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VANDERWERFF, WHITNEY GROVE
VIRGINIA WOOLF AS EQUILIBRIST: THE MOMENT OF
VISION AND THE ANDROGYNOUS MIND.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT
GREENSBORO, PH.D., 1978

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VIRGINIA WOOLF AS EQUILIBRIST: THE MOMENT OF
VISION AND THE ANDROGYNOUS MIND

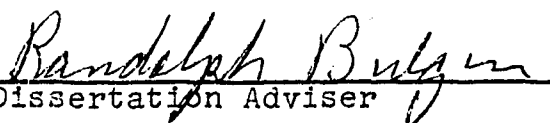
by

Whitney G. Vanderwerff

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the Faculty of the Graduate School at
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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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VANDERWERFF, WHITNEY G. Virginia Woolf as Equilibrant:
The Moment of Vision and the Androgynous Mind. (1978)
Directed by: Dr. Randolph M. Bulgin. Pp. 389.

Current assessments based more upon Virginia Woolf's feminism than upon her novels as literature threaten to make of her a cult-heroine, whose image is now printed upon t-shirts and tote bags. This study asserts, however, that Virginia Woolf's novels reflect her fictive search for a balance between what she called the masculine and the feminine sides of the brain. To the masculine side, she ascribed qualities that are rational, factual, prosaic, practical, and analytical; to the feminine side, the more intuitive, imaginative, poetic, sensitive, and creative characteristics. More important, minds reflecting equilibrium between these "opposing forces" are called "androgynous," and through characters whose minds reflect such balance and wholeness, Virginia Woolf conveys the experience of the moment of vision.

The introduction to this study explains Virginia Woolf's conception of the moment of vision and relates this to the androgynous unity of mind. Chapters I and II serve as background for an analysis of the novels. The first chapter studies Virginia Woolf's search for balance in her literary criticism and in her short stories, briefly surveying some of the contemporary evaluations which stress her feminist concerns to the detriment of her literary achievement. Chapter II is concerned with Virginia Woolf's

social and cultural milieu. It finds the Stephen household representative of the Victorian patriarchy and explains that in Bloomsbury, Virginia Stephen found the androgynous ideal realized socially as well as aesthetically. This chapter also examines Virginia Woolf's concern with the androgynous mind as reflected in Three Guineas, A Room of One's Own, and the fantasy Orlando.

Chapters III, IV, and V focus upon the development in the early novels of certain characters' minds in the direction Virginia Woolf calls androgynous. Rachel Vinrace, under the tutelage of Helen Ambrose and Terence Hewet in The Voyage Out, Katharine Hilbery and Ralph Denham in Night and Day, Jacob Flanders and Sandra Williams in Jacob's Room: these characters' experiences of the moment of vision are examined in detail, with particular stress upon Jacob Flanders' "moment of flowering," usually given scant critical scrutiny, in the last section of that novel.

Chapter VI finds that the young Clarissa Dalloway, an intuitive, vibrant, imaginative poetess, represented the potential for the development of the androgynous mind, but that this potential goes unrealized. In Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf's avowed intention to satirize the social system undercuts the reader's experience of the hostess Clarissa's moment of vision. The chapter concentrates upon To the Lighthouse, studying the balanced visions of Cam, James, and Lily Briscoe in the last section. As she completes her painting, Lily's appreciation of the full

significance of both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's perceptions parallels James's revelation that the lighthouse symbolizes the truth of both of these opposing forces; therefore, "nothing was simply one thing."

In Chapter VII, Bernard in The Waves emerges as the quintessential equilibrist. His androgynous mind is clearly delineated; he has the "double capacity" to reason and to feel, balancing in his unified vision the diverse perceptions of the other five soliloquists. Chapter VIII finds that Eleanor Pargiter's moments of vision in The Years are deliberately undermined by the novelist. As Virginia Woolf herself acknowledged, The Years, which reflects a condition of repression, is "dangerously near propaganda." This chapter then briefly examines Between the Acts, which also negates the concept of the moment of vision as experienced by the androgynous mind. Here, no character experiences a balancing of the opposing qualities of mind; hence, there is no individual moment of vision.

In its conclusion, this study refers to an address in which James Hafley urges that the experience of Virginia Woolf's creative art be considered "momentary"; her art records her vision of "the fixing of the moment." The study concurs with Hafley's apprehension about the recent attention given to Virginia Woolf the woman rather than to Virginia Woolf the novelist, and sympathizes with a scholar who is afraid for Virginia Woolf.

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INTRODUCTION

A recently published collection of Virginia Woolf's autobiographical writings, Moments of Being, contains the late (1939) and private essay, "A Sketch of the Past."¹ There, recording her childhood memories, the writer explains, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, her conception of the "moments of vision" which she uses, Morris Beja explains, as "the bases for works of art."² Beginning in very early childhood, Virginia Woolf felt that her days "contained a large proportion" of what she calls "non-being." By this, she means the "non-descript cotton wool" of daily routine, which in adult life she describes thus: "One walks, eats, sees things, deals with what has to be done; the broken vacuum cleaner; ordering dinner; writing orders to Mabel; washing; cooking dinner, bookbinding."³

But even in her childhood, when "week after week" might contain only "this cotton wool, this non-being," there was in Virginia Woolf's life another "sort of being."

¹ Virginia Woolf, Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), pp. 67-137.

² Morris Beja, "Matches Struck in the Dark: Virginia Woolf's Moments of Vision," Critical Quarterly, 6 (1964), 137.

³ Virginia Woolf, Moments of Being, p. 70.

She describes it as "a sudden violent shock" and as "exceptional moments." As an example, she provides the memory of what seemed to her a shocking revelation about a flower in the garden:

I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; "That is the whole," I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower When I said about the flower, "That is the whole," I felt that I had made a discovery.

Such a "shock" from "behind the cotton wool of daily life," she continues, will become "a revelation of some order":

. . . it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness . . . gives me . . . a great delight to put the severed parts together. Perhaps this is the strongest pleasure known to me. It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right; making a character come together. From this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we--I mean all human beings--are connected with this. . . .

This intuition of mine . . . has certainly given its scale to my life ever since I saw the flower in the bed by the front door at St Ives.⁴

Virginia Woolf explains in this essay that the "real novelist" can convey "both sorts of being," both the mundane cotton wool of the "moments of non-being" and the

⁴ Virginia Woolf, Moments of Being, pp. 71-72.

sense of pattern that she intuits in her moments of vision. Perhaps her best-known description of such a "moment" occurs in the last chapter of A Room of One's Own. The author watches a young girl in patent leather boots and a young man in a raincoat get into a taxi beneath her window. "The sight was ordinary enough," she explains; "what was strange was the rhythmical order with which my imagination had invested it."⁵ Before this experience, she had been thinking of one sex as distinct from another; now, she has a feeling that her formerly divided mind has come together again in a "natural fusion." She calls her present state the "unity of mind" in which "two sexes in the mind corresponding to two sexes in the body" have finally been united. She suggests that this "fully fertilised mind" which "uses all its faculties," which is "resonant and porous" and "naturally creative, incandescent and undivided," is androgynous.⁶ The androgynous mind, then, the "man-womanly" or "woman-manly" mind in which male and female powers "live in harmony together," with "both sides of the mind" used "equally," is the mind which can experience moments of vision such as the one Virginia Woolf has just described.⁷

⁵ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1957), p. 100.

⁶ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, pp. 102, 103.

⁷ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, pp. 102, 103.

Owing at least in part to her parental heritage, Virginia Woolf ascribed to the masculine side of the brain qualities that are rational, factual, precise, prosaic, practical, analytical, and intellectual; and to the feminine side, the more intuitive, imaginative, imprecise, poetic, sensitive, and creative characteristics. There may be, as Geoffrey Hartman suggests, "much fantasy" in her association of the two sides of the brain with the two sexes;⁸ nevertheless, to her this dualism was very real, and it permeates her writing.

Virginia Woolf's awareness of the opposing qualities of mind has been called "supernormal."⁹ Her almost obsessive concern for harmonizing what seemed to her to be the masculine and the feminine approaches to truth has led scholars and critics to examine her work in the light of what seem to be extra-literary concerns. Nancy Topping Bazin, for example, relates Virginia Woolf's periods of depression to the predominance of the masculine side of her mind and her periods of mania to the predominance of the feminine side. Bazin studies the "genogenic factors"

⁸ Geoffrey Hartman, "Virginia's Web," Chicago Review, 14 (1961), 27. Writing in Harper's in 1978, Samuel C. Florman subscribes to what Hartman calls this "fantastic" association. Florman argues that because "good engineering requires intuition and verbal imagination," more women should enter this field. Samuel C. Florman, "Engineering and the Female Mind," Harper's, Feb. 1978, p. 60.

⁹ Jane Novak, The Razor Edge of Balance: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Coral Gables, Florida: Univ. of Miami Press, 1975), p. xi.

contributing to a mental illness which she diagnoses as manic-depressive and goes on to analyze the fiction as an expression of Virginia Woolf's own psychic disorders.¹⁰

A second critical quandary that can arise when one examines Virginia Woolf's fictive exploration of this fundamental dualism is one of arbitrary classification: characters and events are relegated to one category or the other, either to the rational, the prosaic, and the analytical, or to the intuitive, the poetic, and the creative. This is illustrated in a study by Alice van Buren Kelley. Focusing upon Virginia Woolf's preoccupation with the world of "facts" (solid objects and social activities) and the world of "vision" (the sense of unity, merging, and boundlessness), Kelley often arbitrarily assigns characters to one world or the other, championing certain "visionary" characters (Mrs. Hilbery in Night and Day, Mrs. Swithin in Between the Acts) while ignoring their fragmented, unbalanced, and often ludicrous natures.¹¹

Perhaps more fruitful than Bazin's psycho-biographical criticism or Kelley's somewhat rigid categorization is the approach suggested in To the Lighthouse by the words of Lily Briscoe, who seeks balance or equilibrium between the

¹⁰ Nancy Topping Bazin, Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1973).

¹¹ Alice van Buren Kelley, The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973).

two sides of the brain, or as Lily thinks of it, "the razor edge of balance between two opposite forces."¹² When Lily achieves this balance, she experiences her moment of vision. And in Virginia Woolf's literary criticism, in her short stories, in her fantasy Orlando, and in her novels, she also searches for such balance--contemporary assessments based upon her feminist tracts, her career, and her suicide notwithstanding.

When this androgynous balance is attained, both in the early and in the later and more familiar novels, certain characters are able to experience moments of vision. As background for an exploration of this fictive quest, Chapter I of this study examines Virginia Woolf's search for balance in her literary criticism and in her short stories, briefly summarizing contemporary evaluations based more upon Virginia Woolf as a woman--upon her diaries, her letters, and her social criticism--than upon Virginia Woolf as an artist. In both her critical essays and her short stories, she is concerned with the relationship between what she calls the "granite-like solidity" of the "piles of hard facts" and the "rainbow-like intangibility" of the individual imagination.¹³ Some of the short stories simply convey a

¹² Virginia Woolf, "To the Lighthouse" (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927), p. 287.

¹³ Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography," Collected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967), IV, 229.

sense of the juxtaposition of rational and intuitive, of fact and imagination; in others, both "the intellect, which analyzes and discriminates," and the intuitive "rush to feeling"¹⁴ seem to coalesce in a harmonious moment of vision.

Chapter II is concerned with Virginia Woolf's social and cultural milieu, including her parental heritage as it relates to her artistic choices. It examines her reaction to the Victorian patriarchy and her concern with the androgynous mind as expressed in Three Guineas and A Room of One's Own. In the latter, the feeling that the masculine and feminine sides of her mind had "come together" in harmony produces a moment of vision; this occurrence is the nexus for an examination of the fantasy Orlando.

Chapters III, IV, and V are devoted to Virginia Woolf's early novels, focusing upon the development of certain characters' minds in the direction Virginia Woolf called androgynous. Rachel Vinrace, under the tutelage of Helen Ambrose and Terence Hewet in The Voyage Out; Katharine Hilbery and Ralph Denham in Night and Day; Jacob Flanders and Sandra Williams in Jacob's Room: These characters experience moments of illumination similar to the more familiar epiphanies of Lily Briscoe, Bernard, and Eleanor Pargiter. In every case, the character develops or displays

¹⁴ Virginia Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Collected Essays, II, 88.

in some way the harmony and wholeness of mind which Virginia Woolf calls androgynous.

Chapter VI suggests that Mrs. Dalloway suffers from the burden of its social criticism and shows that the hostess Clarissa's climactic moment of vision is obviously contrived and simply clever. The chapter concentrates upon To the Lighthouse, studying the balanced visions of Cam, James, and Lily Briscoe in the last section. Chapter VII contains an examination of the qualities of consciousness combined in The Waves through Bernard's creative effort, concluding that his androgynous mind can experience most fully the uniting of the novel's six "psychic entities"¹⁵ in a moment of vision.

Chapter VIII demonstrates that the last novels, in different ways, negate the concept of the moment of vision as experienced by the androgynous mind. Eleanor Pargiter's moments of vision in The Years are found to be deliberately undermined by the author. Between the Acts, Virginia's Woolf's very short and final novel, is examined only briefly. This novel, which is unfinished, contains no character who experiences a balancing of the opposing qualities of mind and therefore includes no individual moment of vision. Instead, a "communal" sense of harmony is experienced by members of the audience at a pageant.

¹⁵ Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies in Technique (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1932), p. 495.

This is described in one paragraph, but it is invalidated by the import of the novel as a whole.

Morris Beja, noticing that the moment of vision is denied to certain characters, concentrates upon Mr. Ramsay, whose "over-rational mind prevents him from going beyond analysis. Claritas, the phase of apprehension that Joyce associates with intuition and epiphany, is out of Mr. Ramsay's reach . . . he is too dependent upon his intellect."¹⁶ This study deals with other characters, beginning in the early novels with the Dalloways and St. John Hirst in The Voyage Out and Cassandra Otway and William Rodney in Night and Day, who also display such single-sexed minds; they realize none of the insights conveyed by Virginia Woolf in the experience of her more balanced, whole, and unified characters. For "it is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple."¹⁷

In To the Lighthouse, James Ramsay very simply expresses, as if in refutation of those who would attempt to align Virginia Woolf with one or the other of her "opposing forces," the realization that he must maintain equilibrium between two truths. These are represented in this novel by James's memory of his mother's imagination, intuition, and sensitivity, which James has appreciated,

¹⁶ Beja, "Matches Struck in the Dark," pp. 147-48.

¹⁷ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 108.

and the reality of his father's more rigid, factual, and rational outlook, which James has resisted. James's moment of vision is the "shock" that Virginia Woolf calls a "revelation," and this can be the basis for a critical assessment of her art, for this is the "rapture" of putting together parts, of balancing and unifying, which she strives to convey. As James approaches the lighthouse physically, in a rowboat, in the world of cotton wool, he comes to understand that the lighthouse itself symbolizes both of the opposing forces, and that they are both "true." James thinks, "For nothing was simply one thing."¹⁸

¹⁸ Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse, p. 277.

CHAPTER I
THE SEARCH FOR BALANCE

Throughout her critical essays and book reviews, Virginia Woolf rejects the novel of "materialism," weighed down, she believed, by detailed physical descriptions, neatly resolved plots, and didacticism. Her well-known essays "Modern Fiction" and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" stress the modern novel's concern with the inner rather than the outer life--a shift in artistic perspective not sensed by the Edwardian writers, who ride in a railway coach with a character, Mrs. Brown, and never so much as look at her. They use her to describe the carriage itself (Bennett) or to project Utopias (Wells) or to crusade for factory reform (Galsworthy), but never look directly at Mrs. Brown, "never at life, never at human nature."¹ In order to "complete" the Edwardian novels, "it seems necessary to do something--to join a society, or, more desperately, to write a cheque."² Wells is concerned "not with the spirit but with the body, taking upon his shoulders work that ought to have been discussed by government officials," ignoring

¹ Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Collected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967, I, 330; hereafter cited as CE).

² Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," p. 326.

"in the plethora of his ideas and facts . . . the crudity and coarseness of his human beings."³

In writing about English poetry in the 1930s, Virginia Woolf faults the Leaning Tower poets (C. Day Lewis, Auden, Spender, Isherwood, Louis MacNeice) for the "pedagogic, the didactic, the loud-speaker strain" that dominates their work: "They must teach; they must preach." They write "oratory, not poetry."⁴ Considering the writing of women in A Room of One's Own, she finds the poetry of Lady Winchilsea, "bursting out in indignation against the position of women," to be flawed, but quotes lines of "pure poetry" as evidence that "the fire was hot within her . . . could she have freed her mind from hate and fear and not heaped it with bitterness and resentment."⁵ Charlotte Brontë "will never get her genius expressed whole and entire" because of the "jerk" of feminist indignation in her novels: Virginia Woolf cites as evidence a passage in which Jane Eyre goes to the roof and becomes a mouthpiece for the author's philosophizing. Here, "anger was tampering with the integrity of Charlotte

³ Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," CE, II, 105.

⁴ Virginia Woolf, "The Leaning Tower," CE, II, 175-79. For a contemporary evaluation of this didactic strain in the American literature of the 1970s, see Richard Locke, "Novelists as Preachers," New York Times Book Review, 17 Apr. 1977, pp. 3, 52, 53, and see also Thomas Griffith, "Moral Tales for a Depraved Age," Atlantic, July 1977, pp. 20-21.

