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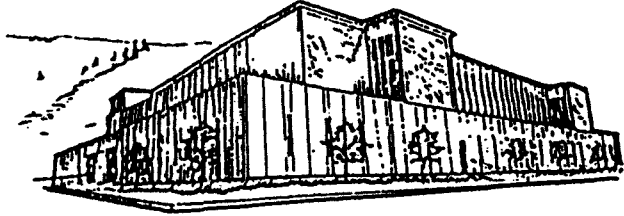
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**"MUSING AMONG THE VEGETABLES":  
The Unveiling of the Soul at Work in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway***

by

Margaret Leigh Tillman

B.A., College of William and Mary, 1988  
M.F.A., University of Montana, 1994

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

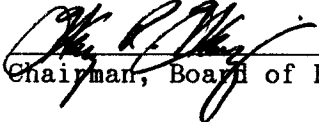
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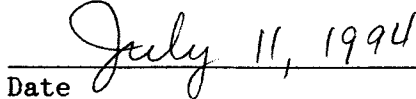
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## Note

In the course of this essay, I have quoted extensively from the letters, diaries, essays, and novels of Virginia Woolf. When quoting, I have kept the British spelling of certain words, and also not included the period at the end of Mr. and Mrs., as is the British custom. In quoting from the diaries, especially, I have followed the exact transcription of Anne Olivier Bell, the editor of Woolf's diaries. Thus, Woolf's frequent use of the ampersand for the word "and" is reflected in my quotations, as is her occasionally phonetic spelling. As Bell writes in her Introduction to the diaries, "Usually [Woolf's] punctuation is perfectly appropriate if inconsistent, although apostrophes in the possessive case and inverted commas tend to stray or fall by the wayside. . ." (*Diary I* x). Following Bell's lead, I have chosen not to insert the distracting [sic] after every such stray apostrophe.



## CHAPTER ONE

### "Lighting A Lamp Behind One's Characters": A Step Toward Defining Woolf's Corporeal Aesthetic

*Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf is an unusual novel in a few ways. Her fourth novel, it represents her first bold step toward what we now call Modernism, after the tentative first step of *Jacob's Room*. Woolf's brand of Modernism is, of course, different from James Joyce's Modernism, T.S. Eliot's Modernism, Ezra Pound's Modernism, etc., and in *Mrs. Dalloway*, we find her setting off on her individual path toward her new method of narrative. Woolf published *The Common Reader*, a book of literary essays, a few weeks before *Mrs. Dalloway*. Woolf planned the close association of these two volumes, and indeed, wrote them at the same time. Thus we have, if considered cautiously, a commentary on this new direction in fiction couched in terms of general literary criticism. The two books represent a rare chance to critique the author using her own contemporaneous critical ideas. Of course, as with almost any period in Woolf's life, her diaries and letters provide a running casual commentary, on the social and private level, of her thoughts about her work and her times.

James Joyce and his large-scale narrative experiment *Ulysses* are essential to the understanding of Woolf's writing of *Mrs. Dalloway*. I will trace the development of Woolf's reaction to Joyce's novel in the

next chapter, at which time the superficial similarities between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Ulysses* will be noted. More important than the similarities are the differences. Comparing the two novels, the rejection of the biological aspects of corporeal existence in *Mrs. Dalloway* is immediately apparent, as various critics, such as Harvena Richter, Carolyn Heilbrun, and William Jenkins, have noted.

The problem in discussing this aesthetic of Woolf's is the possibly derogatory connotation of the vocabulary we might choose: "disembodiment," "ethereal," "rejection of the corporeal," "insubstantial," "immaterial," or even Woolf's own word, "crepuscular" (*Diary II* 13). These words could imply that something is missing in Woolf's writing, especially in opposition to words we might choose to describe Joyce's work: "physical," "material," "sensual," "corporeal." We are discussing two different artistic aesthetics, not to mention two different definitions of reality. I don't intend to set one writer above the other -- they belong on opposite ends of the same spectrum. I do intend to concentrate on Woolf's ideas, and rely on her own words for a working vocabulary.

We begin assembling our vocabulary with a few essays which Woolf wrote for the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1918. Woolf has, at this point, published her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, and is working on some short stories. Her next novel, *Night and Day*, will not be published until 1920. In her second essay of the year, "Philosophy in Fiction" which was published on January 10th, 1918 (*Collected Essays II* 211), we find the beginnings of ideas that we will see expressed and refined again and again. The subject of the essay is a six-volume collection of

the works of L.P. Jacks (*Collected Essays II* 211), and Woolf begins her review with the statement: "After one has heard the first few bars of a tune upon a barrel organ the further course of the tune is instinctively foretold by the mind and any deviation of that pattern is received with reluctance and discomfort" (*Collected Essays II* 208). She extends this predictive quality to apply to

the usual run of stories. . . . For loudly though we talk of the advance of realism and boldly though we assert that life finds its mirror in fiction, the material of life is so difficult to handle and has to be limited and abstracted to such an extent before it can be dealt with by words that a small pinch of it only is made use of by the lesser novelist (208).

Woolf goes on to acknowledge that the work of Mr. Jacks makes one uncomfortable because it is

extremely unlikely that anyone could hum the rest of that tune from hearing the first few bars. It is plain that if you are ordering your imaginary universe from this angle your men and women will have to adapt themselves to a new dance measure. The criticism which will rise to the lips of every reader who finds himself put out by the unwonted sight is that the characters have ceased to be "real" or "alive" or "convincing." But let him make sure that he is looking at life and not at the novelist's dummy (209).

Woolf favors Jacks' approach to writing, and praises him as an "explorer" (209) in this essay. She will continue to express her

admiration for writers who choose to set out a "new dance measure," and will also express her belief that every generation of writers must, in fact, create their own new "tune." Woolf will modify her thought that only a "lesser" novelist deals with a small pinch of life -- we will see this "pinch" re-emerge later as the "glimpse," an idea of Woolf's which is extremely important to the understanding of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Finally, we see the assumption that "reality" in fiction needs to be redefined. Woolf will heed criticism of her novel *Jacob's Room* in which the characters are referred to as "ghosts" by Leonard (*Diary II* 186), or, in fact, non-existent as vital characters by Arnold Bennett (*Diary II* 248). As we shall see, her answer to this criticism will be an attempt to recalibrate, not her characterization, but her definition of reality.

Towards the end of 1918, these first ideas of Woolf's are developing so clearly, that as one reads through the second volume of her *Collected Essays*, one can watch her leading up to the succinct refinement which she will reach in *The Common Reader* with "the glimpse," "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day," and the importance of breaking away from the past. On September 19th, 1918, Woolf offers a review of *Joan and Peter* by H.G. Wells, in her essay "The Rights of Youth." Wells "is not isolating one of the nerves of our existence and tracing its course separately, but he is trying to give that nerve its place in the whole system and to show us the working of the entire body of human life" (*Collected Essays II* 296). Admirably, it seems, Wells has not left this "nerve" in the abstract, but provided the reader with "a picture of his thought" (296); specifically, embodying his discussion of education and British youth in the characters Joan and Peter, among

others, and moving them through various scenes. The problem, as Woolf sees it, is that Wells' characters do not stand up under scrutiny:

Flesh and blood has been lavished upon them, but in crude lumps and unmodelled masses, as if the creator's hand, after moulding empires and sketching deities, had grown too large and slack and insensitive to shape the fine clay of men and women. . . . It is as if he suspected some defect in the constitution of his characters and sought to remedy it with rouge and flaxen wigs and dabs of powder, which he is in too great a hurry nowadays to fix on securely or plaster in the right places (296-297).

Here we have another embryo of an idea that will become increasingly important. Woolf herself is talking around the problem; she too is building a vocabulary with which to work. What we see here is the beginning of the idea of the "ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (*Common Reader* 149); that is, the idea that good fiction must pay attention to small details as well as large. Woolf will soon decide that empires and deities are decidedly second-rate when compared with the workings of the "ordinary mind on an ordinary day." Her thoughts along this line are revised in October 10th's essay "Honest Fiction," in which she describes Frank Swinnerton's *Shops and Houses*. Swinnerton has created a fictional town called Beckwith, and has "[searched] out and [verified] every detail that went to compose the large effect" (312); indeed, Woolf notes the "astonishing number of very minute facts" which Swinnerton has set down in his pages (312). Although Swinnerton pays attention to the small details of life rather than empires and deities, his work is not

admirable because the small details do not add up to reality. Or, as Woolf puts it: "By means of details and fragments he has set working a model Beckwith which performs all the functions of spending time with the regularity of an ant-heap; or, since the activity of an ant-heap has some direction, with the automatic accuracy of a decapitated duck" (312). Swinnerton chooses the wrong details with which to illuminate his characters, an accusation which Woolf will soon level at her un-Modern trinity of Wells, Galsworthy, and Bennett.

On November 14th, she concludes "Mr Howells on Form" with the statement:

It is not that life is more complex or difficult now than at any other period, but that for each generation the point of interest shifts, the old form puts emphasis on the wrong places, and in searching out the severed and submerged parts of what to us constitutes form we seem to be throwing fragments together at random and disdaining the very thing that we are trying our best to win from chaos (326).

Her example in this essay is the "formlessness" of Thomas Hardy's novels. The form is there, a structure exists, but it is not as obvious as the "finely shaped [moulds]" (324) of Austen, Pope, Peacock or Gray. Of importance here is the idea of generational goals for writers -- that one generation cannot rely on the established traditions of the preceding generations, but must find their own way to describe life and reality. Both the idea of an unobtrusive structure for a novel, and the idea of random fragments coming together will continue to be important.

Finally, we come to "The Russian View," published on December

19th, parts of which will be revived in the essay "The Russian Point of View" which Woolf will include in her *Common Reader*. By reading Russian writers and musing on the differences between British and Russian fiction, Woolf begins to state firmly and beautifully her burgeoning ideas about fiction:

[the Russians] have been driven to write by their deep sense of human suffering and their unwavering sympathy with it. An able English writer treating the theme which Elena Militsina has treated in *The Village Priest*, would have shown his knowledge of different social classes, his intellectual grasp of the religious problem. His story would have been well constructed and made to appear probable. All this seems irrelevant to the Russian writer. She asks herself only about the soul of the priest, and tries to imagine what was in the hearts of the peasants when they prayed or came to die. As for the story, there is none; there is no close observation of manners; her work shows very little sense of form; she leaves off anywhere, as it seems, without troubling to finish. And yet, in spite of its formlessness and flatness, she produces an effect of spirituality. It is as if she had tried to light a lamp behind her characters, making them transparent rather than solid, letting the large and permanent things show through the details of dress and body. She is not a writer of remarkable gift, so that, having produced this sense of transparency, with its remarkable power to make us imagine

that we are on the threshold of something else, she stops short; she cannot show us what goes on in the soul thus unveiled (341-342).

These ideas seem familiar by now -- the criticism of English writers for over-intellectualizing and stressing the wrong details; an interest in formlessness. What I find most interesting, however, is the word "spirituality." Although this discussion is set in the context of a religious novel, Woolf's use of the word describes an aesthetic rather than a state of grace. The characters appear "transparent . . . letting the large and permanent show through the details of dress and body" (342); what a remarkable image. The details are present, yet they are not of the utmost importance. The important thing is what Militsina cannot do, that is to "show us what goes on in the soul thus unveiled" (342). "Spirituality," in the sense of the activity of the unveiled soul, rather than in a religious sense, is what strikes Woolf as important about the Russian writers. "Spirituality" as a word has as many unflattering connotations as "ethereal" to the modern ear, but it is the word that Woolf chooses, and defines, I think, beautifully. If the word "soulality" existed, perhaps we could use that instead. But let us not forget that we are not talking about Joyce here; there is no religious background to hold Woolf up against. In fact, one of my favorite stories from Woolf's *Diaries* is one she heard while lunching with Roger Fry on December 5th, 1918:

Mrs McColl to Mr Cox of the London Library:

"Have you The Voyage Out by Virginia Woolf?"

"Virginia Woolf? Let me see; she was a Miss Stephen,



daughter of Sir Leslie. Her sister is Mrs Clive Bell I think. Ah, strange to see what's become of those two girls. Brought up in such a nice home too. But then, they were never *baptised*" (*Diary II* 225).

Never baptized, brought up in an intellectual, atheist household, Woolf could use the word "spirituality" with no apparent residual meanings.

I like the word "spirituality" for another reason -- the connection to women's history that it provides by looking back to Victorian society where women acted as spiritual caretakers of the family. Virginia Woolf grew up in a Victorian household, where her mother Julia Jackson Duckworth Stephen "angelically" cared for her three children from her first marriage, her four children from her second marriage, and her husband, Sir Leslie Stephen, along with his mentally ill daughter from his first marriage, Laura. In Woolf's sketch "Reminiscences," written for Vanessa's children, she describes Julia as "the most prompt, practical, and vivid of human beings. . . . [who] was never . . . troubled to consider herself at all" (*Moments of Being* 34). Woolf continued this description as follows:

Four children were born to her; there were four others already, older, demanding other care; she taught us, was their companion, and soothed, cheered, inspired, nursed, deceived your grandfather; and any one coming for help found her invincibly upright in her place, with time to give, earnest consideration, and the most practical sympathy. Her relations with people indeed were all through her life remarkable; and after her second marriage . . . [she seemed

to] spend herself more freely than ever in the service of others (34).

Quentin Bell, in his biography of Woolf, attributes Julia's death to rheumatic fever, brought about by an earlier bout of influenza and a lifetime of exhaustion (39). From all descriptions, it seems that Woolf's mother lived up to all standards of Victorian womanhood, except ironically the religious standard, as she lost her faith after the death of her first husband. Despite the lack of religious belief as a base for her actions, Julia was the "angel in the house," who was submissive, modest, and self-less (Gilbert 23). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their *Madwoman in the Attic*, trace the beginnings of this ideal woman to *The Booke of Curtesye*, published in 1477, and agree with social historians that by the nineteenth century, the "'eternal feminine' virtues of modesty, gracefulness, purity, delicacy, civility, compliancy, reticence, chastity, affability, [and] politeness" (23) were firmly established. Obviously, these virtues would not be valued in the businessmen and men of letters of Victorian society. There is a strict division between the ideal of womanhood and the ideal of manhood.

