), as Louis does in The Waves. Peggy tries to oppose the relentless disorder by pursuing a social goal about which she ultimately grows cynical; North opposes it with a searching individual response, worthy of his Aunt Eleanor, but lacking the totality of her belief. He enunciates this response as he watches his Aunt and Uncle Edward.

He watched the bubbles rising in the yellow liquid. For them it's all right, he thought; they've had their day: but not for him, not for his generation. For him a life modelled on the jet (he was watching the bubbles rise), the spring, of the hard leaping fountain; another life; a different life. Not halls and reverberating megaphones; not marching in step after leaders, in herds, groups, societies, caparisoned. No; to begin inwardly, and let the devil take the outer form, he thought looking up at a young man with a fine forehead and a weak chin. Not black shirts, green shirts, red shirts -- always posing in the public eye; that's all poppycock. Why not down barriers and simplify? But a world, he thought, that was all one jelly, one mass, would be a rice pudding world, a white counterpane world. To keep the

⁴⁷Keynes, p. 102. In A Writer's Diary, p. 281, Virginia Woolf noted that Keynes liked The Years best of all her books.

⁴⁸Comparing the two generations of Bloomsbury, Keynes, p. 82, wrote that the exhilarating sense of freedom the first generation experienced in their youth accounted for a "certain resilience" which they had "even at their gloomiest," and which the younger generation seemed never to have had. "They have enjoyed, at most, only a pale reflection of something, not altogether superceded, but faded, and without illusions."

emblems and tokens of North Pargiter -- the man Maggie laughs at; the Frenchman holding his hat; but at the same time spread out, make a new ripple in human consciousness, be the bubble and the stream, the stream and the bubble -- myself and the world together -- he raised his glass. Anonymously, he said, looking at the clear yellow liquid. But what do I mean, he wondered -- I, to whom ceremonies are suspect, and religion's dead; who don't fit, as the man said, don't fit in anywhere? . . . There was the glass in his hand; in his mind a sentence. And he wanted to make other sentences. But how can I, . . . -- he looked at Eleanor, who sat with a silk handkerchief in her hands -- unless I know what's solid, what's true; in my life, in other people's lives? (Y, 442-443)

North implies that society distortions do not necessarily require a total rejection of society or its vision. Rather he suggests that man must first enlarge his perspective beyond the loop of time in order to see its dimension and his place in it. As Virginia Woolf wrote earlier:

we [must] escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves [we must] face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women⁴⁹

This suggests that one must assume a position within the sphere and, although rejecting its hypocrisies, seek those values which would sustain a larger, more embracing vision. Lord Keynes acknowledged this attitude when he wrote that the rejection of G. E. Moore's morals and the acceptance of his religion imposed a limitation on judgments young Cambridge men made on human nature.⁵⁰ By religion, Moore meant "one's attitude towards oneself and the ultimate," and by morals, he meant

⁴⁹A Room of One's Own, p. 112.

⁵⁰Keynes, p. 100.

"one's attitude towards the outside world and the intermediate."⁵¹ He believed that some value could be found in contemplating patterns of life within communities themselves.⁵² In Virginia Woolf's first novel she simply showed the fallacy of "intensified withdrawal from the world, and the cultivation in its place of a purely imaginary ideal condition," but in her later novels, she showed the "necessity for human beings to seek fulfillment in a whole hearted engagement with their actual world, limited and limiting as it is bound to be."⁵³ By keeping the toe in Liverpool,⁵⁴ by submitting to the real rhythms of life, in all its particular manifestations and unique moments, one may discover that although nothing matters, everything matters, and that life may be endured.

⁵¹ Keynes, p. 82.

⁵² Ibid., p. 101.

⁵³ Moody, p. 12.

⁵⁴ "Notes on an Elizabethan Play," p. 50.

Chapter V

THE LOOP OF TIME: THE KNOT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Virginia Woolf distinguished between interior and exterior styles of writing in her diary, although she frequently questioned what she meant by the terms. When referring to Orlando, she spoke of its "spontaneous" and "natural" style, its "kind of ease and dash," its "externality." Although these qualities were insufficient for writing The Waves, she wanted to retain them. The style of Orlando, she wrote, "came of writing exteriorly; and if I dig, must I not lose them?" She wanted "to put practically everything in [The Waves]; yet to saturate . . . ; to include nonsense, fact, sordidity: but make it transparent," believing that "some combination of them ought to be possible."¹

When writing The Years, she referred to her theory "of the different levels of writing and how to combine them" and the need to establish contact between the surface and the reality underneath.² The penetrating explorative style, the inner style of images, symbols, and rhythms, and the spontaneous, colloquial, natural style, the outer style of dialogue, description, and action, she most harmoniously blended in The Years and Between the Acts because she more clearly perceived the different levels of personality underlying each mode.

She wrote in her diary:

¹ A Writer's Diary, p. 139.

² Ibid., p. 216.

in this book [The Years] I have discovered that there must be contrast; one strata [sic] or layer can't be developed intensively, as I did expect in The Waves, without harm to the others. Thus a kind of form is, I hope, imposing itself, corresponding to the dimensions of the human being; one should be able to feel a wall made out of those influences³

As she progressed with the book she realized that she had "reached a further stage in [her] writer's advance."

I see that there are four? [sic] dimensions: all to be produced, in human life: and that leads to a far richer grouping and proportion. I mean: I; and the not I; and the outer and the inner Very exciting, to grope on like this. ⁴New combination in psychology and body -- rather like painting.

The "not I" and the outer refer to the "fact, nonsense, and sordidity" elements, and belong to those novels and parts of novels dealing with the individual and his relation to society; the "I" and the inner refer to the transparent element, and belong to those dealing with the individual himself. Besides the problems the "I" and the inner raised in connection with the techniques and purposes of the lyrical method, they raised other problems related to the content of the novels. By creating a subjective level in the novels to account for man's inner nature, Virginia Woolf was able to express her ideas on the nature of the self and interior reality.

Self, to Virginia Woolf, meant the essence of personality, the aspect that endured change and gave an individual uniqueness and significance. Leonard Woolf's characterization of personality as a beaded thread aptly illustrates this notion. The beads represent the

³A Writer's Diary, p. 258.

⁴Ibid., p. 259.

different aspects of the personality that can and cannot be detached. The latter he called the permanent self. Clive Bell characterized the self similarly, conceiving it as a permanent tube through which experience flows.⁵ To find this self in different personalities and to explore its relation to reality became Virginia Woolf's aim, to follow the atoms as they fall upon the mind, to trace the inner pattern that created the life of the spirit.⁶

The self eluded easy conquest. It differed from the self acting in the world. In the essay on "Montaigne," Virginia Woolf wrote, "This soul, or life within us, by no means agrees with the life outside us."⁷ In "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," she said that even the self known by friends has a "shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves"⁸ The real self often lies

⁵Clive Bell, Proust (London, 1928), pp. 52-53.

⁶"Modern Fiction," p. 155.

⁷Common Reader, p. 61. Cf. also Rachel Vinrace's remark in The Voyage Out, pp. 34-35: "To feel anything strongly was to create an abyss between oneself and others who feel strongly but perhaps differently It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant, or ever talked of a feeling they felt"

⁸The Death of the Moth and Other Essays, ed. Leonard Woolf (London, 1961), p. 24. In Sowing, Leonard Woolf writes very similarly of the "carapace, the facade which, if our sanity is to survive, we must learn to present to the outside and usually hostile world as a protector to the naked, tender, shivering soul" (pp. 91-92). "The facade tends with most people . . . to grow inward so that what began as a protection and screen of the naked soul becomes itself the soul. This is part of the gradual loss of individuality which happens to nearly everyone and the hardening of the arteries of the mind which is even more common and more deadly than those of the body" (p. 98). For a less personal expression of the same idea, see D. G. James, Scepticism and Poetry An Essay on the Poetic Imagination, 2nd ed., (New York, 1960), pp. 111-113.

dormant in most relationships and perhaps even to oneself. "We do not know our own souls, let alone the souls of others. Human beings do not go hand in hand the whole stretch of the way. There is a virgin forest in each; a snowfield where even the print of birds' feet is unknown."⁹ Furthermore instead of being one thing, the self seemed to be many. Nature made man "streaked, variegated, all of a mixture, the colours have run . . . ; circumstances compel unity; for convenience sake a man must be whole."¹⁰ "An Evening in Sussex" illustrates the composite nature of the self. One self is eager and dissatisfied with things, one is stern and philosophical about life, another is aloof and melancholy, and a fourth is erratic and impulsive. One self tries to assume control of all the others and another simply registers sensations.¹¹ To say which is the self seems impossible: "Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves?"¹² The ability to assume different selves on different occasions, to "put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others" gives "the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind"¹³ and that no one

⁹"On Being Ill," The Moment, p. 17.

¹⁰"Street Haunting," p. 30.

¹¹Death of the Moth, pp. 13-16.

¹²"Street Haunting," p. 30.

¹³Ibid., p. 35.

exists at all. The narrator's quest for a lead pencil harnesses these ideas to that self ordinarily considered real, the solid object establishing a functional relationship between the self and the external world.

Virginia Woolf's concept of the real self provided a functional resolution of the problem of personal multiplicity. Her treatment of the real self and the many selves suggests several of the conflicting theories native to Romantic idealism, English epistemology, and modern psychology, although her views by no means constitute a formal theory. Idealists and Realists have long struggled over the problems of the nature of human consciousness and the existence of external reality.¹⁴ Views range from the total solipsism of Idealists like Berkeley, Bradley, and McTaggart, who conceived the self as a unified, transcendent entity determining external reality, to the common sense empiricism of Realists like G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, who conceived of both self and external reality as physically existent entities interacting directly. Although Virginia Woolf postulated the idea of a single real self, she did not accept the extreme subjectivity of the Idealist position. Rather, she accepted a transitory idealism based on a sceptical and realistic foundation. Although she followed late nineteenth-century French novelists in emphasizing the self in her fiction,

¹⁴In addition to the primary texts of individual philosophers, a good summary of these philosophical ideas can be found in Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant, ed. Etienne Gilson and Thomas Langan, (New York, 1963), pp. 191-298, and The Age of Analysis Twentieth Century Philosophers, ed. Morton White (New York, 1955).

she did not subscribe to the idealistic conception underlying their treatment. Villiers, Barrès, Gourmont, and Dujardin, among others, modified Berkeleyian idealism with psychological versions of Schopenhauer, and created novels in which the self expressed a metaphysical unity.¹⁵ Understanding this unity meant understanding the universe since the universe was the self's representation. Like these novelists who reacted to the naturalistic view of the self as expounded by Taine and illustrated by Zola and others, Virginia Woolf responded to realistic fiction by making the self more vital to her novels, but she did not eliminate or transform external reality into an image of self.¹⁶ Although the self, to a large extent, determined the external reality perceived, external reality always retained its appearance of concreteness. To understand Virginia Woolf's view of the self and subjectivity, those characters who represent different degrees of subjectivity, and those who seek self-understanding through introspective analysis, must be explored. Considered individually, these characters illustrate the quest for self-awareness Virginia Woolf thought vital to human understanding; considered collectively, they illustrate the subjective view of reality.

¹⁵Karl D. Utti, The Concept of Self in the Symbolist Novel (Gravenhage, 1961), pp. 11-16, 22-25.

¹⁶The Waves and The Years, to some degree, are exceptions to this. Both novels, however, do not go as far as Dujardin's Les Lauriers sont coupés, for example, in seeing external reality through the mind of only one protagonist. The multiple points of view and the recognizable realistic base indicate the interrelationship between interior and exterior worlds.

Virginia Woolf conceived sensation to be the fundamental fact of individual existence. Although not responsible for the existence of things as the Idealists say, and not the end of reality as the sceptical Empiricists suggest, sensation does enable an individual to perceive and understand himself and his environment. The opening of The Waves illustrates the childhood expression of the sense experience.

'I see a ring,' said Bernard, 'hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light.'

'I see a slab of pale yellow,' said Susan, 'spreading away until it meets in a purple stripe.'

'I hear a sound,' said Rhoda, 'cheep, chirp; cheep, chirp; going up and down.'

'I see a globe,' said Neville, 'hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill.'

'I see a crimson tassel,' said Jinny, 'twisted with gold threads.'

'I hear something stamping,' said Louis. 'A great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps.' (W, 180)

Bernard records his initial awareness of the "arrows of sensation":

'Water pours down the runnel of my spine. Bright arrows of sensation shoot on either side. I am covered with warm flesh. My dry crannies are wetted; my cold body is warmed; it is sluiced and gleaming. Water descends and sheets me like an eel. Now hot towels envelop me, and their roughness, as I rub my back, makes my blood purr. Rich and heavy sensations form on the roof of my mind; down showers the day -- the woods; and Elvedon; Susan and the pigeon. Pouring down the walls of my mind, running together, the day falls copious, resplendent' (W, 192)

In Section IV, Bernard refers again to the "arrows of sensation"¹⁷ as the beginning of consciousness: "Old Mrs. Constable lifted the sponge and warmth poured over us We became clothed in this changing, this feeling garment of flesh" (W, 261). In his summing up,

¹⁷In Night and Day, p. 285, Virginia Woolf used this phrase to suggest the rudimentary part of personality: Mary Datchet feels the "arrows of sensation striking strangely through the envelope of personality, which shelters us so conveniently from our fellows."

he recalls this childhood experience and stresses the force of former sensations re-created and new ones experienced (W, 377).

Yet sensation is only the root of experience. As the development of the six characters in The Waves indicates, consciousness implies profounder complexities than sensation can explain. Furthermore, the language of the soliloquies, while expressing the same mode of perception of each character, reveals their individual differences. Since words only symbolize sensation, the self revealed in words only symbolizes the real self. Furthermore, the real self, isolated as it is from the others, seems little more than a bundle of diverse sensations without ultimate value. In such solipsism, external reality is nothing more than what is significant for each self. Although this solipsism can lead to greater individual understanding, it usually results in a severe lack of awareness of the self in its social and its metaphysical function. Far from leading to increased understanding, such subjectivity leads to egoism, neurosis, and, often, madness.

Rhoda, Septimus Smith, Mr. Ramsay, and Sara Pargiter illustrate these forms of extreme subjectivity. Rhoda and Septimus illustrate the excessive introversion that leads to madness and suicide; Mr. Ramsay illustrates the rational egoism that prevents self-awareness and awareness and sympathy for others; Sara Pargiter represents the neurotic sensitivity that intermittently dissolves the boundary between inner and outer reality. Although Sara does not retreat into madness like Rhoda and Septimus, she lives in a world her fancy creates. Sara cannot transform her creative perceptions into art because of the hard

carapace with which she envelops and defends her fragile self. The other three share Sara's inability to create. Each one is potentially an artist whose abortive attempts to deal with reality in his daily life results in his failure to transmute subjectivity into the objective form of art. Mr. Ramsay writes books that will not endure; Septimus jots down notes on scraps of paper and envelopes; Rhoda weaves images into dreams; Sara spills song and rhyme into ordinary speech.

Sara's mode of speech illustrates her subjectivity and her abortive creative expression. Instead of speaking directly, she speaks almost always in metaphor. She rhymes, she sings, she transforms disparate fact into narrative and dissociated object into symbol, relieving both her disillusion with the external world and the pressure of her creative inspiration. Like Isa Oliver, Sara turns what she perceives in herself and in the world into a poetic reality in which she can endure. Her feeling for the mysterious "Brown," Nicholas Pomja-lovsky, for example, remains unaffected by his apparent perversion. Since her love for him does not belong to the working pattern of love in marriage, but to a world of self-expression, an ordinary expression of love does not occur. An eccentric, egoistic pair, Sara and Nicholas wing past each other in the sky, but never touch the ground. Sara comes to Delia's party wearing two different stockings. Nicholas points it out to her:

' . . . coming to a party, ' . . . 'with one stocking that is white, and one stocking that is blue.'
'The Queen of England asked me to tea;' Sara hummed in time to the

music, 'and which shall it be; the gold or the rose; for all are in holes, my stockings and she.' 'This is their love-making, Eleanor thought

' . . . Can you never act for yourself?' he was saying. 'Can you never even choose stockings for yourself?'

'Never! Never!' Sara was laughing.

' . . . Because you have no life of your own,' he said.

'She lives in dreams,' he added, turning to Eleanor, 'alone.'

'The professor preaching his little sermon,' Sara sneered, laying her hand on his knee.

'Sara singing her little song,' Nicholas laughed, pressing her hand. (Y, 398-399)

Sara's mismatched stockings¹⁸ reflect her inability to deal directly with external reality, and her singing illustrates her attempt to deflect observers from this conclusion. Her song is a substitute for actual contact with others or with the truth. Her story to North about seeking a job, her account to Maggie about her excursion with Rose, and her meditations while ill in bed, all express different aspects of this characteristic.

