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An Examination of Narrative and Thematic Devices in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*

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Mary Houghtaling, British Literature, Montclair State University

Abstract of Master's Thesis, Submitted 17 January 2014

An Examination of Narrative and Thematic Devices in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse and Mrs. Dalloway

The purpose of this master's thesis is to examine the narrative and thematic devices Virginia Woolf employs in her two novels, To the Lighthouse and Mrs. Dalloway and how her techniques impact the way in which the readers view the characters and their relationships. Her use of narrator and themes in both novels helps develop more complex characters, making them more relatable and their situations examples that readers can use in life outside the novels. This thesis looks directly at her use of language and character development in order to examine how she achieves success in her novels.

The first chapter of this thesis focuses on To the Lighthouse and the ways in which Woolf uses the narrative as a sort of laboratory for experimenting with her early family life. In doing this, she uses narrative techniques that serve not only her purposes as author, but she in turn writes a tale that is a model of family life and relationships that work for a population of readers in general. The tale is a simple exploration of family life, but one that creates a sort of "how-to" for readers. These ideas are explored through the narrator and thematic structure that occur throughout the novel.

The second chapter of this thesis focuses on Mrs. Dalloway and how Woolf uses this narrative to create a set of characters who, when all woven together, create a model of human experience at its most powerful. Woolf dramatizes situations in this novel, through her narrative devices and thematic structure, which show the depth to which human beings experience life and the impact that major life events can have on the human psyche. The characters experience and feel life altering events all in a single day,

emphasizing how “regular” they are, and Woolf exemplifies that power through her narrator and the way in which she finally brings the characters to one another. Through the narrative and thematic devices Woolf employs in this novel, she creates a model for readers to live by, showing what works and what does not, sharing the intimate details these characters experience in their dramatic situations.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

✓ An Examination of Narrative and Thematic Devices in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse and Mrs. Dalloway ✓

by

Mary Houghtaling

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

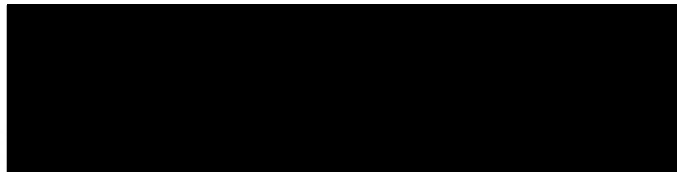
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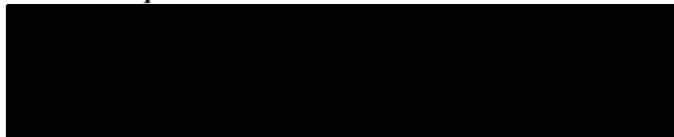
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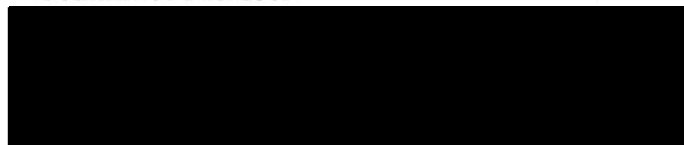
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AN EXAMINATION OF NARRATIVE AND THEMATIC DEVICES IN VIRGINIA
WOOLF'S TO THE LIGHTHOUSE AND MRS. DALLOWAY

A THESIS

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Chapter 1

Nothing is Simply One Thing: Unraveling To the Lighthouse

"A masterpiece may be unwelcome...but it is never dull"

~*Gertrude Stein*

To the Lighthouse, as known by almost every critic, contains a large portion of Woolf's family history. Her mother was a rare beauty, just as Mrs. Ramsay is in the text. Her father, Leslie Stephen, was domineering, brilliant and very critical; Mr. Ramsay is almost an exact replica of him. Woolf had eight brothers and sisters and the Ramsay family consists of that many children. One of Woolf's sisters died during childbirth, just as Prue Ramsay does, and one of her brothers was killed in the war, the same way Andrew Ramsay meets his demise.¹ It only makes sense that an author draws upon what he or she knows and one obvious source for that is family life. To the Lighthouse is, just as every other novel is to some extent, somewhat biographical. Virginia Woolf used this piece of art she created, based on these experience, perhaps to create her relationships with people in her family.

Woolf, in her diary, writes of her parents, "I used to think of him [Leslie Stephen] and mother daily; but writing To The Lighthouse laid them in my mind forever" (138). This demonstrates that she used this text to make her experience of her parents concrete in her mind forever. Couple that along with the fact that she never intended for this book to be called a "novel" in the typical sense of the word; Woolf wanted to call it an elegy and it may be asserted that she needed to grieve her parents, and this text was an emotional outlet.² Thomas Vogler, in the introduction to Twentieth Century Interpretations of To the Lighthouse, claims that Virginia Woolf writes the book, "to explore her attitudes towards herself and her family" (9). The word

¹ This biographical information was obtained from a number of different sources; however, see Vogler's Twentieth Century Interpretations of To the Lighthouse for the majority.

² This information was taken from Twentieth Century Interpretations of To the Lighthouse. The particular essay was by Jean Guiguet and she retrieved the information from Virginia Woolf's diary.

“explore” is exactly what Woolf does in this novel. She experiments and in the end creates a piece of art that affects not only herself, but also the reader on a profound level, as all great novels and novelists do. It is true that she needed to explore her different experiences and lay them all out in front of her, and in choosing the one that best fits, she creates an experience - an experience that is only a hint of the actual reality. What Woolf does in this novel that is different is she uses narrative and thematic devices that create a guide through which she could view her family and a sort of “how-to” that readers can use in their own familial relationships.

Woolf utilizes several different narrative devices to fully display her characters and their relationships. It turns out that in order to get to the center, several top layers must be removed, like peeling back the layers of an onion. There are two devices that are primarily used. The first one is the narrator, who plays an essential role and demands scrutiny. Who is this narrator? Is there more than one? How does he/she deliver the thoughts of different characters? The second device is the rhythmic frequency of themes and ideas found in this novel. The up and down rhythm of the text corresponds to the sea, its waves and the rhythm of the stroke of the searchlight from the lighthouse. These rhythms give the novel a tempo creating a more complete picture for the reader of Woolf’s family life. The frequency found in the novel corresponds nicely with the rhythm. The meaning of frequency being that there is a frequent occurrence of particular themes found throughout the novel. The two main themes are art (painting, knitting and housecleaning) and light and the lighthouse. The continual occurrence of each of these themes corresponds with the different rhythms of the text; therefore, each is crucial to the development of the novel. These different devices help the reader gain a better understanding of the novels of Woolf’s novels.

The Narrator and Narrative Voice

To the Lighthouse is broken into three sections. Because of that, the narrative voice is a major source of debate for many critics. Some argue that there is more than one narrator found in this book. According to this school of thought, there are multiple narrators found in the first and third sections, who slip in and out of the characters' consciousnesses without any obvious clues to the reader. These first narrators are covert and untrustworthy because of this behavior. It is then asserted that a completely different narrator, separate from any that were found in the first and third parts, is active in the second part of the novel. In contrast to the other narrators this narrator is overt and verbose, very interested in giving the reader lengthy descriptions of setting.

The second point of view, and the one that I endorse, holds that there is only one narrator throughout the entire text, a narrator I will henceforth refer to as a woman. This voice may have a different style at various points in the novel but remains the same voice, and therefore, the same narrator. What changes is not the narrator but what Seymour Chatman calls the character filter (Chatman 213). Chatman's term "character filter," or as other critics term it "focalizer," means the particular character whose perspective the narrator has adopted at any given point in the story. The character filter continuously changes in the first and third sections, leading to the incorrect assumption that the narrator has changed. It is only the point of view that has switched, but because the narrator is third-person omniscient, it is difficult to tell that only one voice is speaking and ultimately delivering the different characters' thoughts. For example, in the first section of the text entitled "The Window":

No happiness lasted: she knew that. She knitted with firm composure, slightly pursing her lips and, without being aware of it, so stiffened and composed the lines of her face in a habit of sternness that when her husband passed, though he

was chuckling at the thought of Hume, the philosopher, grown enormously fat, had stuck in the bog, he could not help noting, as he passed, the sternness at the heart of her beauty. (98)

The narrator begins delivering the thoughts of Mrs. Ramsay, who is pondering the idea that happiness does not last. The description abruptly changes to an external description of her rather than the internal one of just sentences earlier. This leaves the reader questioning, why change now? *Who* is seeing her sternness? Suddenly the reader is thrust into the thoughts of Mr. Ramsay who is looking at Mrs. Ramsay wondering about “the sternness of her beauty.” Is Mr. Ramsay actually thinking about how stern Mrs. Ramsay looked at that moment? The narrator is guiding the reader into believing that Mr. Ramsay is thinking the same thing and all along these are the narrator’s own thoughts combined with Mr. Ramsay. We move from one mind to another via the omniscient narrator. This is the narrator’s interpretation of Mr. Ramsay’s subjective feelings which guides the reader to have a decided perspective on Mr. Ramsay. The whole passage is looking at Mrs. Ramsay but creating an impression of Mr. Ramsay. Understandably, some might want to believe that there are different narrators who each deliver different points of view, each taking turns guiding the reader in her part of the tale. However, there is only one narrator, who is third person omniscient, and has slipped from one character to another. The character filter has changed but the narrator has not.