This dichotomy is reflected further in the division of everyday life into two spheres, the sphere of pure domesticity where the Victorian woman cared for home, hearth, and heirs, and the sphere of impure commerce, where the Victorian man battled business challenges, met his fellow man in gentleman's clubs, and managed the funds that kept his family hearth aglow. As Maxine van de Wetering points out, the connection of this Victorian polarity with Darwin's evolutionary theories establishes the feminine sensibilities, the spiritual, non-

physical world, as more desirable than the more animal, physical male world, both in American, and in England:

That men were closer to the beasts than were women seemed to be obvious on the face of it. Their tastes were more sensual, their bodies more muscular, their inclinations more combative and competitive. In dozens of little ways, the popular [American nineteenth century] literature connected man with the primitive beast, and appropriately then, women with the future human evolving ideal. This latter idea advertised the "advanced" and feminine features of intellectual and aesthetic spirituality, benignity, and unworldliness. This future human being, moreover, evinced behavior characteristics that were genteel, meaning by this such behavior patterns were removed from the sensual. Opposite characteristics to these were symptomatic of beastly ties to the sensuous past of human evolution, and were, it was noted, strikingly tied to masculine habits. . . . [such as] Meat-eating, loud, raucous laughter and speech, long silences or grudging grunts instead of complex conversation, gross habits of devouring instead of daintily mincing food, and of course exaggerated sexual needs. . . (463).<sup>1</sup>

After being burdened with a primarily biological identification for so long, women have moved away from their role as breeders, cooks, and maids. Why should Virginia Woolf return to biology by emulating Joyce? Woolf was aware of her place in the history of women, as she proved in *A*

*Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. Not only was Woolf herself brought up in a Victorian household, but her character Clarissa Dalloway, in her fifties in 1919, was also a product of Victorian thinking. Both the author and her fictional character were brought up to believe that women could not be the equals of men physically, nor should they want to be, because "[the] future, in such thinking, hopefully ran towards the denial of animalistic, body instincts and the promotion of its opposite: intellectual and refined tastes; spiritual fervor and ethereal preferences; and the fierce promulgation of cleanliness" (van de Wetering 473).

Yet there may be another reason for Woolf's attention to the soul and psychology of her characters. Louise de Salvo has written an entire book on the impact of sexual abuse on the life and writing of Virginia Woolf. Of all the evidence de Salvo gathers for her argument, one particular passage of Woolf's stands out. "A Sketch of the Past" was probably written as a paper for "The Memoir Club," a "group of close friends of long standing who gathered at intervals to read memoirs in which they were committed to complete candour" (*Moments* 11). In this memoir, we find a brief but startling passage which begins symbolically with the description of a hall mirror at Talland House, the Stephens' summer retreat in Cornwall:

There was a small looking-glass in the hall at Talland House. It had, I remember, a ledge with a brush on it. By standing on tiptoe I could see my face in the glass. When I was six or seven perhaps, I got into the habit of looking at my face in the glass. But I only did this if I was sure

that I was alone. I was ashamed of it. A strong feeling of guilt naturally attached to it. . . . I must have been ashamed or afraid of my own body. Another memory, also in the hall, may help to explain this. There was a slab outside the dining room door for standing dishes upon. Once when I was very small Gerald Duckworth lifted me onto this, and as I sat there he began to explore my body. I can remember the feel of his hand going under my clothes; going firmly and steadily lower and lower. I remember how I hoped that he would stop; how I stiffened and wriggled as his hand approached my private parts. But it did not stop. His hand explored my private parts too. I remember resenting, disliking it -- what is the word for so dumb and mixed a feeling? It must have been strong, since I recall it. This seems to show that a feeling about certain parts of the body; how they must not be touched; how it is wrong to allow them to be touched; must be instinctive. It proves that Virginia Stephen was not born on the 25th January 1882, but was born many thousands of years ago; and had from the very first to encounter instincts already acquired by thousands of ancestresses in the past (67-69).

Here in the nineties, with bookstores devoting entire sections of their shelves to abuse and recovery, we understand the impact of childhood sexual abuse on the victim. Even without our modern psychological platform, we have Woolf's own testament. She "was ashamed" of her body, "afraid" of her body. What is most interesting,

and most distressing, about this passage is the resulting "instinctual" feeling about certain parts of the body: "they must not be touched;" and "it is wrong to allow them to be touched." Woolf does not qualify this feeling -- there is no mention of the fact that she herself might touch these parts, or allow a lover to touch her. She does not say that although it is quite wrong for a brother (or half-brother) to touch her body, that some other man or woman might, with her permission. The language is absolute. It is wrong. There was more than just this one isolated incident, and Virginia implicated her other half-brother, George Duckworth, in the last sentence of her sketch "22 Hyde Park Gate": "Yes, the old ladies of Kensington and Belgravia never knew that George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also" (*Moments* 177).

Apparently, and unfortunately, Virginia and her sister Vanessa were an occasional abnormal outlet for the Duckworth brothers' sexual impulses. As innocent as their actions might have seemed to the Duckworths' (and there is no evidence that the Duckworth brothers went beyond fondling and kissing their half-sisters, though those actions proved quite traumatic enough for Virginia), the effect on Virginia Stephen Woolf seems to have been a retreat into the world of the mind, a preference seen in her fiction. James Joyce, on the other hand, whose sexuality was influenced by the organized condemnation and guilt of Catholicism, found his salvation in an up-front confrontation of the body and its pleasures. Ironically, Joyce's fleshly aesthetic, which thumbed its nose at Victorian and Edwardian propriety and earned *Ulysses* the label of "obscene," is quite appropriate to his place in the polar

spectrum described earlier. In his attention to the flesh, Joyce remains true to the manly ideal of mastering the physical. We see this not only in his fiction, but in his letters to his wife, in which he fully accepts the eroticism of the body and its functions. This letter, dated September 5th, 1909, gives one example of this comfortable eroticism: "My body soon will penetrate into yours, O that my soul could too! O that I could nestle in your womb like a child born of your flesh and blood, be fed by your blood, sleep in the warm secret gloom of your body!" (Ellmann 248). Joyce revels in the delights of the human body, while Woolf, in a brutally honest letter to Leonard dated May 1st, 1912, three months before their marriage, writes: "I feel no physical attraction in you. There are moments -- when you kissed me the other day was one -- when I feel no more than a rock" (*Letters I* 496). Joyce's eroticism, compared to Woolf's "feeling of guilt," and her shame and fear of her own sexuality, indicates that these two writers will rightfully establish their territories in opposite areas of human existence. Joyce will continue to express his curiosity, pleasure, and (a little) residual guilt in the human body, and Woolf will, for the most part, turn her attention to the soul and psychology. Although Woolf's childhood sexual abuse no doubt had an impact on her decision to explore the psyches rather than the physiques of her characters, this spiritual aesthetic is in no way to be considered inferior, to Joyce, or anyone else.

The spiritual aesthetic of Virginia Woolf's fiction is something that she seems at least partially aware of. She refers to Joyce's novel as "raw" and T.S. Eliot's admiration of *Ulysses* as "glory in blood"

(*Diary II* 189). Woolf saw Joyce taking a new direction in narrative, and, although she perceived any experiment which broke away from established techniques of narrative as valuable, she chose to strike out in a different direction. She sets up her method in *The Common Reader*, and in her writings about modern fiction, three ideas pop to the surface again and again: the need for her generation to sever completely their ties to the Victorians and the Edwardians, the notion of the "ordinary mind on an ordinary day," and the "glimpse." These three ideas may be thought of as the three main components in what I am calling Woolf's "spiritual aesthetic."

In the above quotation from "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf also establishes her sense of tradition. Here, she sees herself connected to her "ancestresses." In *A Room of One's Own*, she will connect herself to the British women writers who came before her. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, she will record in a splintered yet chronological fashion, a single day in June for three remarkable characters, Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus Smith, and Peter Walsh. However, Woolf also rebels against literary tradition in this novel, and in her critical essays, by calling for a movement away from the Edwardians. She is particularly critical of those that she sees as her immediate predecessors: Mr. Bennett, Mr. Galsworthy and as we have seen, Mr. Wells. She sees herself as a modern writer, who must "scan the horizon; see the past in relation to the future; and so prepare the way for masterpieces to come" (*Common Reader* 241).

This idea of rebelling against one's predecessors is nothing new; most of the Modernists refer to their desire to break with the past at some point. In her journal, Woolf records Eliot saying that Joyce has



"destroyed the whole of the 19th Century. . . . [and] showed up the futility of all the English styles" (*Diary II* 203). And in her essay, "How It Strikes A Contemporary," Woolf declares that the writers who preceded the Modernists

seem deliberately to refuse to gratify those senses which are stimulated so briskly by the moderns; the senses of sight, of sound, of touch -- above all, the sense of the human being, his depth and the variety of his perceptions, his complexity, his confusion, his self, in short (*Common Reader* 238).

Modernism can be defined by its "persistent and multidimensioned experiments in subject matter and form" (Abrams 108). The fact of so many artists rebelling and all of them coming up with different results is what makes Modernism such an exciting period. As Woolf notes, in her opinion *Ulysses* was a "memorable catastrophe -- immense in daring, terrific in disaster" (*Common Reader* 235). There were many memorable catastrophes, and each one pushed the writers closer to an experiment that would work. In Woolf's case, the lukewarm reception of *Jacob's Room* and a critical reading of *Ulysses*, among other things, resulted in *Mrs. Dalloway*, followed by *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*, a trio of fine Modernist novels. We will presently discuss this process in depth.

Woolf's experiments moved in a different direction from Joyce's experiments. She believed that departure from established literary traditions was crucial, as did Joyce, but from here they begin to diverge. As I have already mentioned, Woolf took the route of the spirit. (I do not mean that Joyce's work did not involve spirituality

or psychology, but again, I intend to concentrate on Woolf's work for the duration of this essay.) Woolf includes a phrase in "Modern Fiction," an essay from *The Common Reader*, which defines her interest in "the ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (149). As we shall see, this phrase is not entirely accurate, for Woolf's characters are more extraordinary than ordinary. She is very interested in psychology, and in new ways to capture a character on the page. She believes that the modern world is moving too fast to stop for an Edwardian or Victorian detailed description of a character; the modern writer must find new techniques for capturing characters -- physically and psychologically. This problem leads to Woolf's idea of the "glimpse," which appears in *The Common Reader* first in the essay "Rambling Round Evelyn," and later in "How It Strikes A Contemporary." In "Rambling Round Evelyn," Woolf comments that "now and again the sight of a vanishing coat-tail suggests more than a whole figure sitting still in a full light. Perhaps it is that we catch them unawares" (85). I will discuss the "glimpse" at length presently. For now, we note that the "glimpse" is her response to the slow plod of linear words across a page in relation to the "light, noise, speed" as Ezra Pound called it, of life in post-war London. In her criticism, the idea of the "glimpse" seems friendly but rushed, a quick sketch of modern life through the eyes of the artist. However, when this "glimpse" is transformed into fiction, it becomes very interesting, because of the way Woolf chooses to illuminate some of her glimpses with descriptive adjectives, and leave others bare.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the overall spirituality of the character in Woolf's fiction, as well as the development and

execution of her ideas about modern fiction. Special attention will be paid to Joyce's *Ulysses*, as both an influence on Woolf and as a foil against which her specific aesthetic qualities appear even more striking. I'll be working with multiple narratives -- the two novels, plus Woolf's letters, diaries, and critical essays, and a few recent critical articles -- a reflection of the "heteroglossia," as Mikhail Bakhtin defines it, of the novel.

"The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice," states Bakhtin in his essay "Discourse in the Novel" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 261), and he calls this multi-voicedness "heteroglossia" (263). Heteroglossia implies a diversity of languages within the novel which work together to form the narrative whole. Bakhtin describes five categories of languages, which can usually be found in the novel, as follows:

- (1) Direct authorial literary-artistic narration [in all its diverse variants];
- (2) Stylization of the various forms of oral everyday narration;
- (3) Stylization of the various forms of semiliterary [written] everyday narration [the letter, the diary, etc.];
- (4) Various forms of literary but extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical or scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions, memoranda and so forth);
- (5) The stylistically individualized speech of characters (262).

Together, these languages, which Bakhtin calls "compositional-stylistic

unities" (262) make up the larger unity of heteroglossia, the many voices speaking within the novel. Bakhtin's argument calls for critical study of all aspects of heteroglossia within the novel, rather than the privileging of one or two over the others. These categories will be useful when we discuss the complicated narrative structure of *Mrs. Dalloway*. But what about the narratives which exist outside the novel? For those, we turn to an earlier essay of Bakhtin's, called "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity." Bakhtin warns against the danger of "confounding the author-creator (a constituent in a work) with the author-person (a constituent in the ethical, social event of life)" (*Art and Answerability* 10). In other words, we must consider cautiously Woolf's words outside of the novel. Bakhtin's main objection is to what he calls "the author's confession" (6). He claims that anything valid that the artist has to say about the process of creation is contained within the created work (7). When an artist "undertakes to speak about his act of creation independently of and as a supplement to the work he has produced, he usually substitutes a new [his later and more receptive] relationship for his actual creative relationship to the work" (7). Bakhtin mentions examples of author's prefaces to new editions of a novel, or essays about the writing of a successful novel, and he views these with distrust, as he should. The author is taking into account the public and/or critical reception of the novel, and shaping his thoughts about his creative process accordingly.

In Woolf's case, this "confession," in terms of the essays in *The Common Reader*, was deliberately produced and published as a companion piece to *Mrs. Dalloway*. In fact, as this diary entry from October 4th,

1922 illustrates, the books of essays was conceived as a book before *Mrs. Dalloway* had evolved from a group of connected short stories into a novel:

Mrs Dalloway & the Chaucer chapter are finished; I have read 5 books of the *Odyssey*; *Ulysses*; & now begin Proust. I also read Chaucer & the Pastons. So evidently my plan of the two books running side by side is practicable, & certainly I enjoy my reading with a purpose. . . . I shall read Greek now steadily & begin 'The Prime Minister' on Friday morning (*Diary II* 204).

Since the essays were revised or written at approximately the same time as *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf is not looking back at her creative process after, say, any critical or public acclaim. On August 30th, she describes her new "tunneling" process which she has discovered while writing *The Hours* (the working title of *Mrs. Dalloway*), and just a few days later, on September 5th, 1923, she records in her diary a fifth and "last" start to *The Common Reader*, as it is already called (*Diary II* 265), and expresses satisfaction with the first page. By May 5th, 1924, she has planned the final year of work on both volumes:

I will write at [*The Hours*] for 4 months, June, July, August & September, & then it will be done, & I shall put it away for three months, during which I shall finish my essays; & then that will be -- October, November, December -- January; & then I will revise [*The Hours*] January February March April, & in April my essays will come out; & in May my novel. [*The Common Reader* was published on April 23rd,

1925; *Mrs. Dalloway* on May 14th.] (*Diary II* 301).

Work on the two projects is separated by hours; days; a few months at the longest. Woolf's fictional progress informed her critical ideas. And, since the essays themselves are another aspect of Woolf's creative process, we will allow them, but will use them carefully.