⁵ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1957), pp. 62-63.

Brontë the novelist. She left her story, to which her entire devotion was due, to attend to some personal grievance."⁶

Contemporary Assessments of Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf's criticism of the didactic in art is hardly surprising. She is well known as a highly individual and experimental novelist who successfully rendered the mental atmospheres of her characters. Her "remarkable achievement," as assessed by David Daiches, is "the deliberate movement of her prose rhythms, suggesting, evoking, illuminating . . . her beautifully modulated transcriptions of consciousness at bay."⁷ In an often-quoted paragraph in "Modern Fiction," she wrote:

Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?⁸

Much Virginia Woolf criticism has focused upon her efforts in this direction, upon her technique, sometimes "working puzzles," in Daiches' description, with "little

⁶ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 76.

⁷ David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (1942; rpt. New York: New Directions, 1963), p. xvii.

⁸ Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," CE, II, 106.

inquiry into the reasons why the puzzle is worth working in the first place."⁹ There is also a plethora of current studies approaching her work from the social viewpoint. Papers read in the Virginia Woolf seminars of the Modern Language Association conventions in 1974 and 1976 deal with her political, social, and feminist views. Irvin Ehrenpreis writes in the New York Review of Books of the social and political concerns of Bloomsbury: "feminism, anti-militarism, anti-imperialism, and a passion for civil liberties."¹⁰

Perhaps because the recent interest in the social significance of Virginia Woolf's work coincides with the feminist movement of the 1960s and '70s, it is the first of these concerns, her feminism, that has been the focus of much recent attention. Jeanette Smyth, in a Los Angeles Times-Washington Post news service feature, tags Virginia Woolf a "trendy" feminist heroine, reporting that the number of Virginia Woolf readers at the Berg Collection of English and American Literature at the New York Public Library has doubled since 1970.¹¹ Smyth quotes Berg Curator Lola

⁹ Daiches, p. xviii.

¹⁰ Irvin Ehrenpreis, "Bloomsbury Variations," New York Review of Books, 17 Apr. 1975, p. 10.

¹¹ Jeanette Smyth, "Virginia Woolf Feminist Heroine: Off-Beat Life, Suicide, Make Her 'Trendy' Author," Greenboro Daily News, 21 Dec. 1975, Sec. D, p. 4, col. 1.

Szladits as saying that interest in Virginia Woolf "dove-tailed" with the rise of the more "free and libertine society of our young" and that "somebody used to call Bloomsbury the 'Ur Hippies.'"¹²

Smyth's article emphasizes the more sensational episodes treated in Quentin Bell's biography: Virginia Woolf's skinny-dip with Rupert Brooke, her alleged love affair with Vita Sackville-West, and her suicide. Today, one can buy a Virginia Woolf t-shirt from a company in Cambridge, Massachusetts: "Virginia Woolf, the British novelist who died in 1941, has become a cult-heroine."¹³

The cult-heroine has kept curious company in sophisticated women's magazines. In the September, 1972, issue of Vogue magazine, between a photographic layout featuring "furry chopped coats" and another highlighting "easy, racy, glamorous black evening fashions," selections from Quentin Bell's forthcoming biography appeared. In this

¹² Lola Szladits, as quoted by Jeanette Smyth, Sec. D, p. 4, col. 1. The label 'Ur Hippies' comes from The Listener, 10 Dec. 1970. In "A Letter to a Friend from Clive James," the writer imagines the discovery of Bloomsbury by a young modern:

Outasite. I've been giving this a lot of thought and I've been wondering. I mean, we are supposed to be the first generation to be completely free about sex, but I've been wondering. I mean, these Bloomsbury people were the ur-hippies, if you can figure that, and it strikes me that in a way they were a lot franker than us. . . . (Clive James, The Listener, 10 Dec. 1970, pp. 818-19)

¹³ Smyth, cols. 1-3.

article, entitled "Who Was Virginia Woolf Afraid Of?" Vogue excerpts only sensational, speculative, and sometimes highly subjective material. Bell guesses that the alleged advances of George Duckworth, her half-brother, "terrified" young Virginia Stephen into a "posture of frozen and defensive panic," and subtly advances the suggestion that this may have contributed to her first "breakdown."¹⁴ He also discusses the symptoms of her mental illness, her "morbid, feverish grief" at her father's death, a naughty remark of Lytton Strachey's (he suggested that the stain on the dress of Vanessa Stephen was semen), and Strachey as a "non-starter" as a husband because he was "the arch-bugger of Bloomsbury."¹⁵ The two-volume biography does indeed contain a number of racy episodes; Vogue, however, selects nearly all of them, to the total exclusion of material that might have demonstrated Bell's sensitive treatment of Virginia Woolf's historical, cultural, and social milieu.

¹⁴ "Who Was Virginia Woolf Afraid Of?", Vogue, 1 Sept. 1972, pp. 274-75. The first volume of The Letters of Virginia Woolf gives a different picture of this situation. Letters 12, 13, 21, 29, and 30 were written to Duckworth at the time of the alleged incidents; these letters are affectionate, playful, and full of family news. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, editors of the letters, suggest that later in her life, when Virginia Woolf had "drifted apart from George and grown contemptuous of his smart clothes, smart friends, smart marriage, and social self-importance," she exaggerated the quality of the alleged intimacies and her own response at the time (Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, eds., The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Vol. I, 1888-1912 [New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975], p. xvii).

¹⁵ "Who Was Virginia Woolf Afraid Of?", pp. 274-75, 304.

Ms. magazine has published selections from the first volume of The Letters of Virginia Woolf, edited by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. Its priorities for Ms. are telling. Ms. offers sixteen of the 638 letters in the volume as evidence that Virginia Woolf passionately loved other women and "stalled" in response to Leonard Woolf's marriage proposal. She was, in fact, thirty years old and had already received at least four offers of marriage. She wrote, "I will not look upon marriage as a profession,"¹⁶ knowing already that this idea was anathematic to Leonard Woolf, who was to appreciate and nurture her artistic sensibility through their relationship.

The Ms. article contains revealing parenthetical introductions of Virginia Woolf's female correspondents: Violet Dickinson, "whose relationship with Virginia was one of passionate affection," and Madge Vaughan, "for whom Virginia had a romantic passion."¹⁷ Ms. seems insistent in its emphasis upon Virginia Stephen's affection for two or three female friends and her occasional remarks about the risk of marriage. These selections are immediately followed by an article entitled "Stalking the Wild Jill Johnson," which graphically describes a lesbian dance; the bias of Ms. is hardly subtle.

¹⁶ "Virginia Woolf's Unpublished Letters on the Occasion of her Marriage," Ms., Nov. 1975, p. 95.

¹⁷ "Virginia Woolf's Unpublished Letters on the Occasion of her Marriage," pp. 95, 96.

More scholarly but equally feminist in emphasis is a 1975 dissertation which insists that "feminism permeates Woolf's novels," which are "indictments of society's ill-treatment of women."¹⁸ Virginia Woolf's art, in such a study, is simply "exposition for her feminism."¹⁹ Herbert Marder bases his book, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf, upon the assumption that her art owed its character to her feminism.²⁰ He argues that To the Lighthouse can be read as an attack on the male sex, and suggests that Mr. Ramsay is at least partially responsible for Mrs. Ramsay's death.²¹

Such endeavors to approach Virginia Woolf's novels from an exclusively feminist standpoint seem to ignore her own injunction against the roman à thèse; they fail to see her steadily and whole. Patricia Meyer Spack's The Female Imagination provides a case in point. Discussing To the Lighthouse, Spacks overlooks the change in the attitudes of Lily Briscoe and the Ramsay children toward Mr. Ramsay. Spacks is eager to establish Mrs. Ramsay's superiority, "the extent of her giving, and the demands that her husband has

¹⁸ Sally Alexander, "Outsiders and Educated Men's Daughters: The Feminist as Heroine in Six Novels of Virginia Woolf," Diss. Florida State Univ. 1975, pp. xi, viii.

¹⁹ Alexander, p. xi.

²⁰ Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 175.

²¹ Marder, Feminism and Art, pp. 171, 24.

made on her; by extension, of the demands all men make of all women."²² From the final section of the book, she quotes Lily's thought: "That man, she thought, her anger rising in her, never gave; that man took." Spacks ignores the fact that later, near the end of the novel, Lily takes her brush in hand, looks toward the Lighthouse, and thinks, "Where was that boat now? And Mr. Ramsay? She wanted him."²³ Lily needs the presence of both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay before she can "see it clear"; as Mr. Ramsay reaches the Lighthouse, Lily ". . . drew a line there, in the center," and can finally say that her vision is completed.²⁴

James, too, must reconcile his mother's legacy with his father's. "To the Lighthouse," the third section of the novel, tells of the boat trip which Mr. Ramsay had insisted upon making with his children. On the way to the Lighthouse, two visions of life are finally unified when James begins to understand his father's life and to notice the similarities in their natures. He remembers the Lighthouse as it had looked in his childhood, when he felt that he hated his father; now, later and up close, it looks different, and he realizes that life contains both images:

²² Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Female Imagination (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 110.

²³ Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927), pp. 223, 300.

²⁴ Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse, p. 310.

The Lighthouse was then a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye, that opened suddenly, and softly in the evening. . . . Now . . . he could see the whitewashed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white; he could see 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.²⁵

Spacks ignores the conciliatory tone of this climactic scene. She compares James's recognition of "his father's endless demand for sympathy" to Mrs. Ramsay's, and calls James's perception of Mr. Ramsay an "arid, metallic, destructive" and "angry" one.²⁶ In searching for evidence of woman's subordination in the novel, she falls prey to a critical myopia. In the world of Virginia Woolf's fiction, both lighthouses are "true": the image of silvery mist which James associates with childhood memories of his mother, and the phallic tower, revealed in the harsh light of day as black and white, with washing spread below.

Virginia Woolf's Literary Criticism

The scene from To the Lighthouse reflects in miniature the larger dualism in Virginia Woolf's writing. Ignore it, and there looms the danger of failing to

²⁵ Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse, pp. 276-77.

²⁶ Spacks, pp. 110-11.

appreciate her fully. She is concerned both with subjective impressions and intuitions and with what she called the "prosaic daylight" of social and cultural fact.²⁷

When she speaks in the essay "Modern Fiction" of the contemporary novelist who records "the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall," and who traces a pattern, "however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness," she is describing the method of James Joyce.²⁸

Whereas the Edwardian writers are materialists, "Mr. Joyce is spiritual; he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain."

But Virginia Woolf goes on to criticize Ulysses for forcing us to be "centered in a self which in spite of its tremor of susceptibility, never embraces or creates what is outside or beyond."²⁹

Her praise for Dorothy Richardson is similarly qualified. Near the beginning of her review of The Tunnel,

²⁷ Virginia Woolf, "A Summing Up," A Haunted House and Other Short Stories (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1949), p. 147.

²⁸ Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," CE, II, 106.

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," CE, II, 107, 108.

she is lyric in her praise:

"Him and her" are cut out, and with them goes the old deliberate business: the chapters that lead up and the chapters that lead down; the characters who are always characteristic; the scenes that are passionate and the scenes that are humorous. . . . there is left, denuded, unsheltered, unbegun and unfinished, the consciousness of Miriam Henderson, the small sensitive lump of matter, half transparent and half opaque, which endlessly reflects and distorts the variegated procession, and is, we are bidden to believe, the source beneath the surface, the very oyster within the shell.³⁰

She then quotes a passage to demonstrate that "we are thinking, word by word, as Miriam thinks," following impressions as they flow through Miriam's mind, "waking incongruously other thoughts, and plaiting incessantly the many-colored and innumerable threads of life."³¹

However, a qualification follows. In addition to feeling ourselves "seated at the centre of another mind," we should be able to perceive, Virginia Woolf insists, "in the helter-skelter of flying fragments, some unity, significance, or design."³² But Miriam Henderson's "sensations, impressions, ideas and emotions glance off her, unrelated and unquestioned, without shedding quite as much light as

³⁰ Virginia Woolf, rev. of The Tunnel by Dorothy Richardson, TLS, 12 Feb. 1919; rpt. in Contemporary Writers, ed. Jean Guiguet (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), pp. 120-21.

³¹ Virginia Woolf, rev. of The Tunnel, p. 121.

³² Virginia Woolf, rev. of The Tunnel, p. 121.

we had hoped into the hidden depths." The reader is "never, or only for a tantalizing second, in the reality which underlies . . . appearances." Furthermore, the sayings and doings of other characters in the novel "never reach that degree of significance which we, perhaps unreasonably, expect."³³

It is plain, then, that Virginia Woolf would welcome neither the role of the effete highbrow lady of Bloomsbury nor that of the novelist of primarily social concerns. Such dogmatic approaches to her work force a thesis and ultimately disappoint. Virginia Woolf wrote that the task of the writer is "to find the right relationship . . . between the self you know and the world outside."³⁴ What she called in her diary the "tug" between individual intuition and the outer universe is incessant in her critical statements and in her fiction.³⁵ She insisted that the writer record an incessant shower of innumerable atoms, and yet four of her own novels criticize the social system and contain as much of the "old deliberate business" as of

³³ Virginia Woolf, rev. of The Tunnel, pp. 121, 122.

³⁴ Virginia Woolf, "A Letter to a Young Poet," CE, II, 191.

³⁵ Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), 2 Nov. 1932, p. 184; hereafter cited as AWD.

the rendering of introspective momentary phenomena.

"I want to criticise the social system and to show it at work, at its most intense," she wrote in her diary of Mrs. Dalloway,³⁶ and yet in that novel she records showers of atoms in the minds of several characters and conveys throughout the sense of the "luminous halo." As Jean Guiguet shrewdly points out, there is in her novels "enough sociological material . . . to disprove the myth of an ivory tower Virginia Woolf, preoccupied only with Art for Art's Sake." As Guiguet suggests, she seems always to need to satisfy on the one hand a rational, utilitarian approach to fiction, and on the other, the aesthetic philosophy of her own generation, which insisted upon the autonomy of art which need not mean, but simply be.³⁷

Hence Virginia Woolf concentrates upon the intense awareness of inner life while striving to maintain what Ralph Freedman calls "her important toe-hold on the earthy substance of Liverpool."³⁸ "I want to eliminate all detail, all fact," she writes to John Lehmann, and yet Recollections of Virginia Woolf, the book containing that

³⁶ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 19 June 1923, p. 56.

³⁷ Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), p. 412.

³⁸ Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 185.

letter, repeatedly records her fascination with detail and fact. Almost every reminiscence in the volume mentions her "passion for practical things," as Janet Vaughan, her cousin and friend, phrases it. "If you were travelling with her or walking with her she would say, 'Look, there's that man wheeling his wheelbarrow, what do you think he had for breakfast?'" Duncan Grant describes her as being "intensely interested in facts." Vita Sackville-West speaks of "the simple enjoyment of things" found during her travels. Nigel Nicolson, Vita's son, recalls returning home to face Virginia Woolf's persistent interrogations about the minutiae of his schooldays. Elizabeth Bowen writes that she wanted to know "all the details of people's lives." Rebecca West heard Virginia Woolf ask the fashion editors of Vogue "questions about what they had seen and what they had done and whom they had met, with the happiest receptiveness."³⁹

William Plomer speaks of her "devotion to the facts themselves and suggests that she was both a "solitary being" and a "social being." Vita Sackville-West also speaks of the basic dualism in her nature; Virginia Woolf "seemed to combine the unusually mixed ingredients of the

³⁹ Joan Russell Noble, ed., Recollections of Virginia Woolf (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 32, 78, et passim.

wild, fantastic, intuitive genius on the one hand and the cold, reasoning intellect on the other."⁴⁰

David Daiches, discussing the Stephens' summer holidays in Cornwall, finds this tension hereditary:

This antithesis between the city and the shore, between London and Cornwall, is almost symbolic of the nature of her sensibility, which contemplates the solid facts of life with the meditative eye that has learned its introspective and dissolving wisdom from watching sunsets over deserted seas. One might even push the symbolic contrast further, and see an opposition between reason, London, and her paternal heredity on the one hand, and intuition, Cornwall, and the legacy of her mother's family on the other.⁴¹

Quentin Bell describes the family of Virginia Woolf's father, Sir Leslie Stephen, as men who saw literature as a means rather than as an end:

Their minds are formed to receive facts and when once they have a fact so clearly stated that they can take it in their hands, turn it this way and that, and scrutinize it, they are content; with facts, facts of this kind, they can make useful constructions, political, judicial, or theological. But for intuitions, for the melody of a song, the mood of a picture, they have little use. There is therefore a whole part of human experience of which they fight shy . . . or which they dismiss as sentimental humbug.⁴²

The Pattles, Virginia's mother's family, Bell describes as "altogether less intellectual" than the

⁴⁰ Recollections of Virginia Woolf, pp. 105, 135.

⁴¹ Daiches, p. 3.

⁴² Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography, I (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972), 19.