In Sara's story to North (Y, 365-369), she proceeds deviously, partly because money and jobs embarrass her and partly because she interprets all actions in terms of what affects her rather than what actually occurs. Instead of directly revealing dissatisfaction with her seedy flat and her monetary need to move away, she tells of the dirty bathtub another tenant leaves. The image of that bathtub haunts her as her weaving it throughout the narrative indicates. The image spurs Sara to relate the experience to North just as it spurred her to

¹⁸ Cf. Rhoda, who must imitate Jinny and Susan's way of pulling on her stockings because she is so removed from ordinary worldly activity. Virginia Woolf often uses one detail or image in different personalities to suggest similarities in her conception of them.

venture out into the external world. Sara proceeds to interpret this world strictly in terms of her own likes and dislikes, and North realizes the impossibility of her achieving the limited goal of getting a job. "'Society is all but rude . . . to this delicious solitude'" (Y, 366), she says, expressing her own insecurity. "'Polluted city, unbelieving city, city of dead fish and worn-out frying pans' . . . " (Y, 366-367), she cries, echoing Eliot echoing Baudelaire, and relating her particular neurotic view to others of the post-war generation. She walks on London Bridge and watches "people passing; the strutting, the tiptoeing, the pasty; the ferret-eyed; the bowler-hatted, servile innumerable army of workers. And [she] said, "'Must I join your conspiracy? Stain the hand, the unstained hand . . . and sign on, and serve a master, all because of a Jew in my bath, all because of a Jew?'" (Y, 367).

Sara's account of her excursion with Rose (Y, 200-205) is also treated in a subjective manner. She focuses on the thoughts of death evoked by her adventure rather than the events comprising it. "'Stood on the bridge and looked into the water . . . running water; flowing water. May my bones turn to coral; and fish light their lanterns; fish light the green lanterns in my eyes'" (Y, 201). This drowning image with its allusion to Shakespeare's song, "Full fathom five," suggests how death becomes the natural antithesis to Sara's fear of the world. This connects her with Mr. Ramsay, Rhoda, and Septimus for each of whom death, or a step towards death by drowning, seems an apt defense in the pursuit and preservation of the self.

In the bedroom scene (Y, 141-156), considered by Virginia Woolf the turning point of the book's creation,¹⁹ Sara contemplates the nature of consciousness that death can so swiftly eclipse. The scene counterpoints the garden-dance sequence, the world that lies outside Sara and that she can only imagine, and the room-bed-book sequence, Sara's own world, from whose locus she projects everything. Her book, illustrating the Idealist position, says that the world is nothing but thought. Since the world scarcely exists for her, she can easily imagine such a concept, but she cannot be thought since she feels things; she must be something other than thought. She considers this idea by imagining existence in terms of a tree, a symbol Virginia Woolf frequently uses to signify selfhood,²⁰ and a well-known archetype for the self.²¹

¹⁹A Writer's Diary, p. 196.

²⁰In The Voyage Out, pp. 204-205, for example, Virginia Woolf uses the tree to suggest the process of Rachel's psychic differentiation. In Mrs. Dalloway, the extensive nature images include various trees which signify Clarissa and Septimus's inner self, see above, p. 78. It is the position of the tree on the canvas in To the Lighthouse that makes Lily Briscoe aware of what she must understand of herself and Mrs. Ramsay before she can complete her painting and fulfill herself, see below, p. 272. Bernard and the five other characters in The Waves are related to one or another tree, signifying some psychic event, see below p. 231. In Between the Acts, see above, p. 125, the trees connected to the greenhouse signify the need for an emotional and social regeneration. And, in Orlando, the oak tree is both the fact and the symbol of Orlando's creative imagination.

²¹In Man and His Symbols, ed. and intro. Carl G. Jung, M. L. Von Franz, Joseph Henderson, Jolande Jacobi, and Aniela Jaffé (New York, 1964), p. 161, Dr. Von Franz writes that Jung considered the tree an archetypal image for the self because it symbolized in dreams, among other things, the individuation process, the slow, powerful growth of the self that fulfills a definite human pattern.

She seemed to become something: a root; lying sunk in the earth; veins seemed to thread the cold mass, the tree put forth branches; the branches had leaves.

' -- the sun shines through the leaves,' she said wagging her finger. She opened her eyes in order to verify the sun on the leaves and saw the actual tree standing out there in the garden. Far from being dappled with sunlight, it had no leaves at all. She felt for a moment, as if she had been contradicted. For the tree was black, dead black. (Y, 142)

The contradiction verifies the rift between her view of reality and what she knows actually exists. Her imagined tree seems more real than the actual tree because it makes her feel intensely. In this sense, she agrees with her book, although only after she has transformed the abstraction into something palpable. The garden-dance sequence verifies the rift, too, because Sara can hear the strains of music but not the dancer's conversation. She, therefore, makes up conversation, fixing images into a romantic dreamy vision that satisfies her imagination. She reads next in Edward Pargiter's translation of Antigone and identifies herself with both translator and heroine because both have retreated from the actual world into an idealized or imagined one. Like Edward and Antigone, Sara's reality, her self, circumscribed only by her imagination, separates her from the ordinary currents of life and causes her to seem, like them, "buried alive" (Y, 146).

Maggie's entrance introduces the garden-dance milieu directly into Sara's meditations on the reality of the imagined and actual worlds. While crossing the Serpentine, Maggie had tried to distinguish between the notion of each person as one distinct self and all men as part of one whole. Was the self consciousness alone or a conscious part of the process of nature; or was the self a separate, unique, and isolated

element that had no meaning and projected none? The water of the Serpentine serves for Maggie, as it serves for Clarissa Dalloway -- the symbol of self-discovery -- and the trees of Maggie's example externalize subjective growth. Maggie asks would there be trees if man did not see them? Would there be a self, would nature really exist if man were not conscious? Like Sara, she strives to solve the problems of mental and physical existence. Is reality simply a phenomenon of mind or is it something more enduring? If consciousness alone comprises reality, then each man's death is another step towards total annihilation and re-establishment of the void; if reality was external to consciousness, each man's death did not affect it at all. In this case, both consciousness and death were part of a vaster process totally independent of man. "I" was a minor player in a self-contained drama. The "I-I-I" of Sara's question not only suggests man's protest against this subordination, but also raises the problem of fragmentation, created by man's sensations and attempts at self-expression. The possibility of discovering one whole and real self, although ultimately futile, seems man's only hope for meaning in life. This can only occur through understanding and acceptance of what the self is, was, and will become. Eugénie Pargiter's momentary recreation of her youthful beauty during her brief dance before her daughters (Y, 152-155) suggests this possibility, although in her, as in Sara and Maggie, it remains unfulfilled.

Sara's sensitive and poetic spirit leads her no further than the contemplation of these problems and their transformation into fitful rhymes. Her inward view limits her thinking, and her poetry expresses

little more than feeble contact with the world. Rhoda achieves almost no contact with external reality. Her inwardness isolates her from it even in childhood. She cannot do sums as the others can; she can only draw a loop filled with non-logical images. Louis says, "As she stares at the chalk figures, her mind lodges in those white circles; it steps through those white loops into emptiness, alone. They have no meaning for her. She has no body as the others have . . . " (W, 189). As Rhoda matures, her inwardness increases, and she retreats into her own dream world. She has constantly to touch something hard to keep aware of the external world.

'I will stretch my toes so that they touch the rail at the end of the bed; I will assure myself, touching the rail, of something hard. Now I cannot sink; cannot altogether fall through the thin sheet now. Now I spread my body on this frail mattress and hang suspended. I am above the earth now. I am no longer upright, to be knocked against and damaged. All is soft, and bending. Walls and cupboards whiten and bend their yellow squares on top of which a pale glass gleams. Out of me now my mind can pour.'
(W, 193)

While the others gradually understand their distinctness from their environment and from each other, Rhoda's self-consciousness expands until she not only loses contact with the environment, but with her sense of self. "I am nobody, I have no face" she intermittently says. Susan and Jinny identify themselves when they look into the mirror; but Rhoda denies what she sees: "' -- that face is my face. But I will duck behind [Susan] to hide it, for I am not here. I have no face. Other people have faces; Susan and Jinny have faces; they are here. Their world is the real world. The things they lift are heavy. They say Yes, they say No; whereas I shift and change and am seen through in a second!'" (W, 203-204).

'I attach myself only to names and faces; and hoard them like amulets against disaster I image these nameless, these immaculate people, watching me from behind bushes. I leap high to excite their admiration. At night, in bed, I excite their complete wonder Therefore I hate looking-glasses which show me my real face. Alone, I often fall down into nothingness. I must push my foot stealthily lest I should fall off the edge of the world into nothingness. I have to bang my hand against some hard door to call myself back to the body.' (W, 204)

Her distaste for the world further enfolds her into herself, and the world's indifference to her real being finally inhibits her from attempting even the feeble contact Sara attempted. Any confrontation with the indifferent world increases the separation between that part of Rhoda that consciously exists in the world and that part that does not.

'Wind and storm coloured July. Also, in the middle, cadaverous, awful, lay the grey puddle in the courtyard, when, holding and envelope in my hand, I carried a message. I came to the puddle. I could not cross it. Identity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell. I was blown like a feather. I was wafted down tunnels. Then very gingerly, I pushed my foot across. I laid my hands against a brick wall. I returned very painfully, drawing myself back into my body over the grey, cadaverous space of the puddle. This is the life to which I am committed.' (W, 219)²²

This experience emphasizes Rhoda's isolation and the human isolation her character symbolizes. It also implies her feeling that life is a tiger, devouring and repressive. Her inability to perceive time as continuous particularly illustrates the devouring aspect. Rhoda says,

²²Cf. Virginia Woolf's own experience, A Writer's Diary, p. 101: "Life is, soberly and accurately, the oddest affair: has in it the essence of reality. I used to feel this as a child -- couldn't step across a puddle once I remember, for thinking how strange -- what am I? etc."

nothing persists. One moment does not lead to another. The door opens and the tiger leaps I am afraid of the shock of sensation that leaps upon me, because I cannot deal with it as you do -- I cannot make one moment merge in the next. To me they are all violent, all separate I do not know how to run minute to minute and hour to hour, solving them by some natural force until they make the whole and indivisible mass that you call life. (W, 265)

Instead of the actual world, she projects an abstract eternal one, which transcends the separateness and discontinuity of time. She creates marble columns and pools in dreams, immune from the world's violence (W, 271), and weaves her flowers into a garland, although she does not know to whom to give them.²³ She perceives her acute difference from the other most strongly at their reunion.

'Coming up from the station refusing to accept the shadow of the trees and the pillar-boxes, I perceived, from your coats and umbrellas, even at a distance, how you stand embedded in a substance made of repeated moments run together; are committed, have an attitude, with children, authority, fame, love, society; where I have nothing. I have no face.' (W, 330)

Although she desperately needs real objects to sustain her, she fears that they would destroy her. Sensing, however, that such destruction would release her, she thinks:

'there are moments when the walls of the mind grow thin; when nothing is unabsorbed, and I could fancy that we might blow so vast a bubble that the sun might set and rise in it and we might take the blue of midday and the black of midnight and be cast off and escape from here and now.' (W, 331)

The "'still mood'" (W, 335) she shares with Louis enables her to attain some relief from the pressures of her self and to transcend her

²³Cf. Mrs. Dalloway, p. 135: Clarissa thinks of bringing people together as "an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom? An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. Anyhow, it was her gift."

imprisonment in the world of time and death. This image of transcendence is her only true creation; it reflects her real self, the abstraction which she effected in order to endure her life. To Rhoda, abstraction is the essence of reality, but such reality cannot be grasped through analogy, as her comments during a concert suggest.

"Like" and "like" and "like" -- but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing? Now that lightning has gashed the tree and the flowering branch has fallen and Percival by his death, has made me this gift, let me see the thing. There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made our oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation.

The sweetness of this content overflowing runs down the walls of my mind, and liberates understanding. Wander no more, I say; this is the end. The oblong has been set upon the square; the spiral is on top (W, 288-289)

Rhoda feels she can tolerate the square standing on the oblong because, in her language, "The structure is visible. We have made a dwelling place" (W, 289); she can destroy that self she has tried to salvage from the world for a more permanent self; hence, she casts her garland to the sea.

The square and oblong images signify Rhoda's realization of her inner self and its necessary expression in suicide. The vision she has while climbing up a Spanish Hill on a mule to see Africa recapitulates her life: her wishes, her disillusion, her dreams, her sense of death, and her attempt to maintain contact with the only real elements she knows, her sensations; she pushes on the hard door of an inn (W, 317-318). When she experiences the "disembodied mood" (W, 335), so vital to her

nature, the square and oblong images appear again.

'The still mood, the disembodied mood is on us . . . and we enjoy this momentary alleviation, (it is not often that one has no anxiety) when the walls of the mind become transparent. Wren's palace, like the quartet played to the dry and stranded people in the stalls, makes an oblong. A square is stood upon the oblong and we say, 'This is our dwelling place. The structure is now visible. Very little is left outside.' (W, 335)

Rhoda fails to integrate the fragments of her personality as she failed to deal with reality, and, as a result, her visions never achieve artistic objectification. "It is because Rhoda cannot assimilate reality that she is mentally and spiritually unresolved. She is . . . an artist manqué unable to achieve the fulfillment for which she longs because of her lust for dreams. The artist's imagination . . . is in her case prostituted to her everlasting desire for fantasy and an idealised life of unreality."²⁴

Rhoda's antithesis, Bernard, relates her death, since her abnegation of life, her quest for "'some pillar in the desert'" (W, 371), affirms his own identity and affirms an attitude towards self and world that Rhoda denies. The antithesis between Bernard, who always seeks contact with others, and Rhoda, who constantly withdraws from it, resembles the antithesis between Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway that plays so crucial a part in Mrs. Dalloway.

Like Rhoda, but unlike Clarissa, Septimus Smith separates himself

²⁴Peter and Margaret Havard-Williams, "Mystical Experience in Virginia Woolf's The Waves," Essays in Criticism, IV (1954), p. 83. See also "Bateau Ivre: The Symbol of the Sea in Virginia Woolf's The Waves," XXIV (1953), pp. 9-17, by the same authors, for an analysis of aesthetic contemplation in the novel and its relation to some nineteenth-century artistic problems.

from external reality by introversion. Like Rhoda, too, he experiences a loss of identity and goes mad. Having experienced extreme despair over the loss of a friend in the war, Septimus retreats into an image of an unfeeling self, by which he seeks to abate intense pain. Since the responsibility for the war's evil cannot be attributed to anyone, Septimus idealistically assumes some responsibility and bears corresponding guilt. He creates a self-image of the unfeeling modern man responsible for the chaos of the world. Septimus's self-image becomes his hope for restoration of love and beauty. That he carries the message of hope heightens the ironic betrayal of his ideals. It was Septimus who "went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square" (MD, 95), and it was Septimus who staunch his pain when Evans died just before the Armistice:

far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, he congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime. He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right there. The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference.
(MD, 96)

Septimus, however, begins to mutter that he has committed a crime, but his crime differs from what he thinks it is. Rather than not feeling, Septimus feels too much; unfortunately, he represses his feeling. "His idea that he cannot feel is false; but his reaction to this supposed fact is true Lost among . . . fears and delusions, he nevertheless has accepted the consequence of them. He has recognized

the seriousness of his 'failure,' and in the end he executes the severe penalty for it upon himself."²⁵ The intense pain Septimus represses throws him into the despair of self-castigation and results in the creation of various images expressing delusions rather than the poems he might have written. The images belong to a totally subjective world, although ironically they imply valid criticism of the society he rejects. "The irony of Septimus's position is that he has so completely lost contact with the world that any insight he might have into social events is wasted."²⁶

From Septimus's first appearance, he betrays his psychic isolation. He murmurs incoherent and unrelated things and incorporates activity around him obliquely into the events of his consciousness. He perceives tree patterns on the blinds of the Royal Car as the drawing together of things at a centre where "some horror had almost come to the surface and was about to burst into flames . . . " (MD, 18); he thinks the car does not move because he blocks the way (MD, 18); he sees the skywritten toffee advertisements as his signals, mysterious words about beauty and goodness which he does not yet understand (MD, 25). He almost constantly experiences rising and falling and floating sensations, and, like Rhoda, and like Rachel Vinrace in her final illness, needs to grasp something hard to feel rooted. Like them, too, he feels part of nature, part of the trees, roots, branches (MD, 26), and he shrieks out against

²⁵Isabel Gamble, "Mrs. Dalloway," pp. 246-247.

²⁶Mollach, "Mrs. Dalloway," p. 70.

men cutting down his only connections with the world. His final revolt against himself comes with his revolt against nature and natural processes, a revolt which extends to Shakespeare, the poet he always revered for his love of nature (MD, 99).

Septimus hears the sparrows singing in Greek.²⁷ That they do so suggests the root of his problem, for Evans died in Greece and Septimus's real feeling died there too. If he could admit this, then he might feel redeemed. The birds sing that there is no crime (MD, 28). This suggests to Septimus that if Evans had not been unjustly killed in an unjust war, beauty and goodness would be real and crime non-existent. In a later passage, Septimus imagines the creation of an "ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time" (MD, 78), but instead of this ode, he seems to have created an elegy for his dead friend. Various pastoral images and Septimus's climactic vision of Evans alive and unharmed suggest such an elegy. The "old man playing a penny-whistle by the public house" becomes the shepherd boy's elegy in which Septimus becomes "some colossal figure who has lamented the fate of man for ages in the desert alone . . . " (MD, 78). Septimus the mourner and the shepherd boy immortalizes himself as well as Evans in his message of love. That the image of Evans Septimus sees is actually Peter Walsh in a grey suit indicates the discrepancy in Septimus's mind between external and internal meaning. Furthermore, that Septimus mistakes Peter Walsh for

²⁷Leonard Woolf, in Beginning Again, p. 77, states that Virginia Woolf herself experienced this. Cf. also the connotations of the various bird images in T. S. Eliot's Waste Land, and "Sweeney Among the Nightingales."