The diary entries and letters I include were also written during the drafting of *Mrs. Dalloway*. We will see her refine her ideas while the work is *in progress*; thus lacking the element of hindsight which seems to bother Bakhtin. Again, we will do so with care. What I propose is an examination of the heteroglossia occurring outside the novel as well as the heteroglossia contained within the novel. Through these various voices, we shall trace the evolution of Woolf's trivium of ideas about modern fiction as well as the development of her spiritual aesthetic.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The question of food in both *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* is an interesting one, and although it falls mostly beyond the scope of this essay, it does relate to this discussion of the "physicality" of men compared to the "spirituality" of women. We might not want to join Mr. Leopold Bloom in his breakfast of "grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine" (*Ulysses* 45), but Joyce's choice of details sets the reader firmly in Bloom's kitchen with cat, kettle, and kidneys. There is altogether more food and eating in *Ulysses* than in *Mrs. Dalloway*, as we would expect based on Victorian sensibilities.

Comparing the first paragraph of the Calypso chapter to Lady Bruton's luncheon (the longest description of food in *Mrs. Dalloway*), we compare: "thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liverslices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencods' roes" and the grilled kidney (*Ulysses* 45) to "saucers of red fruit; films of brown cream mask turbot; in casseroles severed chickens swim; . . . with the wine and coffee" (*Mrs. Dalloway* 158). There is food served at Clarissa's party, but Woolf lists the food items as they appear in the setting of the kitchen, right along with the utensils: "plates, saucepans, cullanders, frying-pans, chicken in aspic, ice-cream freezers, pared crusts of bread, lemons, soup tureens, and pudding basins" (251). No lavish

dining-room scene; in fact, we never see Clarissa's guests eat, only hear that the ladies have gone upstairs and the men have called for the Imperial Tokay (252). Woolf's food is not described with relish. Her sensual descriptions appeal mostly to the eye; her characters rarely touch objects in *Mrs. Dalloway*, a phenomenon I will explore fully in chapter three.

There may be more to Woolf's lack of interest in describing food than just a proper Victorian upbringing. Soon after her marriage to Leonard, Virginia attempted suicide by taking a lethal dose of a sleeping mixture (Spater 67). During her long recovery, Leonard began to keep track of her weight in his diary. Her weight was so dangerously low between August and November of 1913 that her menstrual periods stopped. Today, Spater explains, with the recognition of anorexia nervosa as a disease of the mind, "it is well recognised that there is a direct relationship between weight and menstruation, and that rejection of food may be a sign of sexual conflict -- i.e., a rejection of femininity" (69). Women with very low weights not only lose the regular confirmation of womanhood that menstruation supplies, but they lose the bodily curves which are secondary sexual characteristics. Spater suggests that, due to Virginia's childhood sexual abuse, the consummation of her marriage to Leonard must have been very stressful. We have noted her sense that some parts of the body must not be touched (*Moments of Being* 69). Spater links this stress to the subsequent suicide attempt, and the attempt to deny sexuality through anorexia.

Roger Poole also connects Virginia's bouts with ill health -- mental and physical -- to food, in chapter ten of *The Unknown Virginia*



*Woolf*. Poole includes an excerpt from Leonard's diary in which Leonard describes the difficulty of getting Virginia to "eat enough to keep her strong and well" (Poole 148). Leonard also muses that Virginia has a "(quite unnecessary) fear of becoming fat" (148), and then finally states that "[pervading] her insanity generally there was always a sense of some guilt, the origin and exact nature of which [he] could never discover; but it was attached in some peculiar way particularly to food and eating" (149).

Patricia Moran published "Virginia Woolf and the Scene of Writing" in the Spring 1992 *Modern Fiction Studies*, an article which moves this discussion of food in Woolf to a very different level. Moran suggests that Woolf "portrays eating both as necessary to and as interfering with a woman's ability to write. The association of female writing with sexuality and corporeality prevents the woman writer from 'consuming every impediment' when she writes, and the female body itself occasions artistic impotence" (81). For her first example, Moran turns to *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Lady Bruton's luncheon. Moran points out that Woolf, for the most part:

deflects hunger onto men throughout this text, whereas women serve as cooks and hostesses. But although serving meals turns women into powerful maternal figures and eating turns men into children, eating also becomes a mark of cultural privilege. . . . Lady Bruton does not try to write letters for herself; instead, she feeds Hugh and gets him to write for her. The text focuses obsessively on his appetite: he dives "into the casserole," while Lady Bruton's secretary

thinks him "one of the greediest men she had ever known" and compares him unfavorably to Richard Dalloway. . . (84).

Moran's argument is intricate, and we will not go any further into it. What is relevant to this note is that she, too, has noted that appetite is connected firmly with "the admirable Hugh," and by Woolf's calling Hugh admirable, repeatedly, the reader begins to side with Peter Walsh and think Hugh a bit pompous, a bit too concerned with the material. Hugh's soul, it seems, is too heavily draped in the links of gold Spanish necklaces to be unveiled. Appetite is not a characteristic to be admired in *Mrs. Dalloway*, in this novel of the unveiled soul. And so, for whatever reason, or combination of reasons, food and eating are not carefully described in the novel. Again, this can be explained by Woolf's interest in psychology and the soul, but it does make an interesting aside.

## CHAPTER TWO

### "I Have Found Out How To Begin":

#### The Spiritual Aesthetic and the Importance of *Ulysses*

I begin my inquiry by setting the stage, painting a backdrop against which we will examine *Mrs. Dalloway*. *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* are different results of the same experiment, and Joyce was undeniably on Woolf's mind as she wrote. Questions about influence and rivalry fly about, and the arguments fall into Goldilockish categories. How much influence -- too much, none at all, or just the right amount? How did Virginia feel toward Jim -- disgusted, jealous, or interested? Some of these arguments have the tone of being either pro-Joyce (i.e., Joyce was such a genius that Woolf, either consciously or unconsciously plagiarized the plot of *Ulysses*, resulting in the much inferior copy *Mrs. Dalloway*), or pro-Woolf (Woolf despised and ignored Joyce and came up with *Mrs. Dalloway* and other brilliant Modernist novels without the influence of anyone). Carolyn Heilbrun, in *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women*, begins her chapter on Woolf and Joyce by remarking that "almost all notice of commerce between [Woolf and Joyce] has been confined to a dismissal of Woolf's 'snobbish' response, in her diary, to her first reading of *Ulysses*, and to accusations that she copied Joyce" (58). She continues by pointing out that

No critical display is more offensive than that which

praises one author only by damning another, as though critical judgment were a seesaw on which one reputation cannot rise unless another is lowered. It is . . . no accident that the aggressively masculine worlds of American novelists and American academics have followed Joyce and ignored Woolf who, until the recent revival of feminism, they have misread or scorned" (59).

Heilbrun's findings agree with my own, up to a certain point. I certainly do not plan to establish either Joyce or Woolf as the "better" writer. As for American academics "ignoring" Woolf, it is true that in Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era* (which describes "the first three decades of the 20th century in England," according to *The New York Times* review excerpted on the back cover), Kenner mentions "Mrs. Woolf" a total of three times in its 561 pages, each time grouping her with Edith Sitwell, Clive Bell, and other minor (compared to Eliot, Joyce, and Pound) figures of the era (606). Heilbrun, however, falls into the "pro-Woolf" category with her statement that, "It was, of course, Eliot and not Woolf who was to be influenced by Joyce; it was Eliot's poetry upon which Joyce made a profound impression" (60). My purpose in this chapter is to refute this statement, and show that Joyce did indeed influence Woolf, though not to the detriment of either writer.

Heilbrun herself seems to contradict her statement in her most useful positioning of T.S. Eliot as "the mediating figure between Woolf and Joyce's 'pivotal' work" (59). As we will see in the diaries and letters, and even within the novel itself (Woolf makes subtle references to Eliot's poetry during Septimus' mad scene in Regent's Park), Eliot

does indeed fulfill this role. Heilbrun points out, "It was almost always in connection with Eliot that Woolf, in her diary, mentions Joyce" (59). She then expands this Joyce-Eliot-Woolf connection:

In any case, almost every time Woolf mentions *Ulysses* in her diary, she does so in the presence, so to speak, of T. S. Eliot, of his admiration and her distrust of Joyce, a distrust not only of what she called "underbred," but also of what she found egotistical, narrow, restricting. It is important that it was Eliot against whom this distrust was debated (60).

Eliot, as literary critic and friend to both writers, is in a unique position. Woolf respects Eliot as both a critic and a writer, and although she has already seen the manuscript of *Ulysses* before she meets Eliot, she returns to it because of Eliot's praise. From her conversations with Eliot, she becomes aware that she and Joyce are experimenting in the same way, but using very different tools. Her desire to earn Eliot's respect sets up a dialogue between Joyce and Woolf as writers, through Eliot, and between their novels. In Bakhtinian terms, we could call this "oral everyday narration" which is played out in Woolf's recordings of their conversations and in her shaping of *Mrs. Dalloway* with Eliot as reader in mind.

The most important point Heilbrun makes, however, in terms of this paper, is that "[Woolf] saw in *Ulysses*, as Eliot saw in Milton, the major vision which needed to be not so much refuted as avoided" (59-60). Heilbrun's choice of words is most accurate. To avoid something, you must be acutely aware of it. Perhaps Heilbrun sees this avoidance as a

negative influence, and therefore would not see a contradiction with her earlier statement that Woolf was not influenced by Joyce.

To return to the debate, Wyndham Lewis, in an article published in 1934, compares *Ulysses* to *Mrs. Dalloway* as follows:

the incidents in the local "masterpieces" [*Mrs. Dalloway*] are exact and puerile copies of the scenes in [Joyce's] Dublin drama (cf. the Viceroy's progress through Dublin in *Ulysses* with the Queen's progress through London in *Mrs. Dalloway* -- the latter is a sort of undergraduate imitation of the former, winding up with a smoke-writing in the sky, a pathetic "crib" of the firework display and the rocket that is the culmination of Mr. Bloom's beach-ecstasy) (Bloom 20).

With phrases such as "exact and puerile copies," "undergraduate imitation," and "pathetic 'crib,'" Lewis announces Woolf's unskilled plagiarism of Joyce. I think it is particularly interesting that he uses the word "undergraduate," considering Woolf used the same term in her diary, describing Joyce on August 16th, 1922 as a "queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples" (*Diary II* 188-189). Woolf's remark was, of course, made in the privacy of her journal and presumably read by no one until after her death in 1941. Lewis' statement was published in the book *Men Without Art* in 1934.

The question of plagiarism in regard to *Ulysses* might bring to mind T.S. Eliot, another important figure in this scenario. Some accusations have been aimed at Eliot; a few by Joyce himself. Eliot, however, published a statement about plagiarism in 1920, in an essay called "Philip Massinger." In 1920, while Eliot worked on *The Waste*

*Land* and the *Little Review* published the "Nausicaa" chapter of *Ulysses*, Eliot found the time to comment on plagiarism: "Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different" (Sultan 13). Lewis would, no doubt, classify Woolf as "bad" and "immature." I would classify her as "good" and "mature." She steals, and makes the experiment of *Ulysses* into something quite different, and uniquely hers, on the page.

When these accusations of plagiarism are transplanted into academia, as we have seen in Heilbrun, the language is toned down, but the taking of sides remains a problem. In the summer of 1988, William D. Jenkins published an article in the *James Joyce Quarterly* titled "Virginia Woolf and the Belittling of *Ulysses*," wherein he detailed eight similarities between Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and then summarized his argument:

In all, [the analogies] seem sufficiently numerous as to make it difficult to dismiss them as coincidental. However, it would be even more difficult to believe that Woolf may have consciously used *Ulysses* as a model of any kind. Speculative though it be, we are left with only one ironic conclusion: Despite her stated distaste for *Ulysses* "not only in the obvious sense, but in the literary sense" (*Diary II* 199), Woolf, subconsciously in a quasi-Jungian sense, permitted herself to be influenced by that which she ostensibly rejected. Woolf should be included among those who have accorded Joyce's work the recognition it deserves

(519).

Jenkins includes the "queasy undergraduate" quotation in his article, and gives it more gravity than I think it should be given. Woolf never meant anyone to see that description; her published thoughts on *Ulysses* are much more subtle, as we shall see. Jenkins, in the light of Woolf's harsh private words, cannot believe that Woolf consciously used *Ulysses* as a model, and so comes up with vague terminology like "quasi-Jungian" to explain the parallels between the novels. However, a careful reading of the letters and diaries of Virginia Woolf reveals her mixed emotions about Joyce's work, and, in fact, make it rather easy to believe that Woolf did use *Ulysses* as a model of sorts, and that she saw Joyce as a "contemporary," who was also concerned with breaking free of the established literary tradition.

Some academics have found a way to comment on the similarities between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Ulysses* without resorting to choosing sides. Harvena Richter's 1989 article published in *Studies in the Novel*, "The *Ulysses* Connection: Clarissa Dalloway's Bloomsday" concentrates on a close reading of the two texts, and succinctly details twelve parallels between the two novels. She notes first "*the dual plot structure*: two story lines involving two unrelated groups of characters which converge at the novel's end, the connection occurring in both books in the very early morning (307). This, and her next observation, that there are "*three main characters*: two men and one woman in each novel, from whose consciousness the action unfolds" (307), are undeniably true. Each novel covers the events of a single day in June (June 16th in *Ulysses* and an unspecified day in the middle of June in *Mrs. Dalloway*, another



of Richter's parallels) through the eyes of, in Woolf's novel, Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus Smith, and Peter Walsh, and in Joyce's novel, Steven Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly Bloom. Richter also mentions "a contrast of two types of consciousness: ordinary and intellectual" (307), which will be important to our discussion of the two novels.

Her fifth parallel, an "emphasis on flowers/blooms" does not seem particularly relevant. Flowers are as natural a part of June as they are of setting the stage for a formal party. The same could be said of the sixth parallel, which mentions "*the earth-mother figures* of Molly Bloom, Sally Seton, and the beggar-woman, all connected with flowers; both Molly and the beggar have their 'swamp and ice ages'" (307). The earth-mothers are interesting, but again, not particularly relevant.

Three of the parallels Richter lists are useless to us. The first is the "*relation of a symbolic number to the form/structure: in Ulysses* (as noted by Woolf in her diary) the sequence is divided into 16 incidents (to correspond with the date June 16). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the character Septimus (= seven) has seven scenes allotted to him, as well as seven to Clarissa and seven to Peter" (307). The symbolic number is used deliberately in *Ulysses*, but in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the way that one divides the characters' scenes is arbitrary, depending on whether each narrative break counts as a new scene, or only the chronological breaks. Using chronology, I count five scenes for Septimus, not seven. "*Satire, irony: an abundance of puns, use of leitmotif* (307);" satire and irony are generally found in novels. Richter also points out a "*motif of heat: the character of Blazes Boylan in Ulysses, the heat wave in Mrs. Dalloway*" (307). I'm not sure even Molly would liken Blazes Boylan to a

heat wave. These three parallels will not be considered.