Stephens. They are remembered now for their beauty, recorded in the photographs of Virginia's great-aunt, Julia Pattle Cameron. Bell speaks of "the vague benevolence, the woolly-minded silliness, the poetic gush, the cloying, infuriating sentimentality" of Virginia's maternal grandmother, Maria Pattle Jackson, and concludes of Virginia Woolf's heritage that "it is not hard to find labels for the paternal and maternal sides: sense and sensibility, prose and poetry, literature and art." These labels may be unsatisfactory, but "they suggest something that is true."⁴³

"Granite" and "Rainbow" in Virginia Woolf's
Fiction: An Overview

Virginia Woolf herself called this "something," this distinction, the tension between "granite" and "rainbow," between "the granite-like solidity" of "piles of hard facts" and "the rainbow-like intangibility" of individual imagination.⁴⁴ Winifred Holtby finds in Virginia Woolf's works "two streams of thought; one is practical and analytical, the other creative and poetic."⁴⁵ Bernard

⁴³ Bell, Virginia Woolf, I, 20.

⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography," CE, IV, 229.

⁴⁵ Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London: Wishart and Co., 1932), p. 200.

Blackstone describes her writing as pervaded by "the antitheses of reason and intuition."⁴⁶

Discussing the disparate elements of life and, as we shall see, the possibility of their combination in a single consciousness, Virginia Woolf seems at times vague, even elusive. Ralph Freedman finds her "imprecise and eclectic."⁴⁷ Jean Guiguet, analyzing the world view behind her literary criticism as well as her novels, writes that her vision sometimes "loses the clarity of outline which was familiar to us."⁴⁸ He explains that for Virginia Woolf, "literature . . . is made up, like the mind that apprehends it, of infinitely interlaced ramifications"; therefore, "outlines grow blurred: we are left with innumerable interconnections."⁴⁹ Alice van Buren Kelley notes: "Philosophers and theologians from the Orphics to Plato, from Descartes to Spinoza and on into Virginia Woolf's own day had discussed questions of soul and body, mind and matter, reality and appearance, and had devised careful systems around these divisions. But Virginia Woolf was no philosopher. She approached the world with the flexibility of an artist. . . . She was not

⁴⁶ Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf: A Commentary (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 26.

⁴⁷ Freedman, p. 199.

⁴⁸ Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 161.

⁴⁹ Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 161.

intent on proposing a system, but was concerned primarily with describing the universe as she experienced it, with embodying her understanding of life in her novels."⁵⁰

This classic dualism, as Freedman summarizes, "supplies an important key" to understanding the achievement of the art of Virginia Woolf. ⁵¹

What permeates her work, as well as the recognition of this fundamental dualism, is her obsession with reconciling the contradiction. She asks in her diary:

Now is life very solid or shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on for ever; will last for ever; goes down to the bottom of the world--this moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphanous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves. Perhaps it may be that though we change, one flying after another, so quick, so quick, yet we are somehow successive and continuous we human beings, ⁵² and show the light through. But what is the light?

She approaches this problem in A Room of One's Own:

What is meant by 'reality'? It would seem to me something very erratic, very undependable--now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech--

⁵⁰ Alice van Buren Kelley, The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 1

⁵¹ Freedman, p. 198.

⁵² Virginia Woolf, AWD, 4 Jan. 1929, p. 138.

and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly.⁵³

Whatever this "reality" touches, it "fixes and makes permanent." The world of silence and the world of Piccadilly, fixed and made permanent: it is the business of the writer, who lives "more than other people" in its presence, to communicate this "reality." And after reading a book by such a writer, "one sees more intensely afterwards; the world seems bared of its covering and given an intenser life."⁵⁴

A writer who provides this intensity in his fiction is also one in whose art the two worlds merge. In Virginia Woolf's judgment, Joseph Conrad, who describes his own writing as the effort to reveal "all the truth of life" in a "moment of vision," is such a writer.⁵⁵ In 1923, she recorded an imaginary conversation about him. Penelope, ~~uneducated~~ educated by reading avidly and at random from her father's library, argues that Conrad is a great writer. Her friend David, university trained and glib ("You have skipped, you have sipped, you have tasted," Penelope tells him),

⁵³ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1957), pp. 113-14.

⁵⁴ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 114.

⁵⁵ Joseph Conrad, Nigger of the Narcissus (New York: Sun Dial Press, Inc., 1938), p. xvi.

calls Conrad a disillusioned nightingale who continues to sing one sad song. Penelope has the better of the argument. It is her penetrating observation that Conrad's greatness lies in bringing his "selves into relation," in reconciling his "particular opposite selves"--the simple Sea Captain and the subtle, psychological, loquacious Marlowe. For Penelope, the sea captain and Marlowe combine to produce a profound vision.⁵⁶

Virginia Woolf's fiction can also be approached as the search for such unity in vision; it is not surprising to find her writing that Conrad's moments of vision are "the best things in his books."⁵⁷ When such a merging comes in the fiction of Virginia Woolf, art fixes, gives permanence to a moment of transcendent peace and stability. There is, then, equilibrium between inner and outer, between the chaotic, subconscious powers of creation and rational analysis. "The intellect, which analyzes and discriminates," may at such a moment coalesce with "the rush to feeling," the intuitive, the visionary, which, unlike the intellect, merges and combines.⁵⁸ The world of solid objects seems to take on a universal meaning as the "visionary imagination"

⁵⁶ Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Conrad: A Conversation," CE, I, 310.

⁵⁷ Virginia Woolf, rev. of Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad, TLS, 26 July 1917, p. 355.

⁵⁸ Virginia Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," CE, II, 88.

raises the mind "to a different sphere of consciousness."⁵⁹ She marvels in her diary that "the creative power at once brings the whole universe to order."⁶⁰

These perceptions must, she felt, be achieved in art without either the old bases for belief, no longer valid for the contemporary artist, or the fixed authority of traditional authorial point of view, chronological order of time, or clear-cut resolution of moral dilemmas leading to denouement.⁶¹ Virginia Woolf offers no ultimate answers. Such didacticism, we have seen her say, weakens the aesthetic force of a work of art. She herself will offer transitory moments of insight as her art momentarily orders the confusion and fragmentation of life.

But we have also seen her criticize Joyce and Richardson for failure to provide "some unity, significance, or design," some underlying organizational principle for their novels. Virginia Woolf's moments of vision, which startle the reader into a "flash of understanding" and which recur in the novels to make up the "book itself,"⁶² provide

⁵⁹ Virginia Woolf, "The Intellectual Imagination," TLS, 11 Dec. 1919, p. 739.

⁶⁰ Virginia Woolf, AWD, p. 213.

⁶¹ See especially "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," and the long essay "Phases of Fiction" for her praise of Proust as opposed to "the English novelists who so frequently tell us that one way is right and the other wrong." Virginia Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," CE, II, 84.

⁶² Virginia Woolf, The Moment and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948), pp. 129-30.

such a shaping principle, a point of approach for empirical observation.

The Search for Balance in the Short Stories

This "design" or underlying organizational principle is seminal in the short stories. Each one consists of the imaginative associations of ideas, often culminating in a transcendent moment of vision when balance seems achieved between the outer and inner worlds, between what Virginia Woolf called "materialism" or "prosaic daylight" and the intuitive "rush to feeling." Sometimes, the moment of illumination is shared by a man and a woman. Viewed in this light, the stories provide interesting access to the novels, in which recurring moments of vision are patterned.

Bernard Blackstone has called Virginia Woolf's first book of short stories, Monday or Tuesday, a "mere collection of sketches."⁶³ However, Leonard Woolf emphasizes the careful revisions of the stories:

All through her life, Virginia Woolf used at intervals to write short stories. It was her custom, whenever an idea for one occurred to her, to sketch it out in a very rough form and then to put it away in a drawer. Later, if an editor asked her for a short story, and she felt in the mood to write one (which was not

⁶³ Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf (1952; rpt. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1962), p. 15.

frequent), she would take a sketch out of her drawer and rewrite it, sometimes a great many times.⁶⁴

The stories were not, to Virginia Woolf, merely rough or inconsequential fragments. They are usually given critical attention, however fleeting, because of their free association of ideas and images. Dorothy Brewster writes that they "play with stream-of-consciousness technique."⁶⁵ James Hafley, in one of the few recent studies to devote serious attention to the stories, finds that in all of them, "consciousness moves creatively."⁶⁶

But the strain of dualism throughout the stories is also striking. They consistently explore the relationship between surface appearances, the world of fact, and the intuitive perception of a deeper reality. When the search culminates in an intense moment of illumination, this is expressed in terms of unity and oneness. Other stories simply reflect this search itself.

"Monday or Tuesday," the title story of the 1921 volume, contrasts a heron's flight, "lazy and indifferent," blotting out lakes and mountains, with the trivial human

⁶⁴ Leonard Woolf, Introd., A Haunted House and Other Short Stories, by Virginia Woolf. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1949), p. 5.

⁶⁵ Dorothy Brewster, Virginia Woolf (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1962), p. 99.

⁶⁶ James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 45.

bustle taking place below. The world of prosaic daylight is marked by conflict, by fragmentation. The clock "asservates with twelve distinct strokes that it is midday." Sparks in the fireplace are "momentary." Omnibuses "conglomerate in conflict"; wheels "strike divergently." Parenthetical conversational fragments evoking the humdrum routine are reminiscent of Eliot: "(This foggy weather-- Sugar? No, thank you--The commonwealth of the future.)" These scraps are punctuated by the question, "and truth?" But the Monday or Tuesday world, "content with closeness," seems oblivious to "truth," and the heron, bound neither by the asservating clock nor by the mundane world of "scattered, squandered . . . separate scales" continues to pass overhead as "the sky veils her stars; then bares them."⁶⁷

"The Mark on the Wall," the first of the short stories printed by the Hogarth Press in 1917, also records a search for a deeper and timeless "truth." James Hafley calls it "a story about a person thinking about thinking about thinking."⁶⁸ The daydreamer's reverie, which begins with the attempt to remember when she first noticed a mark on the wall and which consists entirely of mental play, is usually mentioned as an experiment in interior monologue. But the dreamer's search for what is below the surface of

⁶⁷ Virginia Woolf, "Monday or Tuesday," A Haunted House, pp. 6-7.

⁶⁸ Hafley, p. 44.

down here, rooted in the centre of the world and gazing up through the grey waters, with their sudden gleams of light, and their reflections--if it were not for Whitaker's Almanack--if it were not for the Table of Precedency!

This story about surfaces and depths does achieve the "unity, significance, or design" which Virginia Woolf insists upon. The mark on the wall turns out to be a snail, bringing to mind the daydreamer's early thought about "that shell of a person which is seen by other people."⁶⁹

Perhaps the best-known of the stories, "Kew Gardens," also contains an intimation of reality "away from the surface." "Kew Gardens" describes a summer afternoon in the public gardens of London, focusing the reader's attention upon a flower bed, upon a snail, and upon pairs of strollers, their fragmented conversations and their thoughts. Winifred Holtby calls the technique "cinematic," as the angle of vision shifts "from high to low, from huge to microscopic, to let figures of people, insects, aeroplanes, flowers pass across the vision and melt away."⁷⁰ Jean Guiguet is also interested in the impressionistic treatment of evanescent visual imagery; he cites a 1917 review in which Virginia Woolf quotes from Arnold Bennett's

⁶⁹ Virginia Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall," A Haunted House, pp. 39-44.

⁷⁰ Holtby, Virginia Woolf, p. 111.

essay, "Neo-Impressionism and Literature": "Is it not possible that some writer will come along and do in words what these men have done in paint?"⁷¹ The constant flux of images in the story finally dissolves into color:

Yellow and black, pink and snow white, shapes of all these colours, men, women, and children were spotted for a second upon the horizon, and then, seeing the breadth of yellow that lay upon the grass, they wavered and sought shade beneath the trees, dissolving like drops of water in the yellow and green atmosphere, staining it faintly with red and blue. It seemed as if all gross and heavy bodies had sunk down in the heat motionless and lay huddled upon the ground, but their voices went wavering from them as if they were flames lolling from the thick waxen bodies of candles.

But after this, in the last sentences of the story, these voices "cried aloud" while motor omnibuses "were turning their wheels and changing their gears." The reader is brought again into the world of the noisy, bustling city, the world of Piccadilly. The tension between this world and the silent world of dissolving colors and shapes, and the attempt of the artist to contain both worlds in the short story, have perhaps been overshadowed in the critical attention given to the "cinematic" technique or to the story as experiment; Brewster feels that here, Virginia Woolf "tried out the impressionistic technique" used later in The Years.⁷² But neither "Kew Gardens" nor

⁷¹ Virginia Woolf, rev. of Books and Persons by Arnold Bennett, TLS, 5 July 1917, in Contemporary Writers, ed. Jean Guiguet, p. 10.

⁷² Brewster, Virginia Woolf, p. 149.

"The Mark on the Wall" nor "Monday or Tuesday" nor, in fact, any of the short stories, is merely aimless, experimental meandering.

While "Kew Gardens" does indeed begin with flowers, colors, and a drop of water magnified to give the snail's perspective, it is perhaps equally important that the snail, journeying across the flower bed, is endowed with human characteristics. It labors and plans:

. . . the snail . . . now appeared to be moving very slightly in its shell, and next began to labour over the crumbs of loose earth which broke away It appeared to have a definite goal in front of it

Now two pairs of human beings become the center of attention. They pass by, and then the snail again returns to focus. This time, the neuter pronoun "it" is replaced with human gender as the snail engages in deductive reasoning:

The snail had now considered every possible method of reaching his goal without going round the dead leaf or climbing over it. Let alone the effort needed for climbing a leaf, he was doubtful whether the thin texture which vibrated with such an alarming crackle when touched even by the tips of his horns would bear his weight; and this determined him finally to creep beneath it

When the "camera" shifts to human figures, they are first characterized with insect imagery:

The figures of these men and women straggled past the flower-bed with a curiously irregular movement not

unlike that of the white and blue butterflies who crossed the turf in zig-zag flights from bed to bed.

Then, they are described in terms of both butterflies and flowers:

They were both in the prime of youth, or even in that season which precedes the prime of youth, the season before the smooth pink folds of the flower have burst their gummy case, when the wings of the butterfly, though fully grown, are motionless in the sun.

The first couple, the white and blue butterflies, spend the present moment talking of the past ("for me, a square silver shoe buckle and a dragonfly. . . . For me, a kiss"). The focus then shifts to the snail, then back to human beings, then to flowers, back to the snail, and finally to the young couple who are both pink flowers and butterflies. Hence the story "Kew Gardens," without conventional plot and character development, is an effort to convey the sense of reconciliation of many worlds--the worlds of insects, of animals, of plants, of human beings young and old, male and female, of past and present, of dissolving color and silence, and the world of motor omnibuses.⁷³

The last couple among the many who pass the flower bed are "enveloped in layer after layer of green blue

⁷³ I am indebted to James Hafley for this suggestion; Hafley, p. 42.

vapor" and sense for a fleeting moment the "reality" beneath the surface. A long paragraph follows their scraps of perfunctory conversation:

Long pauses came between each of these remarks; they were uttered in toneless and monotonous voices. The couple stood still on the edge of the flower bed, and together pressed the end of her parasol deep down into the soft earth. The action and the fact that his hand rested on the top of hers expressed their feelings in a strange way, as these short insignificant words also expressed something, words with short wings for their heavy body of meaning, inadequate to carry them far and thus alighting awkwardly upon the very common objects that surrounded them, and were to their inexperienced touch so massive; but who knows (so they thought as they pressed the parasol into the earth) what precipices aren't concealed in them, or what slopes of ice don't shine on the other side? Who knows? Who has ever seen this before? Even when she wondered what sort of tea they gave you at Kew, he felt that something loomed up behind her words, and stood vast and solid behind them; and the mist very slowly rose and uncovered--O, Heavens, what were those shapes?--little white tables, and waitresses who looked first at her and then at him; and there was a bill that he would pay with a real two shilling piece, and it was real, all real, he assured himself, fingering the coin in his pocket, real to everyone except to him and to her; even to him it began to seem real; and then--but it was too exciting to stand and think any longer, and he pulled the parasol out of the earth with a jerk and was impatient to find the place where one had tea with other people, like other people.

The feeling that the words "expressed something" with a "heavy body of meaning"; the adjective "massive" in contrast with "short, insignificant" and "very common"; the glimpse of precipices and slopes of ice shining in the sun "on the other side"; the notion of something looming up "vast and solid"; the mist rising to uncover shapes--

all culminate in the need to finger the coin in one's pocket to convince oneself that it is "real," that the parasol can be pulled from the earth and that one can have tea with other people. "Real," in the sense of the world of facts, of solid objects and social actions, must be repeated again and again, because the intimation of another "reality," one that is not common or insignificant or light or fleeting, has at this moment become so strong.