The second section, “Time Passes” is unusual for many different reasons. Here the narrator is extremely overt and even chatty, which is a drastic change from the minimal, covert narration seen in the first and third sections. Because of this, narrative voice is most present in “Time Passes.” The narrator has stepped out of the characters’ minds and she no longer restricted to “reporting” the characters’ thoughts. She is now given the freedom to describe what

she wants and how she feels. How can the reader be sure that this narrator is the same narrator that appears in the first and third sections? The answer is simple: language. The narrator in this section uses a language and style that is full of similes and metaphors that indicate her own feelings; however, she uses the same “flowery” style in the other two sections, as, for example, in the following: “The Spring without a leaf to toss, bare and bright like a virgin fierce in her chastity, scornful of her purity, was laid out on fields wide-eyed and watchful and entirely careless of what was done or thought by the beholders” (135). She has been confined by the characters’ thoughts but in the second section she is no longer restricted.

For example, in the first section James Ramsay is just a little boy. He is, by age, incapable of thinking on the linguistically sophisticated level in which his ideas are related: “Standing between her knees, very stiff, James felt all her strength flaring up to be drunk and quenched by the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male, which smote mercilessly, again and again, demanding sympathy” (80). These feelings belong to James, without question, yet the language belongs to the narrator.³ The narrator has taken what a little boy feels and translated it into adult words. This narrator is obviously a well-educated, well-spoken presence that knows enough about the characters she is describing to come up with a summation of feeling such as that. Compare that passage with this one from “Time Passes”:

And now, in the heat of summer the wind sent its spies about the house again. Flies wove a web in the sunny rooms; weeds that had grown close to the glass in the night tapped methodically at the window pane. When darkness fell, the stroke of the Lighthouse, which had laid itself with such authority upon the carpet in the darkness, tracing its pattern, came now in the softer light of spring

³ Judith Espinola has the same idea and utilizes the same quote, so I would like to acknowledge her priority on this point.

mixed with moonlight gliding gently as if it laid its caress and lingered stealthily and looked and came lovingly again. (200)

This is the same eloquent language of the narrator from the earlier section. The only difference is that this time the material is not her rendering of what a character feels about someone or something, but her *own* feelings and philosophy. There is no character filter here; it is the narrator who is informing the description with her sensibility and values. In the second section she is freed from the perspective of the characters, with the exception of Mrs. McNab, and conveys her own thoughts as she describes the empty house. The language in “Time Passes” is just as fluid and descriptive as the first and third sections but it deals with what the narrator sees and, therefore, may appear to be a different narrator to the reader. The narrator, being free from the characters is master of time here, controlling the pace of the novel, which does not happen in the other two sections of the novel. This narrator uses figurative, elevated language in the first and third sections, retelling what others are thinking and experiencing; in the second section she gets the opportunity to interject her own ideas and feelings. In allowing her narrator this freedom, Woolf allows herself the opportunity to explore ideas, rather than simply retell events. The narrator in the second section allows the reader to feel with her, allowing access to areas that are otherwise restricted. The narrator’s feelings of the emptiness of the house, the loneliness of the place once so full of life are evident and free to be expressed in “Time Passes.”

There is another school of thought about this novel, one that holds that there is no narrator at all. Norman Friedman talks of To the Lighthouse having “multiple selective omniscience,” asserting that the story is delivered with neither an author nor a narrator and “directly through the characters” (1177). Friedman’s hypothesis is unlikely due to the fact that a narrator is obviously accounted for in the tags that are used when presenting the thoughts of the

characters. For Friedman, the narrator is a character who tells a story: in this novel we have a more impersonal narrative function. Judith Espinola, in "Narrative Discourse in To the Lighthouse" says, "the perceptions themselves are not communicated directly to the reader by the characters, but are instead filtered through the vision of a controlling narrative presence" (30). Later she points out the different factors that prove the existence of that narrative presence:

Attitudes and viewpoints of this narrative presence emerge from a combination of the following factors: (1) what she tells while speaking directly to the reader in narrative commentary, description and summary; (2) what she shows about characters when presenting their interior thought processes or their discourse with other characters; and (3) what she chooses to present as characters tell or think about one another. (30)

Espinola, in a footnote, claims that her study of this problem "falls under the assumption that the narrator of any novel isn't confused with the author, and that the different narrators in the novels by Virginia Woolf are abstractions of aspects of the author herself" (31). The narration is admittedly minimal in "The Window" and "The Lighthouse"; however, the single, unified narrator still exists. The two major sections of the novel, "The Window" and "The Lighthouse," use three particular kinds of tagging that are proof of a narrative presence. They are, as noted by Espinola, "narrative tags (including brief descriptions and comments), explanations communicated through figures of comparison, and description of thought processes" (32). It is crucial to pay attention to the tags such as, "said his father," "(James thought)," "said Mrs. Ramsay," "she would ask" (10-11), which exist to maintain the clear difference between the

narrator and the character filter.⁴ Espinola takes a passage from the famous dinner scene and marks every different style of tagging within the passage:

But what have I done with my life? [*indirect discourse*] thought Mrs. Ramsay, taking her place at the head of the table [*narrative speech*], and looking at all the plates making white circles on it [*indirect speech*]. “William, sit by me” [*direct discourse*], she said [*narrative speech*], “Lily” [*direct discourse*], she said wearily [*narrative speech*], “over here” [*direct discourse*]. They had that – Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle – she only this – an infinitely long table and plates and knives. At the far end, was her husband, sitting down, all in a heap, frowning. What at? She did not know. She did not mind. She could not understand how she had ever felt any emotion or affection for him [*free indirect speech*]. She had a sense of being past everything, out of everything, as she helped the soup, as it there was an eddy [*narrative speech*] – there [*direct discourse*] – and one could be in it, or one could be out of it, and she was out of it [*indirect speech*]. It’s all come to an end [*direct discourse*] she thought, while they came in one after another, Charles Tansley [*narrative speech*] – “Sit there, please” [*direct discourse*], she said – Augustus Carmichael – and sat down. And meanwhile she waited, passively for someone to answer her, for something to happen [*narrative speech*]. But this is not a thing [*direct discourse*], she thought, ladling out soup [*narrative speech*], that one says [*direct discourse*]. (Espinola 40)

Espinola works through this passage and proves the existence of the narrator by showing the clear presence of narrative speech that does not belong to a particular character. The information

⁴ “Reading Provisionally: Narrative Theory and To the Lighthouse.” Pinkerton, Mary in “Approaches to Teaching Woolf’s To the Lighthouse,” ed. Beth Daugherty and Mary Pringle (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2001), p. 63.

is not passed to the reader in one consistent form. Indirect speech, free indirect speech, narrative speech and direct discourse are all tools Woolf gives to her narrator; that narrator, in turn, utilizes them all and in no particular order. The term “free indirect discourse” is according to Chatman and as previously discussed, “a term describing a grammar designed to disguise the originating point of the narrative voice” (201). Free indirect discourse confines the narrator to the perspective and mental language of the character, keeping only the tense and pronoun structure of the third-person narration. This could explain why critics are confused as to whether there is any narrator at all. The moments of free indirect discourse that Espinola marked in the passage cited above, are the points where the narrator is *deliberately* trying to be covert. The narrator is trying to blend with the characters’ mental language. If the whole novel were to be broken down in the same manner Espinola employs in that passage, it would be possible to determine that this is the most frequently utilized narrative mode. Using this kind of “deception” allows Woolf a chance to more freely explore experiences and ideas through her characters and allows the reader an intimate, perspective on the events as they occur.

The narrator often remarks on the physical context in which a character is speaking. For example, when Mrs. Ramsay says, ““But it may be fine – I expect it will be fine”” with an explanation following, “said Mrs. Ramsay, making some little twist of the reddish brown stocking she was knitting, impatiently” (11). These physical descriptions are found throughout the novel and are essential to letting the reader know that there is narrative intervention (Espinola 33). Early on in the text there is a section where Mr. Ramsay’s portrayal demonstrates the narrator as less covert: “ - [He] squared his shoulder and stood upright by the urn... Who shall blame him, if, so standing for a moment, he dwells upon fame, upon search parties, upon cairns raised by grateful followers over his bones? Finally, who shall blame the leader of the doomed

expedition[...]?” (57). The fact that this passage begins with a little external, physical description is a clue to let the reader know that there is a mediating narrative presence; yet, the questioning that starts the passage creates confusion. The narrator acts as a mediator between the reader and Mr. Ramsay and leaves the interpretation up to the reader. The reader, through the guidance of the narrator, is allowed to experience Mr. Ramsay. In this way the reader not only gets to see *what* the character physically sees, but *how* he or she perceives it. This continues the effect of intimacy that Woolf achieves through free indirect discourse. The narrator also describes the thought processes of the characters. For example, “Suddenly, as if the movement of his hand released it, the load of her accumulated impressions of him tilted up, and down poured in a ponderous avalanche all she felt about him” (47). Here the narrator is not telling the reader what Lily literally thinks, but is speaking in her own voice of how Lily responds to what she sees (Espinola 34-35). The reader gets the opportunity to be both within and without.