However, Richter's final last three parallels are particularly relevant to our discussion. So far, looking at the two novels as an experiment, we can set up as a "database" the following plot structure: there will be three main characters, two men and one woman, representing different types of consciousness. We'll follow two unconnected stories of an ordinary day in June in a modern city. The connection between the two stories will occur near the end of the novel. Richter's final parallels deal with the true departure of Woolf's path from Joyce's. First, there is the idea of "*man as microcosm*": for Joyce, emphasis on the organs of the body; for Woolf, emphasis on the faculties of mind and feeling: head, heart, brain, soul" (307). Woolf, as we have discussed, is interested in the soul, and the mind, and these interests take precedence in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In my introduction, I included a passage from Woolf's unpublished memoirs which first came to my attention through the work of Louise de Salvo; a passage in which Woolf expresses discomfort with her body because of childhood sexual abuse. This may also be the reason for the "*sexual humor* [being] overt in *Ulysses*, covert in *Mrs. Dalloway*" (307), although how subtle Woolf meant Peter Walsh's pocket-knife to be is open for debate. Woolf's feeling that certain parts of the body "must not be touched" (*Moments* 69), might also account for the "*themes of impotence, love, jealousy*: impotence/frigidity in Bloom and Septimus, and in Clarissa, vs. the sexually healthy Blazes Boylan and Peter Walsh" (307). I do not concur that Peter Walsh is "sexually healthy," for reasons I will discuss in chapter three. These last three parallels clearly point out the

differences in emphasis between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Ulysses*.

These main common elements, combined with the lesser, hardly seem accidental. Nor do they seem the result of the method Woolf calls for in her essay "Modern Fiction," when she asserts: "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" (*The Common Reader* 150). It is impossible to believe that so many similar atoms would fall, within a few years of each other, in the dissimilar minds of Joyce and Woolf. With Bakhtin in mind, we shall consider the essay "Modern Fiction." She knew this essay would reach the reading public a few weeks before *Mrs. Dalloway*. Any connection between her critical words and her fourth novel must be made by an informed reader, easily done now with the benefit of hindsight. Woolf does, however, mention *Ulysses* two sentences after her description of tracing the atoms, and supposes that any one who has read it "will have hazarded some theory of this nature as to Mr Joyce's intention" (151). But let us trace the influence of *Ulysses* on Virginia Woolf from its beginnings.

On April 14th, 1918, The Hogarth Press received a copy of Joyce's manuscript to consider for publication. Virginia Woolf noted, in letters and her diary, her first encounter with *Ulysses*. The occasion was not exactly auspicious:

But almost instantly Harriet Weaver appeared. . . . I did my best to make her reveal herself, . . . but she remained inalterably modest judicious & decorous. . . . We could get no talk to go. Possibly the poor woman was impeded by her

sense that what she had in the brownpaper parcel was quite out of keeping with her own contents. . . . We both looked at the MS. which seems to be an attempt to push the bounds of expression further on, but still all in the same direction (*Diary I* 139-140).

Woolf's honesty in her journal is the reason we can turn to it to trace her thoughts about Joyce and her writing. These journals were written for Virginia's eyes only, though she thought at one point that Leonard might cull a small volume from them, something along the lines of *A Writer's Diary*. The postscript of her last note to Leonard directed him to destroy all her papers (*Letters VI* 487). Her words are more than occasionally unkind, which ironically makes them trustworthy. As Anne Olivier Bell, the editor of the published *Diaries*, states: "in her diaries she is not trying to be entertaining, and [thus] fantasies are rare. . . . But although she is biassed and at times misinformed or careless, she does not consciously tell lies to herself, or even for the benefit of some future reader" (*Diary I* xiv). For this reason, I include more diary entries than letters. Her letters are, by definition, meant to be read by others, and thus, her thoughts and tone are tempered by her awareness of her intended audience. She usually achieves a flippant, humorous voice, meant to entertain. When we read Woolf's letters, therefore, we must not be distracted by humor and sarcasm. For example, to Lytton Strachey, on April 23rd, 1918, she wrote a few lines concerning the manuscript Harriet Weaver had left with them:

We've been asked to print Mr Joyce's new novel, every

printer in London and most in the provinces have refused. First there's a dog that p's -- then there's a man that forths [defecates], and one can be monotonous even on that subject -- moreover, I don't believe that his method, which is highly developed, means much more than cutting out the explanations and putting in the thoughts between dashes. So I don't think we shall do it (*Letters II* 234).

Woolf's letter to Strachey suggests that the content and the style of Joyce's novel are the reasons she and Leonard won't print it. Her letter to Harriet Weaver on May 17th, 1918, enclosed with the manuscript of *Ulysses*, tells a different story. Woolf returns the manuscript, she says, with regrets, because: ". . . the length is an insuperable difficulty to us at present. We can get no one to help us, and at our rate of progress a book of 300 pages would take at least two years to produce -- which is, of course, out of the question for you or Mr Joyce" (*Letters II* 242). A footnote added by Anne Olivier Bell explains that Leonard Woolf had tried without success to enlist another publisher for the manuscript. He was refused by every press he contacted, as they all believed that the publication of *Ulysses* would result in prosecution (*Letters II* 243). At this point in the history of the Hogarth Press, the Woolfs could not produce a full-length book on their own, especially one as hefty as *Ulysses*. They were farming out longer manuscripts to other printers, and the fear of prosecution would cause any press to shy away from the task. The Woolfs, particularly Leonard, it seems to me, attempted to facilitate the publication of *Ulysses*, regardless of content or style. Virginia would want to present herself and Hogarth

Press as professional in her rejection letter to Weaver, but the footnote adds the final evidence that the Woolfs did not dismiss *Ulysses* as flippantly as she would have Strachey believe. This is the first of many small contradictions which show Woolf's mixed thoughts about *Ulysses* during the next six years.

Joyce's collected letters show that Woolf sent him a copy of *The Voyage Out* around this time through Harriet Weaver, and Joyce wrote Weaver asking her to thank Woolf. There is no indication that he ever read the book, nor did he and Woolf ever correspond directly. Carolyn Heilbrun notes that *The Voyage Out* was "among the books in his Trieste library in 1920" and that Joyce had "stamped his name in it" (59). Beyond this, we have no way of knowing whether Joyce gave any thought to Woolf as a writer at this time, or at any time during their respective careers.

Even at this early date, despite the brief reading and dismissal, *Ulysses* found a niche for itself in Woolf's mind. She published an essay in the *Times Literary Supplement* on the 10th of April 1919, a forerunner to the essay "Modern Fiction" which would appear in *The Common Reader* in 1925. "Modern Novels" was the title of the 1919 version, and Woolf had quite a bit to say about the manuscript she had read the previous year:

there can be no question but that [*Ulysses*] is of the utmost sincerity and that the result, difficult or unpleasant as we may judge it, is undeniably distinct. . . . Mr Joyce is spiritual; concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its myriad messages

through the brain, he disregards probability or coherence or any of the other handrails to which we cling for support when we set our imaginations free. . . . Does the emphasis laid perhaps didactically upon indecency contribute to this effect of the angular and isolated? Or is it merely that in any effort of such courage the faults as well as the virtues are left naked to the view? In any case we need not attribute too much importance to the method. Any method is right, every method is right, that expresses what we wish to express. . . . did not the reading of *Ulysses* suggest how much of life is excluded and ignored . . . ? (*The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume Three* 33-34).

Here is Woolf's initial public view of *Ulysses*. Joyce is courageous for his experiment. It will be another twelve years before her ultimate experiment, *The Waves*, as daring in its execution as *Ulysses*, will be published. Throughout this essay, Woolf talks about *Ulysses* as exemplifying "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day." Yet Leopold Bloom, Stephen Dedalus, and Molly Bloom are not ordinary minds. Neither are Peter Walsh, Septimus Smith, and Clarissa Dalloway. What Woolf will eventually prove with her writing is that no mind is ordinary. Each of her characters is remarkable and interesting because of the differences in their psychology and spirituality.

Curiously, Joyce, the "young writer" in this essay, was the same age as Woolf, having been born only a few weeks after her. Woolf's voice reads authoritatively as she praises his effort, yet judges his work difficult and unpleasant. She speaks from the platform of a

published writer, a woman whose novels and essays are well-received, and who has many important and influential friends.

At the time "Modern Novels" was written, in 1919, Richard and Clarissa Dalloway are only minor characters in Woolf's *The Voyage Out*. The work in progress is *Jacob's Room*, the beginning of Woolf's experiments with fiction. The day after her 38th birthday, January 26th, 1920, her diary musings show that Joyce is still on her mind as she contemplates her new work:

Suppose one thing should open out of another . . . for 200 or so -- doesn't that give the looseness & lightness I want: doesn't that get closer & yet keep form & speed, & enclose everything, everything? My doubt is how far it will [include] enclose the human heart . . . For I figure that the approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular, but the heart, the passion, humour, everything as bright as fire in the mist. . . . I suppose the danger is the damned egotistical self; which ruins Joyce & [Dorothy] Richardson to my mind: is one pliant & rich enough to provide a wall for the book from oneself without its becoming, as in Joyce & Richardson, narrowing & restricting? (*Diary II* 13-14).

Woolf reacts against a couple of things here, one being Joyce's carefully designed structure. If she has not yet realized just how intricate the structure of *Ulysses* is, she will later on this year, when she begins to hear T. S. Eliot praising the novel. Woolf rejects the idea of "scaffolding," or inner structure. She wants her novel to be



"crepuscular," a word which indicates spirituality already, and she wants to "enclose the human heart." All of the ideas we saw emerging in her 1918 essays are here, growing more and more complicated. "One thing opening out of another" will become her "tunneling process"; the "glimpse" will indeed give the impression of "looseness & lightness . . . form and speed." What is most interesting about this passage, however, is that Woolf damns Joyce and Richardson because of the "egotistical self." I'm not sure what Woolf meant by this, but there are several possibilities. The least interesting possibility is that the self refers to the physical self and its functions -- the urinating dog, Bloom in the privy, etc. -- which Woolf thinks secondary to the spiritual self and its functions. More intriguing is the idea that the author is intruding into the text somehow. Perhaps there is too much "scaffolding" -- a noticeable structure which worked better for the eighteenth-century novelists (Pope, Austen, etc.) than for the modern novelist who needs to encompass more of life. Or perhaps the choices that these authors are making seem too apparent to Woolf (what tougher critic than a creative writer who also writes criticism?). Woolf might look at the attention to the physical body in *Ulysses* and see it as an attempt to shock, which it certainly did, and feel this too transparent a trick. One other possibility is that she saw Joyce's narrative experiments as too self-conscious; again, the feeling that the "scaffolding" is showing through. These conjectures aside, let us keep in mind these ideas of Woolf's as she continues to react to *Ulysses*.

The Berg Collection of the New York Public Library contains a number of unpublished notebooks, which Brenda Silver, who has

painstakingly catalogued them, calls the "reading notebooks" (Silver xi). The notebook numbered XXXI is unsigned and undated, with the title "Modern Novels (Joyce)" written on the front (Silver 156). Although there is no way to ascertain even the exact year during which these notes were written, there is a five page entry consisting of notes on the first seven "episodes" of *Ulysses*, which were published in *The Little Review* from March to October of 1918 (Silver 156). Harvena Richter includes a short paragraph from this notebook in "The *Ulysses* Connection: Clarissa Dalloway's Bloomsday:"

We mean only that reality, or life, or interest, has come for us to lie rather in the emotions of people. We believe that we can say more about peoples mind & feelings. Well then it becomes less necessary to dwell upon their bodies. All sorts of new situations become possible (316).

In the margin next to these sentences, Woolf wrote " Why not in fact leave out bodies!" (316). The phrase she will use is "the ordinary mind on an ordinary day" not the ordinary body. Only in our minds do we live extraordinarily. As writer William Kittredge explains:

We live in stories. What we are is stories. We do things because of what is called character, and our character is formed by the stories we learn to live in. Late at night we listen to our own breathing in the dark and rework our stories. We do it again the next morning, and all day long, before the looking glass of ourselves, reinventing reasons for our lives. Other than storytelling there is no reason to things.

Aristotle talks of "recognitions," which can be thought of as moments of insight or flashes of understanding in which we see through to coherencies in the world. We are all continually seeking after such experiences (Kittredge 52-53).

I think Woolf would agree that we define ourselves through our minds, through the stories we tell ourselves all day long, every day. Humans narrate their own lives, and the only limits to our stories are the limits of our imaginations. Compare the imagination to the physical senses, the sense of taste, for example. Our tastebuds can distinguish four tastes -- sweet, salty, sour, and bitter. Our minds process these four tastes into the indescribable experience of chocolate, or lobster bisque, or single-malt Scotch. There is more to say about "peoples mind & feelings" than their bodies, although the body is certainly important. By defining her interests in psychology and spirituality, Woolf has set herself in pursuit of "all sorts of new situations."

In 1920, Leonard and Virginia Woolf became acquainted with T. S. Eliot, and Eliot arrived at their country home in Rodmell for a weekend visit on Saturday, September 18th, 1920. On the day before, Woolf finished her diary entry with the line, "I've reached the party in Jacob & write with great pleasure." On Monday, after Eliot had departed, Woolf notes:

I kept myself successfully from being submerged . . . I mean by this that [Eliot] completely neglected my claims to be a writer, & had I been meek, I suppose I should have gone under -- felt him & his views dominant & subversive. . . .

Unfortunately the living writers he admires are Wyndham Lewis & Pound. -- Joyce too, but there's more to be said on this head (*Diary II* 67)

With this first extensive meeting, Eliot establishes himself as an authority, and Woolf is stung by his failure to acknowledge her as a writer. Eliot's praise of Joyce confirms the importance of both men to Woolf's mind. Lewis and Pound, she can dismiss, but not Joyce. She is interested in what he has done with fictional technique, despite the fact that her interests lie in the opposite direction. Eliot waxed eloquent concerning *Ulysses*, and Woolf includes this description in her diary entry on that same Monday:

Joyce gives internals. His novel *Ulysses*, presents the life of man in 16 incidents, all taking place (I think) in one day. This, so far as [Eliot] has seen it, is extremely brilliant, he says. Perhaps we shall try to publish it. *Ulysses*, according to Joyce, is the greatest character in history (68).

Eliot's opinion of Joyce has overtaken Woolf's own opinion, at least momentarily. She, too, has seen the manuscript, yet she makes no mention of that fact, and indeed, muses about publishing Joyce, a feat which she and Leonard have already determined impossible. Being the publisher of *Ulysses* would give Woolf authority over the novel. Instead, after a weekend of being "neglected," she feels herself in the shadow of Eliot and Joyce, a point she brings out in her next diary entry, the following Sunday, September 26th, when she ruefully admits that Eliot's visit has affected her work and her self-confidence:

somehow Jacob has come to a stop, in the middle of that party too, which I enjoyed so much. Eliot coming on the heel of a long stretch of writing fiction (2 months without a break) made me listless; cast shade upon me; & the mind when engaged upon fiction wants all its boldness & self-confidence. He said nothing -- but I reflected how what I'm doing is probably being better done by Mr Joyce (*Diary II* 69).