The young man cannot reconcile the epiphany with his everyday routine. "Come along, Trissie; it's time we had our tea," he urges. But the passage takes a surprising turn. The girl, who had at first wondered what sort of tea she would have, has become intoxicated by the strangeness of the moment. She wanders dreaming down the path, "forgetting her tea, wishing to go down there and then down there, remembering her orchids and cranes among wild flowers, a Chinese pagoda, and a crimson crested bird"; and then, abruptly and in prosaic contrast, there follow five bold, conclusive monosyllables: ". . . but he bore her on."⁷⁴

The young man and woman cannot capture the evanescent moment of illumination, but the art of the short story

⁷⁴ Virginia Woolf, "Kew Gardens," A Haunted House, pp. 30-36.

records and holds it. Lily Briscoe speaks of such moments as "little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark";⁷⁵ James Joyce believed that "it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments."⁷⁶

In the short stories of Virginia Woolf, the play of consciousness often leads to such epiphanies, involving what Lily Briscoe also calls a momentary balance on "the razor's edge between two opposite forces."⁷⁷ Then there is an overwhelming sense of something beyond a character and his surroundings, as in the case of the young man who is at one minute absorbed with surface details and "common objects," and who then suddenly senses something "on the other side." The most rational of characters suddenly becomes intuitive, the imagination plays on facts, or granite unexpectedly reflects rainbow. In "Moments of Being," a music pupil suddenly feels that her spinsterly piano teacher has become "transparent" as she sees her transformed in a "moment of ecstasy."⁷⁸ In "The Lady in the Looking-Glass:

⁷⁵ Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927), p. 240.

⁷⁶ James Joyce, Stephen Hero, ed. Theodore Spencer, rev. John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 211.

⁷⁷ Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse, p. 287.

⁷⁸ Virginia Woolf, "Moments of Being," A Haunted House, p. 110.

A Reflection," the narrator unexpectedly realizes that she has romanticized the lady, Isabella, in her imagination. But the looking-glass, all at once, seems to "pour over her [Isabella] a light that seemed to fix her," as the narrator finally sees "only the truth" which is the precise opposite of her early and sentimental reverie.

The stories themselves embody the search for reconciliation of such opposites. Sometimes, as in "Monday or Tuesday," the juxtaposition of rational and intuitive, sense and sensibility, fact and imagination, is simply sensed and conveyed. In other stories, like "Kew Gardens," outer and inner seem to coalesce in a moment of vision. Adding a further dimension is the fact that the intense moment of illumination is sometimes shared in the stories by a man and a woman. "Together and Apart" records such a moment. Miss Annan, meeting Mr. Serle at a party, stands by the window and feels insignificant; their lives seem to be "as long as an insect's and no more important"; her conversation seems to her "perfectly commonplace." But when she mentions Canterbury to Mr. Serle, his reply ("We are originally a Norman family. . . . That is a Richard Serle buried in the Cathedral. He was a knight of the garter") suddenly causes Miss Annan to feel that "she had struck accidentally the true man, upon whom the false man was built."

Miss Annan begins to feel less "common" now, and she muses upon "the sense she had coming home of something collected there, a cluster of miracles, which she could not believe other people had." At the same time, her companion thinks of Canterbury, of "the best years of his life, all his memories, things he had never been able to tell anybody. . . . She had touched the spring. Fields and flowers and grey buildings dripped down into his mind. . . ." A snob and an unsuccessful writer, Mr. Serle says condescendingly to Miss Annan, "I suppose Canterbury was nothing but a nice old town to you. So you stayed there one summer with an aunt . . . And you saw the sights and went away and never thought of it again."

Snubbed, Miss Annan decides not to confide in Mr. Serle, but then suddenly resolves instead that "this man shall not glide away from me, like everybody else, on this false assumption; I will tell him the truth." She says, "I loved Canterbury," and, seeing him "kindle instantly," decides that Roderick Serle is "nice." The shared moment follows:

Their eyes met; collided rather, for each felt that behind the eyes the secluded being, who sits in darkness while his shallow agile companion does all the tumbling and beckoning, and keeps the show going, suddenly stood erect; flung off his cloak; confronted the other. It was alarming; it was terrific. . . . Now, quite suddenly, like a white bolt in a mist . . . there it had happened; the old ecstasy of life; its invincible assault; for it was unpleasant, at the

same time that it rejoiced and rejuvenated and filled the veins and nerves with threads of ice and fire; it was terrifying. "Canterbury twenty years ago," said Miss Annan, as one lays a shade over an intense light, or covers some burning peach with a green leaf, for it is too strong, too ripe, too full.

It seems then that the two were "so closely united that they had only to float side by side down this stream." But the moment disappears as suddenly as it had come. How did one name this, Miss Annan wonders: "That is what she felt now, the withdrawal of human affection, Serle's disappearance, and the instant need they were both under to cover up what was so desolating and degrading to human nature that everyone tried to bury it decently from sight." Miss Annan provides the "decent" burial with a commonplace remark, "Of course, whatever they may do, they can't spoil Canterbury," which Serle accepts. Separated now, isolated again in their own unhappiness, the two return from the world of vision to the world of fact, to solid objects, a coal scuttle:

And over them both came instantly that paralysing blankness of feeling, when nothing bursts from the mind, when its walls appear like slate; when vacancy almost hurts, and the eyes petrified and fixed see the same spot--a pattern, a coal scuttle--with an exactness which is terrifying, since no emotion, no idea, no impression of any kind comes to change it, to modify it, to embellish it, since the fountains of feeling seem sealed and as the mind turns rigid, so does the body. . . .

A flirt intervenes to chide Serle for ignoring her at the

opera; gratefully, then, Serle and Miss Annan "could separate," the last words of the story.⁷⁹

"Together and Apart" records the potential for a moment of vision shared by a woman and a man. In "The String Quartet," the potential for harmony between masculine and feminine principles is fully realized. Music triggers the narrator's play of consciousness and leads, finally, to a revelatory and harmonious moment of vision. At the beginning of the story, the narrator hears scraps of trivial conversation before a concert--"all the facts"--and wonders, "What chance is there . . . if the mind's shot through by such little arrows." The narrator first thinks that to the people sitting in gilt chairs at the concert, "it's all a matter of flats and hats and sea gulls," but then begins to feel that "we're all recalling something, furtively seeking something." As the string quartet begins to play, the music seems first like a fountain, then like a deep and swift river, then like "exquisite spirals in the air." The music "draws its two-fold passion from my heart." Through music, there is "consummation; the cleft ones unify; soar, sob, sink to rest, sorrow and joy."

The idea of the passion of music as two-fold, and the notion that music unifies and consummates, are expressed as sexual distinctions near the end of the concert. The music is described as a "gentleman" who is answered by a

⁷⁹ Virginia Woolf, "Together and Apart," A Haunted House, pp. 136-43.

lady: "She runs up the scale with such witty exchange of compliment now culminating in a sob of passion, that the words are indistinguishable though the meaning is plain enough--love, laughter, flight, pursuit, celestial bliss. . . ." As the concert ends, the listener "falls back" into the world of the applewoman, the bare pillars of the concert hall, and the maid who bids her, "Good night, good night. You go this way?" She replies, "Alas. I go that."⁸⁰

Here, music seems to bring a sense of resolution, of unification of what the narrator has called the "cleft ones," as the listener imagines the lady and gentleman whose exchange "culminates" in a sob of passion, of love, laughter, and celestial bliss. In "A Haunted House," the title story of the 1949 collection, male and female also achieve perfect unity. Two couples seem to the narrator to inhabit the "haunted" house, one ghostly and one living. The ghosts walk hand in hand through their former home:

Wandering through the house, opening the windows, whispering not to wake us, the ghostly couple seek their joy.

"Here we slept," she says. And he adds, "Kisses without number." "Waking in the morning - " "Silver between the trees - " "Upstairs - " "In the garden-" "When summer came - " "In winter snowtime - "

⁸⁰ Virginia Woolf, "The String Quartet," A Haunted House, pp. 22-27.

In her imagination, the narrator asks the ghosts to tell her about the "buried treasure," the "beam" or "light" which is "sunk beneath the surface." The "pulse of the house" seems to beat, first "softly," then "gladly," and finally "wildly," as the narrator, lying in bed and sensing that the ghostly couple can see her ("Sound asleep. Love upon their lips"), cries, "Oh, is this your buried treasure?" and knows that the treasure "beneath the surface of life is the love the couple shares, "the light in the heart."⁸¹

Bearing in mind that Leonard Woolf selected "A Haunted House" as the title story for the 1949 collection of Virginia Woolf's short stories, we find it interesting to read his account of their publication. He and Virginia Woolf often discussed publishing a new edition, and when he did so, in A Haunted House, two of the stories in Monday or Tuesday, the 1921 volume, were excluded. These are "A Society," which Leonard Woolf knew that she had decided not to include, and "Blue and Green," which he is "practically certain" she would have excluded.⁸²

Both of these stories veer too far toward extremes which Virginia Woolf denounced. "A Society" tells of a

⁸¹ Virginia Woolf, "A Haunted House," A Haunted House, pp. 4-5.

⁸² Leonard Woolf, Introd., A Haunted House, p. 5.

group of young women who decide to find out what the world is like by asking questions of men. They visit the Law Courts, the Royal Academy, the King's Navy, Oxford and Cambridge; they talk of men's books which tell one about the best boarding house at Brighton, and of men's intellect, which causes them to condescend to every woman they meet. Finally they decide to stop having children and wars as well.⁸³

The exact sins which Virginia Woolf ascribes to Charlotte Brontë and to Lady Winchilsea are committed here. The story is flawed throughout by the "jerk" of feminist indignation. It bursts out in indignation against the position of women." Its consistent crusade for reform is worthy of a Galsworthy. The technique is conventional, and Virginia Woolf herself would have called the story "materialistic."

The other story to be excluded, "Blue and Green," has been called "an undistinguished prose poem" by James Hafley.⁸⁴ Hafley is perhaps generous. The story is an inchoate list of images. In "Green," parakeet feathers and green needles glitter in the sun, "the frog flops over," and "the shadow sweeps the green over the mantelpiece."

⁸³ Virginia Woolf, "A Society," Monday or Tuesday (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1921), pp. 9-41.

⁸⁴ Hafley, p. 46.

In "Blue," "strokes of blue" line a sea monster's hide; he sheds "dry blue scales." A wrecked row boat has "blue ribs" and "blue bells" ring out from a cathedral. Except for color, the two short paragraphs lack the "unity, significance, or design" which Virginia Woolf found so necessary even for the "spiritual" Mr. Joyce.

But the rest of the stories maintain a balance between these two extremes. In each of them, an awareness of opposing forces is conveyed; in many, the associations of ideas lead to a balancing of the elements, to a moment of vision in which there is harmony between inner and outer. Dorothy Brewster calls this the "aim" of much of Virginia Woolf's writing: "This harmony, when achieved at rare moments, is the perfect flowing together of the stream of consciousness and the stream of events."⁸⁵

The intuition of the spiritual Mr. Joyce illuminates the external data supplied by the Edwardians: this is for Virginia Woolf the goal of the writer. She would discourage the current exclusively feminist reading of her work for the same reason that she wished to exclude "A Society" from the new short story collection. On the other hand, she would disapprove of overemphasis on her stream-of-consciousness" technique as simply suggestive, subjective,

⁸⁵ Dorothy Brewster, Virginia Woolf's London (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1960), p. 30.

diaphanous and ephemeral, because such a reading overlooks her underlying organizational principles, her own "unity, significance, or design."

The suggestions of Quentin Bell and David Daiches seem especially trenchant here. We recall their saying that Virginia Woolf viewed the world in terms of opposing forces: rational vs. intuitive, practical vs. aesthetic, sense vs. sensibility, fact vs. imagination, prose vs. poetry. These opposites are representative of the paternal and maternal sides of her heritage. Throughout her two long essays, A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas, she does indeed equate the rational faculties with the masculine principle and the intuitive faculties with the feminine principle. In her stories, we have seen that the search for equilibrium between opposites can often lead to a moment of balance. How natural, then, that when the opposites are reconciled, masculine and feminine are also united in vision. "Together and Apart," "The String Quartet," and "A Haunted House" all involve the possibility of attaining a state of mind in which disparate elements, specifically masculine and feminine, become one. The possibility for this ideal unity is aborted in "Together and Apart"; it is suggested by music in "The String Quartet"; it is actually experienced and shared in "A Haunted House." In its entirety, Virginia Woolf's fiction

probes the relationship between opposing forces which she saw as masculine and feminine, and the potential for achieving such balance.

Sometimes this reconciliation of opposites is simply social; more often, an individual attempts to reconcile what Virginia Woolf viewed as the masculine and feminine sides of his nature. When this balance is achieved in a transcendent moment of vision, when in Virginia Woolf's phrase the "whole universe seems brought to order," the quality of this moment, which constitutes an underlying principle of her fiction, is therefore necessarily androgynous.

CHAPTER II
THE ANDROGYNOUS IDEAL

We have stated that Virginia Woolf's quest as a writer involves the search for balance on the "razor edge . . . between two opposite forces," and that she believes that art can, for a fleeting moment of wholeness, bring the opposites into a balance yielding insight. Her awareness of the fundamental dualism has been called "supernormal";¹ her search is intense. Because her sensibility recoils from extreme positions, her aim is often to correct unequal balance. Her critical method is marked by qualification: she makes a sweeping generalization and then modifies this extreme original stance. The writing of her own fiction involves a search for stylistic balance: Jane Novak, in a detailed study of the working notes for the novels, has shown that in the revisions, "ordered and disordered" mental action is later supported by structural forms and that many revisions are made in the interest of "controlling emotion," of "greater formality and hence distancing," and of "economy and density and authorial restraint."²

¹ Jane Novak, The Razor Edge of Balance: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1975), p. xi.

² Novak, pp. 55, 80, 59.

Moreover, Virginia Woolf's desire for a balancing of opposites often results in her fiction in an examination of the possibility of reconciling what she saw as the masculine and feminine sides of the mind. Her novels record a search for such a unity, an ideal condition which she herself discusses in terms of androgyny. From the Greek words andros, "man," and gyne, "woman," androgyny defines a condition under which the qualities of the two sexes are not rigidly classified; they are, in fact, reconciled. Coleridge wrote, "The truth is, a great mind must be androgynous."³ The appeal that this idea held for Virginia Woolf is partially explained by a brief examination of her parental heritage as it relates to her artistic choices.

Victorian Patriarchy and the Stephen Family

Walter Houghton's analysis of the Victorian family provides an interesting gloss to descriptions of the household of Sir Leslie Stephen. The best-known Victorian conception of womanhood, Houghton explains, was that of the "submissive wife whose whole excuse for being was to love, honour, obey--and amuse--her lord and master, and to manage his household and bring up his children."⁴ In addition, she

³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. H. N. Coleridge (New York: Harper and Bros., 1835), II, 51.

⁴ Walter Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1957), p. 348.

was to guide and spiritually uplift her more worldly husband; she was to make of the home a temple, a school of virtue. From a standard Victorian marriage manual, Houghton quotes the admonition that a woman should be "a companion who will raise the tone of his mind from . . . low anxieties, and vulgar cares," and who will "lead his thoughts to expiate or repose on those subjects which convey a feeling of identity with a higher state of existence beyond this present life."⁵

The worship of woman as well as patriarchal tyranny is exemplified in Leslie Stephen's attitude toward his wife. In his essay, "Forgotten Benefactors," he writes of his wife Julia:

A lofty nature which has profited by passing through the furnace acquires claims not only upon our love but upon our reverence. . . . We cannot attempt to calculate the value of this spiritual force which has moulded our lives, which has helped by a simple consciousness of its existence to make us gentler, nobler, and purer in our thoughts of the world . . . [and] which has constantly set before us a loftier ideal than we could frame for ourselves.

"That man is unfortunate," Stephen concludes, "who has not a saint of his own."⁶ His first biographer, F. W. Maitland, records Stephen's praise for Julia's "devotion to her duties"

⁵ Mrs. Sara Ellis, The Wives of England: Their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations (London, 1843), pp. 99-100, as quoted by Houghton, p. 351.

⁶ Sir Leslie Stephen, Social Rights and Duties (London: Swan, Sonnenschein, 1896), II, 256.

and his descriptions of his wife's "unwearying kindness" as providing the "greatest of comforts," and remembers that a close friend of the Stephens, William Kingdon Clifford, described Julia as "looking like the Madonna" when she and Leslie told him of their approaching marriage.⁷

Noel Annan succinctly summarizes Stephen's veneration for Julia and his tyranny: "He worshipped Julia, desired to transform her into an apotheosis of motherhood, but treated her in the home as someone who should be at his beck and call, support him in every emotional crisis, order the minutiae of his life and then submit to his criticism in those household matters of which she was mistress."⁸ Quentin Bell suggests that Julia Stephen exhausted herself for her husband:

. . . Julia lived chiefly for her husband; everyone needed her but he needed her most. With his temperament and his necessities this was too great a task for even the most heroic of wives; his health and his happiness had to be secured; she had to listen to and to partake in his worries about money, about his work and his reputation, about the management of the household; he had to be fortified and protected from the world. He was, as he himself said, a skinless man, so nothing was to touch him save her soothing and healing

⁷ Frederick William Maitland, The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen (London: Duckworth and Co., 1906), pp. 430, 312, 324.

⁸ Noel Gilroy Annan, Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), p. 99.

hand. . . . And so she exhausted herself . . . [and] at length her physical resistance burnt out.⁹

The patriarchal tyrant and the submissive, self-sacrificing woman represent for Virginia Woolf extreme polarities from which she recoiled. At the age of ten, she completely reversed the Victorian stereotypes in two short novels written for the Hyde Park Gate News, a handwritten family newspaper. A Cockney's Farming Experiences records the tribulations of a cockney farmer whose shrewish wife Harriet laughs at him "spitefully," scolds his "unmercifully," and drives him out of the house with "her continued nag, nag, nag."¹⁰ Harriet ignores her husband's feigned illness and rejoices when he seems to be dying. She "reforms" in the last chapter because the farmer inherits a small fortune.