The narrator’s function may be summed up perfectly in a passage found towards the end of the novel, delivering Lily’s thoughts:

Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly’s wings; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron. It was a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses. (255)⁵

Espinola remarks, “Virginia Woolf uses her narrator to function as such a bolt of iron” (41). The narrator is needed to act as an anchor. She is the translator of thoughts and ideas that would otherwise be foreign and she helps sort out meaning for the reader of the text.

⁵ Espinola uses the same idea and quote in the concluding paragraph of her essay.

The Artistic Themes

To the Lighthouse is a rhythmic text. There are rising and falling patterns of mind, image, voice and action which makes it a book that one reads for the rhythm rather than the plot (Laurence 67). There are several different rhythms that occasionally correspond with the frequency of themes found within the text. Prose in fact has a rhythm that moves up and down. In her diary, Woolf wrote, "by way of advising other Virginias with other books that this is the way of the thing: up down, up down - & Lord knows the truth" (262). The idea of up and down gives a pulse, a heartbeat, to the work. Woolf, in creating this work of art, must have felt that type of up and down rhythm very powerfully. She tries to convey the experiences of her family, and the up and down rhythm and reoccurrences of themes reflect the inevitable ups and downs in life as well as in the novel.

The narrator conveys the up and down rhythm, whether it be found within the artistry or the lighthouse, through the consciousnesses and actions of the various characters. As Patricia Laurence observes, the reader must "note the rhythm of the movement that goes from a surface event in life, to an inner associative thought or feeling about that event" (67). Woolf wrote to Vita Sackville-West, "Style is a very simple matter; it is all rhythm" (Letters 3: 247).

There are at least three different types of art in this book: painting, knitting and housecleaning. There are three artist-characters, one associated with each type of art: Lily Briscoe, Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. McNab. First let's look at Lily and the rhythm of the painting theme. Take this example:

Suddenly, as if the movement of his hand had released it the load of her accumulated impressions of him tilted *up*, and *down* poured in a ponderous avalanche all she felt about him. That was one sensation. Then *up* rose in a fume

the essence of his being. That was another...All of this danced *up* and *down*, like a company of gnats, each separate, but all marvelously controlled in an invisible elastic net – danced *up* and *down* in Lily's mind. (47-48)⁶

This passage, taken from the beginning of the novel, describes Lily Briscoe's thoughts.

According to Laurence, Lily "captures these movements of hand, eye, and mind in rhythmic strokes of her paintbrush, which pauses and flickers, moves up and down, and 'attains a dancing rhythmical movement' (TTL 158)" (69). Laurence goes on to point out that when Lily first faces her canvas it floats "up" and places itself "white and uncompromising directly before her," a surreal landscape (69). This is an emotionally charged passage that gives the reader the keen sense of an up and down rhythm of experience. The white canvas that is before Lily as she is trying to accurately portray the scene before her is a common, familiar experience. Where does one start? That begins the up feeling, as if climbing and insurmountable mountain.

Another example of the up and down rhythm pervading Lily's artistic mind is found in the following:

Lily Briscoe went on putting away her brushes, looking *up*, looking *down*.

Looking *up*, there he was – Mr. Ramsay – advancing towards them, swinging, careless, oblivious remote. A bit of a hypocrite? Oh, no – the most sincere of men, the truest (here he was), the best; but looking *down*, she thought, he is absorbed in himself, he is tyrannical, he is unjust; and kept looking *down*, purposefully, for only so could she keep steady, staying with the Ramsays.

⁶ Patricia Laurence in the essay "Some Rope to Throw the Reader" uses this quote. The italics placed on the words are mine

Directly one looked *up* and saw them, what she called “being in love” flooded them. (72)⁷

This passage demonstrates the tumultuous feelings Lily has towards Mr. Ramsay. Notice that when she looks up, he is the sincerest of men; when she looks down, he is tyrannical and unjust. The combination of rhythm and narrative maneuvering help the reader to feel the intensity of Lily’s experiences. At the end of the novel, Lily takes *up* her paintbrush to finish the painting, and lays it *down* when she has had her vision.⁸ That laying down of the paintbrush signifies that Lily has finally achieved the creation of her representation of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. There is a sense of completeness.

The second kind of artistry that creates a rhythm in this text is knitting. Eileen Barrett calls it Woolf’s “language of fabric” (55). Barrett discusses how “no one knew better than Woolf did about the connections between writing and working with fabric” (55). Woolf, quoted in her letters by Barrett, claims that “knitting was the saving of life” (55). Mrs. Ramsay, throughout almost the entire first section, knits both literally and figuratively. She knits actual cloth just as she knits together her own marriage and the lives of the people around her. Barrett points out, “Woolf’s language of fabric invites a close reading” (55). Here is an example taken from the beginning of the text: “She returned to her knitting again. How could any Lord have made this world? she asked. With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit, she knew that. She knitted with firm composure” (98). Here Mrs. Ramsay is knitting, and interestingly enough, she contemplates how any Lord could have made this evil, base world. It seems as though the narrator is playing a game, showing how Mrs. Ramsay is knitting “with

⁷ Italics are mine. I used them to stress the frequency and the rhythm of the language.

⁸ Patricia Laurence uses this same idea from the text to illustrate a similar point. I am on the same track as she is, but I take a somewhat different view and focus more on overall impact of the rhythm.

firm composure,” something that is better than anything the Lord could create. She is portrayed as defiant of the injustices of the world. Like Lily’s unstable feelings towards Mr. Ramsay, the narrator demonstrates ambivalent feelings for Mrs. Ramsay. By portraying Mrs. Ramsay’s thoughts in such a way demonstrates Woolf’s effort to not give in to the created universe but instead make something of value within it. She could create better than the Lord himself, though Mrs. Ramsay is far from perfect.

Mrs. Ramsay’s difficulties in life are also portrayed through her knitting. In the first part of the novel she is knitting a stocking for the lighthouse keeper’s little boy. She is measuring the stocking against James, who is having a hard time standing still. She becomes impatient with James, and every time she measures the stocking, it is too short. It is apparent at the end of the section that Mrs. Ramsay is not angry with James despite her frustrations. However, the reader is never told if the stocking is finished or measured correctly. It is important for Mrs. Ramsay to get it right, yet Woolf chooses to leave it unfinished. This leaves the reader with a keen sense of “unfinished business.”

Mrs. Ramsay is depicted as fabricating figuratively as well. According to Barrett, “Mrs. Ramsay sustains her marriage by artfully lying or fabricating” (56). Barrett uses this quotation to illustrate her point:

Immediately, Mrs. Ramsay seemed to fold herself together, one petal closed in another, and the whole fabric fell in exhaustion upon itself so that she had only enough strength to move her finger, in exquisite abandonment to exhaustion, across the page of Grimm’s fairy story, while there throbbed through her, like the pulse in a spring which has expanded to its full width and now gently ceases to beat, rapture of successful creation. (96)

Barrett notes that Mrs. Ramsay “as part of the marriage, as well as its creative knitter, is the fabric folding in exhaustion, the *pulse* ceasing to beat...marriage is her art” (56).⁹ That marriage is Mrs. Ramsay’s art can be seen throughout the entire first section of the text. She embroiders it, insists that Lily marry Mr. Bankes and Paul Rayley marry Minta Doyle. It is even hinted that she takes happiness in the fact that all of her children, because of how she raises them, are bound to be married one day. Mrs. Ramsay not only fabricates material items, she fabricates lives and takes delight in doing so. Fabrication is her life-blood.

The last form of artistry is a smaller one that often goes unnoticed by critics. Mrs. McNab, the housekeeper, is a character found in the second part of the novel. Cleaning the house is her work of art. The house, as described by the narrator, is falling apart and barely resembles what it had been. Mrs. McNab needs to recreate the house, and that too, is a work of art. The following passage demonstrates the up and down rhythm in this artistry:

like the voice of witlessness, humor, persistency itself trodden *down* but springing *up* again, so that as she lurched, dusting, and wiping, she seemed to say how it was one long sorrow and trouble, how it was getting *up* and going to be again, and bringing things out and putting them away again...Bowed *down* she was with weariness. How long, she asked, creaking and groaning on her knees under the bed, dusting the boards, how long shall it endure? but hobbled to her feet again and pulled herself *up*. (196 – 197)

Mrs. McNab must clean and recreate the world that once existed in that house. The up and down rhythm appears again here, demonstrating the frustrations and effort on Mrs. McNab’s part. She is trying to piece together what once was and this task is an arduous one. This small part plays a vital role in piecing the family, and the novel, together. Virginia Woolf takes the opportunity,

⁹ Italics are mine, going back to the rhythm of the text.

through Mrs. McNab, to make housework, a humble, domestic, traditionally feminine activity into art. This small piece carries large implications for Woolf, in her own life as a female artist. Mrs. McNab puts the house in order again: this woman's artistic creation rights a world that was otherwise wrong.