Eliot's opinion mattered greatly to Woolf, and his preference of Joyce's work to hers bothered her. Indeed, according to her diary, Eliot hasn't discussed writing with her at all. In her letters to Vanessa Bell, her sister and most trusted confidante, Woolf's jealousy rears its head: "write and tell me how you have seduced from me my solitary non-admirer - for Eliot never admired me, damn him" (*Letters II* 472). Naming Eliot as her "solitary non-admirer" emphasizes the importance she places on his opinion, and the fact that he does not recognize her as a writer of importance. Therefore, Heilbrun's positioning of Eliot between Woolf and Joyce becomes important. Woolf respects Eliot as a critic, and wants his recognition of her narrative experiments. We shall see how this plays itself out.

Moving on to 1921, there are three diary entries of particular interest. On April 18th, Woolf, again showing Eliot's influence, drops Joyce's name:

Just back from lunching with a Cabinet Minister. I mean, of course, Herbert Fisher. . . . & he said he was reading Southey's Letters -- "first rate reading. There's a

beautiful description of winter. Now who are our promising litterateurs?" I said Joyce. Never heard of Joyce. So we parted. . . (*Diary II* 112-114).

Again, as she did in the essay "Modern Novels," Woolf gives this public nod to Joyce. She has reservations about the overall success of the experiment, but believes that any experiment is important. Her opinion is still based on a partial reading of the manuscript in 1918, and Eliot's praises, and her final opinion will not emerge until after her second reading of the novel. This public opinion of *Ulysses* is the opinion we should continue to assign to Woolf, rather than her sometimes unkind, but private diary remarks.

Later in 1921, Eliot begins to talk with Woolf about her writing. This long-awaited praise is noted on June 7th:

And Eliot astounded me by praising Monday & Tuesday! This really delighted me. He picked out the String Quartet, especially the end of it. "Very good" he said, & meant it, I think. The Unwritten Novel he thought not successful: Haunted House "extremely interesting." It pleases me to think I could discuss my writing openly with him. And I was stoical; & I write without cringing (allow me these words of commendation!) *Ulysses* he says is prodigious (*Diary II* 125).

Finally, Woolf has gained professional attention from Eliot, and her happiness is obvious. Yet, as usual, the mention of Eliot is accompanied by a mention of Joyce. "Very good," Eliot says of Woolf's writing, and "extremely interesting." Her moment of glory is once again

overshadowed by Eliot's higher praise of *Ulysses*. Not even a full moment to bask in her recognition. Obviously, Eliot still assigns Woolf to the minor leagues, reserving star status for Joyce, who is still ahead of Woolf in published experimentation. Probably Eliot's comment of "extremely interesting" meant more to Woolf than any other words. If Eliot, who thought so highly of Joyce's work, saw the merit in Woolf's more spiritual work, then others would too.

Perhaps this praise leads to her September 28th note that "Eliot's visit passed off successfully, & yet I am disappointed to find that I am not longer afraid of him" (*Diary II* 140). A similar idea emerges on March 12, 1922: "Eliot amuses me most -- grown supple as an eel; yes, grown positively familiar & jocular & friendly, though retaining I hope some shreds of authority. I mustn't lick the paint off all my Gods" (*Diary II* 170). Some of Woolf's other friends are now taking note of Joyce. *Ulysses* has been published amid controversy, and labelled obscene. Joyce's grand experiment is out in the open, while Woolf still works away on *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway* is three years from publication. Since she believes her experiment to be more interesting, it comes as no surprise that she sounds a bit irritated when she responds to Gerald Brenan's offer to loan her *Ulysses*, in a letter dated June 5th, 1922:

Oh what a bore about Joyce! just as I was devoting myself to Proust -- Now I must put aside Proust -- and what I suspect is that Joyce is one of these undelivered geniuses, whom one can't neglect, or silence their groans, but must help them out, at considerable pains to oneself (*Letters II*

533).

Apparently, she does not immediately begin to reread *Ulysses*. She finishes *Jacob's Room* in July, and begins planning her next project. We get an inkling of what she has in mind on July 19th: "Somehow the connection between life & literature must be made by women: & they so seldom do it right" (*Diary II* 184) and again on July 26th, when she and Leonard discuss the completed *Jacob's Room*:

He calls it a work of genius; he thinks it unlike any other novel; he says that the people are ghosts; he says it is very strange. I have no philosophy of life he says; my people are puppets, moved hither & thither by fate. He doesn't agree that fate works in this way. Thinks I should use my 'method' on one or two characters next time. . . . There's no doubt in my mind that I have found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice. . . (*Diary II* 186).

What comes across in Leonard's criticism is that although Virginia is apparently leaving out the body, for the most part, she is not yet showing the workings of the unveiled soul. Her characters do not assert themselves physically in the world, either in terms of their environment or their fate. Leonard calls it a work of genius, and his suggestion that she concentrate on just a few characters next time is a suggestion that she will take. Overall, Leonard's comments confirm that, although she has farther to go in this experiment, she is on the right track. She indicates a satisfaction with the direction she has chosen. Her method results in ghostlike characters, moving through their physical



world with little purpose, maneuvered by a kind of fate working within the novel. Leonard may not agree that fate works this way, but Virginia does not change her opinion. She acknowledges this fate first thing in *Mrs. Dalloway*. As Clarissa walks down Bond Street toward the florist's, surrounded by bustling, post-War London, she wonders:

did it matter that she must inevitably 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 trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met (12).

Clarissa has no choice in what she is part of, the choices are made randomly, and not by her. She is a puppet. But she comforts herself with this passive view of herself in the world; with the ghostlike quality of her own existence; observing the world, but not touching much; living mostly in the story that she tells herself.

By the end of the next month, August 1922, Woolf is already preparing to write *Mrs. Dalloway*, and she reads *Ulysses* again. She assigns her task to peer pressure from Eliot and Gerald Brenan, among others, taking a passive stance in relation to the novel. Perhaps her real intention is to find stimulation in the opposite direction, the way she did in her first reading. She wants to have all of her new ideas as precisely defined as possible during the writing of her next novel. She

looks at what Joyce does, and compares it to the method she has chosen. Thus, her reaction is more critical, lightheartedly in her letters, but unrestrained in her journal, as we see on August 16th, 1922:

I should be reading *Ulysses*, & fabricating my case for & against. I have read 200 pages so far -- not a third; & have been amused, stimulated, charmed & interested by the first 2 or 3 chapters -- to the end of the Cemetery scene, & then puzzled, bored, irritated, & disillusioned as by a queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples. And Tom, great Tom, thinks this on a par with *War & Peace*! An illiterate, underbred book it seems to me: the book of a self taught working man, & we all know how distressing they are, how egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, & ultimately nauseating. When one can have the cooked flesh, why have the raw? But I think if you are anaemic, as Tom is, there is glory in blood. . . . For my own part I am laboriously dredging my mind for *Mrs. Dalloway* & bringing up light buckets. I don't like the feeling I'm writing too quickly. I must press it together (*Diary II* 188-189).

Her distaste for *Ulysses* is, as mentioned before, draped in the language of the physical. Woolf is now expressing dissatisfaction with her own work while she is reading Joyce, because her ideas are still forming. She will need another two years of writing and thinking before she is satisfied with *Mrs. Dalloway*. "Raw, queasy, pimply, bloody," she says, to describe the first two hundred pages of *Ulysses*. What has happened in Dublin on June 16th by page 200? More specifically, since the "dog

peeing" and the "man forthing" have not bothered her this time, from the end of the cemetery scene, what exactly has puzzled, bored, and then disillusioned Woolf?

Apparently, the scene in the newspaper office is not to Woolf's liking. A glance at the beginning of chapter seven, the "Aeolus" chapter, explains why. The novel, which has narrated its story in a fairly recognizable, stream-of-consciousness style, begins to break apart its own narrative here. There are headlines, which make no sense, dividing brief snippets of narrative. This fragmentation and rapid movement is purposefully disorienting, and might seem to Woolf an illustration of the "damned egotistical self" intruding on the novel. Joyce also likens the newspaper business to prostitution, and it is as an essayist for various papers and journals that Woolf is respected these days. However, I think the real "boredom" begins in chapter eight, the "Lestrygonians" chapter. This chapter celebrates sexuality and food, two subjects with which Woolf has personal problems. More importantly, though, this chapter is filled with physical details. We have seen Woolf criticize the Edwardians for what she believes is an improper use of details. In chapter three, we will explore Woolf's use of details thoroughly, and see the carefulness of her method. She may feel that Joyce could be more experimental or careful in his use of details.

Two days later, in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, Woolf rewords her thoughts as such:

I am now reading Joyce, and my impression, after 200 out of 700 pages, is that the poor young man has only got the dregs

of a mind compared with even George Meredith. I mean if you could weigh the meaning on Joyces page it would be about 10 times as light as on Henry James'.

They say it gets a little heavier. It is true that I prepared myself, owing to Tom, for a gigantic effort; and behold the bucket is almost empty.

I tremble as I write. I shall be struck down by the wrath of God (*Letters II* 548).

Despite the flippant tone, which dominates Woolf's letters even when her journals reflect deep mental anguish, two important ideas are confirmed here. Woolf mentions that Eliot had talked up *Ulysses* to her, praising the text as a masterpiece at the same time he is encouraging Woolf with fainter praise, and implying that she is not on the same level of genius as Joyce, as we have seen. Eliot maintains his pivotal place between Joyce and Woolf, in Woolf's mind. Also, Woolf calls her reaction to the text to blasphemy, an indication that she thinks more people agree with Eliot than with her. Interesting, too, her choice of the image of empty buckets (indicating lightness, a lack of substance), a phrase she applied to her own writing two days earlier. Finally, I will point out once again that this "poor young man" is only two weeks younger than Woolf herself. This reading is causing Woolf to respond in strong terms, an indication that she is thinking about Joyce's method in comparison to her own, and becoming more and more convinced that her method is more worthwhile.

Less than a week after this strong response, Woolf states this strategy in her diary:

The way to rock oneself back into writing is this. First gentle exercise in the air. Second the reading of good literature. It is a mistake to think that literature can be produced from the raw. One must get out of life . . . one must become externalised; very, very concentrated, all at one point, not having to draw upon the scattered parts of one's character, living in the brain. . . . when I write I'm merely a sensibility. . . . but shall now rock myself into literature by reading *Ulysses*!" (*Diary II* 193).

When she writes, she is a "sensibility," not a "damned egotistical self." And when she reads *Ulysses*, her own ideas become more concentrated in her head; by looking at Joyce's path, she sees her own more clearly. She sees what she feels are his shortcomings, and thus gains a clearer idea of what she wants to accomplish. We may call it "avoiding," as Carolyn Heilbrun does, or we may call it negative influence, but it is a type of influence, nonetheless. She still connects *Ulysses* with "rawness" and asserts that this attention to physicality cannot result in literature. She believes that spirituality, the workings of the unveiled soul, is more important, more properly the stuff of literature.

Woolf's increasing confidence in her direction becomes apparent in her August 24th letter to Lytton Strachey, who she has long admired, and to whom, in fact, she will dedicate *The Common Reader*:

My own contribution [to the subscription fund for T. S. Eliot], five and sixpence, is given on the condition he puts publicly to their proper use the first 200 pages of *Ulysses*.

Never did I read such tósh. As for the first two chapters we will let them pass, but the 3rd 4th 5th 6th -- merely the scratching of a pimple on the body of the bootboy at Claridges. Of course genius may blaze out on page 652 but I have my doubts. And this is what Eliot worships, and there's Lytton Strachey paying £100 p.a. to Eliot's upkeep (*Letters II* 551).

Again, teasing tone aside, Woolf's point is plain. Woolf sees a connection between Strachey, Eliot, and Joyce. She offers Strachey an exaggeration of her opinion of Joyce, and teases him about supporting Eliot who admires Joyce, although she herself has been instrumental in the establishment of the Eliot Fund, designed to assure Eliot of a steady income if he quits his banking job to write full time. Eliot admires Joyce over Woolf, yet Woolf supports herself as a writer and can even donate money to Eliot's cause. As her confidence in her writing grows, so does her confidence in her opinion of Joyce.

On August 26th, she notes in her diary: "I dislike Ulysses more & more -- that is think it more & more unimportant; & dont even trouble conscientiously to make out its meanings. Thank God, I need not write about it" (*Diary II* 195-196). She does continue to write about it though, and thus presumably to think about it, for another month before diving headlong into the writing of *Mrs. Dalloway*. On September 6th, 1922, Woolf notes in her diary that she has finally finished reading *Ulysses* (*Diary II* 199). She establishes her final opinion here, not using the strong grotesque physical images of her earlier criticism, but resorting to something more like her authoritative essayist voice. She

sketches out a private critique:

I finished *Ulysses* and think it a mis-fire. Genius it has, I think; but of the inferior water. The book is diffuse. It is brackish. It is pretentious. It is underbred, not only in the obvious sense, but in the literary sense. A first rate writer, I mean, respects writing too much to be tricky; startling; doing stunts. I'm reminded all the time of some callow board school boy, . . . full of wits and powers, but so self-conscious and egotistical that he loses his head, becomes extravagant, mannered, uproarious, ill at ease, makes kindly people feel sorry for him and stern ones merely annoyed; and one hopes he'll grow out of it; but as Joyce is 40 this scarcely seems likely. I have not read it carefully; and only once; and it is very obscure, so no doubt I have scamped the virtue of it more than is fair. I feel that myriads of tiny bullets pepper one and spatter one; but one does not get one deadly wound in the face -- as from Tolstoy, for instance; but it is entirely absurd to compare him with Tolstoy (*Diary II* 199-200).

The amount of thought she has devoted to this novel is evident. The words "self-conscious" and "egotistical" are still part of her criticism, as is the word "tricky." I imagine that anyone reading *Ulysses* for the first time, without the guidance of criticism or scholarship, even now would label the novel "obscure." Despite these opinions, and the opinions of critics like William Jenkins, Woolf is undeniably interested in what Joyce attempted in *Ulysses*. She has

learned much from his experiment, and continues to learn from it, as witnessed by her diary entry from the very next day, September 7th, 1922:

Having written this, L. put into my hands a very intelligent review of *Ulysses*, in the *American Nation*; which, for the first time, analyses the meaning; & certainly makes it very much more impressive than I judged. Still I think there is virtue & lasting truth in first impressions; so I don't cancel mine. I must read some of the chapters again. Probably the final beauty of writing is never felt by contemporaries; but they ought, I think, to be bowled over; & this I was not. Then again, I had my back up on purpose; then again I was over stimulated by Tom's praises (*Diary II* 200).

Here is the full confession. She had her "back up on purpose," she was "over-stimulated" by Eliot's praises. Woolf had been ready to bow down before the god of Modern literature, and then she read *Ulysses*. What she found in his text was not, in her opinion, the masterpiece she had been expecting, or even the important watershed of modern literature she had predicted in "Modern Novels" in 1919 : an attempt "to come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves [him] by discarding most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelists" (*Collected Essays* 33). At least, not in her terms. But thanks to Seldes' review, she has seen Joyce's experiment in another light. What has she discovered about *Ulysses*?