Evans not only connects Septimus and Clarissa and emphasizes the importance of these men to their emotional lives, but also connects the idea of the loss of selfhood, which both Septimus and Clarissa share. Evan's death precipitated Septimus's loss of self-awareness, whereas through Clarissa's refusal of Peter Walsh, Clarissa achieved the selfhood she sought. Peter Walsh thus significantly figures as the symbol for self-realization for death, and life.

Although at first Septimus feels unwilling to assume his self-created responsibility of martyr and redeemer, he finally does assume it. He cannot do so until he has transmuted his suffering into a more objective form. The image of the drowned sailor (MD, 77) expresses such a transmutation. It reveals his isolation and his loneliness and, simultaneously, his defense against imaginary enemies. When he burns his writings and drawings, he believes he is preserving his real self from the world's scorn, and when he jumps out of the window, his words, "I'll give it you" (MD, 164), ironically suggest the same thing. His action suggests that whatever his delusion, he seeks to keep his self inviolate.

In Septimus, as in Rhoda, Virginia Woolf used mental aberration to show how the mind knows the external world and how knowledge of the world determines self-knowledge. She illustrated in Septimus "the world seen through a mind so exquisitely sensitive that it has become unbalanced."²⁸ In Mr. Ramsay, she replaced insanity with egoism. Instead of

²⁸Blackstone, p. 79.

retreating from external reality, Mr. Ramsay tries to make it mirror his excessive self-interest. Although Virginia Woolf did not tether egoism solely to Mr. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse, it is he who most clearly dramatizes the egoistic self, and it is he whose preoccupation prevents him from attaining the self-awareness to which introspection ideally leads and the understanding of others that love inspires.

Virginia Woolf based the portrait of the Victorian scholar, whose egoism conditioned all he did and saw, on her father, the noted Victorian man of letters, Sir Leslie Stephen,²⁹ although Sterne's Walter Shandy and Meredith's Vernon Whitford may have influenced it as well. She did not intend Mr. Ramsay to be completely biographical as her letter to Jacques-~~Emile~~ Blanche indicates: "I did not mean to paint an exact portrait of my father in Mr. Ramsay. A book makes everything into itself, and the portrait became changed to fit it as I wrote. But this is of no great importance. My mother died when I was 13 so that the memory of her in Mrs. Ramsay is also very distant."³⁰ Consideration of Mr. Ramsay's philosophy of life aptly illustrates the limitations of subjectivity as egoism.

Mr. Ramsay sees life as a perpetual struggle in which endurance, courage, and truth are man's only resources (TL, 54). He believes that

²⁹A Writer's Diary, pp. 76-77.

³⁰Georges-Paul Collet, "Jacques-~~Emile~~ Blanche and Virginia Woolf," Comparative Literature, XVII (1965), p. 75. See also, Leonard Woolf, Sowing, p. 182, but cf. Vanessa Bell's comment on Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in A Writer's Diary, p. 107. For an interesting view of egoism in Meredith, see Richard B. Hudson, "Egoism in The Egoist," The Trollopian, III (1948-1949), pp. 163-176.

he alone perceives this struggle and can accept the challenge flung before him. Although life ultimately conquers man, Mr. Ramsay believes the heroic stand vital, and sees himself as the leader of man's doomed expedition. His frequent shouting of lines from Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade," in the first section of the novel, comically conveys this self-image. His repetition of the key line, "Some one had blundered" (TL, 31, 48, 52), while variously interpreted,³¹ ironically expresses his own false evaluation of life, although he does not realize this until he really understands himself. He considers his view valiant even though he knows nothing can retard death. Mr. Ramsay's view that the actions of both ordinary and extraordinary men are futile is both a rationalization for his not considering himself a great man whose work will endure and a reflection of his innate melancholy. His melancholy increases his sense of isolation and futility. Man struggles with forces that constantly threaten to annihilate him; regardless of nature's final victory, man must fight the good fight. As a scholar, Mr. Ramsay fights by trying to understand man's relationship to himself and his environment. Only his rugged stoicism sustains him in the battle.

It was his fate, his peculiarity, whether he wished it or not, to come out thus on a spit of land which the sea is slowly eating away, and there to stand, like a desolate sea-bird, alone. It was his power, his gift, suddenly to shed all superfluities, to shrink and diminish, so that he looked barer and felt sparer, even physically, yet lost none of his intensity of mind, and so to stand on his little ledge facing the dark of human ignorance,

³¹For the view that Mrs. Ramsay is the "villain" of To the Lighthouse, and the one who blundered, see Glenn Pederson, "Vision in To the Lighthouse," PMLA, LXXIII (December 1950), pp. 585-600.

how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on -- that was his fate, his gift. (TL, 68-69)³²

To counteract his fatalism, he enjoys the comforts of family sympathy and devotion. Although he considers these trifles as compared with more significant, if sadder truths, he accepts their power to assuage despair.

The image of the angular scrubbed table by which Lily Briscoe understands Mr. Ramsay's work suits the personality of the spare of "expeditionary leader," the metaphysician and professor of the English epistemologists, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Although Mr. Ramsay's philosophical and psychological preoccupation with what and how one knows neither wholly accounts for his view of life nor the personality that view suggests, it illuminates both by its strong concern with man's powers. Whether idealism, empiricism, scepticism, or realism dominates, faith in reason and common sense always remains strong. Common sense tells man how and what to analyze in his sensate experience so as to understand reality. Man's knowledge, then, comes from his ability first to perceive, and then to shape things. Common sense also enables man to see himself as a unified being, a self that is the same at different times and places and with different people. Unity of self derives from different sources according to Locke and Berkeley, but with Hume, the concept of self grew less secure because of his disintegrating sensationalistic theory and views of causality.

³²Virginia Woolf extended her subtle distinctions between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay to their self-images. Mr. Ramsay is a "desolate sea-bird," whereas Mrs. Ramsay is a "wedge-shaped core of darkness"; Mr. Ramsay is the lonely man in nature, Mrs. Ramsay, the enduring spirit. See below Chapter VI, pp. 244-246 for development of this view of Mrs. Ramsay's nature.

Mr. Ramsay's self-image reflects the rational attitude that tends towards idealistic subjectivity. His "farsightedness" is ironic since he sees only as far as his own eminence and range. He sees reality as man alone on a rock confronting nature.³³ No other power intervenes in this confrontation. Mr. Ramsay's lack of concern with what happens around him illustrates how his perceived reality almost entirely eliminates his thought of anyone or anything else. His view, however, hardly expresses the whole truth, as Virginia Woolf's multiple point of view and stream of consciousness method suggest. His vision contrasts markedly with that reality seen by the omniscient author and the other characters. Furthermore, his egoism leads him to a pessimistic vision to which he does not wholly subscribe, as the narrative progression, the contrast between his and his wife's attitudes, and the satiric light in which he almost always appears, indicate. The conflict over the lighthouse excursion best illustrates this.

If the lighthouse symbolizes a reality that is external and larger than man,³⁴ then, whatever Mr. Ramsay's ostensible reason, he cannot go

³³Perhaps Virginia Woolf derived this image from the fact that her father was a distinguished mountain climber who saw mountain climbing as a direct attempt to conquer nature. It is as such a direct attempt also that he began mountain climbing, long-distance walking, and rowing so as to overcome the physical and emotional fragility of his childhood. See Annan, pp. 29, 33, 34, 80-89, 90.

³⁴The meaning of the lighthouse has plagued most critics. For some of the several interpretations given it, see the following: William Empson, "Virginia Woolf," *Scrutinies*, ed. E. Rickwood, II (London, 1931), p. 206; Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel*, p. 234; Moody, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 41; Irène Simon, *Formes du roman anglais de Dickens à Joyce* (Liege, 1949), p. 357. I am not suggesting a final meaning here, but rather one possible explanation related to Mr. Ramsay's behaviour.

to the lighthouse until he really understands his relationship to nature. Although he thinks he understands it, he sees it only through his own ego's demands and as a response to his strong fear of death. His inability to give sympathy re-enforces his egoistic isolation and makes it almost impossible for him to accept comfort, outside of his own ego, for man's mortality. His fears prevent him from breaking down the totally irrational barriers that protect him from the truth. When he acknowledges the nature of his "rational" irrationalities and their consequent denial of absolute heroism, he understands genuine despair and isolation.

Mr. Ramsay's ego turns truth into the progression of Q to R because posterity would say he achieved it, not because R was truth. Mr. Ramsay realizes that he demands the recognition and adulation from his wife and family that he would not get from time. His undertaking of the lighthouse excursion after his wife's death suggests that he has relinquished some of his egoistic preoccupation and that view of reality expressing only the self that envisioned it. Mr. Ramsay could not cross the "waters of annihilation" (TL, 269)³⁵ until he had accepted death. That he has done so and dissolved the solid "I," suggests that he has begun to see reality from a more impersonal perspective and to see his isolation as part of the human condition. His relationship to his children in the boat going to the lighthouse indicates this, while it shows that he still

³⁵See also, "On Being Ill," The Moment, p. 14 for another use of this phrase, and Norman Friedman, "The Waters of Annihilation: Double Vision in To the Lighthouse," ELH, XXII (March 1955), p. 63.

retains his pride in man's fortitude. That his "being convinced . . . of all sorts of horrors, seemed not to depress him, but to cheer him" (TL, 107), confirms this, and emphasizes that he assumed the pose of the Castaway only to get the sympathy his sensitive nature required.

The "king in exile" (TL, 222), the solitary figure, woeful, desolate and frail (TL, 228), always bore down on others and tried to limit their emotional freedom (TL, 221, 227). Sitting in the middle of the boat, fidgeting, full of anxieties about starting, about the breeze, demanding details about a year-old storm, Mr. Ramsay seems the same as he has always been.

He liked that men should labour and sweat on the windy beach at night; pitting muscle and brain against the waves and the wind; he liked men to work like that, and women to keep house, and sit beside sleeping children indoors, while men were drowned out there in a storm. (TL, 245)

But he is no longer the leader of the Charge; he is now truly the Castaway, a man "very old and bowed" (TL, 247). Cam feels this too. Rather than the monster of childhood, she sees an old man, reading, whose genuine loneliness softens her promise to James to resist their father's tyranny to the end. Cam, however, has not totally changed her view of her father as the heroic leader:

He read, she thought, as if he were guiding something, or wheedling a large flock of sheep, or pushing his way up and up a single narrow path; and sometimes he went fast and straight, and broke his way through the bramble, and sometimes it seemed a branch struck at him, a bramble blinded him, but he was not going to let himself be beaten by that (TL, 283)

Cam's sympathy combines with James's recognition that he is like his father, the "old stone lying on the sand" and for whom "loneliness . . .

was . . . the truth about things" (TL, 301). Their feelings blend with Mr. Ramsay's acknowledged insight, signified first by a curious gesture: "He . . . raised his right hand mysteriously high in the air, and let it fall upon his knee again as if he were conducting some secret symphony" (TL, 279). He seems to apprehend both his significance as a man in life and his part in the process of life and death. He senses his death, but perceives his children's lives beyond him (TL, 304). He sits bareheaded with the package on his knee waiting to land (TL, 307); he sits silently without reciting any lines, without issuing any commands. Then he moves to the ship's bow and waits. When the boat lands, he expresses his self-confidence and strength by springing alone onto the rock: "There is no God" (TL, 308). He has crossed the waters of self-understanding and stands on the rock, confronting his truth. He becomes man's symbol for the lighthouse itself by moving out of the sphere of his own ego to see himself as part of the larger impersonal forces of nature.

Rhoda's dreams of universal truth enduring time's flux, Septimus's search for love and beauty to make existence more than tolerable, Sara's attempt to blend imagined and actual reality, and Mr. Ramsay's hope to forge reality out of his own virtue, all reflect the desire of the subjective self to understand its nature and that of its reality. Yet in all four characters, extreme subjectivity thwarts complete self-expression and prevents any fruitful exploration of reality. Their sensitivity rewards them with profound understanding, but their extreme solipsism grants their insight dubious value. It is notable in Virginia

Woolf's treatment of these characters that the problem of personal unity is merely an undercurrent. Their extreme solipsism even prevented them from perceiving any division in the core of self. Orlando provides a sharp contrast. In Orlando, Virginia Woolf treats the self as it endures through time and as it undergoes sexual metamorphosis. By subjecting Orlando to such trials, Virginia Woolf succeeds in demonstrating the multiplicity of personality when it exists in time and the essential unity it achieves when it transcends time. This conclusion, playfully treated in this novel, explains something of the nature of enduring personal identity suggested by Clarissa's triumph at the end of Mrs. Dalloway and Bernard's positive cry at the end of The Waves.

During each of the six eras in which he/she lives, Orlando seems unique. In the Elizabethan age, Orlando is a handsome young nobleman, heroic, patriotic, imaginative, passionate, a seeker after adventure and conquest and a poet and dreamer who easily falls in love with beauty. In the early seventeenth century, disappointed in romance, Orlando turns away from adventure to solitude, from poetry to philosophy, and consumption, crypts, moonlight, gravestones, tears, and thoughts on suicide. At the end of the century, carpe diem becomes his theme; he views literature as a profession and seeks people to entertain at large sumptuous parties. He has an ambassadorial career, becomes the adored and the adorer of beauty, glamour, and romance. Orlando's transformation into a woman curtails the licentious gaiety of the Restoration, while religion transforms pagan freedom into temperance. Gradually Orlando entertains the salon wits and poets and learns to pour tea.

The nineteenth-century dampness turns fashionable tea pouring into the eternal imperative before a hot fire. In this century, too, crinolines disguise sex, and marriage tames love. Orlando learns to cry and mask her feelings behind new words and phrases. The advent of the automobile, the wireless, and the telephone launches Orlando into the twentieth century, in which she drives speedily from country to city, resumes her eighteenth-century smoking habit, though now with cigarettes instead of cheroots, shops in department stores, and constantly loses track of who she is at any particular time.

These changes Orlando undergoes characterize the gross changes in English literary and social history, but they also characterize only the superficial aspects of Orlando. In spite of time's vagaries, Orlando retains certain characteristics distinguishing a self that endures. Throughout his/her career, Orlando remains an English aristocrat and poet. Love of nature and solitude, melancholy, and candidness define his/her romantic disposition. An expressive aspect balances a meditative one, with the urge to write constantly transforming his/her natural responsiveness and contemplative desires into imaginative recreation. The Oak Tree, the long poem which follows Orlando through the trials of life and changing literary trends, illustrates his/her love of intellect and imagination as well as nature. The oak tree was both a real object, whose roots Orlando liked to touch, and the spirit of his/her poem. The poem constantly re-affirms Orlando's desire for natural and imaginative beauty.

Temporal change in the novel encourages the growth and powers of

duration of the self called Orlando. Virginia Woolf emphasizes this not only by satirizing the distinctions she often drew between clock and mind time, but by expanding normal time spans into fantastic times, by indicating the changing value clock and calendar held in each era, by exploring the potential of history and biography, and by emphasizing specific moments, days, and dates that have little to do with what really happens. Specific references to time suggest solidity in the midst of wild fantasy, but they also show Virginia Woolf's mockery of the total dependence biographers and historians have on facts when depicting the life of a person or an epoch. Over-emphasis on factual observation and recording implies a schematic view of reality and fails to account for life's contradictions and variegations. The increasing significance of time in science, philosophy, and daily affairs suggests a re-orientation of a static universe in which absolutes are possible, and forces biographers and historians to deal with the dynamic character of things. Relativity makes duration of anything seem an unrealizable dream. Even man's tenacious hold on the present seems tenuous, and it becomes apparent that individual time even differs from nature's time.

The mind of man . . . works with . . . strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second (0, 98)

Thinking time seems longer than acting time so that even estimating the length of a person's life grows difficult. A man could

go out after breakfast a man of thirty and come home to dinner a man of fifty-five at least. Some weeks added a century to his age, others no more than three seconds at most. Altogether, the task of estimating the length of human life . . . is beyond our capacity, for directly we say that it is ages long, we are reminded it is briefer than the fall of a rose leaf to the ground. (0, 99)

The contrasting experiences of "brevity and diuturnity" (0, 99) dominate the mind at the same time too, emphasizing that within them time is not one thing but many.