In the sequel, The Experiences of a Pater-familias, Harriet still dominates her timid spouse. She prevails in her choice of a name for their baby; her husband hates the name "Alphonso" but meekly acquiesces. Harriet insists that her husband submit to the child's whims: "I am made to give in to him in every thing. If he wants me to be his horse, down I have to go on my hands and knees,"

⁹ Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972), I, 38.

¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, A Cockney's Farming Experiences and The Experiences of a Pater-familias [Probable date, 1892] (San Diego: San Diego State Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 1-2.

Farmer John laments. "I now look upon the nursery as a cage where I am made to perform compulsory tricks. . . ." ¹¹

Like A Cockney's Farming Experiences, The Experiences of a Pater-familias is swamped with Harriet's demands and admonitions. Suzanne Henig wonders if ten-year-old Virginia Stephen might have read about such a marriage in a novel or magazine, or whether she could have observed one first-hand. ¹² At any rate, Virginia Woolf's juvenile writing clearly underscores her reaction to the polarization of roles in the traditional Victorian marriage.

In 1905, Virginia Woolf began to review books for The Times Literary Supplement. She records another effort to correct the Victorian imbalance in her description of a phantom which had to be vanquished before she could write her first book review:

And the phantom was a woman, and when I came to know her better I called her after the heroine of a famous poem, The Angel in the House. It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her. . . . I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it--in short she was so constituted

¹¹ Woolf, A Cockney's Farming Experiences, p. 5.

¹² Suzanne Henig, Introd., A Cockney's Farming Experiences, p. vi.

that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all--I need not say it--she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty--her blushes, her great grace. In those days--the last of Queen Victoria--every house had its Angel. And when I came to write I encountered her with the very first words. The shadow of her wings fell on my page; I heard the rustling of her skirts in the room. Directly, that is to say, I took my pen in hand to review that novel by a famous man, she slipped behind me and whispered: "My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure." And she made as if to guide my pen.¹³

Comparing Julia, the angel of Leslie Stephen's household, to her husband, Annan states flatly, "His wife was more remarkable than he." Annan speaks of Julia's "exquisite sensibility" and of the "extraordinary degree" of her ability to apprehend the children's feelings. Sir Leslie, on the other hand, "lacked the patience and imagination to understand them as boys and girls."¹⁴ Annan helps us to see why Virginia Woolf so clearly equated the feminine principle with intuition and the masculine principle with ratiocination:

She [Julia] responded to other people's feelings instinctively; she could heal a child's wound before it was given, and read thoughts before they were uttered,

¹³ Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women," Collected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967), II, 285; hereafter cited as CE.

¹⁴ Annan, pp. 100-101.

and her sympathy was like the touch of a butterfly . . . for she knew what it was to live an inner life. . . . Leslie thought himself a practical man but beside her he was a ninny. Leslie thought himself a friend in need, but she knew how to translate sympathy into action. Leslie ploughed furrows of ratiocination to reach conclusions, she had intuitively reached them and acted upon them before he arrived. Thus he was for ever trampling upon her feelings, wounding the person who comforted him. . . .¹⁵

Annan traces Stephen's zeal for "ploughing furrows of ratiocination" to the influential intellectual companionship of Henry Fawcett, a utilitarian who "distrusted ambiguity" and who was "uninterested in science, theology, or the arts."¹⁶ Stephen and Fawcett adhered to the Cambridge rationalist tradition. F. W. Maitland explains that they valued "a hard-headed commonsense that detects humbug and imposture and sentimentalism in many quarters."¹⁷ Furthermore, as Annan comments, the Cambridge rationalists believed that "they, not the speculative theologians, did most to improve human nature."¹⁸ From associationist

¹⁵ Annan, p. 101.

¹⁶ Annan, pp. 41-42

¹⁷ Maitland, p. 170. In a letter to her sister Vanessa, Virginia Woolf speaks of the depression of a middle-aged friend as a direct result of his Cambridge education. "This is a judgment upon Cambridge," she writes. "You lose all generosity, and all power of imagination. Moreover, you inevitably become a complete egoist." Virginia Woolf, Letter to Vanessa Bell, 13 Nov. 1918, Berg Collection, New York Public Library, as quoted by Novak, p. 9.

¹⁸ Annan, p. 149.

psychology, they deduced the notion that human nature could be improved: Every human thought springs from individual experience; therefore, education alone will make man good. A child who is rewarded for good behavior will, by the association of ideas, grow up to realize that, as Annan explains, "his own happiness depends upon the degree to which he promotes the happiness of others."¹⁹

In this respect, the Cambridge rationalists were in diametrical opposition to a school of thought which Julia Stephen might have espoused: the intuitionist school. As Annan describes them, the intuitionists insisted upon the primacy of "judgments and perceptions, not ideas." They believed that man differs from the beasts by dint of "special faculties that enable him intuitively to perceive the difference between right and wrong."²⁰ In the prosaic daylight of Stephen's intellectual positivism, which stressed the primacy of individual experience and man's rationalistic deductions therefrom, this intuitionist emphasis upon perceptions rather than ideas seemed "morbid." Stephen called the tendency to introspection "morbid" and also stated that "sensitive . . . is a polite word for 'morbid.'"²¹

¹⁹ Annan, p. 149.

²⁰ Annan, p. 150. I owe to Annan the illustrations from Stephen that follow.

²¹ Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (London: Duckworth and Co., 1904), p. 350.

This stricture is telling, for it demonstrates the extent to which Stephen's thinking is imbued with the Victorian masculine ideal. "Morbid," Annan explains, is for Stephen "the opposite of masculine."²² Stephen felt that men must be manly, and his conception of the word permeates his writings. For example, he praises Trollope as a "sturdy" man. Trollope's stoic acceptance of the world of his childhood is admirable, for "a more sensitive and reflective nature [would have revolted] against morality in general or [met] tyranny by hypocrisy and trickery."²³ In contrast, the sensitive and introspective temperaments of Rousseau, Keats, and Shelley, are to Stephen effeminate.²⁴ Annan records Stephen's criticism of Adrian, the son Julia most adored; Stephen writes that the boy was "oddly dreamy and apt to take a great interest in things which are impractical."²⁵ Annan notes that in Stephen's mind, the English undergraduate, playing cricket and rowing, was infinitely superior to the philosophizing German students or the French intellectuals arguing about politics and art.²⁶

²² Annan, p. 226.

²³ Leslie Stephen, Studies of a Biographer (London: Duckworth and Co., 1898), IV, 205, 176.

²⁴ Stephen, Studies of a Biographer, III, 47.

²⁵ Stephen, in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton, 25 Aug. 1895, as quoted by Annan, p. 101.

²⁶ Annan, p. 38.

Stephen awards highest marks to Macaulay, a man who "grasps facts with unequalled tenacity" and "shoulders his way successfully through the troubles of the Universe." Macaulay may "trample upon acute sensibilities," but he is "not to be trifled with." Stephen forgives Macaulay "a certain brutal insularity" because "he is a thoroughly manly writer . . . combative to a fault." Macaulay is "proud of the healthy vigorous stock from which he springs; and the fervour of his enthusiasm, though it may shock a delicate taste, has embodied itself in writings which will long continue to be typical illustrations of which we are all proud at bottom. . . ." ²⁷

Houghton calls this worship of the idol of manliness a tradition of the "English squirearchy, with its admiration for physical strength and prowess," and it is not surprising that Houghton has chosen Leslie Stephen to illustrate the Victorian "worship of force." ²⁸

Three Guineas

Virginia Woolf's reaction to the extreme which her father represents is voiced most explicitly in the feminist tract Three Guineas (1938), where she writes of women as victims of masculine aggression, of the patriarchal tyrants

²⁷ Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), II, 375-76.

²⁸ Houghton, p. 202.

who assume "the right . . . to dictate to other human beings how they shall live, what they shall do."²⁹ The book takes the form of a letter written to an attorney, "practical and busy," who has asked how war is to be prevented. Virginia Woolf's answer makes clear her definition of masculinity. "To fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's," she insists. Men "fight to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share"; furthermore, most men-- "a great majority of your sex"--favor war (pp. 8, 11).

Before Virginia Woolf can contribute to the attorney's society for the prevention of war, she must give a guinea to a fund for rebuilding a certain women's college. Graduates will, she hopes, be able to correct the imbalance in the state, which at this point excludes women from holding national office, thereby favoring masculine qualities of pugnacity and greed. This college will offset the effects of Cambridge, which has "stimulated great manufacturers to endow it, taken a leading part in the invention of the implements of war," and fostered its students' "success in business as capitalists" (p. 48). Unlike Cambridge, the new college will refuse to teach "the arts of dominating other people; not the arts of ruling, of killing, of acquiring . . . land and capital." Instead,

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1938), p. 80. Subsequent references to Three Guineas in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

the women's college will teach "the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people's lives and minds. . ." The aim of the new college "should be not to segregate and specialize, but to combine. It would explore the ways in which mind and body can be made to co-operate, discover what new combinations make good wholes in life" (p. 50).

Her second guinea goes to a society for helping women enter the professions. Again, an imbalance must be corrected. Professional life now has great "cash value," but successful professional men have lost their sight "(they have no time to look at pictures)," their hearing "(they have no time for conversation)," and their sense of proportion, "the relations between one thing and another . . ." (pp. 109-10). Women will bring to the professions their intuition, "the little instrument" upon which they can depend in personal relationships. This will help them to make subtle distinctions between "real" and "unreal" loyalties (or pride in nationality, religion, college, family, and sex) and difficult decisions (how much wealth is desirable, how much learning is desirable). Like Antigone, contemporary women will distinguish between the laws and the Law. Antigone's words, "'tis not my nature to join in hating, but in loving," are worth "all the sermons of all the archbishops" (pp. 123-24).

When she considers giving the third guinea, which will go to the attorney's society to prevent war, Virginia

Woolf explicitly links "the tyranny of the patriarchal state" with "the tyranny of the Fascist state" (p. 156). Her tone is shrill³⁰ as she addresses the lawyer:

And abroad the monster has come more openly to the surface. There is no mistaking him there. He has widened his scope. He is interfering now with your liberty; he is dictating how you shall live; he is making distinctions not merely between the sexes, but between the races. You are feeling in your own persons what your mothers felt when they were shut up, because they were women. Now you are being shut out, you are being shut up, because you are Jews, because you are democrats, because of race, because of religion. . . . The whole iniquity of dictatorship, whether in Oxford or Cambridge, in Whitehall or Downing Street, against Jews or against women, in England or in Germany, in Italy or in Spain, is now apparent to you. (pp. 156-57)

Although she refuses to sign the lawyer's petition, she finally gives a guinea as a free gift. First, however, she proposes that women in the professions form a new order, the Society of Outsiders, which will dispense with "dictated, required, official pageantry, in which only one sex takes an active part," do away with medals and ribbons, and

³⁰ Quentin Bell explains that the book was written "to let off steam." In April, 1935, E. M. Forster had told her that the Committee of the London Library was considering admitting ladies as members. "Virginia supposed that she was about to be invited to serve; but she was not," Bell relates. "Having raised her expectations Forster proceeded to disappoint them. Ladies were troublesome, ladies were impossible, the Committee wouldn't hear of it. Virginia was furious. . . ." The incident provided "new impetus" for the idea of a book which would "hit back at what seemed to her the tyrannous hypocrisy of men." She first called it On Being Despised. Bell, Virginia Woolf, II, 191.

eliminate all ceremonies that "encourage the desire to impose 'our' civilisation or 'our' dominion upon other people" (pp. 173, 166). Instead, women will instruct young people in the arts of peace, and encourage what Virginia Woolf calls "private" beauty: "the beauty of spring, summer, autumn; the beauty of flowers, silks, clothes; the beauty which brims not only every field and wood but every barrow in Oxford Street; the scattered beauty which needs only to be combined by artists in order to become visible to all" (p. 173).

This stress upon combining what is "scattered" is crucial to Three Guineas. Bernard Blackstone calls this Virginia Woolf's "least genial work" and finds it marred by "explosions of spleen";³¹ we have seen that it does descend to feminist harangue. However, the essential movement of Three Guineas is toward unity and co-operation. We remember that the aim of the new college is not to segregate and specialize, but to combine, and that Antigone joins in loving. Near the end of Three Guineas, Virginia Woolf writes that "the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected; the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other We are not passive spectators doomed to unresisting

³¹ Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf (1952; rpt. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1962), p. 31.

obedience. . . . A common interest unites us; it is one world, one life" (p. 217). She discards the very word "feminist" in favor of the mutuality of an androgynous ideal: "'Feminist,' if it means only 'one who champions the rights of women,' is now a dead word, a corrupt word." Virginia Woolf burns this word, and "the air is cleared." In the clearer air of the present, she sees "men and women working together for the same cause--the rights of all, all men and women" (p. 155).

Bloomsbury

Pleading for the spirit of reconciliation between the sexes, Virginia Woolf is in Three Guineas concerned with the androgynous ideal in the social arena. In Bloomsbury, she found such social equilibrium. She and her sister Vanessa had literally performed as "angels in the house" of Leslie Stephen from the time he became quite ill in 1902 until his death in 1904. Then, six months later, after twenty-two years of Victorian patriarchy, Virginia Stephen got out from under. She, Vanessa, Thoby, and Adrian Stephen moved to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. Thoby's Cambridge friends began to visit, and evenings of conversations with gifted young intellectuals followed. Early members of the group, in addition to the Stephens, were John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Duncan Grant, Leonard Woolf, E. M. Forster, Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, Roger Fry, and

Clive Bell, who married Vanessa in 1907.³² J. K. Johnstone calls the group "a society of equals," and asserts that "as an artist or as an individual," Virginia Woolf "could scarcely have found a more suitable milieu."³³ In Bloomsbury, the androgynous ideal was realized socially: segregation by sex was considered "one of the sins of the Victorian age."³⁴ Quentin Bell in his recent study, Bloomsbury, summarizes: "Women were on a completely equal footing with men."³⁵

Leslie Stephen would have been appalled. For him, Annan notes, "the slightest androgynous taint must be condemned or satisfactorily explained."³⁶ Stephen criticizes Cleopatra for her portion of "the masculine temperament" and forgives George Eliot her "masculine" intelligence only because she creates women in need of "manly confession." Mill, because he tries to minimize the differences between the sexes, lacks virility and needs "some red blood infused

³² J. K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group: A Study of E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, and their Circle (New York: Noonday Press, 1954), p. 1. See also Annan, p. 123, and Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 14.

³³ Johnstone, p. 17.

³⁴ Johnstone, p. 33.

³⁵ Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 42.

³⁶ Annan, p. 224.

into his veins"; Mill is not, like Stephen, "a man of ordinary flesh and blood, who had grounded his opinions, not upon books, but upon actual experience of life."³⁷

But now, what Leslie Stephen condemned as androgynous--women who partake of the "masculine temperament, or men who display sensitive or introspective natures--was realized for his daughter in the Bloomsbury group, where both sexes met on equal terms. Moreover, the equilibrium or the androgynous balance that Virginia Woolf found in Bloomsbury was more than merely social. Bloomsbury, Johnstone writes, believed in "reason . . . leavened or balanced by sensitiveness and a love of beauty. . . . Rationalism and sensibility, reason and intuition, must go hand in hand."³⁸ Johnstone's assessment of "the great strength of Bloomsbury's aesthetics" underscores its importance to Virginia Woolf's development as a writer:

. . . it asserts that sensibility and intellect are equally necessary to the artist. . . . The artist must be androgynous, with the sensibility of a woman and the intellect of a man, and . . . with the prejudices of neither. The artist's business, Bloomsbury believes, is to use his intellect and sensibility to construct works that will satisfy us both for their aesthetic unity and for the vision of life which they give us.³⁹

³⁷ Stephen, Hours in a Library, II, 167; III, 222; The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephens, bart. (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1895), pp. 316-17.

³⁸ Johnstone, p. 17.

³⁹ Johnstone, p. 93.

In a sense, Bloomsbury served Virginia Woolf not only as intellectual climate but as a conduit, bringing to her the important influence of G. E. Moore. At Cambridge in 1902, Thoby Stephen, Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Lytton Strachey, and John Maynard Keynes had formed a "Society" which, in Keynes's words, was "dominated" by their reading and discussion of G. E. Moore's Principia Ethica.⁴⁰ Johnstone finds that Bloomsbury's beliefs were "nearly all derived from Moore," and regards the whole of Bloomsbury's philosophy as a development of this central passage from Principia Ethica:

By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects. . . . it is only for the sake of these things--in order that as much of them as possibly may at some time exist--that anyone can be justified in performing any public or private duty; . . . they are the raison d'être of virtue; . . . it is they . . . that form the rational ultimate end of human action and the sole criterion of social progress. . . .⁴¹

Elsewhere, Moore calls these states of consciousness "states of mind." Johnstone explains that for the younger generation, Moore's view represented a badly needed

⁴⁰ John Maynard Keynes, Two Memoirs (London: Hart-Davis, 1949), pp. 84, 97, as quoted by Annan, p. 124, and Johnstone, p. 20.