Seldes describes the "spiritual" plot of *Ulysses* as "an average



day [which] marks the defeat of the poet; he has encountered and been overcome by the reality of experience; the ecstasy and lyric beauty are no more; instead of it we have a gigantic travesty" (*Critical Heritage* 235). Seldes goes on to explain that since Stephen Dedalus is both a "created character" and an "artist" (specifically Joyce himself), the novel "takes on the proportions of a burlesque epic of this same defeat" (235). Seldes compares *Ulysses* to a satyr-play which parodies the tragic trilogy it was attached too. Woolf has written her own brief parodies of English prose in her essays, particularly in "Character in Fiction" and "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown." I'm not trying to say Woolf didn't "get it;" what I am suggesting is that perhaps Woolf didn't ascribe the humor all the importance that Seldes did because she was too busy looking for this great masterpiece that Tom Eliot had been raving about. She certainly never recorded Eliot expounding on the humor of *Ulysses* in her journal notes, though this doesn't mean he never mentioned it.

Seldes spends most of the rest of his review discussing the narrative technique of *Ulysses*, and how

in a few words, at most a few pages, the essential setting is objectively presented; thereafter we are actually in the consciousness of a specified or suggested individual, and the stream of consciousness, the rendered thoughts and feelings of that individual, are actually the subject matter of the book (236).

This, of course, is exactly what Woolf plans to do, in a different way, in her next novel. She has experimented a bit with this technique in

*Jacob's Room*, and at Leonard's suggestion will restrict her field to just a few characters this next time. Seldes' praise of this technique bodes well for the reception of Woolf's next project, which may be one reason she finds this such an intelligent review. Finally, there is the last sentence of the review, in part:

Joyce has created an image of contemporary life; . . . this epic of defeat, in which there is not a scamped page nor a moment of weakness, in which whole chapters are monuments to the power and the glory of the written word, is in itself a victory of the creative intelligence over the chaos of uncreated things and a triumph of devotion, to my mind one of the most significant and beautiful of our time (239).

These are all things that Woolf could admire. She herself is attempting an image of contemporary life. As a sheer linguistic feat, despite her feeling that Joyce has been "playing tricks," *Ulysses* is also admirable to Seldes. And again, as a "victory of the creative intelligence over the chaos of uncreated things," *Ulysses* would have therefore to be an example of what Woolf herself wants to achieve. That this praise of the novel is justified, stems from the fact that this critic recognizes the importance of the experiments. This, in turn, justifies Woolf's work-in-progress, and indeed, the whole turn that her fiction is taking.

In the last mention of Joyce in her diary, Woolf seems to have come to terms with her project, and has a discussion about *Ulysses* with Eliot on October 26th during which they actually agree on some things:

There was a good deal of talk about *Ulysses*. Tom said "He is a purely literary writer. He is founded upon Walter

Pater with a dash of Newman." I said he was virile -- a he-goat; but didn't expect Tom to agree. Tom did tho'; & said he left out many things that were important. The book would be a landmark, because it destroyed the whole of the 19th Century. It left Joyce himself with nothing to write another book on. It showed up the futility of all the English styles. He thought some of the writing beautiful. But there was no 'great conception': that was not Joyce's intention. He thought Joyce did completely what he meant to do. But he did not think that he gave a new insight into human nature -- said nothing new like Tolstoy. Bloom told one nothing. Indeed, he said, this new method of giving the psychology proves to my mind that it doesn't work. It doesn't tell as much as some casual glance from outside often tells. I said I had found [Thackeray's] *Pendennis* more illuminating in this way (*Diary II* 202-203).

These new critical angles on *Ulysses* were no doubt welcome to Woolf's ears. Not only did they affirm her belief that the novel was less than The Great Masterpiece, but also gave her some insight into what Eliot believed remained to be done with the modern novel. Joyce hadn't gotten hold of human nature, hadn't used psychology to its fullest extent within the novel. That left the field open for Woolf's next novel. Psychology was something she thought very interesting and worthwhile, and she might even be able to do better than Joyce. Here was her chance for recognition. This was the impetus she needed to really work on her new novel; there were experiments still to be done successfully. Joyce

hadn't done it all.

Also interesting in Eliot's comments is the idea of "the casual glance from the outside," an idea that Woolf is already toying with, and will develop into what she will call "the glimpse," a process which we will follow in the next chapter.

Finally, reading, thinking about, and talking about *Ulysses* gives Woolf the incentive she needs to expand what had been a short story about a character in *The Voyage Out* into a novel that does attempt a new insight into human nature. *Mrs. Dalloway* becomes the first in a trilogy of novels which are considered Woolf's greatest works. She continues her experiments in *To the Lighthouse*, and creates her triumph in *The Waves*, assuring her place on the Modernist team. The whole process is well-documented in her diaries. Woolf responds to *Ulysses* quite consciously but takes a different approach and has a different focus when it comes to the problems of modern literature.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### "The Task of the Novelist:"

#### "Glimpses," Ordinary Minds, and A New Direction for Fiction

We have seen that the late summer and early fall of 1922 were extremely important months to the genesis of *Mrs. Dalloway*. During this time, Woolf reread *Ulysses*, defined Joyce's method and results once and for all in her mind, and began to plan her own narrative experiment. By Christmas Day, she felt confident enough in her ideas to share them with Gerald Brenan by letter:

I have been thinking a great deal about what you say of writing novels. One must renounce, you say. I can do better than write novels, you say. I don't altogether understand. I don't see how to write a book without people in it. Perhaps you mean that one ought not to attempt a 'view of life'? -- one ought to limit oneself to one's own sensations -- at a quartet for instance; one ought to be lyrical, descriptive: but not set people in motion, and attempt to enter them, and give them impact and volume? Ah, but I'm doomed! As a matter of fact, I think that we all are. It is not possible now, and never will be, to say I renounce. Nor would it be a good thing for literature were it possible. This generation must break its neck in order

that the next may have smooth going. For I agree with you that nothing is going to be achieved by us. Fragments -- paragraphs -- a page perhaps: but no more. Joyce to me seems strewn with disaster. I can't even see, as you see, his triumphs. A gallant approach, that is all that is obvious to me: then the usual smash and splinters (I have only read him, partly, once). The human soul, it seems to me, orientates itself afresh every now and then. It is doing so now. No one can see it whole, therefore. The best of us catch a glimpse of a nose, a shoulder, something turning away, always in movement. Still, it seems better to me to catch this glimpse, than to sit down with Hugh Walpole, Wells, etc. etc. and make large oil paintings of fabulous fleshy monsters complete from top to toe (*Letters II* 597-598).

This letter contains many of the important ideas she's working with, including the ones most important to this paper, ideas that I have referred to (since their emergence in the essays of 1918) as the "glimpse," the "ordinary mind," and the break with previous writing techniques. She also reiterates the notion that Joyce has not succeeded in fully portraying human nature in a new way. Woolf has been working with the idea of revealing the workings of the "unveiled soul" since 1918. As we saw in the previous chapter, she already plans to enter into her characters and give them "impact and volume." Furthermore, she intends to try to "set them in motion," to show them interacting with their environments more forcefully than she did in *Jacob's Room*. Woolf

is also aware of her place in literary history, and mentions "generations" of writers, all with different tasks, in her letter to Brenan. The responsibility of a modern writer, as she has mentioned before, is to break with the past, to experiment, to break his or her neck so that the next generation "may have smooth going." It is in the context of the break with past narrative techniques that Woolf mentions "the glimpse" in her letter: "The best of us catch a glimpse of a nose, a shoulder, something turning away, always in movement."

An idea that we haven't seen before is that "the human soul . . . orientates itself afresh every now and then. It is doing so now. No one can see it whole, therefore." Woolf will restate this in her essay "Character in Fiction," published first in the *Criterion* in July of 1924, then reprinted as a pamphlet by Hogarth Press in October of that year (*Collected Essays II* 436n), in which she put forth the proposition that "on or about December 1910 human character changed" (*Collected Essays II* 421). This idea is also related to the "glimpse."

What exactly is meant by "the glimpse?" We first saw it mentioned as a "small pinch" of the material of life in Woolf's 1918 essay "Philosophy in Fiction" (see page 4). Woolf sees the human soul continually reorienting itself, so that it cannot be captured as a whole. What the modern artist can do, is capture a "nose, a shoulder, something turning away, always in movement." Although Woolf also uses her "glimpse" on subjects other than human characters, we see this idea very clearly in the next chapter, when we will follow Peter Walsh all the way through the novel, and never get a really good look at him. This moving glimpse, says Woolf in her letter to Brenan, is preferable

to the "monster" or the plodding prose of the Edwardian realists who feel compelled to "observe every detail with immense care. . . . the advertisements; the pictures of Swanage and Portsmouth; the way in which the cushion bulged between the buttons; how Mrs Brown wore a brooch which had cost three-and-ten-three at Whitworth's bazaar . . .

(*Collected Essays II* 428). Even her metaphor of oil paints, again in the letter to Brennan, makes her point -- the Edwardian uses oil paints, which must be carefully applied and then allowed to slowly dry, as opposed to the ink sketch (the metaphor she assigns to the modern writer in "Modern Fiction") which is executed in a few quick confident strokes.

The essay "Character in Fiction," which I have been quoting from, was the first draft of one of Woolf's most famous essays, "Modern Fiction." "Modern Fiction" is the centerpiece of *The Common Reader*, and her other essay on modern fiction, "How It Strikes A Contemporary" ends the volume. When we examine these essays, we must remember that the collection of essays was carefully planned to precede *Mrs. Dalloway* by just a few weeks (see pages 20-22). Woolf uses her authoritative critic's voice in these essays, setting up a dialogue between her own critical work and her fictional work. She establishes her critical standard for modern fiction, and then releases her fictional attempt to embody these ideas.

"Modern Fiction" contains the observation that if we "examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day," we find "a myriad impressions" changing every moment, 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. . . . Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is 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 varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible (150)?

Woolf goes on to imply that Joyce has moved in this direction in *Ulysses*, but at the expense of probability and coherence (151).

However, none of the three minds she explores at length in *Mrs. Dalloway* are "ordinary." They are extraordinary in their narrative consciousnesses, in their "random patterns of atoms," their thoughts and memories. In a literary sense, they are also not ordinary. Clarissa is heroic in her facing down of death at the novel's climax. Septimus is tragic in his "mental illness" (what we now call Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome), his inability to communicate, and his suicide. Peter Walsh, as we shall see in the next chapter, spends his day in an epic journey through the past, emerging triumphantly into the present at Clarissa's party. Even the day itself is not ordinary, because even though Woolf does not specify the date, just says "it was the middle of June" (5), this is the day that Clarissa is throwing a party, the day Peter has returned from India, and the day Septimus kills himself.

Further on, Woolf exhorts writers to

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. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small (150).

A few sentences after this, she quietly admonishes Joyce for discarding coherence. Here is one of the dilemmas of modern fiction. How much of the random pattern of atoms can one record without adding explanations, orienting devices, or other elements of plot, that heavy-handed word which Woolf connects to the Victorians and Edwardians? How much maneuvering of these atoms can the author do without letting the "scaffolding" show through?

The way that Woolf herself solves this dilemma is with the "glimpse," which we see again in "How It Strikes A Contemporary." The idea is to take a slice out of the luminous halo, a quick sketch without generalizations, without the use of intellect "whose message is obscure," she writes in "How It Strikes A Contemporary" (*Common Reader* 239). As we saw in the last chapter, she wants "looseness & lightness" in her fiction, "no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen. . . ." (*Diary II* 13). To bring in the intellect, to leave signs of a complicated structure which could be pointed to and admired, is to leave signs of the "damned egotistical self; which ruins Joyce and Richardson" to her mind (*Diary II* 14). The modern writer, she says in "How It Strikes A Contemporary," "cannot make a world because they are not free

of other human beings. They cannot tell stories because they do not believe that stories are true" (239). They must rely on their "senses and emotions, whose testimony is trustworthy" and finally, "set down at a fresh angle of the eternal prospect they can only whip out their notebooks and record with agonised intensity the flying gleams; which light on what? and the transitory splendours, which may, perhaps, compose nothing whatever" (239). The "flying gleams" does sound more like the verbal acrobatics that this writing method implies, but we will stick with "glimpse."

The "glimpse" is particular to the artist trying to coherently portray the modern world. The urban world with its "light, noise, speed," in the words of Ezra Pound, must be artistically controlled somehow -- the sense of motion has to be represented, but not, Woolf insists, at the cost of coherence. Woolf's method is an alternative to a "large oil painting," yet for these "glimpses" to offer coherence, there must be a relationship between the "glimpses" and the larger picture. This is where the narrator comes in.

The consciousness of the narrator provides the needed structure. The narrator, who provides what Bakhtin calls direct authorial narration, is present in *Mrs. Dalloway* from beginning to end. But how does this narrator begin to sort out the atoms? We can turn to Bakhtin for an understanding of this type of narration. Again, in "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin describes the "character zone," which is formed from the actual speech of the character, "various forms for hidden transmissions of someone else's word," the actual speech of other characters, and the "invasions into authorial speech of others'

expressive indicators (ellipsis, questions, exclamations)" (316). These create an active field in which the narrator's voice and the characters interact.

Bakhtin goes on to characterize various forms of the direct authorial narrative. I have inserted examples of each type from the opening page of *Mrs. Dalloway*. The narrator may use the same general language that the author would use (with any slang expressions in quotation marks)(317): "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself" (3). The narrator may also insert "in its emotional and expressive structure" the hidden speech of another character, in this case, Clarissa: "For Lucy had her work cut out for her" (3). Then we have "pseudo-objective underpinning" (317), where the tone is consistent with the tone of the character, and could very well be put in quotation marks: "The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming" (3). These lines are not given in quotation marks, but Clarissa might have spoken them aloud. There are no pronouns to identify whether the narrator or the character is the actual source of this line. Finally, we have "quasi-direct discourse" (319), where the emotional aspects of someone else's speech are shaped by authorial punctuation: "What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air" (3). The pronouns set this in authorial discourse, but the emotion and phrasing is Clarissa's. Of course, all sorts of hybridizations of these authorial narratives can also exist.

Bakhtin pays particular attention to this last type, quasi-direct

discourse, which is the type Woolf uses most often. The "syntactic markers," he explains, indicate authorial speech, but the "entire emotional structure" indicates the character. This form

introduces order and stylistic symmetry into the disorderly and impetuous flow of a character's internal speech (a disorder and impetuosity would otherwise have to be re-processed into direct speech) and, moreover, through its syntactic (third-person) and basic stylistic markers (lexicological and other), such a form permits another's inner speech to merge, in an organic and structured way, with a context belonging to the author. But at the same time it is precisely this form that permits us to preserve the expressive structure of the character's inner speech, its inability to exhaust itself in words, its flexibility, which would be absolutely impossible within the dry and logical forms of indirect discourse (319).