The lighthouse is a recurring symbol that also adds a sense of rhythm to the text. The lighthouse pervades the entire novel. Most of the characters are drawn to the lighthouse in some way. For some it is a physical destination. It is different for Mrs. Ramsay. As Jack Stewart states, "she has no need to go to it, like others who must see it face to face, for looking along its beam, she can penetrate into self and others" (379). Just as she embroiders the lives of the people around her, she infiltrates their lives, like the light from the lighthouse. She is a companion to the light, if not one with it. The lighthouse beam is a symbol of truth and Mrs. Ramsay's relationship with the lighthouse is depicted as a sort of love affair. Mrs. Ramsay is in love with truth, introspection and all that is concerned with the betterment of the self, as the lighthouse represents in the novel. Woolf writes, "There *rose*, and she looked with her needles suspended, there curled *up* off the floor of the mind, *rose* from the lake of one's being, a mist, *a bride to meet her lover*" (98).¹⁰ The rising and falling in this passage corresponds with the up and down rhythm. Another passage illustrates the rhythm of this strangely physical, even sexual, relationship:

With some irony in her interrogation, for when one woke at all, one's relations changed, she looked at the steady light, the pitiless, the remorseless, which was so much her, yet so little her, which had her at its beck and call (she woke in the night and saw it bent across their bed, stroking the floor), but for all that she thought, watching it with fascination, hypnotized, as if it were stroking with its

¹⁰ The italics are mine in order to place emphasis on the rhythmic language.

silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and the waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough!

(100)

The rhythm is related to the motion of light as well as the motion of the waves in the sea. Mrs. Ramsay feels and responds to the beam of light physically. Mrs. Ramsay is one with the light and the lighthouse. Laura Doyle claims, "In depicting Mrs. Ramsay's response to the rhythm of the lighthouse searchlight the narrator explicitly sexualizes her relationship to the physical world" (52). However, Doyle views this relationship as one between a mother and daughter rather than as one between a woman and her lover. She says, "to some extent Woolf bears out Helene Cixous' celebrations,¹¹ but at the same time To the Lighthouse suggests that the 'milk' connecting mother and daughter is never pure, never flowing completely free of fatherly intervention" (52). Not only can the lighthouse be a metaphor for a mother-daughter relationship, it can be metaphorical for all of Mrs. Ramsay's relationships throughout the novel. Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, as noted by Stewart, claims "The real lighthouse of the novel...is the one which Mrs. Ramsay carefully sets glowing and which illuminates a space of life even after her death. This illumination becomes a triumph of the human spirit" (379). Mrs. Ramsay represents the light and has the light of human spirit that all the others are trying to obtain. She is concerned with inner light: "She praised herself in praising the light, without vanity, for she was

¹¹ Doyle uses a lot of Cixous' thinking throughout her entire essay.

stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like the light" (101). Mrs. Ramsay, like the lighthouse, is what all of the other characters are trying to achieve. As Stewart notes:

Socially Mrs. Ramsay's function is akin to that of the lighthouse beam. At her festival dinner, she undertakes "the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating," orders the candles lit – "her face was all lit up – without looking young, she looked radiant" – and observes family and guests with "eyes...so clear that they seemed to go round the table unveiling each of these people, and their thoughts and feelings, without an effort like a light stealing under water so that its ripples and the reeds in it and the minnows balancing themselves, and the sudden silent trout are all lit up, hanging, trembling." (383-384)

Mrs. Ramsay shines her guiding light on the characters, just as the lighthouse is there as the literal guiding, invasive light.

In the first section all James Ramsay wants is to go to the lighthouse. Mr. Ramsay continuously denies James the trip. Mr. Ramsay gets angry about the lighthouse and his wife cannot understand why he must deny their son the pleasure of the trip, or at least the hope of it. Mr. Ramsay feels resentment towards the connection Mrs. Ramsay has with all of her children. He lacks that connection so he feels the need to snuff it out for them when the opportunity arises. Throughout the entire first section Mrs. Ramsay is seen consoling and assuring James that perhaps they will get to the lighthouse and each time Mr. Ramsay shoots his (James's) hopes down. The opening lines of the book demonstrate this:

"Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay. "But you will have to be up with the lark," she added. To her son these words conveyed extraordinary joy...and the wonder that he had looked forward, for years and

years is seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch [...]

“But,” said his father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, “it won't be fine.” (9-10)

James has a strong desire to go to the lighthouse. It promises extraordinary joy for him and his mother wants to see him get there. Mr. Ramsay comes in with rhythmic treading of his boots and dashes the boy's hopes. Mr. Ramsay's rhythmic motion is one that controls, intimidates, and scares James into submission. Just as he shoots down James' hope of going to the lighthouse, so he makes Lily feel as though she is not a good artist. Patricia Laurence writes how Mrs. Ramsay's “movements of mind also adjust to Mr. Ramsay's walks ‘up and down, up and down the terrace’ and how his rhythmic marching both physically and mentally affects the minds and peace of the people around him” (69). If Laurence's assertion is correct, and Mr. Ramsay's rhythm is affecting people around him, then he is akin to the darkness through which the lighthouse beam (Mrs. Ramsay) must shine. In this passage from the third section, “The Lighthouse,” Lily remembers a scene she saw unfold between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay: “She would look intent. Then she would lapse again, and suddenly Mr. Ramsay stopped dead in his pacing in front of her and some curious shock passed through her and seemed to rock her in a profound agitation on its breast when stopping there he stood over her and looked down at her. Lily could see him” (295). Lily, the character filter whom the narrator uses most throughout part three, details this scene and gives the reader an acute voyeuristic experience of the impact of Mr. Ramsay's authority.

In “Time Passes” Mrs. Ramsay, who has been seen as almost one with the light from the lighthouse, dies and the beam from the lighthouse is described “with its pale footfall upon a stair and mat” (191). Stewart remarks that the lighthouse beam “becomes a ghost of departed

consciousness” (384). If the beam is the ghost of departed consciousness and Mrs. Ramsay is seen as one with the lighthouse beam, it is likely that the beam represents the departed consciousness and character of Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. McNab imagines the beam from the lighthouse as Mrs. Ramsay’s ghost, “She could see her now...(and faint and flickering, like a yellow beam or the circle at the end of a telescope, a lady in a grey cloak, stooping over her flowers, went wandering over the bedroom walls...)” (211).¹² The idea that the consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay lives on after her death demonstrates how Mrs. Ramsay is still emotionally and symbolically present for the other characters. This is a passage from “Time Passes”:

They never sent. They never wrote. There were things up there rotting in the drawers – it was a shame to leave them so, she said. The place was gone to rack and ruin. Only the Lighthouse beam entered the rooms for a moment, sent its sudden stare over the bed and wall in the darkness of winter, looked with equanimity at the thistle and the swallow, the rat and the straw. (207 – 208)

The “they” in this passage refers to the living Ramsays. During the years after Mrs. Ramsay died, the remaining family members never return to the world where she once existed. It appears as though they deliberately avoid that place. The fact that the life-like stare of the beam from the lighthouse still remains within the rooms of that house may be what keeps them away. If the beam is representative of Mrs. Ramsay it may have been too painful for the rest of the family to return to that place. The fact that the Ramsays “never wrote” or how “the place had gone to rack and ruin” demonstrates Mrs. Ramsay’s pivotal role in all of their lives. When she is gone they are absent.

In the third section “The Lighthouse” James (along with Cam and Mr. Ramsay) makes the physical journey to the lighthouse that he has been longing to do since the start of the novel.

¹² Stewart used the same quote and developed this idea on pages 385-386.

Lily makes a mental journey to the lighthouse, and both James and Lily are lead to an understanding of the spirit of Mrs. Ramsay. As Stewart notes, “in ‘The Window’ and ‘Time Passes’ the lighthouse is a source of light; in ‘The Lighthouse’ it becomes a goal” (387). The characters seek the type of illumination Mrs. Ramsay already had in making the journey to the lighthouse. There is a sense of completion and satisfaction for the characters and the readers in finally getting to the lighthouse.

Lily stays on land and tries once again to paint a portrait of Mrs. Ramsay. This time, however, she must do it from memory. Stewart remarks that “as Lily becomes absorbed in the act of painting, she begins to exchange ‘the fret, the hurry, the stir’ of a driven ego for a deeper source of energy” (387). The rhythm of her painting changes and is noted in this passage, as also cited by Stewart:

Her brush was heavier now and went slower, as if it had fallen in with some rhythm which was dedicated to her...by what she saw, so that while her hand quivered with life, this rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with it on its current...And as she lost consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance...her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, names, and sayings, and memories, and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modeled it with greens and blues. (246-247)

Lily is able to overcome the glaringly white canvas that she could never otherwise fill up. She seems to be in a trance-like state, which is conveyed through the rhythm of the passage. Like the Ramsay children, Lily is making a journey -- only hers is not a physical journey. She is taking and transposing all of her experiences into art and creating a work with great personal depth and

meaning. As Stewart notes, “the rhythm of her (Lily) painting begins to resemble the ‘long steady stroke’ of the Lighthouse beam, with which Mrs. Ramsay identified her Being” (387). Lily, the narrator tells us, becomes one with her memories and experiences of Mrs. Ramsay. Stewart later goes on to say, “Lily, like Virginia Woolf, is remodeling the Lighthouse in the colors of imaginative reality” (387). Lily uses her art to tell her story.