And indeed, it cannot be denied that the most successful practitioners of the art of life, . . . , somehow contrive to synchronise the sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system so that when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison, and the present is neither a violent disruption nor completely forgotten in the past. Of them we can justly say that they live precisely the sixty-eight or seventy-two years allotted them on the tombstone. Of the rest, some we know to be dead, though they walk among us; some are not yet born, though they go through the forms of life; others are hundreds of years old though they call themselves thirty-six. The true length of a person's life, whatever a person's life, whatever the Dictionary of National Biography may say, is always a matter of dispute. Indeed it is a difficult business -- this time-keeping; nothing more quickly disorders it than contact with any of the arts (0, 305-306)

The problem of accepting one time rather than "seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once . . . " (0, 308) illustrates the problem of unity that vitally concerned Virginia Woolf. The idea of time as a continual forward progression implies the "illusion of holding things within itself . . . " (0, 307), and poses the question of the real affect of the present moment on the mind. "For what more terrifying revelation can there be than that it is the present moment? That we survive the shock at all is only possible because the past shelters us upon one side, the future on another" (0, 49).

The present moment becomes the only possible cessation amid the chaotic relativity and discontinuity of experience; it provides unity. The dial point order, dissociating one from that sense of unity that accompanies first consciousness, may be overcome through a more profound understanding of the nature of the present moment. Orlando's metamorphosis into many selves and her final vision of one self at the book's conclusion illustrate her understanding of this idea.

The narrator says that two thousand and fifty-two different selves comprise one self and that one constantly changes from one to another depending on one's circumstance (0, 308). Stacked like plates on a waiter's hand, the selves appear only one at a time, in a pattern of their own (0, 308). A biographer considers his work complete if he deals with six or seven selves whereas a person may have a thousand (0, 309). That a person's self is not always what it seems to be, Orlando's different disguises make evident, but it is apparent even in most ordinary circumstances. The poet has a butcher's face; the butcher, a poet's. The self is never all one thing or another: it is composed of granite and rainbow, clay and diamonds; there is a "ragbag of odds and ends within us," policeman's trousers and Queen Alexandra's wedding veil. Memory relates the different elements of the self and the unpredictable movements it performs. Memory gives discontinuity the semblance of unity; with the aid of her past, Orlando gives her present meaning (0, 77-78).

The conscious self, which initiates the memory process, is not necessarily the "Captain self" of the "Key self"; the true self comes

spontaneously rather than on command as Orlando discovers (0, 310). Furthermore, this true self, decidedly single, makes no attempt to talk, and thus sets itself apart from the other selves, so conscious of disseverment that they constantly seek communication (0, 314). The different selves Virginia Woolf describes, and for which Orlando tries to account, include the alteration of sex that Orlando undergoes in the eighteenth century.

In general, the role of male and female changes in each period just as the social self of Orlando does, the masculine role dominating from the Elizabethan era to the early eighteenth century and the feminine dominating from then on. The changes from the heroic active life to the chaste modest family life, while significant in determining many aspects of daily activity, of world view, and of values, do not effect those characteristics of Orlando that endured over the centuries. The love of reading, of meditation, of solitude, of nature, and his/her vivid imagination and passion to write, remain constant throughout. Sex does not alter the real Orlando, although it certainly affects the various selves that time creates, and, therefore, Orlando reacts to the sexual transformation rather differently from the world. Most people cannot accept Orlando first as a man and then as a woman (0, 139). Orlando, however, is shocked at how relative male and female attitudes actually are:

'what fools they [men] make of us -- what fools we are!' and here it would seem from some ambiguity in her terms that she was censuring both sexes equally, as if she belonged to neither; and indeed, for the time being she seemed to vacillate; she was man; she was woman; she knew the secrets, shared the weaknesses of each. (0, 158)

Orlando explores the dual qualities she possesses.

She had, it seems, no difficulty in sustaining the different parts, for her sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive; nor can there be any doubt that she reaped a twofold harvest by this device; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied. From the probity of breeches she turned to the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally. (O, 220-221)

Even more significant in clarifying the real self is the acknowledgment of similarity and difference between the sexes. Clothes distinguish men and women, but the narrator notes, if men and women wore the same clothes their outlook might be similar too.

That is the outlook of some philosophers and wise ones, but on the whole, we incline to another. The difference between the sexes is, happily, one of great profundity. Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath But we come to a dilemma. Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above. (O, 188-189)

Once again, despite alterations and multiplicity, a single self emerges. Orlando recognizes the real self surviving long and dazzling career in the moment of vision at the conclusion of the book. Nothing else had given her a sense of belonging to life at hand, no matter how well he/she had adjusted to a particular era. The granite and rainbow elements conflicted; time seemed short and long, life seemed whole and fragmented. Only when memory linked all the parts together and one self subsumed all others in one moment did Orlando experience unity

and perceive continuity. In the final scene,³⁶ imagination and love link past and future, life and death, and create the present, and the self. Orlando's house symbolizes the self standing steadfast against time, but the shadows dim the intense brightness of perception to actual human capacity. Orlando's breast, shining in the moonlight, externalizes this perception of self. The wild goose is the spirit of ecstasy that has inspired the appreciation of the imaginative and factual truth of the oak tree, the significance of Shelmerdine, the adventurer and symbol of love and romance, and the present moment. The striking of midnight and the announcing of the date ironically indicate that Orlando has captured time and experienced the unity of timelessness. This unity affirms the reality of the self that endures and through which the poet understands the spirit of a family, the imagination of a country, and the flux of time and personality.

The playful irony of Orlando becomes transmuted into the tragic irony of The Waves. When Bernard discovers his real self, he understands simultaneously that it endures only for a moment. The achievement of self-understanding serves only to reconcile him to inevitable annihilation. Despite its desolation, this understanding enables him to accept his fate heroically. It is Bernard's attitude towards life

³⁶In Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (London, 1963), pp. 299-307, Maud Bodkin develops the interesting view that the images of the poet, Shakespeare, the lover-adventurer, Shelmerdine, and of ecstasy leading to the revelation of reality, the wild goose, is a modern woman's rendering of the "intuition, communicated from man's side by Dante's Comedy and Goethe's Faust," and that "through the ever-elusive Image formed in each of the others man and woman alike find a way of approach to reality, or to the Divine" (p. 307).

and death that most realistically expresses Virginia Woolf's view of the development of the real self from first to final consciousness.

Before Bernard uncovers the real Bernard, he, like Orlando, encounters the multiplicity of his personality:

' . . . I am not one and simple, but complex and many. Bernard in public, bubbles; in private, is secretive. That is what they do not understand, for they are now undoubtedly discussing me, saying I escape them, am evasive. They do not understand that I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard. I am abnormally aware of circumstances.'
(W, 227)

In different rooms and with different people, he becomes a different self. "We are not simple as our friends would have us to meet their needs" (W, 236). He constantly loses his identity when he considers his place in life:

'I, mixed with an unknown Italian waiter -- what am I? There is no stability in this world. Who is to say what meaning there is in anything To speak of knowledge is futile. All is experiment and adventure. We are forever mixing ourselves with unknown quantities. What is to come? I know not. But, as I put down my glass, I remember; I am engaged to be married. I am to dine with my friends tonight. I am Bernard.' (W, 256-257)

Bernard opposes the loss of identity that Rhoda's puddle experience illustrates with the pillar-box, the real object which fixes his wandering thoughts and enables him to say that he is Bernard and engaged to be married (W, 273-275). Pillar-box and puddle distinguish the extreme solipsism that drives Rhoda and Septimus into madness and the subjectivity that drives Bernard into developing himself and seeking a fruitful relationship with the world.

'To be myself (I note) I need the illumination of other people's eyes, and therefore cannot be entirely what is myself. The

authentics, like Louis, like Rhoda, exist most completely in solitude. They resent illumination, reduplication. They toss their pictures, once painted, face downward on the field ' (W, 255)

Louis and Rhoda live outside Bernard's pillar-box world. Although Bernard's occasional and involuntary experiences of indifference to it reward him with new insights into his self and life, only through pillar-boxes can he avoid the self-abnegation he abhors and fears. For self-abnegation means discontinuity and death, the enemies of selfhood.

'I have heard in my moment of appeasement, in my moment of obliterating satisfaction, the sigh, as it goes in, comes out, of the tide that draws beyond this circle of bright light, this drumming of insensate fury. I have had one moment of enormous peace. This is perhaps happiness. Now I am drawn back by pricking sensations; by curiosity, greed, (I am hungry) and the irresistible desire to be myself.' (W, 255)

"Curiosity is knocked out only for a short time. One cannot live outside the machine for more perhaps than half an hour" (W, 282), Bernard admits. After such an experience of dissociation, Bernard returns to his ordinary perceptive mode, unlike Rhoda, convinced that the self exists somewhere, and that something remains (W, 283). First, he imagines rain dissolving his nose like a snowman's and losing "the sharp tooth of egotism"; he perceives "that the earth is only a pebble flicked off accidentally from the face of the sun and that there is no life anywhere in the abysses of space" (W, 332). Then, however, "the memory of my nose recalls me. I rise; 'Fight,' I cry, 'fight!' remembering the shape of my own nose and strike with this spoon upon this table pugnaciously" (W, 333).

In his summing up Bernard most clearly describes his perception of self. First he sees himself as a distinct entity, an "I," a man, the inheritor of the human race, symbolized for him by Beethoven's picture (W, 352). Then he recognizes a more private self opposing the general undifferentiated forces and including sensations that cannot destroy or disturb it (W, 352-353). He sees the mind's growth in rings, each new experience being an expansion of the central core, and he characterizes emotional experiences as floating sensations (W, 228, 332-334, 362), both the buried tree and sea metaphors linking him to the other subjective figures seeking self-definition. Gradually Bernard sees the self as one thing enduring multiplicity. This realization is like netting that fin in the waste of water; it turns life into "perpetual warfare," a "shattering and piecing together . . . the daily battle, defeat or victory, the absorbing pursuit" (W, 363-364). At this point, Bernard incorporates all his different selves into the one self, Bernard; at this point, also, he becomes the symbol of man himself, the warrior who flings himself into life and against death, the act which dissolves time (W, 369). Like Coleridge's mariner, Bernard tells his story to a stranger, and consequently realizes the unity transcendence of the self brings. He sees a pattern within and without the temporal world, a pattern of strife and resolution, growth, death, and renewal. He feels renewed after his story. He has "walked bang into the pillar-box" (W, 380).

'Once more, I who had thought myself immune, who had said,
Now I am rid of all that, find that the wave has tumbled me
over, head over heels, scattering my possessions, leaving me

to collect, to assemble, to heap together, summon my forces, rise and confront the enemy.' (W, 380)

Out of the passivity and submission of old age, Bernard actively continues the fight that characterizes his real self and that makes him a symbol of man. The self, like the willow tree, will endure.

'Its shower of falling branches, its creased and crooked bark had the effect of what remains outside our illusions yet cannot stay them, is changed by them for the moment, yet shows through stable, still, and with a sternness that our lives lack. Hence the comment it makes; the standard it supplies, and the reason why, as we flow and change, it seems to measure.'³⁷ (W, 350-351)

Bernard has discovered that although man grows in awareness to perish as a particular self, he endures as a general one. During her day in June, Clarissa Dalloway also discovers a self that endures, but she allows her particular insight to extend into a broader transcendental vision. The movement from self to selflessness implied in Clarissa Dalloway's vision expresses the most mystical, but not the most dominant, aspect of Virginia Woolf's view of reality. Clarissa's subjective exploration leads her not only to self-awareness, but to a satisfying relationship with her world.

Virginia Woolf describes Clarissa's understanding of her social and metaphysical self through a dialectic of personality rather than through the analysis of different selves as she did in Orlando and The Waves. The dopp lganger technique illustrates the idea of the single self emerging from the fusion of opposites. Clarissa and Septimus symbolize the light and dark parts of the self, life and death, the

³⁷Cf. the image of the willow as seen by Rhoda and Jinny (W, 351).

fusion of which brings self-unity. Clarissa would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or that, "she would not say of Peter, she would not any of herself, I am this, I am that" (MD, 10-11). When she looked into the mirror, however, she saw a self, her self, "pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, to call on her to be herself, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman . . . never showing a sign of all the other sides . . . " (MD, 42). This is a single person, the diamond shape, the hostess (MD, 43). Her self-assertiveness makes her seem cold to those who love her. Her self-containment causes her to lack that "something central which permeated" (MD, 36). But Clarissa deliberately prevents this permeation; she deliberately preserves her self in all relationships and experiences. Clarissa senses that only through the discovery and preservation of the self, the "unmergeable" quality (VO, 94-95), can one transcend the annihilation of time.

To Clarissa, the self is a treasure. Her thoughts on Septimus's death substantiate this. She sees Septimus's suicide as an act to preserve that treasure; her girlhood refusal of Peter Walsh, her aloof relationships with her husband and child, and her distant friendships illustrate a similar intention. Clarissa resents marriage and close friendships as a threat to selfhood just as Septimus resented them after the war. Clarissa flings herself into the hostess role, however, and stands staked at the top of the stair, because that role places her real self

in an agreeable social role that precludes intimate contact. Beyond these personal expressions lies Clarissa's transcendental theory, which determines her relationships with others and with the external and natural worlds. The death of a kindred spirit in Septimus and the death of the dark forces in her own self as a result of his suicide confirm Clarissa's transcendental intuitions.

Clarissa's love of life makes her hate and fear death and repress thoughts of it. That these thoughts haunt her during the day suggests that she must come to terms with death before she can truly assert the selfhood she has struggled to sustain. The procession up Bond Street and the ecstasy in the florist shop represent the first stage in her confrontation. On Bond Street she actually feels part of the flow of life; she feels her self somehow merged in the movement.

Did it matter then, . . . , did it matter that she must cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? But that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, her self. (MD, 11-12)

She even experiences a sense of separation from the physical being she identifies as her self, the physical self, which had often repelled her:

. . . now this body she wore (she stopped to look at a Dutch picture), this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing -- nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway. (MD, 13)

This dissolution is not like death's negative annihilation, but an experience of extension and duration. By losing the sense of her self in life's procession, in nature's eternal cycles, that self endures as these things do. The masses of flowers in the florist shop make her feel "as if this beauty, this scent, this colour, and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her, were a wave which she let flow over her and surmount that hatred, that monster, surmount it all; and it lifted her up and up . . . " (MD, 16). Her particular life and her particular joy become transmuted into universal life and universal joy. On the Shaftesbury Avenue bus Clarissa

felt herself everywhere; not 'here, here, here'; she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. So that to know her or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with some man behind a counter -- even trees, or barns. It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her scepticism), that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary, compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places, after death (MD, 168)

Septimus's hallucinations disclose his rejection of the natural beauty he, like Clarissa, loves, and illustrate how the same impulses can lead to a negative or positive end. Septimus protects the vestiges of self by denying beauty because of the evil he has known; Clarissa protects herself by abnegating strong personal involvement and submitting only to impersonal communion with nature and the city. Her parties serve both the dissolving and unifying function. The diffusion of self among vast numbers of strangers and acquaintances allows Clarissa the

full range of freedom to express that self that needs contact and immunity. Bringing people together expresses her love of life³⁸ and symbolizes her desire for continuity. That she spends more time with acquaintances than with her real friends illustrates her desire to maintain her distance and to attain, thereby, transcendence over her immediate environment. Her identification with Septimus emphasizes this and affirms the forward movement the imagery has underlined.

Clarissa's hostility to death makes her angry with the Bradshaws for introducing the subject at her party. But she gradually sees it climax her thoughts of the day. She compares her "giving" with that of Septimus. She felt with him that by dying one gave away the thing vital to the soul's salvation. Suicide was that defiant act against age, decay, and corruption. "Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death" (MD, 202). Was death preservation for Septimus? Would it be so for her? Life's intense pleasures force her away from these thoughts, the dark parts of herself, although she clearly feels that Septimus's death was her disaster, her disgrace. Although each man's willful death was each man's responsibility, Clarissa felt that her own shallowness forced Septimus into his intolerable position. That she enjoys her own superficiality makes her recognize what she is and what her life means (MD, 204). She sees her

³⁸ Frank Baldanza, "Clarissa Dalloway's 'Party Consciousness,'" Modern Fiction Studies, II (February 1956), p. 27.

self as part of the sky viewed through the window of a room. The old woman opposite that window, a figure of death and of the truth of Clarissa's advancing age, goes to sleep, thereby symbolizing the resolution of Clarissa's thoughts of death. She at last perceives death as part of the natural cycle in which she has faith and which she does not fear. Acceptance of life means acceptance of death, but she cannot make one fulfill the function of the other. Proceeding in the next room, symbolizing the unifying and dissolving processes of life and the particular actuality of the striking clock, the party illuminates her intense pleasure in life and the intense way she experiences the present and imagines the future. "She did not pity [Septimus] with all this going on" (MD, 204). Death could not resolve life's enigmas, but death had re-awakened her to the life she instinctively and consciously sought to preserve. By transcending Septimus's death, for a moment, Clarissa transcends his burden and her own and turns duration in time to timelessness.

Although Virginia Woolf acknowledged the existence of a real self, a "knot of consciousness,"³⁹ and described a functional unity leading to fulfillment in Clarissa, Bernard, and Orlando, she did not pretend to have solved the problems of identity and unity. Her persistent verification of those very sensations that destroyed unity forced her to seek some means of reconciling the inner vision by which one came to understand the essence of personality, the self, with the outer

³⁹"The Moment: Summer's Night," The Moment, p. 10.

vision by which one expressed and communicated that self. She discovered this reconciliation in a modified and transitory mysticism and in art. The quintessential aspect of her lyricism rests on this reconciliation.