Bakhtin uses Turgenyev as an example, but he might as well use Joyce, or Woolf, as I have. This "quasi-direct discourse," then, is an answer to a modern dilemma. It is through this narratorial control that the inner life of a character may be presented in, and I like Bakhtin's terminology here, "an organic and structured way." In Woolf's novel, the narrator is as present at the beginning, as at the end:

"I will come," said Peter, but he sat on for a moment. What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? he thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?

It is Clarissa, he said.

For there she was (296).

The narrator remains constant, with the exception of the diatribe on Proportion in the middle of the novel, weaving the various threads of heteroglossia together into an "organic and structured" narrative. In contrast, at the end of Joyce's novel, the narrator, after becoming more and more of a character within the novel, has disappeared, leaving the reader as aware of the start of Molly's menstrual period as of a train passing in the night. Joyce relies on the structure of the rest of the novel, and the forceful presence of the narrator up to this point, to provide a raft for the reader, who is set completely adrift in Molly's mind.

So narrative, although narrative of a different form than that of the Victorians or Edwardians, solves part of our problem. Narrative will provide the structure for joining together these "glimpses," capturing the illusive modern human spirit, and noting all those small things in modern life, which Woolf believes are as important as the big things. This attention to details will also help her counteract her characters' ghostliness, while still allowing her to concentrate on psychology and revealing the workings of the soul unveiled. The new technique will set her apart from her predecessors, and, she hopes, establish her reputation as an experimental modern writer.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### "Musing Among the Vegetables:"

#### The Importance of Adjectives and Objects in *Mrs. Dalloway*

Woolf has determined that human nature is of the utmost importance, but what exactly is human nature? What will Woolf attempt to capture in her "glimpses"? We find some hints in her diary entries for 1923, beginning with Monday, June 4th, after a social weekend at Ottoline Morrell's house: "I want to give the slipperiness of the soul. . . . The truth is people scarcely care for each other. They have this insane instinct for life. But they never become attached to anything outside themselves" (*Diary II* 244). This candid observation of Woolf's works well with her preference for describing the spirituality of her characters, the workings of their unveiled souls. Why should she include all sorts of sensual details when people "never become attached to anything outside themselves"? In fact, most of the details that Woolf includes in *Mrs. Dalloway* are sight details, a subtle underlining of the fact that humans move through the world but are separate from it. We will look more closely at her details momentarily.

By June 19th, she has incorporated this new observation about the "slipperiness of the soul" into her plan, and notes in her diary:

I want to give life & death, sanity & insanity; I want to criticise the social system, & to show it at work, at its

most intense. . . . I daresay its true, however, that I haven't that 'reality' gift. I insubstantise, wilfully to some extent, distrusting reality -- its cheapness (*Diary II* 248).

This distrust of reality may come from physics (we've already seen that she's quite aware of atomic theory) or from psychology (the Hogarth Press published Freud's *Collected Papers, Volumes I & II* in November 1924 (*Diary II* 322n)). Whatever the source, Woolf seems completely at ease with her expedition into human nature, spirituality, and in what she refers to as the point of interest for the moderns in "Modern Fiction," the "dark places of psychology" (*Common Reader* 152).

Another goal is confirmed on July 8th, when she writes, "I should like . . . to get speed & life into [*The Hours*]" (*Diary II* 251). She has yet to find a way to incorporate her idea of the "glimpse" into her writing, but this comes quickly, documented in her diary on August 30th: "I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment" (*Diary II* 263). Her tunneling method is, of course, a method of narration, by which she can dive deeply into a character's consciousness, note all the details she finds artistically necessary both in the past and in the present moment, and then resurface in the present moment. Not having access to Bakhtin's clearly delineated study of narrative, Woolf must work it out on her own. Although she discovers her "tunneling" method during the summer of 1923, we find her still fine-tuning her method the following summer, combining "tunneling" with



spirituality. On June 21st, 1924, she muses "I think its time to cancel that vow against soul description" (*Diary II* 304). Again, on August 2nd, she mentions the soul: "Then, being at a low ebb with my book -- the death of Septimus, -- I begin to count myself a failure. . . . But oh the delicacy & complexity of the soul -- for, haven't I begun to tap her & listen to her breathing after all?" (*Diary II* 307-308).

Despite this "low ebb," as she draws near the end of this draft of the novel, her diary entries become even more confident. On September 7th, she notes that the description of Clarissa's party

is to be a most complicated spirited solid piece, knitting together everything & ending on three notes, at different stages of the staircase, each saying something to sum up Clarissa. Who shall say these things? Peter, Richard, & Sally Seton perhaps: but I don't want to tie myself down to that yet. Now I do think this might be the best of my endings, & come off, perhaps (*Diary II* 312).

The confident language here shows that she is finally comfortable with her narrative experiments. Again, although the fact that we have access to her diaries goes against Woolf's last wishes, we have the extraordinary advantage of being able to read her private thoughts on her writing process; thoughts not written with the hindsight that Bakhtin so distrusts, but at the same time as the novel itself. We also see from this entry that despite her stated dislike of "large oil paintings," and her resolution against showing the "scaffolding" and the "bricks," she has given quite a lot of attention to the structure of *Mrs. Dalloway*, as we know she must to maintain coherence.

So, she has her structure, although it is a much more subtle structure than could be called a "plot" in the old sense. Her narrator will hold the "glimpses" together. The "glimpse" is part of her "tunneling" method -- each "tunnel" will contain a "glimpse," as we shall see. Her "tunneling" method also allows her to duck in and out of time (a most modern technique) and create characters with depth, impact, and volume. She has established her view of human nature and come up with a new way to express it. So, what will she include in these "glimpses"?

Atomic patterns and the ordinary mind all sounds quite marvelous in theory. How does it hold up on the page? At the beginning of the novel, Clarissa, through the narrator, describes a "glimpse" of June in London:

The King and Queen were at the Palace. And everywhere, though it was still so early, there was a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats; Lords, Ascot, Ranelagh and all the rest of it; wrapped in the soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air, which, as the day wore on, would unwind them, and set down on their lawns and pitches the bouncing ponies, whose forefeet just struck the ground and up they sprung, the whirling young men, and laughing girls in their transparent muslins who, even now, after dancing all night, were taking their absurd woolly dogs for a run; and even now, at this hour, discreet old dowagers were shooting out in their motor cars on errands of mystery; and the shopkeepers were fidgeting in their windows

with their paste and diamonds, their lovely old sea-green brooches in eighteenth-century settings to tempt Americans . . . (6).

These are Clarissa's thoughts after crossing Victoria Street and before walking into the park. The King and Queen at the Palace we can accept as a known fact, although not one corroborated by anything Clarissa experiences on her walk. We can assume that she cannot actually hear galloping ponies or tapping cricket bats on the street; this is not a physical experience either, but rather a flight of fancy; an imaginative enhancement of the morning, based on Clarissa's impressions. The grey-blue morning air is all around her; this we'll take as an actual, visible fact. The bouncing ponies, forefeet and all, are projected onto the scene, as are the whirling young men. People actually seen are: girls walking their dogs (and they may still be in their evening clothes but we cannot prove they've been dancing all night) and dowagers, discreet or not, in motor cars, as well as shopkeepers arranging their windows. The most clearly seen object is the sea-green brooch; she gives us enough adjectives to form a clear picture of it amongst the haze and motion of the other real and imagined details. The brooch stands out as a focused, physical object against a background of vaguer images. So, all together, here is our "glimpse." The narrator, through Clarissa, captures visual impressions of London in June, including the psychological associations triggered by these visual impressions. It is a "slice of life" seen through the particular eyes and mind of one character, and it includes the whole "pattern of atoms." There are actual physical details of the present moment, both focused and clearly

described like the brooch and also more abstract, leaving more room for the reader to fill in the details, like the girls walking their dogs. There are projections onto the present based on the present, the sounds of galloping ponies and cricket bats, which, although not actually present, are suggested by the atmosphere of the summer morning; and there may be a brief or prolonged memory of the past, again, triggered by something present in the moment, although one does not occur in this particular "glimpse." This is an example of a "glimpse" which remains grounded in a present moment.

An example of a "glimpse" which reaches back to the past occurs even earlier, when Clarissa remembers Bourton:

How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she was then) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, "Musing among the vegetables?" -- was that it? -- "I prefer men to cauliflowers" -- was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace -- Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when

millions of things had utterly vanished -- how strange it was! -- a few sayings like this about cabbages (3-4).

The London morning air, chill and sharp, and the squeak of a hinge are sensual details which have sent Clarissa from present day London to Bourton many years ago. In the past, the "glimpse" becomes immediately psychological -- "solemn." Clarissa is, on two levels, adrift in psychology even as she stands grounded among physical objects. In a "glimpse" of the past, we find an array of detailed and vaguer objects similar to those in a "glimpse" which remains rooted in the present. This is a past memory as well as a musing on the past, so we can't expect much of it to be ornately detailed. Woolf gives more suggestive details than concrete details, leaving the reader to draw most of the picture in his or her own mind. We might have our own ideas of fresh, calm, still morning air, but the simile of the flap and kiss of a wave confuses the image with a different type of physicality, neither of which can really be called concrete. She thinks of flowers. For all the flower listing that Clarissa/the narrator does a few pages further on at the florist's shop, you'd think she'd throw in a name or two here, to give us a clear visual image, but Woolf leaves it to the reader to decide here. Trees with smoke rising off them -- does she mean early morning mist, or does she mean real smoke? Again, the completed image is left to the reader. Rooks rising and falling are small black dots in the air. And then we come to Peter Walsh. Clarissa doesn't remember his letters or when he's due in from India; says she remembers his eyes and his smile (but without any adjectives the reader supplies an

arbitrary set of eyes and smile), his grumpiness (arbitrary again, rather than tied to a particular event or situation) and his sayings, of which she's just given three different versions. The focal image here is the pocket-knife, which faithfully appears with Peter throughout the rest of the novel.

We must assume Woolf was at least a little familiar with Freud, since her press was publishing his papers, and since her brother Adrian and his wife Karin had already decided to become psychoanalysts (*Diary II* 335). I presume this is what Harvena Richter had in mind when she mentioned the "covert sexual humor" (307). Peter's pocket-knife is an example of the expression of human nature in *Mrs Dalloway*. Peter and Clarissa were in love when they were young, or at least they thought they were. Clarissa chose Richard Dalloway over Peter, and neither has ever forgotten that. It becomes clear when Peter visits Clarissa at eleven a.m. that they both know he still has some sort of feeling for her. Yet Peter is never shown thinking of Clarissa's body, never physically desiring her. (He never thinks of Daisy, his love in India, or even the anonymous woman he follows on the street in a physical, sexual sense either. Thus I protest Richter's description of Peter as "sexually healthy.") Clarissa does not think of Peter sensually either; but when she thinks of Peter, she thinks of a pocket-knife. The few real objects that Woolf includes are quite striking, standing out against a more abstract backdrop of memory. What shall we do with these objects?

Mieke Bal, art historian, art critic, and author of *Reading "Rembrandt": Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* has developed a way to

look at paintings which she calls a "hysterical reading." Bal's choice of the term "hysterical" is meant to override the derogatory meaning of hysterical that has been applied to women throughout history. Bal names her dynamic poetics, which shifts and displaces the traditional visual narrative of paintings, "in honor of the wandering womb of ancient hysteria" (Bal 63). Bal developed this technique around what she calls the "revelatory detail," and she describes it as follows:

Rather than "reading for the plot", a "hysterical" semiotic [which] reads for the image; rather than reading for the main line or the proposition, it reads for the detail; and rather than reading for the hero or main character, it reads for the victim. Rather than reading for logic, linearity, and literality, it displaces these, replacing them with a scene-oriented simultaneity in which these categories of literal and figural change places (63).

This is precisely the type of reading method we need to work with Woolf's objects. Since Woolf is deliberately avoiding traditional plot structures and "main lines," utilizing a narrative consciousness instead, her novelistic structure fits Bal's ideas. We would be hard pressed to read for logic and linearity in the novel, since Woolf is working against them in her quest to capture modern life and the modern mind.

When Bal applies her "hysterical" reading to a painting, she concentrates on the figures in the painting, and more particularly, the direction of their gaze. The object of the gaze becomes her key to interpreting the painting. We can apply this same technique to Woolf's

"glimpses." When she paints an image for the reader, we can examine what the characters are looking at because the narrator works so closely within their consciousnesses. The objects which appear solid and focused against a less detailed background will be examined carefully, to see why Woolf detailed them so carefully, choosing a few adjectives to clearly present the object to the reader, through the character's consciousness.

As we follow Peter Walsh through the novel, following his "gaze" (in Bal's terms), we discover the hidden scaffolding of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Peter Walsh spends his day coming to terms with the past, and as he accomplishes this, his perception of reality changes. We shall follow Peter through the novel, watching him first cling to the past, and view the present in only the vaguest, unfocused way. Each "tunnel" that Peter plunges into takes him into the past, where he relives a "glimpse" of the summer at Bourton. Finally, Peter begins to notice more and more about the present. As he makes his way towards Clarissa's party, he floats along on a stream of present images, "glimpse" after "glimpse," and he does not retreat down a tunnel. He keeps himself in the present by focusing on objects; real, detailed, adjective-laden objects which keep him grounded in the present. These objects allow Peter to stay in the present moment at Clarissa's party, even when he reminisces about the past with Sally. In the final pages of the book, Peter sees Clarissa, in the present moment, for the first time since Bourton. This clarity of vision at the end is due to his having focused on objects as a way of anchoring himself in the present. Peter has survived the epic journey through his past by focusing on certain objects, as we shall



see.

Although Peter's consciousness is extraordinary, as we discussed in the last chapter, his character is rather ordinary, but also very important. He is British, yet he has an outsider's view of London because he has been away in India, and has not been back to England in five years. He is ~~an~~ vital part of Clarissa's past, in fact, she thinks of him more in the past than she does of her husband Richard; she thinks of Richard almost entirely in the present. Through Peter, not Clarissa, we learn most of the details of that summer at Bourton when Clarissa met and fell in love with Richard Dalloway. Beyond his devotion to Clarissa and his habit of playing with pocket-knives, Peter is a rather ordinary character. Again, his continuous internal narrative is what makes him extraordinary -- the pattern of atoms that fall into his mind set him apart from Clarissa or Septimus.