James, Cam and Mr. Ramsay make the physical journey to the lighthouse. Their journey can also be seen as a metaphor. James is the focus of the analysis here, as he is Woolf’s focus in this section of the text. During the trip across the water, he remembers the way he used to view the lighthouse, longing to go to it. He thinks about the way he sees the lighthouse now, ten years later, when he is finally making the journey:

The lighthouse was then a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye, that opened suddenly, and softly in the evening. Now – James looked at the Lighthouse. He could see the white-washed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white; he could see the windows in it; he could even see washing spread on the rocks to dry. So that was the Lighthouse, was it? No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing.

The other Lighthouse was true too. (276 -277)

James discovers that his experience of the lighthouse when he was a child is just as real, just as valid, as his experience of the lighthouse now. His perspective changes because of time passing and in that time he matures and experiences death and loss. All of the experiences that he has are real. Just as Lily waits for time to pass after Mrs. Ramsay’s death, James too needs time to pass in order to finally get to the lighthouse. For Lily it takes some growing to understand that she can choose amongst her experiences of Mrs. Ramsay; she is in control of creating the portrayal of her

subject. As Stewart says in his conclusion, “The voyage to the Lighthouse is any activity of consciousness that reaches out toward the Light, follows a direction, seeks integration. If the reader never quite arrives at the Lighthouse, he sees it from many angles and from many points of view, and in it he seeks his own illumination” (388). In the novel, James, Cam and Mr. Ramsay never technically reach the lighthouse. It is reported that they land on the shore and their journey has come to an end. At the same time that the reader understands that those three have come to the end of their journey, Lily is reported as saying aloud, “He must have reached it” (308), and she experiences relief:

Her journey has come to an end at the same time. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (310)

Lily, like James, reaches a moment of illumination. The narrator uses Lily in this section to convey a sense of satisfaction - satisfaction for both the character and the reader. The job is done. And just as quickly as the vision is there, it is gone. Lily has the consolation of knowing that such an experience does exist. It is like going into a pitch-black room and lighting a match. For a moment everything can be seen. When the match goes out, everything is dark once again. There is a sense of satisfaction at the end of the book. The journey that began is now complete. James gets to the lighthouse, Lily finishes her painting, and Woolf completes her story.

At the end of To the Lighthouse, the reader is left with the sense that something is resolved, yet is not privileged enough to know exactly what that something is. Woolf put her pen

down, just as Lily put down her brush, because they each had their visions. She created her work of art and so the novel has come to an end.

Chapter 2

Dividing the Self into Identifiable Pieces: The Fragmented Human in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway

"Every man is born as many men and dies as a single one"

~Martin Heidegger

Virginia Woolf, in her novel Mrs. Dalloway, presents many different perspectives on life, and disperses different familiar human qualities and experiences into the many characters that appear throughout the novel. Mrs. Dalloway is a novel without a conventional plot; it represents characters during a single day and their individual experiences. In crafting her novel this way, Woolf is able to explore feelings and emotions through each character on his or her own, testing relationships through the characters varied experiences. Woolf knows that each one of these characters and their experiences, by itself, does not convey a complete picture of life, so she presents them all, connecting them narratively and thematically. Woolf weaves these individual stories together in order to unify not only her characters but her novel as well. Readers identify with one or many of her characters because each represents facets of all human beings - the struggles, concerns and fixations that may be felt at various points in life. These characters are lesser without the others, able to stand on their own, but without great depth. When the characters from Mrs. Dalloway are linked together, there emerges a story of greater depth. Readers come to an understanding of human nature and relationships. In this essentially plot-less novel, Woolf's narrative techniques blend the internal and the external views; this creates understandings unavailable through any one view on its own.

Mrs. Dalloway has three main characters, Clarissa Dalloway, Peter Walsh and Septimus Smith. As Woolf develops these characters, their interrelationships give them depth and complexity. Each is shown on his/her own, with exaggerated experiences and emotions that people can relate to at one point or another in life. Woolf weaves them together in the novel and shows that as a unit they create a complete human experience – and all the pieces are necessary to have the complete picture/novel.

Free Indirect Discourse

In Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf breaks the conventions of Victorian writing. She crafts a novel that lacks the narrator readers think they need in order to know the difference between “fact” and “fiction.” The narrator, who serves as the guide, appears to be markedly absent from this novel. Instead readers are allowed to move freely through characters minds, hearing their thoughts, getting their opinions, without the mediating force of the narrator. This can be a disorienting experience for a reader, but it is also very freeing, allowing the reader to experience events and feelings with the characters, rather than through a second hand telling of what is happening through the narrator. Readers, thanks to Woolf, no longer have to trust that the narrator is constructing an accurate portrait of the events at hand; instead the reader get to experience the events as they happen and decide for him or herself. The narrator merely identifies the path the reader should follow.

As established in chapter one of this thesis, free indirect discourse is a type of third person narration which makes the thoughts of the characters indistinguishable from the thoughts of the narrator. According to Yael Sharvit, “Free indirect discourse is a special technique, or style, used by narrators to convey what a character thinks or says” (353). Sharvit goes on to give

style, used by narrators to convey what a character thinks or says" (353). Sharvit goes on to give the following examples of direct discourse, standard indirect discourse and free indirect discourse for further clarification:

As he looked at my picture, John thought: "Yes, I want to marry her today. (Direct discourse)

As he looked at my picture, John thought that he wanted to marry me that day. (Standard Indirect Discourse)

John looked at my picture. Yes he wanted to marry me today. (Free indirect discourse). (Sharvit 354)

Sharvit shows that free indirect discourse resembles direct discourse in the use of "yes" and "today" but that it also resembles standard indirect discourse in the use of the 3rd person pronoun to refer to the subject and the first person pronoun is used to refer to the speaker (354). The commonalities that free indirect discourse share with direct discourse in one instance and standard indirect discourse in the other (noting that direct discourse and standard indirect discourse do not share similarities) makes free indirect discourse what Sharvit refers to as a "beast" that is very difficult to understand completely (355). Similarly, Stefan Oltean notes, "Free indirect discourse displays an atypical structure: while preserving the original syntax of direct discourse (direct discourse) (it is 'free,' showing signs of syntactic autonomy), it is also constrained by tense and person agreement like indirect discourse (indirect discourse)" (692). Woolf employs free indirect discourse for any number of reasons; but the fact that she does is so crucial to this entire text. Through this writing style the reader now feels closer than ever to the characters, and therefore winds up with a much more powerful experience. Woolf could have laid out the path, very neatly through the standard overt narrator, but rather than tell the reader

what to think, Woolf allows direct access to the minds of the characters through the occasional use of free indirect discourse. According to Gloria Jones, “one of the major abiding concerns of Virginia Woolf’s work as a critic during the years before the publication of Mrs. Dalloway is the importance of conveying internal, subjective reality” (69).

Woolf uses free indirect discourse, coupled with direct discourse and standard indirect discourse to seamlessly move the reader through all of the characters’ minds and link them to one another. The characters are connected through the narrative techniques, even though some of them never actually meet in the novel. Clarissa Dalloway is the centerpiece of this novel. All events that take place trace back to her. Her thoughts and feelings throughout are reflected in the other characters. She has direct interaction with Peter Walsh and they share a history. She does not have any direct connection with Septimus Smith at all, yet Clarissa and Septimus are, according to Woolf herself, “doubles” (550). Woolf weaves all three characters’ storylines together narratively and thematically.

Clarissa Dalloway: the Life Source

Clarissa Dalloway’s primary concern in life, as evidenced through free indirect discourse and narrative techniques, is her interpersonal relationships. She is giving a party, but it is the guest list, people from her past and present, that consumes her. Clarissa Dalloway is a character who, as the novel opens, appears to have superficial concerns:

Looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the roots 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 he 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 cabbage. (1-2)

In this passage, the guiding hand of the third person omniscient narrator has led us to Clarissa's mind, but once we are within, the narrator seemingly disappears and leaves us to experience the thoughts with Clarissa as she feels them. Notice that some of the instances of free indirect discourse are bolded. Clarissa is thinking about Peter Walsh, a former suitor and friend, and remembering a conversation between the two of them. The narrator takes the reader to the memory with Clarissa, and then drops out with the “ – was that it? -” The first time it happens, the reader is left to question, who is saying this? When it happens a second time it is more obvious to us that Clarissa is asking the question directly and the narrator has slipped away. The narrator, in the very first pages of the novel, is setting the tone for what occurs throughout; we can expect to not only benefit from the point of view of the narrator, but the reader is going to experience the events with the characters as well.

The passage also makes clear that Clarissa spends a great deal of time thinking about past relationships. She is trying to remember Peter's sayings, and the free indirect discourse allows us to witness, in a more direct manner, her stumbling to remember the exact phrasing. This is a common and comforting experience because it is an action that all people experience on a day-to-day basis. Allowing us to go through that memory lapse with Clarissa creates a sense of comfort through its realism. The free indirect discourse places us in a comfortable position, but the rest of the novel is daunting.