Chapter VI

THE GREAT FISH

In Orlando, Virginia Woolf comments on the frustration of the artist who seeks, but fails to find, the perfect shape for his imaginative vision. Although he "flings after it words like nets," he never gets more than "an inch of silver -- six words -- in the bottom of the net. . . . never the great fish who lives in coral groves" (O, 313). In Between the Acts, Virginia Woolf suggests how the harmonious vision of one person can resolve discord, even if only temporarily, between man and nature. Lucy Swithin gazes at the lily pool.

Then something moved in the water; her favourite fantail. The golden orfe followed. Then she had a glimpse of silver -- the great carp himself, who came to the surface so very seldom. They slid on, in and out between the stalks, silver; pink; gold; splashed; streaked; pied.

'Ourselves,' she murmured. And retrieving some glint of faith from the grey waters, hopefully, without much help from reason, she followed the fish; the speckled, streaked, and blotched; seeing in that vision beauty, power, and glory in ourselves. (BA, 239-240)

Orlando and Lucy want either to capture or to see the great fish, their symbol of the spirit of harmony between the outer and the inner worlds. Their aim differentiates them from introspective people like Septimus Smith, Sara Pargiter, and Rhoda, whose acute self-consciousness prevents them from pursuing anything outside their own psyches. Lucy, along with Mrs. Ramsay and Eleanor Pargiter, and Orlando, along with Miss La Trobe and Lily Briscoe, are artists who transform their

consciousness of self and environment into a form significant both for themselves and for others. Unlike Septimus, Sara, and Rhoda, they can, as D. G. James describes the process of self-objectification, represent themselves to themselves.¹ They can order the different selves of their personalities into a meaningful pattern.² Self-conscious people, possessing some creative propensity, who neither perceive nor create such a pattern from their emotional experiences, James asserts, using Coleridge's term, possess only primary imagination. Those others, whose self-consciousness stimulates the creation of an imagined pattern corresponding to the one they perceive within themselves, possess a secondary imagination.³

The secondary imagination makes art and, according to James, lyrical poetry in particular, possible.⁴ By separating emotional and conative reactions from the experiences, the artist can create a significant design from them. The artist possesses, rather than is possessed by, his emotions. He wants to understand self and reality solely through the "effort of the imagination, to relate, or to effect wholeness of prehension; to get above the flux of experience and grasp it as a unity . . . to transcend and be raised above the life of passion and action and see it as a whole, instead of experiencing a flux

¹D. G. James, Scepticism and Poetry An Essay on the Poetic Imagination (New York, 1960), p. 111.

²Ibid., p. 113.

³Ibid., p. 112.

⁴Ibid., p. 114.

of selves and a succession of obscurely felt reactions." The artist seeks "a singleness and clearness of prehensive grasp of the life of emotion and impulse, which will leave no element in that life unrelated and isolated." By so doing, the artist can become detached enough to maintain his imaginary life despite all that his personal experiences may bring.⁵ The artist's transformation of personal into impersonal experience gives meaning to his own life, and enables him to create something that might endure.

Mrs. Ramsay, Eleanor Pargiter, and Lucy Swithin, in their introspective explorations, discover a significant unity that they then try to recreate in personal relations. Miss La Trobe and Lily Briscoe seek the same inner unity and then recreate it, and often the process of discovery as well, in some form of art.⁶ These artists and artist-figures express how Virginia Woolf made the process of self-objectification, so vital to the development of a personality and to artistic creation, vital to her own art.

At the conclusion of Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa recognizes the boundaries of the real self she has long struggled to define and preserve. When she re-enters the party room, Peter Walsh perceives that self and responds ecstatically to Clarissa's presence. "For there she

⁵D. G. James, Scepticism and Poetry, pp. 114-116.

⁶Bernard, in The Waves, is a would-be writer who constantly tries to turn his inner world into the forms of art. His "Summing Up" is his only achievement, and although an achievement that aptly shows the transformation of life into art, it is still so far within the bounds of self-exploration that it cannot add to the present discussion.

was" (MD, 213) epitomizes the strength of Clarissa's self-affirmation, and her absolute existence in the present. Clarissa's transcendental theory extends this affirmation to the metaphysical plane. By accepting the notion of self-expansion, Clarissa denies the finality of death and asserts the breadth of her ego. Such expansion, however, threatens the ego, since it implies the dissolution of many qualities important to its expression. Although the movement from self to selflessness never develops in Mrs. Dalloway, the idea is implicit in the development of Clarissa's personality. It is even more important, however, in Virginia Woolf's treatment of the process of self-awareness experienced by other of her female protagonists.

The concept underlying Virginia Woolf's handling of this experience resembles Carl Jung's concept of the individuation process. In the individuation process there is a "conscious coming-to-terms with one's own center (psychic nucleus) or Self" ⁷ The ego strives to realize the totality of the whole psyche. ⁸ If an individual reaches this state, even for an instant, he may understand or achieve self-transcendence. Self-transcendence implies self-objectification, which often inspires the sense of mystical union with the universe. The desire for self-transcendence often disguises the desire for death; "la choix de la mort devient un choix d'amour" ⁹ because only in death

⁷ Man and His Symbols, p. 167.

⁸ Ibid., p. 163.

⁹ Jean-Jacques Mayoux, Vivant Piliers: Le roman anglo-saxon et les symboles (Paris, 1960), p. 210.

can the union, desired but really unattained in life, be achieved. The positive and negative aspects of this concept appear in those artist-figures who move joyously forward through life, though fully aware of final annihilation.

Mrs. Ramsay has been stereotyped by many critics of Virginia Woolf's work into an universal mother image and fertility symbol whose extraordinary beauty and capacity for understanding epitomizes the spirit of love itself.¹⁰ Although she does represent these things, she is a real person who not only seeks understanding of self and reality, but also tries to reconcile her vision of truth with her personal desires. Like Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay cannot reach out to others until she resolves the conflict between the active willful self and the passive receptive one.¹¹ Her "mania for marriage" (TL, 261), her constant attempts to overcome others' indifference to her desire to help, her enjoyment of her own beauty, while qualitatively less offensive than the egoistic demands of her husband, reveal an altruistic egoism characteristic of her personality. That she appears as a giving and sympathetic person

¹⁰See, for example, Joseph L. Blotner, "Mythical Patterns in To the Lighthouse," PMLA, LXXI (September 1956), pp. 547-562; John Graham, "Time in the Novels of Virginia Woolf," University of Toronto Quarterly, XVII (1949), pp. 186-201; F. L. Overcarsh, "The Lighthouse, Face to Face," Accent (Winter, 1950), pp. 107-123; D. S. Savage, "The Mind of Virginia Woolf," The Withered Branch (London, 1950), pp. 70-105; also in South Atlantic Quarterly, 46 (October 1947), pp. 556-573.

¹¹In "Vision in To the Lighthouse," PMLA, LXXIII (December 1950), pp. 585-600, Glen Pederson makes Mrs. Ramsay the villain who prevents family integration because of her strong desire to dominate everyone. Only after her death can such integration occur.

from the beginning of To the Lighthouse indicates that she has moved towards a resolution of her conflict, although not until she perceives her ultimate goal as self-dissolution and impersonality rather than self-affirmation does she fully achieve it.

Whereas Clarissa Dalloway's very being suggests movement and activity, Mrs. Ramsay's suggests calm and tranquillity. She spends most of her time in a sitting posture. She sits at the window of her seaside cottage, knitting, cutting out pictures for, or reading to, her small son, James. She, too, has a party, but since it is a dinner affair, she remains seated throughout, and after a brief excursion upstairs to sit beside her children and calm their fears, she sits quietly with her husband, reading, knitting, and ruminating. Although passivity suggests peace, Mrs. Ramsay is not peaceful and continually struggles to find some of the peace she brings to others. The story of the Fisherman's Wife that she reads to James suggests her desire for domination.¹² This desire, however, is not only thwarted by her belief in the actual or apparent submission of a wife's individual desires to her family's, but by her inclination towards the selflessness that would reveal reality. That this instinct triumphs over her willful self becomes apparent as she gradually retreats from profound personal involvement with Mr. Ramsay, her children, and her guests. Her success in not telling Mr. Ramsay she loves him is not a victory of will, in the obvious sense, but an expression of the self-containment she believes

¹²Pederson, pp. 588-589.

necessary to attain her ideal. Mrs. Ramsay's ability to separate her social from her personal needs enables her to withdraw from the emotional demands of personal relationships and suspend all thought and feeling relating to the world around her.

For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of -- to think; well, not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. Although she continued to knit, and sat upright, it was thus that she felt herself; and this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless. And to everybody there was always this sense of unlimited resources, she supposed; one after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by. Her horizon seemed to her limitless. There were all the places she had not seen; the Indian plains; she felt herself pushing aside the thick leather curtain of a church in Rome. This core of darkness could go anywhere, for no one saw it. They could not stop it, she thought, exulting. There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability. Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience (she accomplished here something dexterous with her needles) but as a wedge of darkness. Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke, for watching them in this mood always at this hour one could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw; and this thing, the long steady stroke, was her stroke. Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at -- that light, for example. And it would lift up on it some little phrase or other which had been lying in her mind like that -- 'Children don't forget, children don't forget' -- which she would repeat and begin adding to it, It will end, it will end, she said. It will come, it will come, when suddenly she added, we are in the hands of the Lord.

But instantly she was annoyed with herself for saying that. Who said it? Not she; she had been trapped into saying something she did not mean. She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, searching as she alone could search into her mind and her heart, purifying out of existence that lie, any lie. She praised herself in praising the light, without vanity, for she was stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like that light. It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself. There rose, and she looked and looked with her needles suspended, there curled up off the floor of the mind, rose from the lake of one's being, a mist, a bride to meet her lover. (TL, 95-98)

Often quoted as the sine qua non of Virginia Woolf's mysticism,¹³ this passage illustrates Mrs. Ramsay's use of instinctive receptivity to attain impersonality. Her identification with the lighthouse beam affirms her positive feeling towards impersonality at the same time that it indicates her knowledge of her significance as illuminator of the family circle. The light also suggests the window in which Mrs. Ramsay sits, for like the light, the window is the means by which one sees outside of oneself. Mrs. Ramsay's perception of herself as a "wedge-shaped core of darkness" illustrates the important distinction between self and spirit that she comes to understand before she dies. Mrs. Ramsay's spirit may be identified with the lighthouse beam, but her self, the core denoting her in reality, appears only as a shadow. She retreats from the mother, wife, queen, protectress figure, into an abstraction representing her real self. From the wedge-shaped core of

¹³See, for example, Blackstone, Virginia Woolf, pp. 160-162; and Hardy, "To the Lighthouse," pp. 104-105.

darkness, later indicated in the Lily's painting as a purple shadow, she becomes the light symbolizing the spirit. This progression is the progression from self to selflessness Mrs. Ramsay sought to attain. It is the movement towards impersonality that momentarily frees her from the fragmentation of self and world. She watches the lighthouse beam

with fascination, hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its ' silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting could flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough!' (TL, 99-100)

After the "vision," Mrs. Ramsay seems more remote than she had been before. "She had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything, as she helped the soup, as if there was an eddy -- there -- and one could be in it, or one could be out of it, and she was out of it" (TL, 125). This remoteness, however, enables her to understand more clearly than she previously had that the separateness of the guests prevented the dinner party from having any meaning or beauty at all. She knew it was imperative to bring them together, and to create unity from separateness. The "yellow and purple dish of fruit"¹⁴ enables her to see that unity in one form before she inspires it in another. Although she knows that someone will pluck one fruit from that "trophy fetched from the bottom of the sea" (TL, 146), she

¹⁴Cf. Maggie's floral arranging and painter-like perception in *The Years* (175, 180, 373, 469), and the wearing of a flower on her dress as Eugenie did (148), and having her own daughter do likewise (409).

believes it creates and sustains order in the present.

Her eyes had been going in and out among the curves and shadows of the fruit, among the rich purples of the lowland grapes, then over the horny ridge of the shell, putting a yellow against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape, without knowing why she did it, or why, every time she did it, she felt more and more serene. . . . (TL, 163)

After Mrs. Ramsay lights the candles, the guests seem to draw closer together:

the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candle light, and composed, as they had not been in the twilight, into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, waterily. (TL, 146-147)

The Boeuf en Daube links them further together, and when Mrs. Ramsay serves William Bankes "one very small piece more," she feels that it was "a specially tender piece, of eternity" (TL, 158). She feels assured of

a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again tonight, she had the feeling she had had once today, already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures. (TL, 158)

Mrs. Ramsay brings order and unity out of separateness and division. She transfers her own inner harmony into personal relations, making objective her perception of selflessness. The impersonal whole she creates at the dinner party enables Mrs. Ramsay to take one further step in the objectification of her own emotion. The poetry, recited by Mr. Ramsay and chanted by Augustus Carmichael, seems to say exactly

what she thinks; "all the lives we ever lived and all the lives to be are full of trees and changing leaves" (TL, 166) leads Mrs. Ramsay from an understanding of the ebb and flow of life to an understanding of the unity created at dinner. Then she moves towards a more permanent type of perfection by reading poetry. She reads "like a person in a light sleep" (TL, 181).

She was climbing up those branches, this way and that, laying hands on one flower and then another.

'Nor praise the deep vermillion in the rose,¹⁵ she read, and so reading she was ascending, she felt, on to the top, on to the summit. How satisfying! How restful! All the odds and ends of the day stuck to this magnet; her mind felt swept, felt clean. And then there it was, suddenly entire; she held it in her hands, beautiful and reasonable, clear and complete, the essence sucked out of life and held rounded here -- the sonnet. (TL, 181)

Mr. Ramsay cannot "remember the whole shape" of the Scott he reads.

"He ha[s] to keep his judgement in suspense" (TL, 180), but Mrs. Ramsay seizes the essence of meaning expressed in the poetic form. In the poem, she discovers final order; in it, she objectifies herself as far as she is able.

Although Mrs. Ramsay's vision does not dispel her pessimistic view of life, it does resolve her personal quest for meaning and enable her to act out that meaning in her relationships with others. The vision affirms her intuition that the transitory nature of life not only does not destroy the significance of the present, but that it increases the richness of the moment.

¹⁵See Barbara Seward, The Symbolic Rose, p. 129 for the view that the rose symbol develops from Mr. Ramsay's, "The china rose is all abloom," and illustrates how clarity and order comes from instability.

That Mrs. Ramsay's understanding affects those around her becomes more apparent in Section III. Though dead ten years, she inspires the lighthouse excursion and Lily's painting, the two acts that reflect her spirit and resolve everything into order again. She "resolved everything into simplicity," Lily thought. Mrs. Ramsay

made these angers, irritations fall off like old rags; she brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite . . . something -- . . . this movement of friendship and liking -- which survived, after all these years complete (TL, 239-240)

Mrs. Ramsay made "'Life stand still,'" and made "of the moment something permanent." "In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay said" (TL, 241).

Mrs. Ramsay's creation of order in one moment of time resulted first from emotional submission, and then from death. Only by reaching impersonality could she draw chaos into harmony. Only when she relinquished her desire to control others and to affirm herself constantly could she perceive man's place in nature. Even if the universe seemed indifferent to man in particular, some force was concerned with man in general. "We are in the hands of the Lord" (TL, 97) is Mrs. Ramsay's unconscious avowal of this notion even if it is an ironic comment on religious truth.¹⁶

¹⁶Virginia Woolf frequently uses Christian symbols ironically and metaphorically. Some critics, however, read such treatment seriously, and attribute to Virginia Woolf religious belief that she apparently

The idea that a force controls the universe appears most strikingly in the patterns of nature and time in Virginia Woolf's novels. In the portrait of Eleanor Pargiter and in the various images of city and clock, the perception and nature of these patterns become clear.

The unmarried Eleanor Pargiter¹⁷ holds a central position in the Pargiter family. Like a true matriarch, Eleanor runs her family, Abercorn Terrace and its servants, and many families of the vast "Poor," particularly as a landlord. Eleanor Pargiter does not, however, invest her real self in these roles. She keeps it well hidden, pushing her personal feelings and thoughts beneath those actions that seem to characterize her personality. When she wants to solve a problem, she waits until her family responsibilities cease. "She must wait till she [is] alone -- till she [is] brushing her teeth at night. When she [is] with the others she must stop herself from thinking of two things at the same

did not hold. See Overcarsh, "To the Lighthouse Face to Face," n. 10; René Fortin, "Sacramental Imagery in Mrs. Dalloway," Renaissance, XVII (1964), pp. 73-81; Maxime Chastaing, La Philosophie de Virginia Woolf (Paris, 1951).