⁴¹ George Edward Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1922), as quoted by Johnstone, p. 41.

revision of materialistic and utilitarian Victorian values. For Virginia Woolf, it represented an aesthetic development in the direction of the more intuitive and imaginative aspects of her maternal heritage, and away from her father's pragmatism. It is, in fact, Leslie Stephen whom René Wellek offers as a prime example of a literary historian who "thought of literature as completely determined by its social background." Stephen, says Wellek, held this view in an "extreme form."⁴² F. W. Maitland writes, "I have heard him [Stephen] maintain that philosophical thought and imaginative literature can have no history, since they are but a sort of by-product of social evolution, or as he once put it, 'the noise that the wheels make as they go round.'"⁴³

Annan succinctly summarizes the contrasting philosophy which Bloomsbury espoused: "With the help of G. E. Moore's philosophy they created an ethical justification for art for art's sake. . . . From Moore's ethics, they learnt that nothing mattered but 'states of mind.' A state of mind such as being in love, or apprehending beauty, was to be judged by itself and without regard to its consequences,

⁴² René Wellek, Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), p. 155.

⁴³ Maitland, p. 283.

and salvation was to be obtained by communion with objects of love, beauty and truth."⁴⁴

The experience of this communion was regarded as an end in itself. Desmond MacCarthy writes of Bloomsbury's concern for "those parts of experience which could be regarded as ends in themselves. . . . The tendency was for the stress to fall on feeling rightly rather than upon action."⁴⁵ We have seen that Virginia Woolf criticizes the Edwardian novels that seem to prompt us to action; Johnstone relates this Bloomsbury stricture to her "moments of vision." Her artistic vision, he explains, encompasses both "a realization of the truth that an individual mind can experience only a fragment of time and space" and a concern "not with action or with the consequences of action, with power or with the practical affairs of life . . . but . . . only with understanding":

She stripped from the outside world the veil that the active life imposes. And, above all, she shows us in her books, as fully as she can, what her experience of living was--not her experience of life, which, in popular usage . . . means . . . a guide to action. . . . The emotions and intuitions . . . in her novels are valid because Virginia Woolf experienced them. . . . She does not say to us: "Here is universal truth. Act accordingly." She says, rather: "This is what I have experienced . . . Understanding, not action, is required."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Annan, p. 124.

⁴⁵ Desmond MacCarthy, Portraits (London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1949), p. 164, as quoted by Annan, p. 126.

⁴⁶ Johnstone, p. 152.

The reader's understanding of the artist's communication of his moment of vision: this was the subject of Virginia Woolf's twenty-five year dialogue with Roger Fry, a second major Bloomsbury influence. Jean Guiguet notes that their friendship involved an exploration of "the relations between art and reality, the resources of composition with all its elements and their connections: structures, balances, motifs."⁴⁷ In "An Essay in Aesthetics," first published in the New Quarterly in 1909, Fry insists, like Moore, upon the autonomy of art. "Art is not to be used but to be regarded and enjoyed," Fry insists. Morality appreciates emotion by the standard of the resultant action. Art appreciates emotion in and for itself."⁴⁸

Fry also argues that exact representation, mere photographic accuracy, will preclude the possibility of considering the vital, organic interrelationships which a work of art should embody, and which the viewer, his power of perception "heightened" by contemplation of the painting, must experience. For example, he criticizes Daumier's "Gare St. Lazare" because the detailed "dramatic incidents" of the painting preclude consideration of its "plastic relations," therefore resulting in "a failure in plastic

⁴⁷ Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), p. 154.

⁴⁸ Roger Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design (New York: Brentano's, 1920), p. 37.

completeness." Pieter Brueghel the Elder's "Christ Carrying the Cross," while it contains "separate psychological elements" that characterize "some dramatic literature," nevertheless subordinates "plastic" to "psychological aspects" and is therefore merely "pure illustration." Fry concludes the essay with a consideration of Rembrandt, whose "psychological imagination" was "sublime" and whose "plastic constructions are equally supreme."⁴⁹

Virginia Woolf makes similar judgments as a literary critic. E. M. Forster's The Longest Journey is weak symbolically, she states, because the realistic narrative is too dense. The opposition between "truth" and "untruth," between Cambridge and Sawston, is overly "accentuated": "He builds his Sawston of thicker bricks and destroys it with stronger bricks."⁵⁰ Here, the "vital, organic interrelationship" fails to attain unity: "We are often aware of contrary currents that run counter to each other and prevent the book from bearing down upon us and overwhelming us with the authority of a masterpiece. Yet if there is one gift more essential to a novelist than another, it is the power of combination--the single vision."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Roger Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," in Transformations: Critical and Speculative Essays on Art (New York: Brentano's, 1926), pp. 15-16, 21. I owe to Jane Novak the reference to this essay.

⁵⁰ Virginia Woolf, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," CE, I, 344.

⁵¹ Virginia Woolf, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," CE, I, 344-45.

Roger Fry's analysis of what he calls the "emotional elements of design" leads to the conclusion that art must achieve in this single vision a unity that is more than the sum of its parts. Rhythm of line, mass, space, light and shade, and color combine with "the presentation of natural appearance" for "an indefinitely heightened" effect. The artist must "give first of all order and variety in the sensuous plane," and then must "arrange the sensuous presentment of objects so that the emotional elements are elicited with an order and appropriateness altogether beyond what Nature herself provides."⁵²

Fry, then, shifts attention from the representational or decorative elements in a painting to the nonrepresentational elements--to the unity of design which communicates the artist's grasp of "the substratum of all the emotional colours of life," of "something which underlies all the particular and specialised emotions," and of his "revelation of an emotional significance in time and space."⁵³

Virginia Woolf finds this idea congenial to her theory of fiction also. In her introduction to the Modern Library edition of Mrs. Dalloway, she stresses the importance of "the effect of the book as a whole on his [the reader's]

⁵² Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," pp. 33-36 passim; p. 37.

⁵³ Roger Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis (London: Hogarth Press, 1924), p. 19.

mind."⁵⁴ He must, while reading, build up what she calls elsewhere "the architecture of the whole."⁵⁵ When the reader finishes the book, he should see the whole and simultaneously feel the impact of the book in its entirety. Describing the power of the great novels of the past, she writes:

From the first page we feel our minds trained upon a point which becomes more and more perceptible as the book proceeds and the writer brings his conception out of darkness. At last, the whole is exposed to view. And then, when the book is finished, we seem to see it . . . something girding it about like the firm road of Defoe's storytelling; or we see it shaped and symmetrical with dome and column complete, like Pride and Prejudice and Emma. A power which is not the power of accuracy or of humour or of pathos is . . . used by the great novelists to shape their work. As the pages are turned, something is built up which is not the story itself.⁵⁶

From even a cursory comparison, we can see clearly that Virginia Woolf owes much to Fry, especially her sense of architectonics, of the power of design to provide the reader's pleasure, and her emphasis upon art's communication of the experience of a momentary and harmonious vision.

But she was to decide, finally, that Fry's aesthetic theories were not entirely applicable to fiction. For

⁵⁴ Virginia Woolf, Introd., Mrs. Dalloway (New York: Modern Library, 1928), p. viii.

⁵⁵ Virginia Woolf, "De Quincey's Autobiography," CE, IV, 4.

⁵⁶ Virginia Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," CE, II, 100-01.

the daughter of Leslie Stephen, Fry's aesthetics represented too drastic a sweep of the pendulum; she sought equilibrium in a position somewhat closer to the center. Addressing a group of psychoanalysts, Fry had contrasted popular art that overflows from dreams of sexual triumphs with pure art, which should not offer satisfactions of fantasy but rather the satisfactions of contemplating "inevitable sequences. . . . logical constructions united by logical inevitability."⁵⁷ He went on in that address to discuss the novel solely in terms of design and texture; he seems to look everywhere for what he calls "interesting plastic sequences."⁵⁸ Virginia Woolf finds that this theory of criticism exaggerates the importance of spatial structuring and pure aesthetic patterning. In her biography of Fry, she states simply that "he was not what is called a safe guide" as a critic of literature. She takes issue with his statements that "the only meanings that are worth anything in a work of art are those that the artist himself knows nothing about," and that the artist's own ideas and emotions "must not be central to an art form."⁵⁹ For the equilibrist Virginia Woolf, ideas and emotions are indeed central to art, and therefore to her communication

⁵⁷ Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 19.

⁵⁸ Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," p. 17.

⁵⁹ Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., Inc., 1940), pp. 240-41.

of the experience of the harmonious revelatory moment of vision. An excellent example of this--of the moment as aesthetic experience as well as idea--is provided in the last chapter of her best-known prose essay.

A Room of One's Own

A Room of One's Own (1929) culminates in a significant moment of vision which not only invites the reader to share an experience, but serves as the vehicle for expression of the androgynous ideal. The moment is carefully and artfully prepared for. At first, the book seems similar to Three Guineas, sharing the themes of women's education and independence, with the emphasis in A Room of One's Own falling upon the subjugation of women writers. Virginia Woolf rails against "the patriarch who has to conquer, who has to rule," who must feel that "great numbers of people, half the human race indeed, are by nature inferior to himself."⁶⁰ Masculine tyranny is again discussed in terms of imbalance or lack of proportion:

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. Without that power probably the earth would still be swamp and

⁶⁰ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1957), p. 34. Subsequent references to A Room of One's Own in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

jungle. The glories of all our wars would be unknown. . . . Whatever may be their use in civilised societies, mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action. That is why Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge. That serves to explain in part the necessity that women so often are to men. . . . For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished. How is he to go on giving judgment, civilising natives, making laws, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and at dinner at least twice the size he really is? (pp. 35-36)

As in Three Guineas, Virginia Woolf goes on in A Room of One's Own to argue for balance and reconciliation. She warns against hatred and bitterness toward men in general: "It was absurd to blame any class or any sex, as a whole" (p. 38). Moreover, women's continued resentment of male domination can engender disabling anger: an embittered woman writer will "write in a rage when she should write calmly. She will write foolishly when she should write wisely. She will write of herself when she should write of her characters" (p. 73).

This is not to say that women should write like men. The minds of men and women differ, as does their creative power. Women have an "intricate" and "highly developed creative faculty" which differs greatly from the creative power of men. "It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, for if two sexes are quite inadequate, how should we manage

with one only? Ought not education to bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities?" (p. 91).

Hopeful about the situation of the contemporary female writer, Virginia Woolf offers a "new" novel by an imaginary novelist, Mary Carmichael. Reading Life's Adventures, Virginia Woolf finds much to praise. Men were no longer to Mary Carmichael "the opposing faction." "Fear and hatred were almost gone" in her work. Her woman's sensibility was "very wide, eager, and free." As Virginia Woolf describes the creative power that the contemporary woman brings to her fiction, we are reminded of her description of woman's sensitive "instrument" in Three Guineas:

[Her] sensibility . . . responded to an almost imperceptible touch on it. It feasted like a plant newly stood in the air on every sight and sound that came its way. It ranged, too, very subtly and curiously, among almost unknown or unrecorded things; it lighted on small things and showed that perhaps they were not small after all. It brought buried things to light and made one wonder what need there had been to bury them. . . . She wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself. (p. 96)

Virginia Woolf contrasts Mary Carmichael's lack of sex consciousness to the "purely masculine orgies" of Galsworthy and Kipling, who write books that "celebrate male virtues, enforce male values and describe the world of men," and therefore seem written "only with the male

side of their brains" (pp. 106, 105). While these books lack "suggestive power," too many books written by women are rife with bitterness, fear, and protest. The fault, she concludes, lies with both sexes.

Now Virginia Woolf realizes that up to this point she has been thinking too much of one sex as distinct from the other. She sees that the fault lies with neither sex exclusively; her analysis of Mary Carmichael's novel serves as preparation for her discussion of androgyny in the final chapter of the book. However, there is one other vital requirement for "Mary Carmichael." Not only must she, as a writer, be "unconscious" of her sex, but she must "face herself with 'a situation,'" with a significant moment:

And I meant by that until she proved by summoning, beckoning, and getting together that she was not a skimmer of surfaces merely, but had looked beneath into the depths. Now is the time, she would say to herself at a certain moment, when without doing anything violent I can show the meaning of all this. (p. 97)

The "beckoning and summoning" would make significant a moment "while some one sewed or smoked a pipe," and the reader would then feel "as if one had gone to the top of the world and seen it laid out, very majestically, beneath" (p. 97).

Both requirements of the writer--that he must be unconscious of his sex, and that he must convey a significant moment of "beckoning and summoning" when the reader

seems to see the world laid out--are fulfilled in Virginia Woolf's last and conciliatory chapter. She shows us precisely what she means. Having spent days considering the grievances of women writers, feeling as she read and mused that the two sexes were not only distinct but antagonistic, she awoke one morning and decided, after "all this reading" and thinking, "to look out of the window and see what London was doing" (p. 99). She saw a typical London day; each person seemed "bound on some private affair of his own" (p. 99). Her phrasing is precise, leading to the climactic moment of the book. This October morning, "here came an errand-boy; here a woman with a dog on a lead. . . . And then a very distinguished gentleman came slowly down a doorstep and paused to avoid collision with a bustling lady . . ." (pp. 99-100). We are reminded of the conflict, divergence, and separateness of the busy city in the story "Monday or Tuesday" as we read, "They all seemed separate, self-absorbed, on business of their own" (p. 100).

But then, there comes "at this moment . . . a complete lull and suspension of traffic":

Nothing came down the street; nobody passed. A single leaf detached itself from the plane tree at the end of the street, and in that pause and suspension fell. Somehow it was like a signal falling, a signal pointing to a force in things which one had overlooked. It seemed to point to a river which flowed past, invisibly, round the corner, down the street, and took people and eddied them along. . . . (p. 100)

Now, for the first time, the discord and separateness that have characterized the book as well as the London morning up to this point are ended as a man and a woman come together:

Now it [the invisible river] was bringing from one side of the street to the other diagonally a girl in patent leather boots, and then a young man in a maroon overcoat; it was also bringing a taxi cab; and it brought all three together at a point directly beneath my window; where the taxi stopped; and the girl and the young man stopped; and they got into the taxi; and then the cab glided off. . . . The sight was ordinary enough; what was strange was the rhythmical order with which my imagination had invested it. . . . (p. 100)

The sight of the man and woman meeting and getting into the taxi seems to Virginia Woolf to ease her mind of "some strain," which, she decides, is the result of thinking as she has been of one sex as distinct from the other (p. 100). Now, her "unity of the mind" seems the antithesis of the "severances and oppositions" of the past few days. The present moment brings to her a "state of mind . . . in which nothing is required to be held back." She feels as if, "after being divided" during her days of indignant reading and thinking, her mind had now "come together again in a natural fusion. The obvious reason would be that it is natural for the sexes to co-operate" (p. 101). The moment of harmony which she experiences seeing the two young people together in a taxi exemplifies this higher, unified state of mind; there must be, she continues, "two

sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body." She proceeds, "amateurishly," to sketch "a plan of the soul":

In each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties.

Virginia Woolf then develops a negative definition of androgyny that gives the lie to any strictly feminist interpretation of her prose treatises or her fiction. Coleridge did not mean, "certainly," that the androgynous mind "has any special sympathy with women, takes up their causes or devotes itself to their interpretation." The "single-sexed mind" makes these distinctions; the androgynous mind does not. The androgynous mind is "resonant and porous"; it transmits emotion "without impediment"; it is naturally "creative, incandescent, and undivided." The "fully developed mind . . . does not think specially or separately of sex" (pp. 102-03).

Here, the androgynous ideal, the reconciliation of the masculine and feminine sides of the mind, harmonious, open, and freed of the limitations of self, is, as Winifred

Holtby notes, "clearly and unambiguously" discussed.⁶¹ Virginia Woolf delivered the lectures which were altered and expanded into A Room of One's Own in October, 1928. October 11, 1928 is "the present moment" in Orlando: if A Room consists in part of a lecture on the androgynous ideal, Orlando is an imaginative and extravagant development of that ideal, which is neither a mere adjunct to Virginia Woolf's themes nor an adornment to her aesthetics.

Orlando

Orlando tells the story of a hero-heroine who grows from an Elizabethan adolescent to a woman of thirty-six in 1928. As Herbert Marder explains, "the idea of androgyny pervades this fantasy."⁶² And as we might expect, Orlando, who is both "woman-manly" and "man-womanly," experiences moments of vision throughout her many colorful lives. The climactic epiphany occurs at the conclusion of the book, in the present moment, when Orlando seems thoroughly integrated with a web of associations from her past. She seems, like Bernard in The Waves, to exist in other selves, both male and female, as well as in other times and places, and she thinks, in phrasing

⁶¹ Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London: Wishart and Co., 1932), p. 179.

⁶² Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 110.

similar to James Ramsay's (see above, p. 20, and see below, p. 258), "Nothing is any longer one thing."⁶³

As a sixteen-year-old boy in the court of Queen Elizabeth, Orlando loses favor when he prefers a Russian princess, Sasha, to the queen's lady-in-waiting. In the middle of the seventeenth century, Orlando becomes King Charles I's Ambassador to Turkey; he is elevated to a dukedom and in the midst of the celebration, the hero becomes a woman.