In addition to comfort, this passage exemplifies and what Clarissa Dalloway is all about: she is consumed with relationships. She spends her day getting ready for a party she will host that evening, and the reader experiences her past and present through access to her thoughts about her various relationships. Peter Walsh, the old friend about whom Clarissa is reminiscing, is quickly connected to the relationship created for the readers: “and who should be coming along with his back against the Government buildings, most appropriately, carrying a despatch box stamped with the Royal Arms, who but Hugh Whitbread; her old friend Hugh – **the admirable Hugh!**” (5). Here, Clarissa sees an old acquaintance, and it is evident through the narrator and the sparse usage of free indirect discourse that we are not going to go as deeply into Clarissa’s thoughts of Hugh Whitbread as we with Peter Walsh. The very thought “the admirable Hugh” is one that is laughable, as everyone knows the feeling of running into a person who is admirable, a friend, but not the first choice as far as whom one would prefer to see. And yet we will not get to know anything further about Clarissa’s feelings for Hugh because the narrator has interceded. This is further evidenced later by the narrator, “she always felt a little skimpy beside Hugh; schoolgirlish; but attached to him, partly from having known him always, but she did think him a good sort in his own way” (6). Hugh does not command Clarissa’s thoughts in the way that Peter does, and although Clarissa judges Peter more critically, it is clear that she is closer to him and that his relationship bears more weight. When Clarissa thinks of Peter, free indirect discourse is used more frequently, allowing us to feel the same way. We experience a closeness to Peter – through Clarissa’s thoughts – that is not experienced when she thinks of the other characters.

Another person whom Clarissa spends a great deal of time thinking about is Sally Seton. Sally, unlike Peter, exemplifies love and what it means to be happy for Clarissa: “But this

question of love (she thought, putting her coat away), this falling in love with women. Take Sally Seton; her relation in the old days with Sally Seton. **Had not that, after all, been love?"** (32). For the first time in the novel we get a privileged look into Clarissa Dalloway's true heart. She thinks about her past relationship with Sally, and it is here that she contemplates real love. It is true that she has thought about both Richard and Peter, but it is in her memories of Sally that Clarissa thinks of love. Whether it is romantic love or love between friends is unclear and the free indirect discourse allows us to see that this is the same thing Clarissa herself is asking about as well. Her feelings for Sally are complex:

The strange thing, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity, of her feelings for Sally. It was not like one's feelings for a man. It was completely disinterested, and besides, it had a quality which could only exist between women, between women just grown up. It was protective, on her side; sprang from a sense of being in a league together, a presentiment of something that was bound to part them (they spoke of marriage always as a catastrophe) which led to chivalry, this protective feeling which was much more on her side than Sally's. For in those days she was completely reckless; did the most idiotic things out of bravado; bicycled around the parapet on the terrace; smoked cigars. Absurd, she was – **very absurd.** (33)

Here the narrator gives the reader a glimpse into how Clarissa feels about Sally and their past; Clarissa seems much more invested in Sally than in the men she has loved. The free indirect discourse allows the narrator to share directly with us although her past may have shown her to be enamored with Sally Seton, the modern Clarissa Dalloway deems her younger self as absurd.

We can sense the confusion and hurt in the slip from narrator to free indirect discourse – it is unmistakable and poignant.

Clarissa's memories and feeling for Sally also involve Peter Walsh. He seems to intrude on not only her thoughts, but directly on her happy memories:

The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it – a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and down, up and down), she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling! – when old Joseph and Peter faced them:

“Star-gazing?” said Peter.

It was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness! **It was shocking; it was horrible!** (35)

Here, Clarissa is having what is described as a religious experience with Sally. This description is a combination of the narrator's delivery and Clarissa's characterization of the experience. Peter Walsh's words and very presence interrupts the moment and, therefore, interrupts Clarissa's happiness. The reader gets to feel the shock and the horror as the narrative slips to free indirect discourse at the very end of the passage. The reader too, feels the interruption of such a memory of perfect happiness and bliss.

During the time Clarissa meditates upon relationships past and present, she also manages to keep her focus on the party that she is throwing that night and she keeps the reader with her – as when she contemplates the dress she will wear: “She would wear it to-night. She would take her silks, her scissors, her – **what was it?** – her thimble, of course down into the drawing-room, for she must also write, and see that things generally were more or less in order” (37). She may

have gotten lost in the chaos of memories of past relationships that she can no longer control, but she is quick to snap back to the issue, the party, at hand.

Peter Walsh: the Romantic

Peter Walsh is a hopeless romantic fixated on his relationship with Clarissa Dalloway. Just as we feel Clarissa's frustration and love for Peter, especially emphasized through the narrator and free indirect discourse, Peter's feelings toward Clarissa are evident: "But it was delicious to hear her say that – **my dear Peter! Indeed it was all so delicious** – the silver, the chairs; all so delicious!" (40). Peter's feelings for Clarissa are still very strong. He tries to maintain that he has moved on, and yet the free indirect discourse allows us to feel his elation as he experiences it – he loves to hear her reference him; in fact, he loves anything that is hers. The word delicious gives the sensory experience just as Peter feels it.

Peter's feelings for Clarissa are tumultuous and as much as he tries to fight them, they overpower him. He feels a push and pull between love for the old Clarissa, the girl he knew, and a sort of animosity toward this new Clarissa and her lifestyle now:

I know all that, Peter thought; I know what I'm up against, he thought, running his finger along the blade of his knife, Clarissa and Dalloway and all the rest of them; **but I'll show Clarissa** – and then to his utter surprise, suddenly thrown by those uncontrollable forces thrown through the air, he burst into tears; wept without the least shame, sitting on the sofa, the tears running down his cheeks (Woolf 45).

Peter wants to prove something to Clarissa now, and it is for the benefit of the Clarissa and Peter of the past. He struggles with the fact that Clarissa rejected him in the past, and now he feels that the Clarissa of the present will reject him as well. We can feel that fear through free indirect discourse and direct narratorial description. The intensity that Peter feels in the situation is felt by

us due to these techniques and it makes Peter's situation that much more powerful and relevant. Peter wants to "show" these people, and at the same time we are given a chance to step outside of Peter's intense emotions and watch him as he runs his finger down the blade (both literally and metaphorically) and watch as he collapses into tears. The reader gets to experience Peter on both levels, and that creates very moving and intense reading.

When Peter is able to step away from Clarissa's literal presence, she stays with him, though he is able to keep his composure about her, particularly as he moves further from her:

He had escaped! was utterly free – as happens in the downfall of habit when in the mind, like and unguarded flame, bows and bends and seems about to blow from its holding. I haven't felt so young for years! thought Peter, escaping (only of course for an hour or so) from being precisely what he was, and feeling like a child who runs out of doors, and sees, as he runs, his old nurse waving at the wrong window. But she's extraordinarily attractive, he thought. (51)

As he moves farther from Clarissa, he feels better about the situation. It is as though he has in fact escaped. Free indirect discourse is minimal in this passage, leaving us with the impression that the narrator is intervening on behalf of Peter, helping Peter to save face and make it appear as though Clarissa is someone from whom one needs to escape. The reader knows that his escape, even if the narrator presents it as an escape from Clarissa, is really Peter's escape from himself and his overwhelming feelings toward her. And at the end when he thinks of Clarissa as attractive, it minimizes his feelings for her to merely physical ones.

Peter Walsh needs to escape from Clarissa and his feelings for her and he does so by following a young girl around the streets to invent in his mind another story on which he can focus. He realizes, however, that this is in vain: "Well, I've had my fun; I've had it, he thought

looking up at the swinging baskets of pale geraniums. And it was smashed to atoms – his fun, for it was half made up, as he knew very well” (53). There is a sadness that the reader can feel in this passage; Peter Walsh knows full well that he lives in his head with his memories and feelings for Clarissa, and he knows that he needs to do so now in order to escape. And when he realizes that he lives in a “half made up” world, through the eyes of the narrator, the reader can’t help but feel pity for this man:

And yet in a moment Peter is back to conflict and denial, As a child he had walked in Regent’s Park. **Yes, As a child he had walked in Regent’s Park** – odd, he thought, how the thought of childhood keeps coming back to me – **the result of seeing Clarissa, perhaps**; for women live much more in the past than we do, he thought. They attach themselves to places; and their fathers – a woman’s always proud of her father. (54)

The irony and conflict in Peter Walsh continues in this passage where he suddenly finds it odd that he should think of his past, and attributes that quality to women who are attached to him, as obviously they should be. Peter has spent this entire time in the past, and yet suddenly finds it odd that he should do so, and winds up blaming it on Clarissa; clearly she cause him to do this, to act like a woman. He is as attached to the past and to Clarissa as he observes women are to men, particularly their fathers. This sets up a strange dynamic for furthering the confusion in the way that he feels towards Clarissa Dalloway. Oddly enough, this makes Peter Walsh more human and tangible.