¹⁷After Mrs. Ambrose, Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Hilbery, and Mrs. Ramsay, the later heroines in Virginia Woolf's novels who experience the "moment of vision" are unmarried. In these heroines, Virginia Woolf seems to have combined the image of the career-woman (Mary Datchet, Doris Kilman), the spinster, and the young female sceptical of marriage (Rachel, Katharine), with the image of the understanding feminine figure to whom marriage is not essential for the development of personality or fulfillment as a human being (Eleanor). These women also may have extreme marital freedom (Orlando) or are widows (Lucy). Married women in novels following To the Lighthouse, Susan in The Waves, Maggie, Milly, Delia in The Years, Isa, and Mrs. Manresa in Between the Acts, seem more frustrated and disillusioned with life and love than married women in the earlier novels, although in those too, marriage was never affirmatively accepted.

time" (Y, 32). This discrepancy between what she seems and what she is appears in her persistent asking of questions and her lack of interest in the answers (Y, 45). Eleanor's questions are not really of others, but of herself and the universe. While she concerns herself with the family accounts and her brothers' and sisters' schoolwork and careers, she ponders "Where am I? . . . What is that? She seemed to be alone in the midst of nothingness; yet she must descend, must carry her burden -- she raised her arms slightly, as if she were carrying a pitcher, an earthenware pitcher on her head" (Y, 44-45). Like the women of the Nile in Louis's motif in The Waves, and Isa Oliver's donkey image in Between the Acts, Eleanor, the ordinary, the unromantic, the unrebelling Pargiter, identifies with the eternal race of people on a pilgrimage through time to discover the meaning of existence. When Eleanor calculates the budget, she contemplates the ink-corroded patch of bristle on Martin's walrus. "That solid object might survive them all. If she threw it away it would still exist somewhere or other" (Y, 96). Then she unconsciously scribbles a dot with strokes raying out around it, a figure that she does not understand at the time, but that she later perceives as a symbol for the meaning of existence she discovers.

With the passage of time and the appearance of younger groups of Pargiters, Eleanor's family responsibilities diminish, and she begins to fill in the blank spaces in her education. She decides to learn something about Christianity, and tackles Renan. She had always wanted to put meaning behind the words she spoke (Y, 166). She travels to Spain and to Greece, fighting vigorously against the

spectre of "a grey-haired lady cutting flowers with a pair of scissors and tapping at cottage doors" (Y, 209). She never considers herself growing old. While travelling, she almost always considers herself the "youngest person in the omnibus" (Y, 107).¹⁸ and can hardly believe that Sir William Whatney was not "in the prime of life, as she was herself" (Y, 214). Eleanor believes she is young because she does not believe in aging. She has always to tell herself, "Things can't go on for ever Things pass, things change" (Y, 229), but throughout all the changes in her life, the real Eleanor, the "I," remains the same.¹⁹

Throughout the years, Eleanor retains both her genuine interest in family affairs and in her silent quest. This later pursuit enables her to accept and to understand the strange Nicholas Pomjalovsky more easily than anyone else in her family understands him, except Sara, for Nicholas expresses many things Eleanor has secretly thought (Y, 304). She agrees with Nicholas' idea that the world can only improve through an expansion of soul (Y, 399), a possibility that the German air-raid they undergo together reduces and makes ironic. After the air-raid, however, Eleanor feels strangely happy. "It was as if another space of time had been issued to her, but, robbed by the presence of death of something personal, she felt -- she hesitated for a word; 'immune'?"

¹⁸Cf. Virginia Woolf's own comment in A Writer's Diary, p. 178.

¹⁹See Karin Stephen, The Misuse of Mind A Study of Bergson's Attack on Intellectualism (London, 1922), for an interesting discussion of the concept of change and actual fact.

(Y, 317). She scrutinizes Renny's picture of the South of France, perhaps by Cézanne, and becomes part of it. The painting objectifies her faith that the impending destruction will obliterate only particular life, but will not harm the general, the universal (Y, 317). When she leaves Maggie and Renny's flat, nature itself seems to confirm this notion. "A broad fan of light, like the sail of a windmill, was sweeping slowly across the sky. It seemed to take what she was feeling and to express it broadly and simply, as if another voice were speaking in another language" (Y, 323).

In the Present Day sequence, Eleanor, an old woman, resolves her silent riddles and articulates their solutions in relation to her own life. To the younger generation of Pargiters, she is a "fine old prophetess, a queer old bird, venerable and funny at one and the same time" (Y, 352). She is "the soother, the maker-up of quarrels, the buffer [in] . . . the intensities and strifes of family life," "a goddess" (Y, 13), just as she had been to her sister Milly in their youth. The sceptic, Peggy, is impressed with her as a believer. "It was the force that she had put into . . . words that impressed [Peggy], not the words. It was as if she still believed with passion -- she, old Eleanor -- in the things that man had destroyed." (Y, 357).

Eleanor's belief comes not from formal faith, but from her conscious and intuitive recognition that her particular life was part of the pattern of life in general.

My life And I haven't got one, she thought. Oughtn't a life to be something you could handle and produce? -- a life of seventy odd years. But I've only the present moment

Atoms danced apart and massed themselves. But how did they compose what people called a life? Perhaps there's 'I' at the middle of it . . . ; a knot; a centre; . . . little holes from which spokes radiated. (Y, 395)

The old scribbled image returns with "I" at the centre -- the same "I," except for the expansion and emanation of self that occurred through time. Eleanor still feels young, still feels life is in the future and that "Nothing was fixed; nothing was known; life was free and open"

'Isn't that odd? . . . Isn't that queer? Isn't that why life's a perpetual -- what shall I call it? -- miracle . . . old age they say is like this; but it isn't. It's different; quite different. So when I was a child; so when I was a girl; it's been a perpetual discovery. A miracle' (Y, 412-413)

When Eleanor wakes from her nap in the middle of a party, she fears she has lost touch with her insight. But the retreat into dreams has not destroyed it; she wakes still holding the coins she held before. Her sleep, however, does make her feel as if she transcended the immediate circle in which she is sitting and in which she has always existed. It also encourages her to acknowledge, at last, her real self. Such acknowledgment is Eleanor's first actual step towards the impersonality characteristic of the image of those pilgrims in quest of the meaning of life. Eleanor recognizes, as Katharine Hilbery in Night and Day (132-133), and Prince Mishkin recognized in Dostoevsky's Idiot, that the discovery of self, and even the need for transcendence of that self, matters less than the process of discovery, and that it was this process that each generation renewed. "Does everything then come over again a little differently? . . . If so, is there a pattern; a theme,

recurring, like music; half remembered, half foreseen? . . . a gigantic pattern, momentarily perceptible? The thought gave her extreme pleasure: that there was a pattern. But who makes it? Who thinks it? . . . " (Y, 398).

Although the creator of the pattern remains unknown, the existence of a pattern explains the riddle of individual life. Personal identity is vital to daily life, and to the life of a generation, but after that, it does not matter at all. It becomes absorbed into a larger scheme.

Was it because this had survived -- this keen sensation (she was waking up) and the other thing, the solid object -- she saw an ink-corroded walrus -- had vanished? She saw all the heads in a circle. At first they were without identity. (Y, 460)

This insight satisfies Eleanor, for it alleviates the pressure ordinary life placed on her in her youth; it alleviates, too, the feeling of uselessness evoked by individual life as death approaches. The expansion and dissolution of the self into the pattern of life brings individual life to a halt, while it brings it in touch with eternity. For some, this occurs only in old age, but for Eleanor, the process of expansion and dissolution occurred at different intervals throughout life. It made her seem old in sympathy and understanding in her youth, and young in imagination and enthusiasm in her maturity. Recognition of the process exhilarates Eleanor, but it frustrates Peggy and several of Eleanor's brothers and sisters. Eleanor accepts her place in the scheme of things because she trusts the process itself. What matters even more to Eleanor, however, is her ability to perceive that

process.²⁰ Despite absolute annihilation, the moment of perception satisfies her because it affirms the truth of the here and now, the truth that one actually does exist, and perhaps even affirms that as the only truth.

She felt as if she were standing on the edge of a precipice with her hair blown back;²¹ she was about to grasp something She held her hands hollowed; she felt that she wanted to enclose the present moment; to make it stay; to fill it fuller and fuller, with the past, the present and the future, until it shone, whole, bright, deep with understanding. (Y, 461-462)

The pattern Eleanor discovers appears in various forms in The Years, although it appears most vividly in the image of the city. The city, and London in particular, is more than a background in this book as it is in those novels following Night and Day. In its continual movement, variety, and vitality, the city symbolizes life itself. Whereas the early novels only occasionally indicate this symbolic function, in Jacob's Room, Mrs. Dalloway, Orlando, and The Years, the city helps to define character and external time in its relation to the

²⁰It is the negative view of individual existence particularly that makes critics conclude not only that Virginia Woolf's last books were unabatedly pessimistic, but that the pessimism in them meant the collapse of her artistic vision. It is notable that most critics view the last books in this way whereas most writers feel the opposite. For critical views, see, for example, Josephine Schaefer, Nature of Reality, esp. Part IV, "The Vision Falters," and Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf on Between the Acts and The Years; for views of writers, see Elizabeth Bowen, "Between the Acts," New Statesman and Nation, 22(July 19, 1941), pp. 63-64, and Richard Hughes, "Virginia Woolf," Spectator (November 20, 1953), pp. 587-588. Leonard Woolf himself thought Between the Acts, for example, one of her finest achievements.

²¹cf. the images of man the hunter and warrior throughout The Waves, and in Bernard's soliloquy (W, 383).

larger patterns of nature.

The dominant characteristics of the city are ceaseless movement and a sense of continuity. These are aptly revealed in the labyrinthine streets and squares and in the stream of people on Waterloo Bridge, "passing from the Surrey side to the Strand; from the Strand to the Surrey side" (JR, 113). They appear also "in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar, the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead . . . " (MD, 6), and in the "minds eternally occupied . . . with thoughts of ships, of business, of law, of administration . . . " (MD, 151). The city's movement is a triumphant procession: "superb omnibuses, red and yellow, stopping and starting, punctually in order," and "powerful and beautiful cars that now slow to a foot's pace and now shoot forward"; "this is the army of victory with banners and brass eagles and heads crowned with laurel-leaves won in battle These broad thoroughfares -- Piccadilly South, Piccadilly North, Regent Street and the Haymarket -- all sanded paths of victory driven through the jungle" (W, 310-311). From the "top of [a] yellow bus," everything seems alive, "everything beginning again in October" (Y, 100). "The streets [are] crowded; women [are] swarming in and out of shops with their shopping baskets" (Y, 100). Butlers and chow dogs, girls "silk-stockinged, feathered," and "doctors and men of business and capable women all going about their business . . . ," "like the pulse of a perfect heart" (MD, 61-62). At night, "the lamps of

London uphold the dark as upon the points of burning bayonets" (JR, 97), Piccadilly becomes a "long loop . . . diamond stitched" (JR, 112), and the West End, "a piece of work manufactured by industry" (VO, 5). But below the street is "the heart of life" and "the heart of London," the Tube, "where everything that is desirable meets The great avenues of civilisation meet here and strike this way and that" (W, 309-310). "Think ~~how~~ they organise, roll out, smooth, dip in dyes, and drive tunnels blasting the rock. Lifts rise and fall; trains stop, trains start as regularly as the waves of the sea" (W, 311). The Tube was a smaller city in which the "changing tumult had the inexpressible fascination of varied life pouring ceaselessly with a purpose which . . . seemed . . . the normal purpose for which life was framed"; however, both were completely indifferent to the "individuals whom it swallowed up and rolled onwards, . . . the enormous rush of the current -- the great flow, the deep stream, the unquenchable tide" (ND, 465-466). The city released an individual from his particularity. To Eleanor, "the uproar, the confusion, the space of the Strand came . . . with a shock of relief. She felt herself expand." "It was as if something had broken loose -- in her, -- in the world . . . to be dissipated, tossed about" (Y, 119).

The preludes in The Years put this feeling in a temporal perspective. The seasons change from spring to fall, from summer to winter; relentless movement continues, despite the particular events colouring each of the Pargiter's lives. The changing seasons and progressing years bring changing sounds. The 1880 section opens in

spring, and the motif, "the season was beginning," is woven throughout. Men in frock coats, carnations, carrying canes, ladies in flounced dresses with bustles, street musicians vying with the birds, and the occasional landau or hansom cab, all create a mood of cultivated elegance. In 1907, London is shown at night, stoical in its midsummer heat. Farmers trudge along country roads carrying fresh vegetables, "like caravans piled with the goods of tribes migrating in search of water" (Y, 138). An inn dance reveals a woman wearing a high headdress and a bare-shouldered dress, and a man in a white waist-coat, nonchalantly smoking. By November 1918, post-war London is no longer gallant, proud, or leisurely. Rain and puddles cover the new pavement. Traffic roars and booms on every street, and chiming or ticking clocks replace the former silence. Only in the country can birds still be heard. The changes, however, from street musicians, iron mongers, boat-train whistles, to street-speakers, railroads, factories, do not at all affect the seasons. They follow a cyclic rather than a linear progression of time,²² and begin, end, and begin again. When viewed

²²In an interesting article by John Henry Raleigh, "The English Novel and the Three Kinds of Time," Sewanee Review (Summer 1954), pp. 428-440, Nicholas Berdyaev's three basic categories and symbols for time-history are discussed and applied to nineteenth-century English novelists like Trollope, Dickens, Hardy, and briefly to Joyce and Mann, to suggest how the English novel, in the twentieth century, has become oriented towards the first and third categories as opposed to the second. The three categories are: 1) cosmic time, symbolized by a circle, and referring to the endless recurrence of things; 2) historical time, symbolized by an horizontal line, and referring to the course of nations, civilizations, and tribes. (An individual has a linear and a circular relationship to time, indicating regress or progress); 3) existential time, symbolized by a vertical line, and referring to a notion similar to Bergson's durée, only religious or

from an individual perspective, both progressions only seem to cease. To one who seeks freedom from time, therefore, only the intensity of momentary experience offers an answer. Such experiences, emphasizing the particular and the individual, probably inspired Virginia Woolf to call her novel "Here and Now," "The Pargiters," or "Dawn," while she was writing it.²³ That "Ordinary People" and "Caravan" seemed other possibilities suggest that the pressure of the perpetual march of time was stronger than individual revelation. By deciding finally on The Years, she stressed the literal truth of temporal progression and the irony of the personal point of view. By subduing the intense individual insight to the relentless movement of time and nature, Virginia Woolf suggested the necessity of accepting an inevitable, if sadder, truth.

The moving and changing city symbolizes life in time, and the years symbolize time in nature. Seasonal alternation expresses eternal change and renewal. The years reveal the life of the Pargiters and a particular social vision, but they symbolize the natural cycle underlying every generation and every family. Eleanor's temporary release from individuality in the city is a release from time, but not from nature.

mystical in nature. Existential time is an extreme form of individualism and presupposes an individual's ability to free himself from cyclic or historical time. In effect, it denies their validity (p. 430). I am using Raleigh's interpretation of Berdyaev's terms to analyze what Virginia Woolf suggests in her treatment of time in history, nature, and man.

²³A Writer's Diary; "The Pargiters," pp. 189-221; "Here and Now," "Dawn," pp. 222-223; "Ordinary People," p. 234; "Caravan," p. 237; The Years, p. 253, et sequitur.

Beyond the adjustment of individual life to the cyclic movement is the joyous affirmation of such an adjustment; Lucy Swithin most clearly reflects this. Lucy's reading of the history of evolution sets the idea of death into the perspective of progress. Her Victorian upbringing makes her partial to progress and her somewhat individual interpretation of Christianity enables her to accept the evolutionary view of Genesis. Nature, thus, contains an order of which man is part and which he must accept. As a unifier, whose job is "one-making," (BA, 204), Lucy eagerly accepts the idea of order and her part in it. Her vision of ultimate harmony influences her response to people and events. She says, "We live in others, We live in things" (BA, 86). She is genuinely charitable towards strangers especially William Dodge, although she quite forgets his name (BA, 84-91). Unlike Mrs. Ramsay's type of giving, Lucy's is more diffuse and less personal. She gives freely, without being aware that she is doing so, and her actions, no matter how foolish, inspire love and wonder.

Lucy's optimism causes her to deny time just as Eleanor Pargiter does. Given as Lucy is "to increasing the bounds of the moment by flights into past and future" (BA, 14), she perceives her life and her brother's as part of an ever-expanding present. There were no Victorians, she tells Isa Oliver, "Only you and me and William dressed differently" (BA, 203). Lucy's recognition of inevitable destruction does not blind her to inevitable regeneration. It does not blind her either to the need of enriching the present as much as possible.

Lucy's world is spiritually endowed and empty of petty jealousies

and major hostilities. It is easy for her, therefore, to transcend herself, to see faith in fish, and to find harmony in discord. The pageant not only expresses her cyclical view of nature and time, but reveals how easily one transcends oneself through objectification in art, and how much of one's personality remains, even in such objectification. Lucy tries to explain this to Miss La Trobe.

'Oh Miss La Trobe!' she exclaimed; and stopped. Then she began again; 'Oh Miss La Trobe, I do congratulate you!'