The Lady Orlando joins a gypsy tribe and in the late eighteenth century returns to England, where she joins fashionable salons. When the Victorian age begins, Orlando dons layers of crinolines and marries and gives birth to a son. The twentieth century finds her driving a car, shopping at Marshall and Snelgrove's for sheets, and rejoicing that her poem, "The Oak Tree," begun as "his boyish dream" in 1586, has won the Burdett Coutts Memorial Prize.

The book is a lark. Virginia Woolf speaks of kicking up her heels over it, and calls it an "escapade . . . great fun to write."⁶⁴ Quentin Bell writes that it is her

⁶³ Virginia Woolf, Orlando: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1928), p. 305. Subsequent references to Orlando in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

⁶⁴ Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1954), 14 March 1927, p. 104; hereafter cited as AWD.

"gayest, most optimistic work";⁶⁵ critical approaches are as varied as the many genres Orlando mingles. Virginia Woolf titled it Orlando: A Biography; much of it is built around Vita Sackville-West and her family home, Knole. Bell suggests that it was Virginia Woolf's intention to parody a literary form fashionable in the 1920's, the fictionalized biography.⁶⁶ Stephen Spender calls it "a fantastic meditation on a portrait of Victoria Sackville-West."⁶⁷ Winifred Holtby finds in it "a learned parable of literary criticism";⁶⁸ Jean Guiguet suggests that it be called an "essay novel" or "conversation piece."⁶⁹ David Daiches says that Orlando is an "impressive experiment," a "holiday," but "not her main job."⁷⁰ It is telling that Daiches feels that the book "will be remembered not as an integrated unit . . . but for the brilliant writing in individual passages."⁷¹

⁶⁵ Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 96.

⁶⁶ Bell, Bloomsbury, p. 96.

⁶⁷ Stephen Spender, World Within World (1951; rpt. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1966), p. 152.

⁶⁸ Holtby, p. 177.

⁶⁹ Guiguet, p. 262.

⁷⁰ David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (1942; rpt. New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 103.

⁷¹ Daiches, p. 100.

The approaches of Daiches and others are valid insofar as they apply to certain features of the book-- but not, as James Hafley perceptively points out, for the book as a whole. For example, exclusive emphasis upon Vita Sackville-West's ancestry and family home may preclude a consideration of the book's irony. Orlando is mock biography, as Hafley, examining the biographer's persona, quickly deduces.⁷² The biographer shies away from Orlando's investigation of Sir Thomas Browne's "longest and most marvellously contorted cogitations" because he, the biographer, must have nothing to do with thought. "These are not matters on which a biographer can profitably enlarge." He insists that "the first duty of a biographer . . . is to plod, without looking to right or left, in the indelible footprints of truth. . . . Our simple duty is to state the facts as far as they are known. . . ." (p. 65). If the subject of his biography "will only think and imagine, we may conclude that he or she is no better than a corpse" (p. 269). The biographer's art, as he understands it, entails accumulation of facts and details. He quotes from insignificant diaries and letters; he includes pedantic digressions and a hilarious index with entries such as "Abbey, Westminster," "Canute, the elk-hound," "Frost, the

⁷² James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 95.

Great," "Hall, the falconer," "Pippin, the spaniel," and "Marshall and Snelgrove's."

The irony of this biographer's stance is overlooked by Winifred Holtby, who, in emphasizing Orlando as biography, invites the reader to consider the life of Vita Sackville-West:

Any reader who felt curious could turn to Who's Who and the current press and learn there that the Honourable Victoria Sackville-West was a daughter of Lord Sackville, that she had been brought up at Knole, one of the most famous of great English country houses, that she had married the Honourable Harold Nicholson [sic], once a member of the British diplomatic service, himself also a writer and critic; that she had two sons; had travelled in the East, and had won the Hawthornden Prize with her poem "The Land," so shamelessly quoted as "The Oak Tree" in Orlando. In short, Orlando was not merely called a biography. It was one.⁷³

However, Mrs. Holtby goes on to assert that Orlando is also a "composite biography" which "concerned not only V. Sackville West, the twentieth-century poet, but her ancestors."⁷⁴ Photographs of the portraits of Vita's ancestors do indeed illustrate the first edition of Orlando. As the poet Orlando's "ancestors" were literary, Mrs. Holtby also sees the book as a "dramatised history of literary fashion."⁷⁵

⁷³ Holtby, pp. 165-66.

⁷⁴ Holtby, p. 166.

⁷⁵ Holtby, p. 167.

Here again, the critical approach is partially valid. Styles of literature, as well as of architecture and fashion, are cleverly mocked. As an Elizabethan youth, Orlando writes "scores of sonnets" and eloquent, melodramatic verse tragedies (p. 16). Orlando himself "suddenly falls into moods of melancholy"; his mind works "in violent see-saws from life to death stopping at nothing in between" (p. 46). The description of the Elizabethan age is equally extravagant:

The age was Elizabethan; their morals were not ours, nor their poets; nor their climate; nor their vegetables even. Everything was different. . . . The brilliant amorous day was divided as sheerly from the night as land from water. Sunsets were redder and more intense; dawns were whiter and more auroral. Of our crepuscular half-lights and lingering twilights they knew nothing. The rain fell vehemently or not at all. The sun blazed or there was darkness. . . . Violence was all. . . . And what the poets said in rhyme, the young translated into practice. Girls were roses, and their seasons were short as the flowers. Plucked they must be before nightfall; for the day was brief and the day was all . . . (p. 27)

As England changes, Orlando's style changes. In the late seventeenth century, "his floridity was chastened; his abundance curbed; the age of prose was congealing those warm fountains. The very landscape outside was less stuck about with garlands and the briars themselves were less thorned and intricate. Perhaps the senses were a little duller and honey and cream less seductive to the palate. Also that the streets were better drained and the

houses better lit had its effect upon the style, it cannot be doubted" (p. 113).

Returning to England from Turkey in the eighteenth century, the Lady Orlando finds London completely changed. She remembers an Elizabethan city with cobbled pavements "reeking of garbage and ordure" and "a huddle of little black, beetle-browed houses." Now, as her ship sails into port, she catches glimpses of "broad and orderly thoroughfares, stately coaches drawn by teams of well-fed horses," and "houses whose bow windows, whose plate glass, whose polished knockers, testified to the wealth and modest dignity of the dwellers within." Near London Bridge, she sees "coffee-house windows where, on balconies . . . a great number of decent citizens sat at ease, with china dishes in front of them, clay pipes by their sides, while one among them read from a news sheet, and was frequently interrupted by the laughter or the comments of the others" (pp. 166-67).

Orlando pours out tea in the salons, and meets Addison, Pope, and Swift, who "liked arbours. They collected little bits of coloured glass. They adored grottoes. Rank was not distasteful to them. Praise was delightful A piece of gossip did not come amiss" (p. 208). Under the influence of "the cadence of their voices in speech," Orlando changes her style and writes "some very pleasant, witty verses and characters in prose" (p. 212).

As the eighteenth century ends, Orlando notices behind the dome of St. Paul's a small cloud which darkens and spreads to blacken the sky. Victorian England is portrayed as a "huge blackness" of the heavens, a damp, depressing blight. ". . . there is no stopping damp; it gets into the inkpot as it gets into the woodwork-- sentences swelled, adjectives multiplied, lyrics became epics, and little trifles that had been essays a column long were now encyclopaedias in ten or twenty volumes" (pp. 229-30).

Again, Orlando's style changes accordingly: "Her page was written in the neatest sloping Italian hand with the most insipid verse she had ever read in her life" (p. 238). Finally, when King Edward succeeds Queen Victoria, "the clouds had shrunk to a thin gauze . . . everything seemed to have shrunk." Houses are well-lit, the Victorian ivy has been scraped off houses, and families are smaller and vegetables less fertile. People are "much gayer" and it is "harder to cry now" (pp. 296-97).

The vigor and wit of this "dramatised history of literary fashion" is beguiling; Orlando invites enjoyment both as the fictionalized biography of Vita Sackville-West and as an imaginative history of English literature. However, two major levels of interpretation remain: the first involves the expression in Orlando of Virginia Woolf's concept of androgyny; the second, the rendering of

the moments of vision which Orlando experiences. The two are inextricably linked. Orlando experiences her final moment of illumination precisely because she has become completely "man-womanly" and "woman-manly."

As James Hafley has noticed, androgyny is found in a variety of levels in Orlando. Sasha, Orlando's beloved Russian princess, first appears in tunic and trousers. Orlando is not sure of Sasha's sex: ". . . the boy, for alas, a boy it must be--no woman could skate with such speed and vigour--swept almost on tiptoe past him . . ." (p. 38). Later, Sasha dresses in "cloak and trousers, booted like a man" (p. 59). As a boy, Orlando is loved by the Archduchess Harriet, who is later revealed as the Archduke Harry: "The Archduchess (but she must in future be known as the Archduke) told his story--that he was a man and always had been one; that he had seen a portrait of Orlando and fallen hopelessly in love with him; that to compass his ends, he had dressed as a woman and . . . that he had heard of her change and hastened to offer his services . . ." (p. 179).

More important, Orlando him(her)self displays androgynous traits from the beginning. We learn in the opening sentences of the book that "the fashion of the time did something to disguise" the sex of the young boy (p. 13). When he serves as Ambassador to Turkey, he is "adored of many women and some men" (p. 125). When he

changes to a woman, Orlando "combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace" (p. 138). Having lived as a man for two centuries, the Lady Orlando brings to her womanhood an ironic perspective. At first, she forms a low opinion of the male sex:

. . . I shall never be able to crack a man over the head, or tell him he lies in his teeth, or draw my sword and run him through the body, or sit among my peers, or wear a coronet, or walk in procession, or sentence a man to death, or lead an army, or prance down Whitehall on a charger, or wear seventy-two different medals on my breast. . . . She was horrified to perceive how low an opinion she was forming of the other sex, the manly, to which it had once been her pride to belong. . . . "To dress up like a Guy Fawkes and parade the streets, so that women may praise you; to deny a woman teaching lest she may laugh at you; to be the slave of the frailest chit in petticoats, and yet to go about as if you were the Lords of creation. --Heavens!" she thought (p. 158)

Herbert Marder argues that Orlando issues from Virginia Woolf's feminism, from "the sharp distinctions which wounded her like ancient taunts."⁷⁶ But Orlando soon finds herself "censuring both sexes equally" (p. 158). As a woman en route to England, she discovers that "skirts are plaguey things to have about one's heels" and realizes that she cannot jump overboard and swim: "I should have to trust to the protection of a blue-jacket" (p. 154). She realizes that as a young man, she had insisted that

⁷⁶ Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 111.

women be "obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely appalled." Now, she herself will cater to men's whims: "'There's the hair-dressing,' she thought; 'that alone will take an hour of my morning; there's looking in the looking-glass, another hour; there's staying and lacing; there's washing and powdering; there's changing from silk to lace to paduasoy; and there's being chaste year in year out. . .'" (p. 157).

Furthermore, when she sets foot on English soil, she will spend her days pouring out tea and asking "D'you take sugar? D'you take cream?" Lady Orlando, having lived as Lord Orlando, "was man; she was woman; she knew the secrets, shared the weaknesses of each" (p. 158). This is to say, as Hafley puts it, that Orlando has the ability "to understand beyond the confinements of her sex as a human being and an artist."⁷⁷ Only a creature of fantasy can achieve such balance between the masculine and the feminine; "normal" people are baffled by Orlando:

How . . . if Orlando was a woman, did she never take more than ten minutes to dress? . . . And then they would say, still, she has none of the formality of a man, or a man's love of power. She is excessively tender-hearted. . . . Yet again, they noted, she detested household matters, was up and out among the fields in summer before the sun had risen. No farmer knew more about crops than she did. . . . Yet again, though bold and active as a man, it was remarked that the sight of

⁷⁷ Hafley, p. 103.

another in danger brought on the most womanly palpitations. She would burst into tears on slight provocation. She was unversed in geography, found mathematics intolerable, and held some caprices which are more common among women than men, as, for instance, that to travel south is to travel down hill. Whether, then, Orlando was most man or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided. . . . (pp. 289-90)

Virginia Woolf does not intend to argue, in Orlando any more than in A Room of One's Own, that there is no difference between men and women. "The difference between the sexes is, happily, one of great profundity," she writes (p. 188). Orlando, in choosing a woman's dress and a woman's sex, "was only expressing rather more openly than usual . . . something that happens to most people without being thus plainly expressed. . . . Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being, a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, which underneath the sex is the very opposite of what is above" (p. 188).

Hafley defines Orlando's androgyny as "communication and assumption of the true self by means of intuitive as well as intellectual perception."⁷⁸ Whether Orlando is dressed as a man or as a woman, and whether she is conforming to or reacting against the behavior society expects from either sex, she retains throughout the centuries the

⁷⁸ Hafley, p. 104.

higher state of mind which enables Virginia Woolf to experience the moment of vision described at the end of A Room of One's Own. It is the state of mind in which nothing is held back, in which the faculties of the mind are not in opposition but in harmony, masculine intellect espousing feminine intuition. The undivided personality can give itself fully to life: Guiguet, without developing the idea, speaks of Orlando's "zest for life" and her "admirable flexibility and open-mindedness."⁷⁹ Orlando's openness to life is concomitant with her androgyny; both are consistent throughout the fantasy. We have seen that Elizabethan fashion made it difficult to discern Orlando's sex, and that as a young man he was loved by men as well as by women. He entered whole-heartedly into the Elizabethan age; his love affair with Sasha was passionate; his moods were violent. He experienced Elizabethan life as fully as she will experience the Victorian age, "by loving nature, and being no satirist, cynic or psychologist" (p. 266). Orlando lives always in "dexterous difference to the spirit of the age"; she neither "fights her age, nor submits to it; she was of it, yet remained herself" (p. 266).

To this enthusiastic, androgynous creature are given extraordinary moments of vision. One night, perusing his

⁷⁹ Guiguet, p. 265.

verse tragedies, the Elizabethan Orlando, for an unknown reason, pauses. "As this pause was of extreme significance in his history," we are invited to consider its cause and its effect:

Nature, who has played so many queer tricks upon us, making us so unequally of clay and diamonds, of rainbow and granite, and stuffed them into a case, often of the most incongruous, for the poet has a butcher's face and the butcher a poet's; nature, who delights in muddle and mystery . . . has further complicated her task and added to our confusion by providing us not only a perfect rag-bag of odds and ends within us--a piece of policeman's trousers lying cheek by jowl with Queen Alexandra's wedding veil--but has contrived that the whole assortment shall be lightly stitched together by a single thread. (p. 78)

The thread, Orlando perceives, is memory. Memory "disturbs" him with "a thousand odd, disconnected fragments," including the face of his lost princess; these are finally sewn together in his sudden decision to devote his entire life to poetry (p. 79). Orlando then returns to the outer world from his estate, where he had retired in despair when Sasha proved faithless.

Hafley focuses upon Orlando's climactic epiphany at the end of the book, but it is important that the androgynous character experiences other moments of illumination throughout his career. To his matter-of-fact biographer, who insists that he "must confine himself to one simple statement" (p. 98), this is maddening. When Orlando "gave his orders and did the business of his vast estates in a flash," the biographer is perplexed, because as soon

as Orlando is alone, ". . . the seconds began to round and fill until it seemed as if they would never fall. They filled themselves, moreover, with the strangest variety of objects. For not only did he find himself confronted by problems which have puzzled the wisest of men, such as What is love? What friendship? What truth? but directly he came to think about them, his whole past, which seemed to him of extreme length and variety, rushed into the falling second, swelled it a dozen times its natural size, coloured it all the tints of the rainbow and filled it with all the odds and ends in the universe" (p. 99). Orlando finds that everything in the "rag-bag of odds and ends within us" is, in memory, more than itself: "Every single thing, once he tried to dislodge it from its place in his mind, he found thus cumbered with other matter like the lump of glass which, after a year at the bottom of the sea, is grown about with bones and dragon-flies, and coins and the tresses of drowned women" (p. 101).

Orlando experiences her final revelation at "the present moment," the eleventh of October, 1928. Shopping in Marshall and Snelgrove's, she sees a fat, furred woman who reminds her of Sasha. Through her mind flash images of ice blocks in the Thames, the Great Frost, and a girl in Russian trousers. Afterwards, driving on the Old Kent Road, she thinks of her many selves, "these selves of which we are built up, one on top of another" (p. 308). She thinks of her past in time and in personality:

For if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there not. . . . She had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand. Choosing then, only those selves we have found room for, Orlando may now have called on the boy who cut the nigger's head down . . . the boy who sat on the hill; the boy who saw the poet; the boy who handed the queen the bowl of rose water. . . . (pp. 308-09)

Orlando continues to think of her different selves, despairing of finding the truth. She cries as she drives, "There flies the wild goose. . . . The goose flies too fast. I've seen it here--there--there--England, Persia, Italy. Always it flies fast out to sea and always I fling after it words like nets . . . which shrivel as I've seen nets shrivel on deck with only sea-weed in them . . ."

(p.313). Finally, the sense of her true self comes to her: "She was now darkened, stilled, and become, with the addition of this Orlando, what is called, rightly or wrongly, a single self, a real self. And she fell silent. For it is probable that when people talk aloud, the selves (of which there may be more than two thousand) are conscious of disseverment, and are trying to communicate, but when communication is established there is nothing more to be said" (p. 314).