It is at this point in his wanderings around London that Peter Walsh falls asleep and the reader is allowed access to Peter’s dream, and further intimate access to his thoughts which draw even stronger connections with this “solitary traveller,”

By conviction an atheist perhaps, he is taken by surprise with moments of extraordinary exultation. Nothing exists outside us except a state of mind, he thinks; a desire for solace, a relief for something outside these miserable pigmies, these feeble, these ugly, these craven men and women... So, as the solitary traveler advances down the village street where the women stand knitting and the men dig in the garden, the evening seems ominous; the figures still; as if some august fate, known to them, awaited without fear, were about to sweep them into complete annihilation... 'There is nothing more tonight, sir?' But to whom does the solitary traveler make reply? (55-57)

The reader is left to question whether Peter Walsh is this solitary traveller, or if this is the narrator seguing into Septimus Smith – as Peter Walsh serves as the link between Clarissa Dalloway and her “double” Septimus Smith. Peter Walsh, although literally alone at this point in the novel, is not a character who is “alone” in the world – his relationships and memories allow the reader to see that. Septimus Smith, on the other hand, although never alone for his wife Rezia, is very much alone in his thoughts and experiences. This dream, this discussion on the solitary traveller, leaves the reader to question, just as Peter Walsh does in his musings around London, where is this headed next? The solitary traveller could be Walsh, it could be Septimus, or it could be the narrator. It could even be the reader.

The reverie of the solitary traveller has a powerful impact on Peter Walsh. The narrator describes him waking from the dream: “He woke with extreme suddenness, saying to himself, ‘The death of the soul’... ‘The death of the soul.’ He had said that instinctively, ticketing the moment as he used to do – **the death of her soul**” (57-58). The narrator relates what Walsh says and feels after this dream: it is a powerful statement to say the death of the soul. And as he slips

to thoughts of Clarissa Dalloway the free indirect discourse allows us to hear directly from Peter that he believes that Clarissa's past relationship with Sally Seton and current marriage with Richard Dalloway directly impedes any relationship that he may have with her, and is the death of her soul. The reader can feel the power of Peter's feelings toward Clarissa and his absolute feelings of rejection by her, both in the past and now in the present.

Septimus Smith: the Lost

When the novel transitions to Septimus Smith, the reader is allowed three distinct impressions in order to experience Septimus and his journey, and the issues focused on in the text take on much more weight. The narrator, Rezia and Septimus are all involved in telling his tale. Septimus is resuming life after the war, so his experiences and the way in which he views the world are much bigger and far less shallow than Clarissa Dalloway and Peter Walsh's concerns.

Septimus, who has no physical connection with either Clarissa or Peter, enters into the novel through the thoughts of his wife. Rezia is lamenting what has become of their relationship:

But Lucrezia Warren Smith was saying to herself, It's wicked; why should I suffer? she was asking, as she walked down the broad path. No; I can't stand it any longer, she was saying, having left Septimus, who wasn't Septimus any longer, to say hard, cruel, wicked things, to talk to himself...But for herself she had done nothing wrong; she had loved Septimus; she had been happy; she had had a beautiful home, and there her sisters lived still, making hats. Why should *she* suffer? (63-64)

Septimus is clearly having an impact on his wife's well-being and that is evident through the thoughts related by the narrator. This relationship can be seen as a foil to the relationship of Clarissa and Peter – Clarissa and Peter's issues and worries become small and superficial when seen in comparison to the magnitude and depth of the struggles between Rezia and Septimus. Rezia is a working-class woman, not only concerned with making money for her family, but also consumed with making sure her husband does not fall apart. Rezia's love and dedication for Septimus are a matter of life or death. She is struggling because Septimus is struggling. She is suffering because Septimus is suffering, and yet she knows that she has done, and continues to do all that she can to help him. In her eyes, he is ungrateful and unwilling to recover and move on with her.

Rezia's frustrations and struggles with Septimus are amplified through her explanation that perhaps Septimus is just unwilling:

Yet he could be happy when he chose. They went to Hampton Court on top of a bus, and they were perfectly happy. All the little red and yellow flowers were out on the grass, like floating lamps he said, and talked and chattered and laughed, making up stories. Suddenly he said, "Now we will kill ourselves." (65)

Rezia and Septimus are capable of happiness, and still experience happiness together in brief, fleeting moments. We can see and feel that happiness in reading the description of their time at Hampton Court laughing and making up stories. But then the dark line of "Now we will kill ourselves" creates confusion, frustration and fear for us: the same emotions Rezia experiences. What is wrong with Septimus that he cannot maintain a happy disposition from one moment to the next? As the narrator points out, the change happens suddenly, so the reader feels acutely not

only for Rezia, but for Septimus as well. What is happening to this man? The reader is as lost and frustrated as Septimus's wife.

Just as the reader is accepting Rezia's point of view, and developing feelings that coincide with hers, the narrative switches to Septimus's point of view:

Was it that she had taken off her wedding ring? "My hand has grown so thin," she said. "I have put it in my purse," she told him. He dropped her hand. Their marriage was over, he thought, with agony, with relief. The rope was cut; he mounted; he was free, as it was decreed that he, Septimus, the lord of men, should be free; alone (since his wife had thrown away her wedding ring; since she had left him), he, Septimus, was alone, called forth in advance of the mass of men to hear the truth. (66)

Septimus experiences a barrage of emotions, and suddenly we can see that there is more to this story than is given through Rezia's perspective. The struggles this man is experiencing compounded with the fact that his wife has taken off the symbol of their union, has left him alone, a solitary traveler. The impact of that realization for him seems not only to make him sad, but also to relieve him – he no longer has to be concerned for his wife's welfare because they are no longer joined. He is free to do as he pleases, which in Septimus's case seems to be suicide. There is nothing, and no one, holding him back any longer.

Further glimpses into Septimus's war-torn memories and struggles are made clear when we learn about Evans, a soldier with whom Septimus was very close: their relationship that could be likened in intensity to Clarissa Dalloway's relationship with Sally Seton. Both relationships have homosexual undertones, making them taboo. It could be these strong feelings towards Evans, and the great impact of the war that causes the demise of the relationship between

Septimus and Rezia. When he thinks about Evans, there is obvious elation, and this elation is related through free indirect discourse (in bold), “But the branches parted. A man in grey was actually walking towards them. **It was Evans!** But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed. I must tell the whole world, Septimus cried” (68). This vision of Evans alive again, albeit a hallucination, thrills Septimus and thrill is contagious. We feel with Septimus this momentary elation, which is all too soon swept away by the reality of his world, a world in which he no longer wants to live.

The relationship between Septimus and Evans is shown later, and the power of it is made very clear:

There in the trenches...he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name. It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug...They had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, ...when Evans was killed...Septimus...congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him...he became engaged one evening (to Lucrezia) when the panic was on him – that he could not feel. (84-85)

The narrator’s account of the history Septimus’s relationship with Evans gives the reader an outside perspective that helps to see that theirs was more than an ordinary friendship. The decision to provide this information only after describing the elation that Septimus feels imagining Evans is alive only amplifies the reader’s appreciation of the intensity of the homosocial bond. At the end of the passage, the narrator describes how Septimus came to be engaged to Rezia during the panic of the war, right after Evans died. The narrator suggests that Septimus needed a blind, and he found one too quickly to realize the damage he was inadvertently doing to his future well-being and happiness.

Throughout the focus on Septimus, his experience as a solitary traveler and his contemplation of literary and intellectual giants such as Keats, Shakespeare, Darwin and Bernard Shaw shows the magnitude and intensity of Septimus's journey:

As for the experiences, the solitary ones, which people go through alone, in their bedrooms, in their offices, walking the fields and streets of London, he had them...had gone to London leaving an absurd note behind him, such as great men have written, and the world has read later when the story of their struggles has become famous. (82)

At this point the narrator ironically connects Septimus to Clarissa and Peter through the fact that he, the solitary traveler, the man standing alone with the weight of the world on his shoulders, has done the same things that Clarissa and Peter have done on that same day; he has wandered around London and he has written notes to be left behind him. Septimus's issues are weighty but all of these characters are living, literally and metaphorically in the same world; where Clarissa and Peter feel part of the world in the larger context, Septimus sees his actions as solitary ones. He feels alone, while they feel a part of something bigger, which is perhaps why Septimus comes to the end that he does.

Septimus and Rezia do not have what is expected in a "normal" heterosexual marriage: children. Septimus cannot, nor does he seem to want to give Rezia what she needs in their marriage. He cannot do so because, perhaps, he is living a lie. The thoughts marked in bold are delivered through free indirect discourse, which allows again for the feeling of sympathy with Septimus. He thinks:

Love between a man and woman was repulsive to Shakespeare. The business of copulation was filth to him before the end. But, Rezia said, she must have

children...One cannot bring children into a world like this. **One cannot perpetuate suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way, now that.** (87)

Here, Shakespeare helps to inform Septimus's ideas on heterosexual intimacy, but it goes further than that. He mistakenly imagines these to be Shakespeare's ideas and he finds the idea of bringing children into this world a horrific one. Septimus, who cannot live his life to the fullest the way in which he wants, and who has suffered tremendous loss, does not feel right bringing a child into the world, a child who runs the risk of suffering the same way Septimus does. Septimus is looking to leave this world: why would he want to force anyone to enter it?