The first stop on Peter's epic journey through the past is Clarissa's house at eleven a.m., where he finds her mending her green party dress. During this whole scene, which stretches over twelve pages, the focused images which Peter sees are her green silk dress, which he points his knife toward (60) and details of Clarissa's drawing room which he connects to her success and his failure quite openly: "he was a failure, compared with this -- the inlaid table, the mounted paper-knife, the dolphin and the candlesticks, the chair-covers and the old valuable English tinted prints" (64). Peter's immediate reaction to Clarissa and her material wealth is to take out his pocket-knife "quite openly . . . and [clench] his fist upon it" (65). When he begins to pare his nails with it, Clarissa cries, "For Heaven's sake, leave your

knife alone!" to herself (69). We know that she sees the knife as a focused object because she describes it as "his old horn-handled knife" (65). Woolf is playing with Freudian symbolism again, making it subtle and funny. The underlying meaning is clear because of the material reality of the knife and the drawing room decorations. Peter pulls out his knife, the closest thing he has to a weapon, in direct response to a feeling of threat. The physicality of these objects makes them stand out in relation to the rest of the scene, which is not as clearly focused. What Peter sees, the material comforts of Clarissa's home, are the important objects. Here in the beginning of the novel, it is Clarissa who sends Peter down tunnels to Bourton. "Do you remember?" she asks, and he begins his journey through the past. It seems that Peter must take this journey to come to terms with his old feelings for Clarissa. He must settle, once and for all, this old love in his mind, so he can turn his full attention to his new love.

We follow Peter as he leaves Clarissa's and walks down the street. He sees himself in "the plate-glass window of a motor-car manufactured on Victoria Street" (72), which seems like a clear image until we realize that other than the description "elderly man," which the narrator gave us on page 59, we have no idea what Peter looks like. The window as an object is fairly focused, but the reflection might as well not be there. Of course, Peter knows what he looks like; he has just registered "the effigy of a man in a tail-coat with a carnation in his button-hole" (72). The reader knows what Peter is wearing, but the details of his face and body are not yet available. He has just seen Clarissa for the first time in five years, and called himself a

"fortunate man," because he is in love with a married woman he met in India, named Daisy (72). He might register some detail of a happy or disheveled appearance in the window. But, as it stands, we have a much clearer image of Peter's horn-handled pocket-knife than of the man himself.

Peter pauses briefly in his walk, stopped by the thought "Clarissa refused me" (74). He thinks of her recent illness, imagines her falling dead in her drawing room, and rebels against his morbid thoughts. "No! No! he cried. She is not dead! I am not old, he cried, and marched up Whitehall, as if there rolled down to him, vigorous, unending, his future" (75). He recovers from seeing Clarissa surrounded by the trappings of her successful marriage to Richard Dalloway. The next thing that Peter notices is a marching group of young soldiers, and several commemorative statues. He connects these images to his youth, and to a feeling of masculinity -- he feels that he has "made the same renunciation" as the great soldiers in the statues. Then, with his renewed sense of masculinity, he sees a young woman, and begins to follow her, "stealthily fingering his pocket knife" (79). We can definitely grant Richter her covert sexual humor now. This woman, though, lacks physical reality and specificity, even though Peter follows her and fantasizes about asking her to have an ice, and her answering "Oh yes" (a possible echo of Molly Bloom's string of "yesses" at the end of *Ulysses*). Peter mentions her white gloves, a thin long cloak, and a red carnation which matched her lips on page 79. But in his first glimpse of her, "as she passed Gordon's statue" (78), she appears to him to "shed veil after veil, until she became the very young

woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately; merry, but discreet; black, but enchanting (78-79). As he follows her, her image becomes even more ghostly, "her shoulders combining with the fringes and the laces and the feather boas in the windows" (80), until she disappears inside a house, and Peter's fantasy is over. And then Peter thinks about having had his fun, "for it was half made up, as he knew very well; invented, this escapade with the girl; made up, as one makes up the better part of life, he thought -- making oneself up; making her up; creating an exquisite amusement, and something more" (81).

Well, it's more than half made up, but that isn't the point here, and although I think this scene may be a response of sorts to Bloom's watching Gertie on the beach in *Ulysses* (299-301), I don't believe there is a direct dialogue going on here, as William Jenkins suggests (517-518). What is important is that here is a character within *Mrs. Dalloway*, rationalizing his fantasy, excusing his separation of this girl from her physical reality, by simply saying, it's more fun this way. He is acknowledging his narrative consciousness. Furthermore, in the next sentence of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Peter thinks, "But odd it was, and quite true; all this one could never share -- it smashed to atoms" (81). We cannot ignore the word "atoms," not after having seen it in one of the most vital sentences in "Modern Fiction" ("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" (*Common Reader* 150)). Through Peter, Woolf is explaining her "glimpses" again, right here in the novel. One cannot "share" all of one's impressions; all one

can hope to do is trace the pattern of atoms after the whole picture smashes. We've just watched Woolf tracing Peter's atoms, and now here's another instance of author-as-creator, speaking through Peter in a "quasi-direct discourse," explaining her technique, just in case we haven't read *The Common Reader*.

Peter sees one more substantial "glimpse" on his way to Regent's Park. Through an opened door, he sees "Admirable butlers, tawny chow dogs, halls laid in black and white lozenges with white blinds blowing" (82). This time, the details of wealthy London life do not bother him. "A splendid achievement in its own way, after all, London; the season; civilization" (82), he thinks, and then settles on a bench in the park, enjoys "rich benignant cigar smoke" (84), and falls asleep. Anonymous wealth does not bother Peter; it is Clarissa's wealth (which he connects to her marriage to Richard Dalloway, rather than to himself), which threatens him. In any case, all worries can be chased away with that most masculine of Freudian symbolic pleasures, the cigar, which he will connect, after his nap, with Sally Seton.

Thinking of Sally sends Peter spelunking into a very deep "tunnel," and he remembers being in love with Clarissa, and Richard Dalloway coming on the scene, and Clarissa breaking with him. It is all beautifully described, and unfocused, as the past should be. And when Peter re-emerges from his "tunnel," he leaves the Park, musing about England, India, Love, and back to the past again -- great, abstract ideas. Peter spends a long time in this tunnel, and at the end, remembering how he had cried in front of Clarissa that morning, he holds his pocket-knife "at arm's length" then shuts it, thinking that "women

don't know what passion is. They don't know the meaning of it to men" (121). Again, Woolf uses the revelatory physical detail -- Peter is thinking about passion, not sex, and playing with his knife again. The emotion is abstract, the knife is concrete. These concrete objects popping up can indeed be read as small symbols, reinforcing the ideas presented in "tunnels" or "glimpses." They are a structural device within the structural narrative, working with the narrator. When we think of Peter Walsh, we think of the old horn-handled pocket-knife, just as Clarissa does, because the narrator has still not given us a physically detailed picture of him.

Peter registers nothing more until he reaches his hotel, where he sees "the hall, with its mounds of reddish chairs and sofas, its spike-leaved, withered-looking plants" (233). This is quite a contrast to the wealth he had eyed all day, which is precisely why he sees it. He walks to his room thinking of Clarissa, and then sees, in his hand with other letters, a letter from her, "this blue envelope; that was her hand" (234). Significantly, we don't read it. Our view of the letter is two-fold, and is a hybrid of quasi-direct discourse. "How heavenly to see him. She must tell him that" (234) metamorphoses into "Heavenly to see you. She must say so!" (235) which becomes finally "that one line which he was to find greeting him. . . . 'Heavenly to see you!'" (236). After all this musing about Clarissa, after spending practically his whole day thinking about her, her words are not concrete; they are not focused to Peter. The words shift and evolve on the page, first with pronouns, then without. They shift in Peter's mind. He sees the envelope clearly, and her handwriting, but the words change. Clarissa

herself is not focused in Peter's mind. At her house, he saw her household objects, her green silk dress, but not Clarissa. Clarissa is, at this point, most real to him as a girl of eighteen. Words from the older Clarissa, the white-haired Clarissa, are not real.

Next Peter sees his hotel room, not a "consoling place," he thinks (235):

For sleep, one bed; for sitting in, one armchair; for cleaning one's teeth and shaving one's chin, one tumbler, one looking-glass. Books, letters, dressing-gown, slipped about on the impersonality of the horsehair like incongruous impertinences. And it was Clarissa's letter that made him see all this (235).

He sees his hotel room as a great contrast to the luxuries and comforts of Clarissa's life with Richard. And then, to highlight this contrast, Peter Walsh empties his pockets: "Out came with his pocket-knife a snapshot of Daisy on the verandah; Daisy all in white with a fox-terrier on her knee; very charming, very dark; the best he had seen of her" (238). The woman he loves now, dark, charming Daisy, in comparison to Clarissa, who has been described as pink and white by Scrope Purvis, by herself, by the narrator, and by Peter. As these details themselves are not connected to a particular physical feature (I assume pink cheeks and white hair but cannot be sure), I have not included them as concrete details. Yet the contrast is still quite clear, between Clarissa and Daisy, between the past at calm, beautiful Bourton by the sea, and the present busy London summer day, between Clarissa's wealth and Peter's transitory existence. He carries his life in his pockets. Peter

gathers his life -- "his knife; his watch; his seals, his note-case, and Clarissa's letter . . . and Daisy's photograph" (241), returns his objects to his pockets, and goes down to dinner. His substantial details travel with him, secure in his pockets, within grasp if he needs them.

The narrator describes the dining room to us, "little tables round vases" (241), and we catch a glimpse of Peter Walsh as a "nice-looking gentleman with horn-rimmed spectacles" (242), not much to go on, but as much of a look at Peter as we've had all day. What Peter sees next is his own hand holding a liqueur glass "among the hairy red chairs and ash-trays." This is a confident vision; he is holding his own in the dining room, and he decides to go to Clarissa's party.

Outside, he sees London: "the paper boys went by with placards proclaiming in huge red letters that there was a heat-wave, wicker chairs were placed on the hotel steps and there, sipping, smoking, detached gentlemen sat" (244-245). Peter sits there too, declaring himself a detached gentlemen, which we've known all day, as we followed him. He sees women in "pink stockings; pretty shoes" in the "yellow-blue evening light; and on the leaves in the square shone lurid, livid - they looked as if dipped in sea water -- the foliage of a submerged city. He was astonished by the beauty" (246). Peter is seeing details about the present, noticing the city's concrete details for a moment, which leads him to buy a newspaper and read the news of the day (247). With this grounding in reality, he sets off for Clarissa's party.

Now as he walks, he sees details galore; he looks through uncurtained windows and sees "parties sitting over tables, young people



slowly circling, conversations between men and women, maids idly looking out, stockings drying on top ledges, a parrot, a few plants" (248). He sees all these details without being swept into the past, as he has been all day, and he finds it all "interesting" (248). He continues on, still grounded in the present by these details. None of them send him down a "tunnel," back to Bourton, or even to India. He sees a door opened by a footman

to let issue a high-stepping old dame, in buckled shoes, with three purple ostrich feathers in her hair. . . . ladies wrapped like mummies in shawls with bright flowers on them, ladies with bare heads. . . . [and] a retired judge . . . sitting four square at his house door dressed all in white (248).

Still looking, still walking, noticing more and more objects, substantial details, he sees "a shindy of brawling women, drunken women; here only a policeman and looming houses, high houses, domed houses, churches parliaments, and [hears] the hoot of a steamer on the river" (250). Then Peter realizes he is on Clarissa's street, and he sees people arriving for the party:

The cold stream of visual impressions failed him now as if the eye were a cup that overflowed and let the rest run down its china walls unrecorded. The brain must wake now. The body must contract now, entering the house, the lighted house, where the door stood open, where the motor cars were standing, and bright women descending: the soul must brave itself to endure. He opened the big blade of his pocket-

knife (250).

Weapon in hand, Peter walks into the party. But how extraordinary is this passage! Peter has allowed himself to be carried along on a stream of visual impressions, keeping himself in the present by noticing concrete objects, but not letting them send him off into any "tunnels." Now, entering the party, he must have his wits about him; he must have his knife at the ready, and most importantly, he must have contracted his body. He has deliberately grounded himself with these details, yet not spent a lot of time interacting with them physically. He observes. He keeps himself "contracted" or separate from his environment in order to cope with human nature, yet he will keep noticing details in order to keep himself in the present. It's quite a strategy, and quite boldly stated. And it works. It works so well that Peter will actually see Clarissa, perhaps for the first time since Bourton. [Incidentally, Ellie Henderson, Clarissa's awkward cousin, has been invited to the party apparently just to give us the most complete look at Peter yet, and we might want to know after spending the day with him: "A tall man, middle aged, rather fine eyes, dark, wearing spectacles, with a look of John Burrows" (258). Of course, we might have no idea who John Burrows is, or what he looks like, but the fact that Peter reminds Ellie of someone makes him more real to the reader.]

Here is Clarissa as Peter sees her:

And now Clarissa escorted her Prime Minister down the room, prancing, sparkling, with the stateliness of her grey hair. 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. There was a breath of tenderness; her severity, her prudery, her woodenness were 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; an 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. (But he was not in love.) (264-265).

It has taken all day; it has taken thirty years. Peter finally sees Clarissa as she is, and realizes that she is like a mermaid to him; a siren; yet he sees her age, sees her in her element, sees her being the perfect hostess (a role he had teased her about), and realizes that Clarissa made the right choice in breaking with him. He sees her as she is, in fantastic detail. This is our most concrete view of Clarissa, and Peter does not touch his pocket-knife. He is no longer threatened; he is not in love; he does not retreat down a "tunnel" into the past. He does not touch his pocket-knife until the past looms up in the person of Sally Seton, who remembers his "old trick . . . always opening and shutting a knife when he got excited" (285). But Peter does not

think of Clarissa, he thinks of Sally; they talk of the past, and he still thinks of Sally, remembering her, not Clarissa. And they talk of Clarissa, without Peter diving down a tunnel. He stays right there, rooted in the present, without the visual details now to buoy him, even when they talk of Clarissa breaking it off with Peter.

At the very end of the novel, Peter sees Clarissa, without any visual details. He says, "It is Clarissa" (296). and there she is. He no longer needs specific, individual details to see her, just as he no longer needs the past. The past and present have finally met, and it is only Peter, who has been through all of these "tunnels" thinking of Clarissa, who has spent his whole life thinking of Clarissa and only really seen her tonight, who can sum her up at the end of the novel with his statement. "It is Clarissa," he said. For there she was" (296). Woolf has used these substantial objects to keep Peter firmly in the present moment, in a psychological sense. She has revealed the unveiled workings of her characters' souls, and used these workings as a part of the structure, developing Peter Walsh toward this final moment when he does see Clarissa. She has concentrated on the mind, rather than the body, and created a modern consciousness.

The "tunnels," "the glimpses," and the revelatory details have all worked together within the structure of the narrative consciousness to form a view of the contemporary world, to explore not-so-ordinary minds on a not-so-ordinary day, to make an attempt at capturing human nature by using psychology and narrative technique. By concentrating on spirituality, and paying close attention to the objects that her characters see, Woolf has made their brief encounters with the concrete

world reverberate with meaning, and kept within the bounds of her own experiment with modern fiction. Finally, she has broken with the old forms of fiction, answered Joyce's *Ulysses* in her mind, and set out another smoothed path on which the next generation of writers might choose to make their way.

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