She hesitated. 'You've given me . . . ' she skipped, then alighted -- 'Ever since I was a child I've felt . . . ' A film fell over her eyes shutting off the present. She tried to recall her childhood; then gave it up; and, with a little wave of her hand, as if asking Miss La Trobe to help her out, continued: 'This daily round; this going up and down stairs; this saying "What am I going for? My specs? I have 'em on my nose." . . . '

She gazed at Miss La Trobe with a cloudless old-aged stare. Their eyes met in a common effort to bring a common meaning to birth. They failed; and Mrs. Swithin, laying hold desperately of a fraction of her meaning, said: 'What a small part I've had to play! But you've made me feel I could have played . . . Cleopatra.' (BA, 178-179)

Lucy could have played any character in the pageant because she felt herself expand and reach all history and nature; she reached William, the fish in the lily pool, and the swallows in the sky. Fish and swallows have faith, she believes, verifying to herself what her brother thinks foolish and irrational. When the swallows cross the barn ceiling, she believes they are the same ones that came the previous year (BA, 122).

'Swallows,' said Lucy, holding her cup, looking at the birds. Excited by the company they were flitting from rafter to rafter. Across Africa, across France they had come to nest here. Year after year they came. Before there was a channel, when the earth, upon which the Windsor chair was planted, was a riot of rhododendrons, and humming birds quivered at the mouths of scarlet trumpets,

as she had read that morning in her Outline of History,
they had come (BA, 129-130)

She herself is like a swallow, perching on a chair "like a bird on a telegraph wire before starting for Africa" (BA, 139), and Bart refers to her as "'Swallow, my sister swallow,'" after Swinburne (BA, 131, 134, 139). The pagan allusion is more than casual, however, since it reveals another dimension of Lucy's character.

Lucy wears, and frequently caresses, a gilt cross. "How stamp herself, so volatile, so vagrant, with that image?" (BA, 90), wonders William Dodge. Despite the "sleek symbol" (BA, 90), her early morning supplications, and her respect for Reverend Streatfield, Lucy's spirituality transcends the Christian sphere. To Isa, she is an "angel," who "beat up against [the] immensities and the old man's [Bart's] irreverences" (BA, 31, 203); she is a "goddess" to William (BA, 89-90), "old Flimsy" to the younger generation (BA, 35), and the swallow whose heart is full of spring to Bart (BA, 131, 138-139). Bart cannot understand how Lucy maintains her affirmative belief, particularly when he sees young men, like his own son, unhappy. Lucy was "up in the clouds, like an air ball" and "her mind touched ground now and then with a shock of surprise. There was nothing in her to weight a man like Giles to the earth" (BA, 139). But for Bart and Lucy, "flesh and blood was not a barrier, but a mist. Nothing changed their affection; What she saw he didn't; what he saw she didn't" (BA, 33). Even though Bart cannot believe as Lucy can, he seems to accept the idea that she symbolizes spirit itself, and different spiritual values as

they evolved through history. Lucy's "one-making" transcends spiritual differences and stands for harmony itself. Thus, her cross is an ironic symbol, for it represents only one form of love and faith in the history of civilization.

Mrs. Swithin caressed her cross. She gazed vaguely at the view. She was off, . . . , on a circular tour of the imagination -- one-making. Sheep, cows, grass, trees, ourselves -- all are one. If discordant, producing harmony -- if not to us, to a gigantic ear attached to a gigantic head. And thus -- she was smiling benignly -- the agony of the particular sheep, cow, or human being is necessary; and so -- she was beaming seraphically at the gilt vane in the distance -- we reach the conclusion that all is harmony, could we hear it. And we shall. (BA, 204)

However significant Lucy's "one-making," and however fitting it is that real swallows fly across the stage during the Present Day sequence, neither actively affects anyone except William Dodge. Although all recognize the value of Lucy's "one-making," none can overcome his own frustration and fragmentation to accept her gift. For Lucy, the present contains hope for the future, but for the others, it only means devastation. She is truly "old Flimsy" in relation to the everyday world; she is just as remote as the eternal cycles of nature are. But like the cycles of nature, Lucy cannot change no matter what the disaster, no matter what the reason. She remains a constant symbol of the good that she believes destruction will bring, as it periodically does. She stands for the spiritual belief that can replace Bart's rationalism, Mrs. Manresa's materialism, and Giles and Isa's emotional egotism, even if only temporarily. Lucy's faith in man's capacity to endure and to triumph over defeat enables her to see in Miss La Trobe what no one else can.

Lucy looks forward exuberantly to the pageant. "People are gifted -- very. The question is -- how to bring it out? That's where she's so clever -- Miss La Trobe" (BA, 73). Miss La Trobe has a "passion for getting things up" (BA, 72). It is the unladylike, swarthy, sturdy, alien, Miss La Trobe who enables Lucy to experience her vision. Whereas Lucy is called "Flimsy," Miss La Trobe is called "Bossy" (BA, 78). Whereas Lily broods in awe over the lily pond, Miss La Trobe "splash[es] into the fine mesh like a great stone" (BA, 79). Miss La Trobe, however, was the commander pacing her deck, the admiral of a ship (BA, 77-78), and Lucy only one of her passengers. Although Lucy is the spirit who symbolizes harmony in the undulating rhythms of nature and history, Miss La Trobe is the maker who transforms these rhythms into design, the creator who transmutes life into art.

As an artist, Miss La Trobe possesses secondary imagination. Since Virginia Woolf subordinated the details of Miss La Trobe's personal history to her significance as an artist, it is clear that Miss La Trobe is to reflect, most importantly, the secondary imagination seeking to find the order in art that resembles the order in nature.

Miss La Trobe uses a linear progression, exemplified by English literary history, to express artistic order. By outlining the patterns of different epochs, she emphasizes the relativity of conventions and values, satirizes the failure to distinguish between empty conventions and real traditions, and illustrates how history, like daily life, is both ridiculous and sublime. In spite of the pessimism inherent in the pageant, Miss La Trobe's work implies that recognition of past and

present evils might inspire change. Like Lucy, Miss La Trobe has some faith in the process of time itself, although she lacks Lucy's love for the people who perpetuate that process. That Miss La Trobe is a dramatic artist accentuates her need to establish contact with people, however, and her need to make them aware of the differences between types of time and between actual and illusory reality.

Miss La Trobe's intermittent curses indicate her frustration at anything hindering her attempt to reveal these differences and to create unity from them. Frequent interruptions undermine her efforts. Latecomers, side conversations about the players, the costumes, and the meaning, and the interval between the acts, distress her. "'Curse! Blast! Damn 'em'" she cries (BA, 113), as one or another interruption breaks the mood; "she had agreed to cut the play here; a slave to her audience, -- to Mrs. Sands' grumble -- about tea; about dinner; -- she had gashed the scene here. Just as she had viewed emotion, she spilt it" (BA, 113). Like the interval the book itself symbolizes, the moments between the acts destroy all the unity that has developed. "Dispersed are we" the gramophone wails, as Miss La Trobe tries to weld the whole experience together, even when the audience is off the stage. But the music just succeeds in accenting the dispersion she tries to overcome.

Flowing, and streaming, on the grass, on the gravel, still for one moment she held them together -- the dispersing company. Hadn't she, for twenty-five minutes made them see? A vision imparted was relief from agony . . . for one moment . . . one moment . . . She hadn't made them see. It was a failure, another damned failure! As usual. Her vision escaped her (BA, 117-118)

To recapture the audience and recreate the mood, Miss La Trobe clings to music, even if merely scales and nursery rhymes, for music is not only a good connective, but an expression of the harmony the pageant tries to create. Miss La Trobe believes in the ability of art to create the harmony that is absent in the daily lives of the audience. Therefore, every delay agitates her further: "Every moment the audience slipped the noose; split up into scraps and fragments" (BA, 145). When the gramophone fails, Miss La Trobe fears the collapse of everything, because art dies with the failure of illusion. Nature supplements art, however; the cows bellow and sustain the illusion and introduce the element of reality the pageant had lacked up to this point (BA, 165).

Lucy feels then that the element of reality prevents the pageant from attaining a significant imaginative level, although Miss La Trobe's vision still inspires her. Her attempt to tell Miss La Trobe this occurs just before the sequence that illustrates Lucy's own heritage. This is ironic since the nineteenth-century sequence succeeds in blending reality and illusion most successfully, thanks to the spontaneous dialogue of the audience during the playlet. Miss La Trobe's attack on the nineteenth century thus does not affect Lucy, since by this time, Lucy reflects history in general. Miss La Trobe comprehends what Lucy cannot articulate. "Glory possessed her. Ah, but she was not merely a twitcher of individual strings; she was one who seethes wandering bodies and floating voices in a cauldron, and makes rise from its amorphous mass a re-created world. Her moment was on her -- her glory" (BA, 180).

After this triumph, Miss La Trobe dares even further. In the Present Day scene, she attempts ten minutes of actual reality. She tries to make the audience aware of their discordant lives and their need to change. "She wanted to expose them, as it were, to douche them, with present-time reality. But something was going wrong with the experiment. 'Reality too strong,' she muttered. 'Curse 'em!'" She felt everything they felt. Audiences were the devil. O to write a play without an audience -- the play" (BA, 209-210). "Nature once more [takes] her part" (BA, 211), however, for when all else has failed, a sudden shower falls. Like humanity, art cannot bear very much reality; illusion is necessary for both. Ten minutes of reality threatens to destroy all Miss La Trobe has created. But nature serves illusion's turn and subdues the painful reality to the pleasure of art.

Miss La Trobe tries to make the meaning of her pageant clearer by adding two final notes. She makes the players hold up mirrors before the audience, and plays a voice screaming out the message of impending destruction. The grotesque vision of the reflected audience is Miss La Trobe's attempt to realize the metaphor of art as the mirror of nature. Although it indicates her strong belief in the significance of art, it also indicates her condescending view of the audience. It illustrates her frustration with an audience that forces her into a limited artistic position. Because the artist must serve human and social relations where they should serve themselves, because he must reveal unity among the "scraps, orts, and fragments" of human

lives, he resents the very audience he must please for any opportunity to shape his vision at all. Music turns these alien notes into harmony, however, since it alone naturally blends the different themes into a whole. The audience's negative response to Reverend Streatfield indicates that they perceive this whole, for an instant, since they see the Reverend's attempt to create wholeness, through religious spirituality, as the antithesis to that of art.

Miss La Trobe's momentary satisfaction in her achievement pre-cedes depression. When the pageant is over, she no longer feels content.

Glory possessed her -- for one moment. But what had she given? A cloud that melted into the other clouds on the horizon. It was in the giving that the triumph was. And the triumph faded. Her gift meant nothing. If they had understood her meaning; if they had known their parts; if the pearls had been real and the funds illimitable -- it would have been a better gift. Now it had gone to join the others. (BA, 244)

Suddenly starlings attack a tree behind which Miss La Trobe stands. "Life, life, life" their voices say to her. The "whizz and vibrant rapture" (BA, 244-245) of their music and their cacophony make her understand, at the same time, both her gift and her failure. From this insight, a new vision arises, a vision foreshadowing the image of Isa and Giles at the novel's conclusion.

She put down her case and stood looking at the land. Then something rose to the surface. 'I should group them,' she murmured, 'here.' It would be midnight; there would be two figures, half concealed by a rock. The curtain would rise. What would the first words be? The words escaped her. (BA, 246)

"She [takes] her voyage away from the shore" (BA, 246); she begins to assume command of the ship of imagination. While drinking beer in a pub, Miss La Trobe assumes full command. The words rise to the surface.

Like the strange children's song at the end of The Years, the words are yet abstract and meaningless to anyone except the forthcoming generation. The words emerge from the fertile mud, from the earth and the water with which she has been associated throughout the novel, and rise into the air, the fluidity that expresses man's spirit, and is Lucy's domain. It is these two fluidities that turn life into art.

That Virginia Woolf makes the symbolic narrative of the conclusion the realization of Miss La Trobe's new vision, strengthens the creative expression. Although belonging to the same reality as the protagonists, Miss La Trobe, as an artist, holds a unique position outside that reality. This position enables her to judge it, and to create, from it, an independent world. This is the power that differentiates the artist from everyone else; this is the power that enables the artist to play a part just as others do, and to achieve momentary triumph over the discrepancy between vision and creation.

The personal sense of triumph and the inevitable feeling of failure after creation characterize almost all Virginia Woolf's artists.²⁴ All have great artistic aspirations, but none ever fully realize them in the form they desire. For them, as for Miss La Trobe, however, the impulse to find the form to express their vision, is primary, and indicates their artistic purity. It is such artistic purity, best represented in Lily Briscoe, that characterizes Virginia Woolf's own attitude towards

²⁴Throughout A Writer's Diary, Virginia Woolf reveals very similar responses to her own creations, particularly during the intervals between the publication of her books and the appearance of private opinions and public reviews of them.

art, and towards the kind of novel she sought to write.

Love for Mrs. Ramsay and for painting determine Lily Briscoe's attitude towards life. Lily loves Mrs. Ramsay for her beauty, for her sympathy, for her capacity to give, and for her creativity. She loves Mrs. Ramsay's little island world because it is a product of Mrs. Ramsay's own creation. Mrs. Ramsay is the artist of life Lily wants to be in painting. She turns the disorder of life and personal relations into a unity that transcends flux and gives each day meaning. Lily's battle with her painting is an attempt to duplicate that creation. In attempting to paint Mrs. Ramsay and James, she attempts to capture the artist of life in her most creative role, and in attempting this, she hopes to make more permanent the substance and the process by which one can achieve order and meaning. That Lily Briscoe knows she can never attain the beauty in her painting that she believes Mrs. Ramsay achieves in life testifies not only to her sense of inferiority to her idol, but also illustrates the purity of her artistic impulse. An artist who creates for the sake of creation alone, for the disinterested contemplation of a subject, is a pure artist. Although, initially, the thought that her painting would be disregarded disturbs Lily, her deepening awareness of the real nature of artistic creation completely dissolves her self-interest.

Lily's non-representational method of painting illustrates many of the aesthetic ideals of Roger Fry and Clive Bell.²⁵ She paints Mrs.

²⁵J. H. Roberts, "Vision and Design in Virginia Woolf," *PMLA*, LXI (September 1946), pp. 835-847, discusses some of Fry's major aesthetic ideas as they appear in Lily Briscoe's creative endeavours.

Ramsay and James in terms of relationships between masses, shapes, and colours. Although she feels her subject intensely, she translates it into an abstract symbolic form so as to give it the universal meaning she perceives in it. Throughout the first section of To the Lighthouse, Lily's chief pictorial problem is to balance the masses and avoid blocks of empty space (TL, 128). During the dinner party, Lily realizes that by placing the tree further in the middle of the painting, she can solve this problem. "She took up the salt cellar and put it down again on a flower in pattern on the table-cloth, so as to remind herself to move the tree" (TL, 128). Lily, however, neither moves the tree nor completes the painting at this time. Only after she has been separated from her subject for ten years and has grown to understand what that tree and those relationships between the masses actually stand for can she attain her goal.

The tree symbolizes Lily as a person and as an artist. It also symbolizes the idea of self. By placing the tree in the centre of the painting, Lily can link the idea of self with the spirit of love and creation Mrs. Ramsay represents and the purple shadow symbolizes. Identification with tree means possession of the two qualities that Lily lacks. The tree, like the lighthouse, symbolizes that harmony vital to art and to life.

In Section III, the balance between Lily's voyage into her painting and Mr. Ramsay's voyage to the lighthouse identifies the meaning of these symbols. Lily's desire to make sense of the "strange morning" at the island cottage can only be accomplished through "symbols";

then "she would have got at the truth of things" (TL, 219). She begins the painting again and faces the old problems of love, creation, and nature, "the wall; the hedge; the tree" (TL, 221). These, she must somehow bring together (TL, 220).

The first problem is how to give and receive love. For Lily the problem has never been about suitors, but about giving sympathy to and enduring emotional domination by another person. Her relationship with Mr. Ramsay illustrates her conflict. Until Lily overcomes these limitations in personal relations, she cannot really understand the spirit of Mrs. Ramsay, or the meaning of her life. Like Rhoda, Septimus, and Sara Pargiter, Lily cannot solve her artistic problem until she solves the human one. When she gives Mr. Ramsay the sympathy he wants, she understands the essence of Mrs. Ramsay's femininity. Mrs. Ramsay's gift, the creation of emotional harmony, meant the submission of her will to that of her husband. Although Lily cannot achieve this goal except in a limited way, she can understand Mrs. Ramsay's achievement. This does not mean that Lily desires more than this limited achievement herself. In fact, although her understanding releases those impulses vital to the expression of her painting, it further emphasizes the problem she faces of being a woman, and of being an artist.

As with Eleanor Pargiter and Miss La Trobe, Lucy's spinsterhood is not incidental to her character. Not only does it reflect her particular emotional limitations, but it also suggests something about her views on marriage. Although Lily admires marriage and family life as exemplified by the Ramsays, she considers it, for herself, as a possible

emotional restriction. Like Rachel Vinrace, Katharine Hilbery, and Clarissa Dalloway, Lily fears marriage as a dilution of the self; and like the Lady Orlando, Mary Datchet, and Miss La Trobe, she fears marriage as an obstacle to her career. Mary Datchet sacrifices love for her social vision because her ideal demands a narrowing of emotional range and outlet for energy. Lady Orlando's marriage with Marmaduke Bonthorpe Shelmerdine raises the question of whether she should continue writing poetry or whether she should stop and assume a purely domestic role. That she continues to write asserts that independence she considers vital to her personality. Miss La Trobe illustrates the totally one-sided artist whose contact with others occurs only in art, or, as rumours suggest, in perversion (BA, 72).