The Connection: Where the Three Intersect

To this point in the novel each character and his or her thoughts have been delivered separately from one another, allowing the reader to get to know and identify with each alone. It is during the second part of the novel, and the later part of the day depicted in the novel, that the three characters and their stories are woven together in a more distinct manner. Woolf has given the reader time to get to know and understand Clarissa Dalloway, Peter Walsh and Septimus Smith and now she takes the opportunity to bring the three together and show how they essentially need each other in order to be whole, and in turn make the story more complete.

At the insistence of Rezia, Septimus is taken to speak with the doctor about his "condition." Coincidentally, Sir William Bradshaw, the doctor, is to be a guest at Clarissa Dalloway's party this evening. This is the connection of Septimus to Clarissa. Septimus's experience of Bradshaw is singularly unpleasant: "He swooped; he devoured. He shut people up. It was this combination of decision and humanity that endeared Sir William so greatly to the

relations of his victims” (99-100). Septimus, struggling to find a reason to remain in this world, sees Bradshaw as a sort of demon, swooping in and devouring him, taking victims. This is a powerful description that leaves the reader with a very foreboding feeling when it comes to Bradshaw. It is easy to despise him at Septimus’s suggestion.

And yet, Bradshaw is to be counted among the many honored guests at Clarissa Dalloway’s party that night. This calls into question her choices and leaves the reader wondering what Clarissa Dalloway is really up to – spending time, seeking time with people who so clearly are disdainful of others, including her. Perhaps she is just nodding to social customs: this is a big party and all must be included. But we still may wonder at the company she keeps. Just as Septimus contemplates his life, Clarissa contemplates her guest list: “But what should she invite all the dull women in London to her parties?” (115). These are the concerns Clarissa Dalloway has, at the exact same moment of Septimus’s suffering. This parallel connects the two in a very real and very poignant way; it shows how the lives of two very different characters, with very different concerns, can intersect. It makes the reader feel the power and the triviality of the whole day in an instant.

And in the next instance the reader is forced to see Clarissa as the yin to Septimus’s yang. She admits, through the narrator, that she knows that people see her as shallow:

Now that she knew what it was, she felt perfectly happy. They thought, or Peter at any rate thought, that she enjoyed imposing herself; liked to have famous people about her; great names; was simply a snob in short. Well, Peter might think so. Richard merely thought it was foolish of her to like excitement when she knew it was bad for her heart...And both were quite wrong. What she liked was simply life. (118)

Clarissa is filled with the very thing that Septimus is not, a desire for life. Clarissa wants a life full of people and experiences. Even though she may have abandoned her feelings for Sally Seton and Peter Walsh to marry Richard Dalloway, she has accepted that and her new role in life, one as Richard's wife, Elizabeth's mother and London socialite. This passage shows her feelings further reflected upon:

All the same, that one day should follow another; Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday; that one should wake up in the morning; see the sky; walk in the park; meet Hugh Whitbread; then suddenly in came Peter, then these roses; it was enough. After that, how unbelievable death was! – that it must end; and no one in the whole world would know how she had loved it all; how, every instant. (119)

Just as Septimus is feeling that life needs to be escaped, Clarissa soaks up every minute. These two are connected through their overwhelmingly strong feelings about life. One needs it to end and the other cannot imagine there ever being an ending. Clarissa embraces what Septimus cannot and Septimus embraces what Clarissa cannot imagine. This binds them to each other. The perfect balance of these two characters creates a more complete experience for the reader, for no one is always at the point at which Septimus is, and yet no one feels constantly the way Clarissa does. Readers find themselves at varying points on the Septimus-Clarissa spectrum, and it is a comforting experience to read and feel with both of them.

Peter Walsh occupies a middle ground between Septimus and Clarissa. Peter Walsh re-enters the text through Clarissa's thoughts:

Love destroyed too. Everything was fine, everything that was true went. Take Peter Walsh now. There was a man, charming, clever, with ideas about everything. If you wanted to know about Pope, say, or Addison, or just to talk

nonsense, what people were like, what things meant, Peter knew better than anyone. It was Peter who had helped her; Peter who had lent her books. (124)

Peter is the knowledgeable romantic, who maintains a balance for the reader between the two extremes of Septimus and Clarissa. Clarissa views Peter as an extremist who lets love get the better of him. Clarissa, who let her passion go, let go of what she really desires, sees love as a destroyer. Love, in her view, means taking an otherwise intelligent, charming man, and ruining him. It is true that Peter has loved and lost; and he experiences life and spends a great deal of time examining past events. Peter is the sort of character that represents where most people spend a great deal of their lives; he lives, loves and contemplates. Peter Walsh's story is not compelling enough to stand alone: Peter Walsh's story must be juxtaposed against the other, more extreme stories in order to have an impact. He is stability, despite his life changes.

And once again, the reader is with Septimus Smith, facing his tumultuous thoughts on Evans, his life with Rezia and what is to be done now. For Septimus the only escape is suicide:

But he would wait till the very last moment. He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun was hot. Only human beings – what did *they* want? Coming down the staircase opposite an old man stopped and stared at him. Holmes was at the door. "I'll give it to you!" he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer's area railings. (146)

Septimus, sitting on the ledge of the window, ready to jump, feels for a moment that life is good – and the comment about the sun being hot demonstrates that Septimus feels that all in life that is good is natural, echoing the Shakespearean quote Clarissa repeats to herself throughout the novel, "Fear no more the heat of the sun." It is people, with unnatural wants and expectations that make life unlivable. Septimus does not want to die, if he could only live his life according to his

nature. But people like Sir William Bradshaw, and even Rezia, with their unnatural expectations, propel him from the ledge.

With the death of Septimus, we are sent back to the ruminations of Peter Walsh. Peter is the balance between Septimus and Clarissa:

He never knew what people thought. It became more and more difficult for him to concentrate. He became absorbed; he became busied with his own concerns; now surly, now gay; dependent on women, absent-minded, moody... And then he could just – just do what? just haunt and hover, swoop and taste, be alone, in short, sufficient to himself; and yet nobody of course was more dependent upon others; it had been his undoing. (154-155)

Peter Walsh takes the reader from the extreme feelings and eventual suicide of Septimus Smith to a place where one can feel a balance: a balance in Peter's struggles in life. Peter Walsh wants life, lives life, but struggles with life. This is a comfortable place for the reader between Septimus and Clarissa. Peter Walsh is the link that connects Clarissa and Septimus to each other. More importantly he helps to maintain their relationships and relevance to the reader.

The next, obvious character is Clarissa Dalloway, and she is in the throes of her party. This is the very pinnacle of her day; all of her stress and her delight have led to this very event. It seems to be very successful. And then Bradshaws enter with the news of Septimus Smith's death:

What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself. And they talked of it at her party – the Bradshaws, talked of death. He had killed himself – but how? Always her body went through it first, when she was told of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown

himself from a window... There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it. But why had he done it? And the Bradshaws talked of it at her party! (179)

Clarissa, who cannot handle the idea of death and things coming to a close, is horrified and fascinated about what could have possibly driven him to do such a thing. She feels this news throughout her whole body and cannot conceive of the reason why he would kill himself, and yet she can imagine the scene. Finally she is horrified that the Bradshaws would bring it up at her party. Clarissa's reaction resonates with the reader – the experience of Septimus's suicide, and any suicide for that matter, is one that evokes horror, shock and questioning. And just as Clarissa, however shallow it is, feels horror at the Bradshaws mentioning this at her party, this horror can be likened to the horror the reader feels at how freely and comfortable the Bradshaws talk about something horrible that occurred. They reduce Septimus's life to this anecdote, and it is horrific. This event binds Clarissa and the reader more closely to Septimus and his experience. It is one of the most intense examples in the novel where the experience can actually be felt with the character as she goes through it.

The power of Septimus's death weighs on Clarissa and it is the last thing that the reader experiences with her, as she thinks about and applies it to her own life,

Somehow it was her disaster – her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress. She had schemed; she had pilfered. She was never wholly admirable...It was due to Richard; she had never been so happy. **Nothing could be slow enough; nothing last too long...**The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him, with all this going on...and the words

came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away...He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. (181-182)

Septimus's death has made Clarissa feel and appreciate the power and beauty of life. We see her transition, at the end of the novel, from a character with a somewhat shallow perspective on life to one who has a deep and intense appreciation for it. She comes to the understanding that Septimus did what he had to, and she chooses another path. The reader feels this intensity in her emotions, and it provides a moment of emotional relief in an otherwise very intense ending.

The novel ends with Peter Walsh, as it necessarily should, to bring the reader back to a balance, away from the extreme emotions just felt with Clarissa: "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" (190). Peter's questions here mirror the experience of the reader; all of the emotions, including both terror and ecstasy, are summed up for him in Clarissa Dalloway. For Peter Walsh, and for the reader, Clarissa in her clarity and peacefulness at the end of the novel, means the journey and the searching are complete. These characters give the reader a clear picture of human relationships and how they operate: the good, the bad and the ugly. Each character examined is a vital piece to human experience as whole. With a representative from the stable, the romantic, and the lost, there is a complete tale of human experience.

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