Marriage, as known in the Victorian era particularly, then seems a hindrance to artistic creation for a woman because of social inequality, domestic responsibilities, economic dependence, and emotional submission. Love and marriage seem to thwart the impersonality essential to art, for love and marriage demand the whole of a personality, and prevent that personality from expressing itself outside of a family. Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Ambrose, and Lucy Swithin, for example, seek books and art only after their family obligations are fulfilled. Furthermore, Mrs. Ramsay's marriage mania takes a considerable amount of her time. Her faith in marriage and family life compels her to find Charles Tansley, Augustus Carmichael, William Bankes, and Lily, narrow and unfeeling because they do not share her absolute faith in marriage and the family. She even wonders about her own children, "her daughters, Prue, Nancy, Rose --

[who] could sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other . . . " (TL, 14) and about Jasper who shot those birds who, to her, lived in domestic bliss (TL, 121-122). Mrs. Ramsay cares little about botany, philosophy, or painting, and finds room for a little poetry only at the end of her day.

Lily loves Mrs. Ramsay, but she feels marriage as she expressed it would completely prevent her from creating even inferior works of art. But the initial inability to complete her painting results not from the prospect of marriage, but from her inability to understand the feminine nature vital to art. Lily realizes after ten years that she must blend feminine receptivity, sympathy, intuition, and feeling, with masculine aggressiveness, intellect, and objectivity, in order to paint as she wants to paint; she must add colour to the bare scrubbed table of Mr. Ramsay's world. As an artist Lily must become androgynous.

The androgynous mind is that in which male and female characteristics "live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating."²⁶ "It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties." The androgynous mind is "resonant and porous," "transmits emotion without impediment," and is "naturally creative, incandescent, and undivided."²⁷

It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly. It is fatal for a woman to lay the

²⁶A Room of One's Own, p. 97.

²⁷Ibid.

least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice any cause; in any way to speak consciously as a woman. And fatal is no figure of speech; for anything written with that conscious bias is doomed to death. It ceases to be fertilized. Brilliant and effective, powerful and masterly, as it may appear for a day or two, it must wither at nightfall; it cannot grow in the minds of others. Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated. The whole of the mind must lie wide open if we are to get the sense that the writer is communicating his experience to perfect fullness²⁸

Lily must blend the abstract and the human, the trivial and the transcendental, in order to develop her fullest creative ability, and to create a work aesthetically reflective of that ability.

To Lily, a work of art must be congruent with the artist's creative vision. The vision draws the fragments into unity and allows the artist to exercise control over his created universe. During the creative vision, the artist neither thinks nor feels (TL, 288). Lily wonders, "Always (it was in her nature, or in her sex, she did not know which) before she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting she had a few minutes of nakedness when she seemed an unborn soul" (TL, 236-237). In art she can be drawn out of life's fret and stir (TL, 236); in art she finds the permanent things she cannot find in life. "In the midst of chaos there was shape" (TL, 241). To make that shape really symbolize what she sees is Lily's challenge. "Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped

²⁸A Room of One's Own, p. 102.

together with bolts of iron" (TL, 255).

Lily realizes that this combination is the essence of her method and her subject. Mrs. Ramsay was an extraordinary woman involved in ordinary family affairs. Although she lived and died without doing anything of note, her creative understanding of life became a spirit that endures. She lived her life with that same disinterest that Lily paints her portrait, for although Mrs. Ramsay acknowledged death's absolute, she knew how significant little daily revelations could be. Lily learns that her painting of Mrs. Ramsay must reveal this idea, "to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, it's a miracle, it's an ecstasy" (TL, 300). For the moment of insight, life becomes everything it is not for eternity.

Lily's insight occurs simultaneously with the conclusion of Mr. Ramsay's voyage. Both have reached the lighthouse, the understanding of the self that extends beyond each individual and that illuminates the sea in which man exists. Lily stands beside Mr. Carmichael, the poet, whose poetry epitomizes impersonality (TL, 290):

Mr. Carmichael stood beside her, looking like an old pagan god, shaggy, with weeds in his hair and the trident (it was only a French novel) in his hand They had not needed to speak. They had been thinking the same things and he had answered her without asking him anything. He stood there as if he were spreading his hands over all the weakness and suffering of mankind; she thought he was surveying, tolerantly and compassionately, their final destiny. Now he crowned the occasion, she thought, when his hand slowly fell, as if she had seen him let fall from his great height a wreath of violets and asphodels which, fluttering slowly, lay at length upon the earth. (TL, 309)

The painting and the lighthouse now symbolize Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay and Lily, the artists who explore reality through the perspective of spirit.

After the moment of revelation, Lily can paint the tree that will balance the whole because she has fully objectified her relationship to reality. It no longer matters that the painting might be left in attics. "It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" (TL, 310).

Lily's vision illustrates Virginia Woolf's faith in the "moment," the still point which illuminates life's meanings. Virginia Woolf sought to make each novel express the unfolding of the patterns of time and nature while revealing the still points in her characters' experiences that would offer insight into those patterns and individual existence. It is only after To the Lighthouse, however, that Virginia Woolf really explored the relationship between the "moment" and the "pattern," and, except for some treatment in Night and Day and Jacob's Room, only in The Waves, The Years, and Between the Acts, did she make the cyclic rhythm of nature completely vital to her design.²⁹ The evolution of Orlando the poet clearly, if fantastically, reflects how the recognition of this balance affects art itself.

Orlando faces problems crucial to the growth of every artist. From the outset, he/she experiences the discrepancy between nature as it actually is and as it appears in art. After writing plays like Aethelbert: A Tragedy in Five Acts (O, 17), Orlando says, "Green in

²⁹The late novels reveal a development of the ideas and themes of the early ones. It is important to see Virginia Woolf's novels in an evolutionary way, as Guiguet emphasizes, rather than illustrating different ideas and methods of expression. In fact, it is interesting how Virginia Woolf realized many ideas and themes of the early books in the forms of the later ones.

nature is one thing, green in literature another. Nature and letters seem to have a natural antipathy; bring them together and they tear each other to pieces." Nature's shade of green "spoilt his rhyme and split his metre" (0, 17). Orlando cannot change his style, however, and continues to write all kinds of books, in prose, in verse, in French and Italian, "all romantic and all long" (0, 77). He still continues to turn all ordinary actions from being "single, downright, bluff piece[s] of work" into "a fluttering and flickering of wings . . ." (0, 78-79). He affirms his style as he affirms his unfitness for society: "all the turbulence of his youth, his clumsiness, his blushes, his long walks, and his love of the country proved that he himself belonged to the sacred race rather than to the noble -- was by birth a writer, rather than an aristocrat . . ." (0, 83).

Orlando has always supported the convention that feelings of love should be expressed metaphorically. When he tries to express them in common words, to bridge the gap between poetry and truth (0, 101-102), he is worried by the thought that he would not be read. Must the writer conform to his audience's demands if his spirit dictates otherwise? Abruptly, Orlando vows to write only to please himself (0, 103).

Consequently, Orlando's style develops differently from the way it had developed before. "His floridity was chastened; his abundance [was] curbed," partly by writing periodically on the poem of his boyish dreams, The Oak Tree, and partly because the age of prose congealed "warm fountains" (0, 113). Orlando struggles to "shape words until they are the thinnest integument for . . . thoughts" (0, 173). Good

conversation teaches him that "the most important part of style . . . is the natural run of the voice in speaking" (0, 211-212). Orlando's transformation into a woman raises the problems of a feminine voice, and of women as writers in general (0, 264-265), but since in the nineteenth century, Orlando finds herself both a married woman and a poet, "she need neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it; yet remained herself" (0, 266). She found this helpful because "the transaction between a writer and the spirit of the age is one of infinite delicacy, and upon a nice arrangement between the two the whole fortune of his works depend" (0, 266). Whatever his/her sex, Orlando would write as his/her spirit dictated.

Orlando still wonders about a subject. Is life the only fit subject, or was sitting in a chair and thinking suitable as well? (0, 267). Orlando concludes that such a decision can only occur when one knows the meaning of life itself (0, 267; 270-271). This he/she decides, suddenly, as he/she does all other things. Small things matter most,

not the articles by Nick Greene or John Donne nor eight hour bills nor covenants nor factory acts . . . ; it's something useless, sudden, violent; something that costs a life; red, blue, purple; a spirt; a splash; like those hyacinths . . . ; free from taint, dependence, soilure of humanity or care for one's kind; something rash, ridiculous (0, 287)

Then to write about these sudden apprehensions, about the wild geese, as they appear in the ordinary course of events is essential to the writer's integrity (0, 285). "When the shrivelled skin of the ordinary is stuffed out with meaning it satisfies the senses

amazingly" (O, 315). The balance between the usual stream of events and the moment of revelation becomes an absolute necessity to the honest writer. The subject of Orlando's work then must be life as transfigured by his/her imagination. Since the writer is more capable than others of effecting the metamorphosis of wild goose to great fish, he has to transmit his vision to others, for by reading, "one sees more afterwards; the world seems bared of its covering and given an intenser life."³⁰

From the very first novel, Virginia Woolf expressed the significance of this idea even though she struggled to articulate her vision. Rachel Vinrace wonders about "the process that people call living," whether "everyone knew . . . where they were going; and things formed themselves into a pattern not only for her, but for them, and in that pattern lay satisfaction and meaning" (VO, 385). But the pattern Rachel discovers is the only "solid" thing she has found in life. After reading Ibsen, the dramatist who in so many ways epitomized the passionate disinterest in truth and reality all Virginia Woolf's heroines reflect, and "feeling like an heroic statue in the middle of the foreground, dominating the view" (VO, 143), Rachel sinks into a "very real, very big, very impersonal" sensation in which she loses consciousness of her own existence. "Who were the people moving in the house -- moving things from one place to another? And life, what was that? It was only a light passing over the surface and vanishing, as in time she would vanish, though the furniture in the room would remain" (VO, 145).

³⁰ A Room of One's Own, p. 108.

The image of light appears again in the novel when she debates with Terence over the composition of the world.

'Does it ever seem to you, Terence, that the world is composed entirely of vast blocks of matter, and that we're nothing but patches of light -- ' she looked at the soft spots of sun wavering over the carpet and up the wall -- 'like that?'

'No!' said Terence, 'I feel solid, immensely solid; the legs of my chair might be rooted in the bowels of the earth.'
(VO, 358)

Virginia Woolf asked herself this question in her diary, and in different ways in every novel after The Voyage Out.

Now is life very solid or very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on for ever; will last for ever; goes down to the bottom of the world -- this moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphanous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves. Perhaps it may be that though we change, one flying after another, so quick, so quick we are somehow successive and continuous we human beings, and show the light through. But what is the light? I am impressed by the transitoriness of human life to such an extent that I am often saying a farewell -- after dining with Roger for instance; or reckoning how many more times I shall see Nessa.³¹

In an unpublished letter written to Hugh Walpole on November 8, 1931, she asked why he called The Waves unreal, when that was what she felt about Walpole's latest book. "These people aren't real to me You're real to some -- I to others. Who's to decide what reality is?"³² And what about the realism of the Edwardian novelists? Why were their details trivial and transitory? Was it simply because they described the external world, or was it that facts implied that the external world was the only reality? In reacting against Edwardian

³¹A Writer's Diary, p. 141.

³²Unpublished autographed letter, Virginia Woolf to Hugh Walpole, Monk's House, Rodmell, November 8, 1931.

materialism, Virginia Woolf believed that it was not the facts themselves but the way in which the Edwardians treated them, and the view of life their treatment implied, which distorted the true picture of reality.

From The Voyage Out to Between the Acts, Virginia Woolf never sacrificed the facts and details that characterized the external world; she always retained the toe in Liverpool she believed essential to the novel. She once even said in a letter to Walpole that he often ran into trouble in his novels because he was a "romantic novelist" and invented things "that don't sit with fact. You are altogether at sea in the world of reality. There my footing is firm I'm not a romantic novelist."³³

Although ironic, Virginia Woolf's comment indicates that she considered her own fiction neither romantic like Walpole's nor realistic like the novels of the Edwardians. Like the early nineteenth-century romantic writers and some later symbolists, she thought of her novels as exploring the personal but expressing the general, the specific expressing the universal.³⁴ She valued the facts of ordinary existence not only because they were the stuff of immediate experience, but because she perceived a transcendental meaning within them. The great fish belonged not only to the physical world, but also to the spiritual

³³Unpublished autographed letter, Virginia Woolf to Hugh Walpole, Monk's House, Rodmell, April 2, n. d.

³⁴See Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950 (New York, 1960), pp. 30-49, 166-172, et passim, for a distinction between early and late nineteenth-century romantic attitudes towards art and artists.

one; it served as a symbol for outer and inner reality, for the artist of life and the artist of the imagination. Her persistent attempts to root transcendental meaning in fact, to kindle fact into spirit, and finally, to fuse external and internal reality into one whole, brought her fiction closest to the ideal of lyric poetry she expressed in "A Letter to a Young Poet."

Virginia Woolf believed that the contemporary poem had failed to achieve the fusion between the actual, the colloquial, and the beautiful.

The poem is cracked in the middle it comes apart in my hands: here is reality on one side, here is beauty on the other; and instead of acquiring a whole object rounded and entire, I am left with broken parts in my hands which, since my reason has not been roused and my imagination has not been allowed to take entire possession of me, I contemplate coldly, critically, and with distaste.³⁵

Part of the reason for this came from the modern lyricist's failure to write of "the self that loves a woman, or hates a tyrant, or that broods over the mystery of the world" Instead, he writes of the "self that sits alone in the room at night with the blinds drawn [He] is much less interested in what we have in common than in what he has apart [He] is trying honestly and exactly to describe a world that has perhaps no existence except for one particular person at one particular moment."³⁶ Thus, he loses sight of the "central reality" and "all becomes distorted and impure." Once he has explored his own mind, the lyric poet must look out of the window and write about others. In fact, his most important obligation is "to find the right relationship . . .

³⁵The Death of the Moth, p. 184.

³⁶Ibid., p. 186.

between the self that you know and the world outside," "to find the relation between things that seem incompatible yet have a mysterious affinity, to absorb every experience that comes your way fearlessly and saturate it completely so that [the] poem is a whole, not a fragment" ³⁷

Although Virginia Woolf concluded that the novel and the poem must translate human life into tragedy and comedy in different ways, she constantly sought to ally the two genres. Poetry needed to clasp the actual in addition to the sublime if it was to express contemporary reality; fiction needed to relinquish its bondage to fact if it was to "give the relation of the mind to general ideas and its soliloquy in solitude." ³⁸ And Virginia Woolf believed that fiction, like poetry, and painting and music, should seek this goal since fiction was essentially an "art of the spirit" and that "moments of the spirit" ³⁹ belonged to the novel as they belonged to life. The Voyage Out and Night and Day indicate the course of her struggle to free spirit in fiction. In Jacob's Room she achieved this, and then attempted to harness it to a more solid structure. From Mrs. Dalloway to Between the Acts, she attained, in different degrees, a delicate balance between the solid and the shifting, asserting throughout each novel that the reality she re-created was both an inner and outer experience. In

³⁷The Death of the Moth, pp. 188-189.

³⁸"The Narrow Bridge of Art," pp. 18-19.

³⁹Charles Mauron, "The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature," Hogarth Essays, trans. Roger Fry (London, 1927), pp. 72-73.

those novels in which she adhered to what Charles Mauron considered the cardinal principle of all lyric poetry, the fusion of the inner and the outer into one reality,⁴⁰ and in which the self was not individual but impersonal,⁴¹ she reached her goal.

The daily battle of creation reproduced the vision of reality Virginia Woolf saw in nature itself:

a consciousness of what I call 'reality'; a thing I see before me: something abstract; but residing in the downs or sky; beside which nothing matters; in which I shall rest and continue to exist. Reality I call it. And I fancy sometimes this is the most necessary thing to me: that which I seek. But who knows -- once one takes a pen and writes? How difficult not to go making 'reality' this and that, whereas it is one thing. Now perhaps this is my gift: this perhaps is what distinguishes me from other people: I think it may be rare to have so acute a sense of something like that -- but again, who knows?⁴²

It was this vision, both perceived and imagined, that inspired Virginia Woolf to create works of art that actively and continually fused outer and inner into one whole; it was this vision that became the source and substance of her lyrical voice.

⁴⁰Mauron, p. 74.

⁴¹Cf. Virginia Woolf's comment in "How It Strikes A Contemporary," The Common Reader, p. 244: "To believe that your impressions hold good for others is to be released from the cramp and confinement of personality." In this way, one can create a work of art that endures.

⁴²A Writer's Diary, p. 132. Cf. Eleanor Pargiter (Y, 86).

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LIST OF ORIGINAL DATES OF PUBLICATION OF THE NOVELS
OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

Title	Year of Publication
<u>The Voyage Out</u>	1915
<u>Night and Day</u>	1919
<u>Jacob's Room</u>	1922
<u>Mrs. Dalloway</u>	1925
<u>To the Lighthouse</u>	1927
<u>Orlando</u>	1928
<u>The Waves</u>	1931
<u>The Years</u>	1937
<u>Between the Acts</u>	1941