Now, Orlando's "mind had become a fluid that flowed round things and enclosed them completely" (p. 214). She finally has her vision of truth, of the wild goose. The

book ends as her husband, an aviator, joins her by leaping to the ground from an airplane. "There sprang up over his head a single wild bird. 'It is the goose!' Orlando cried. 'The wild goose. . .'" (p. 329).

Orlando and her husband, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire, are both androgynous. When they met, they understood this at once. ". . . an awful suspicion rushed into both their minds simultaneously.

'You're a woman, Shel!' she cried.

'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried" (p. 252).

As Hafley explains, "the mentally androgynous man and woman can understand each other with a perfection impossible to those barred behind the limitations of their sex. . . . Each is able to see beyond quantitative differentiation. To be only a man in mind or only a woman . . . is to be hopelessly isolated. . . ." ³⁰ Hence, Orlando's final vision of the wild goose, truth, comes only after Shelmerdine joins her. She sees in her momentary vision that her true self is the fusion of her many selves, from Elizabethan boy to contemporary woman--just as the present moment is composed of every moment from the past. Overlooked in critical studies of the book is the fact that as the Elizabethan Orlando experiences his significant "pause," it is also "the first of November, 1927" (p. 78).

³⁰ Hafley, p. 104.

Hafley, whose criticism of Orlando is singular in that it points to a relationship between the androgynous mind and the revelatory, harmonious moment of vision, explains that Orlando finally envisions a unity that is "the essence of diversity itself." Hafley provides an illuminating statement from Bergson: "Intuition and intellect represent two opposite directions of the work of consciousness: intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction. . . . A complete and perfect humanity would be that in which these two forms of conscious activity should attain their full development."⁸¹

Such "complete and perfect humanity," in which intuition and intellect attain complete fruition, is imaginatively and playfully developed throughout the fantasy Orlando. But we remember that Virginia Woolf considered the book a "lark" in which she kicked up her heels. In a diary entry, she contrasts it to her "serious" fiction.⁸² There, even in the early novels, we find examples of the more manly woman and the more womanly man. As Winifred Holtby, referring to the scene at the close of A Room of One's Own, explains, except for Orlando, Virginia Woolf's female characters cannot have lived first as a man,

⁸¹ Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Holt, 1911), p. 161, as quoted by Hafley, pp. 98-99.

⁸² Virginia Woolf, AWD, 14 March 1927, p. 104.

but "they often harbour a man hidden in their hearts. Thus, though the sexes differ, they do not estrange. Once inside the taxi of human personality, man and woman can instruct each other."⁸³ By means of both intellectual and intuitive perception, these characters live fully and communicate with others. Other characters, who fail or refuse even to attempt to achieve a balance of intellect and intuition, remain trapped within the limitations of self. But it is the more androgynous characters, those who do not segregate but combine, who do not divide but unify, to whom Virginia Woolf gives the experience of the moment of vision.

⁸³ Holtby, p. 182.

CHAPTER III

THE VOYAGE OUT: "FITFUL GLEAMS OF INSIGHT"

Virginia Woolf's first novel, The Voyage Out (1915), involves the quest for equilibrium that was to persist in her work. An imbalance in the nature of the protagonist, Rachel Vinrace, is corrected so that finally, before she dies, Rachel is able to experience a moment of vision in which she senses a reality that transcends her limited, objective, physical existence, and that seems to her to form an underlying pattern. Rachel is educated by the other characters, most of whom, as Jane Novak points out, are personifications who "through their homiletic conversations" instruct the pilgrim Rachel.¹ Winifred Holtby remarks that Rachel's development is "organic" to the novel, and that "she really grows before our eyes." The girl who announces her engagement at the end of the book is "no longer the same girl who stood arranging forks in the ship's cabin" at its beginning.²

¹ Jane Novak, The Razor Edge of Balance: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1975), p. 73.

² Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London: Wishart and Co., 1932), pp. 67, 68.

Rachel's outlook at the beginning reflects the workings of only "the woman part of the brain."³ "Dreamy," impractical, and imprecise, she prefers to lose herself in the world of her individual imagination and her private visions. Two characters help Rachel "voyage out" into the world of social activity, into what Virginia Woolf calls "prosaic daylight," and each of them exhibits the qualities of mind Virginia Woolf thinks of as "androgynous." One is a young man with "something of a woman in him"; the other, Rachel's aunt, is also balanced, appreciating a "grasp of facts" as well as more sensitive and intuitive characteristics. Other characters act as foils to these two, and at times their narrow, single-sexed minds seem to be caricatured.

As the story opens, Ridley and Helen Ambrose, a classical scholar and his wife, leave London on the Euphrosyne, a cargo ship bound for Santa Marina on the South American coast. Crossing the ocean with the Ambroses are Helen's brother-in-law, Willoughby Vinrace, and his twenty-four year-old daughter, Rachel. Rachel, motherless since early childhood, has been raised by maiden aunts in Richmond. She has received only perfunctory education in a smattering of subjects which her aunts consider suitable

³ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1957), p. 102.

for young ladies; her piano playing has been discouraged because it might result in muscular (and therefore, unfeminine) arms. Rachel's entire upbringing has been directed toward producing an angel of the house, compliant, subservient, chaste, and ignorant.

Two strangers, Richard and Clarissa Dalloway, embark unexpectedly in London. Dalloway, a rising politician, kisses Rachel when they find themselves alone. Immediately afterwards, Rachel begins to feel that life holds "infinite possibilities she had never guessed at."⁴ But later, she dreams that she is locked in a vault with a "little deformed man" with the face of an animal (p. 77). In a discussion of the experience with her aunt, Rachel vows to find out "exactly" what the incident means, and Helen, angry with her brother-in-law for bringing up his daughter so that "at the age of twenty-four she scarcely knew that men desired women and was terrified by a kiss" (p. 81), decides to help Rachel satisfy her curiosity about life. Helen invites Rachel to stay with the Ambroses at their Santa Marina villa. Among the guests staying at a hotel nearby is Terence Hewet, an aspiring novelist with whom Rachel falls in love. On a trip up the river, Terence and Rachel become engaged. Much of the last half of the

⁴ Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1920), p. 76. All other references to the novel in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

novel is taken up with their conversations about marriage and the life they expect to lead in London. However, Rachel contracts a local fever and dies. Hence, as Dorothy Brewster suggests, the title of the book takes on tragic significance: the "voyage out" is not only the literal voyage out to South America, but also the "voyaging out" of Rachel's personality, and finally, the voyage out to death.⁵

Dorothy Brewster writes of the book:

This first novel is in many ways traditional, with its chronological sequence, easily followed flashbacks, central characters fully drawn and others receding into the background, a narrative diversified with scenes and dialogue, explanations of what goes on in people's minds, but not in stream of consciousness technique, descriptions of settings, and so on.⁶

However, these distinctly "Edwardian" qualities seem incongruous with another emphasis of the novel. The Voyage Out contains the germ of a crucial concept which is more fully developed later: the moment of vision as experienced by the enlightened, open, and harmonious mind, the mind freed of the limitations of self, the mind in which the masculine and feminine seem reconciled. But Daiches objects that this content, which he describes as "fitful gleams of insight into the subtler realms of human consciousness,"

⁵ Dorothy Brewster, Virginia Woolf (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1962), p. 87

⁶ Brewster, Virginia Woolf, p. 87

is not proper for the novel's form, which is "the record of a series of events that happened to a number of people during a selected period of time."⁷ Daiches explains that these insights, which Winifred Holtby calls "moments . . . of deepened significance and profundity" in which "all nature, all time, all human emotion" seem drawn together,⁸ seem to "depend on making patterns within time that do not depend on chronology." He summarizes:

Throughout the book something is continually breaking up the solidarity of events; the characters suddenly cease being real and become more and more fantastic, then lurch back into reality again. . . . There is the story to take up, the events to follow in due order, and the result is that the world of shifting and dissolving things is continually being pushed away to make room for the solid march of events. And so the reader wonders which he ought to believe--chronology, or the luminous fog that keeps interrupting it. In other words, there seems to be a struggle between the form of the book and the content. Social events and situations that seem to come straight out of Jane Austen merge into moods and dimnesses that would have baffled Jane completely.⁹

⁷ David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (1942; rpt. New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 14.

⁸ Holtby, p. 73.

⁹ Daiches, pp. 14-15. Daiches identifies as other flaws the miscellaneous collections of irrelevant descriptions and the shifts in emphases upon minor characters who "keep changing their size constantly," sometimes becoming mere background figures after Virginia has concentrated upon them "all her powers of analysis" (p. 10). A third problem with the novel is surely its uneven authorial intrusions. For example, we see Clarissa Dalloway through Helen Ambrose's eyes, and then suddenly, after Clarissa interjects a remark into a conversation, we read, "she added, with her usual air of saying something profound" (The Voyage Out, p. 55). We understand another of the

These "moods and dimnesses" make the novel compelling. They were surely important to its author. Clive Bell writes that he and Virginia Woolf often talked "about the atmosphere that you want to give; that atmosphere can only be insinuated, it cannot be set down in so many words."¹⁰ Reading an early draft, he praises "your power . . . of lifting the veil and showing inanimate things in the mystery and beauty of their reality."¹¹ John Lehmann finds the book "interesting" because of this visionary dimension. He remarks that while on the social level, "many questions about human life and society" are indeed posed, these questions are "tantalizingly answered only, if at all," in the "moments of intense poetic suggestion."¹² When we perceive that certain characters experience these moments and others do not, that they are given only to minds which Virginia Woolf thought of as androgynous, we can consider

characters, Susan Warrington, through her conversations with Rachel about marriage, and through Rachel's reactions to Susan. However, elsewhere in the novel, the self-consciously ironic narrator intervenes to interpret and comment upon Susan's limited domesticity. These perceptions are those of the narrator rather than those of the characters.

¹⁰ Clive Bell, a letter of 5 Feb. 1909, in Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), I, 208.

¹¹ Clive Bell, letter of Oct. 1908, in Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography, I, 208.

¹² John Lehmann, Virginia Woolf and Her World (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 45

an approach to The Voyage Out which relates its "Jane Austen" perspective to its visionary dimension.

The viewpoint from which Rachel Vinrace voyages out is narrow, aesthetic, and unbalanced. Sheltered in Richmond with her aunts, she has found reality only in her private emotions and in her music. "To feel anything strongly was to create an abyss between oneself and others who feel strongly perhaps but differently," Rachel thinks. "It was far better to play the piano and forget all the rest" (p. 36). Absorbed in her music, she will remain detached:

Let these odd men and women--her aunts, the Hunts, Ridley, Helen, Mr. Pepper, and the rest--be symbols,--featureless but dignified, symbols of age, of youth, of motherhood, of learning, and beautiful often as people upon the stage are beautiful. It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant, or ever talked of a feeling they felt, but that was what music was for. Reality dwelling in what one saw and felt, but did not talk about, one could accept a system in which things went round and round quite satisfactorily to other people, without often troubling to think about it, except as something superficially strange. Absorbed by her music she accepted her lot very complacently . . . (p. 37)

This self-absorption and detachment clearly signify a lack of equilibrium between the inner and outer worlds. The experiences of the novel will awaken Rachel, first, to the existence of others and finally to a more clearly-defined sense of herself.

At the beginning, she is portrayed as incomplete and indefinite; her face is "weak rather than decided,"

lacking in "colour and definite outline"; elsewhere it is described as a "smooth unmarked outline" (pp. 20, 25). Helen Ambrose finds Rachel "vacillating" and "emotional," and decides that a month on board ship with her will be boring (p. 20).

However, two things arouse the sympathy of Helen as well as that of the reader. The first is the indication that Rachel is beginning to awaken from her "dreamy confusion" (p. 37). She thinks about the people around her and asks, "Why did they do the things they did, and what did they feel, and what was it all about?" (p. 36). During a long supper conversation, Rachel takes no part in the talk, but "she listened to every word that was said" (p. 46). After Richard Dalloway surprises Rachel by kissing her passionately, she confides openly and candidly in Helen. Rachel admits that she liked being kissed, and immediately asks Helen about the prostitutes in Piccadilly. Helen asks Rachel to call her "Helen," and tells her to "go ahead and be a person on your own account" (p. 84). Now, "the vision of her own personality, of herself as a real everlasting thing, different from anything else, unmergeable, like the sea or the wind, flashed into Rachel's mind and she became profoundly excited at the thought of living. 'I can be m-m-myself,' she stammered . . ."

(p. 84). Helen invites Rachel to the Ambroses' villa,

insisting that the two can "talk to each other like human beings." It is firmly established that "we like each other" (p. 84).

Second, though perhaps less subtly handled, there is the matter of Rachel's upbringing and her father's intentions for her. Willoughby Vinrace is a caricature of the Victorian patriarch. "I want to bring her up as her mother would have wished," he tells Helen. "I don't hold with these modern views. . . . She's a nice, quiet girl" (p. 85). Vinrace confides that his success in business "is tending to Parliament" and explains that because "a certain amount of entertaining would be necessary . . . Rachel could be of great help to me." He asks Helen to "bring Rachel out," to "make a woman of her" (p. 86), by which Helen sees that he means a hostess. Helen marvels at Vinrace's selfishness and "astounding ignorance," and resolves to entangle her own fortunes with Rachel's.¹³

¹³ Willoughby Vinrace also illustrates the Victorian "woman worship" discussed above, p. 56. When he retires to his cabin to work at his papers, his late wife's portrait hangs above him and he sighs "profoundly" whenever he looks at it:

In his mind this work of his, the great factories at Hull which showed like mountains at night, the ships that crossed the ocean punctually, the schemes for combining this and that and building up a solid mass of industry, was all an offering to her; he laid his success at her feet; and was always thinking how to educate his daughter so that Theresa might be glad. He was a very ambitious man; and although he had not been particularly kind to her while she lived, as Helen thought, he now believed that she watched him from Heaven, and inspired what was good in him. (pp. 84-85)

Hence her brother-in-law, trapped within the limitations of self, acts as a spur to Helen and indirectly affects Rachel's education by the outer world. Other male characters on the voyage also provide examples of minds that are single-sexed and therefore lacking in the "resonant," "porous," and "undivided" qualities Virginia Woolf attributed to the androgynous mind. In fact, the composite mentality of the men on board the Euphrosyne provides a foil for the androgynous mind of Terence Hewet, whom Rachel will meet at Santa Marina. Ridley Ambrose, whom Alice van Buren Kelley calls "symbolically the opposite of his wife,"¹⁴ devotes himself exclusively to intellectual matters. He spends most of his time during the voyage, and then again at Santa Marina, locked in his room translating Pindar. As Helen shelves armfuls of Ridley's "sad volumes" in their cabin, she says, "If ever Miss Rachel marries . . . pray that she may marry a man who doesn't know his ABC" (p. 31). At the villa, Ambrose's door is "always shut, and no sound of music or laughter issued from it. Every one in the house was vaguely conscious that something went on behind that door, and without in the least knowing what it was, were influenced in their own thoughts by the knowledge that if they passed it the door should be shut, and if they made a noise Mr. Ambrose inside would be disturbed" (p. 170).

¹⁴ Alice van Buren Kelley, The Novels of Virginia Woolf (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 10.

Having examined Virginia Woolf's assertions that the masculine intellect analyzes, discriminates, and divides, we cannot fail to catch the negative implications of the description of Ambrose's activity. He sits "hour after hour among white-leaved books"; he is alone "like an idol in an empty church" (p. 170). His intellectual endeavors actually create a physical barrier which separates him from other people: "As he worked his way further and further into the heart of the poet, his chair became more and more deeply encircled by books, which lay open on the floor, and could only be crossed by a careful process of stepping, so delicate that his visitors generally stopped and addressed him from the outskirts" (p. 170). Ambrose in his study is "some thousand miles distant from the nearest human being" (p. 170). At a ball, Helen dances almost every dance, and as she whirls by, flushed and animated, the guests notice her beauty. But when asked, "Where is Mr. Ambrose?" she must answer, "Pindar" (p. 152). He refuses to stroll through Santa Marina with Helen and Rachel, standing instead over the fire, fearing that his work will be "ignored by the entire civilised world," and feeling that he is like "a commander surveying a field of battle, or a martyr watching the flames lick his toes . . ." (p. 98).

Clive Bell finds all of the male characters in this first part of the novel "obtuse, vulgar, blind, florid, rude, tactless, emphatic, indelicate, vain, tyrannical, stupid

men."¹⁵ Richard Dalloway is the third of these caricatures. He provides for Rachel the most direct confrontation with the world of prosaic daylight--the world of trains, money, laws, and "a system in modern life" which the narrator says Rachel's education has totally overlooked (p. 34). Dalloway is a politician who, to serve his country, has stopped at manufacturing centers in France "and noted facts in a pocket-book." In Lisbon, he has had audiences with ministers and privately issued a journal predicting a crisis. Now, he wishes to "stop at this port and that" in order to "look at certain guns" (pp. 39, 40). Rachel observes that Dalloway "seemed to come from the humming oily centre of the machine where the polished rods are sliding, and the pistons thumping. . . ." (p. 47). Clearly he represents the world of fact and action as opposed to Rachel's private, dreamy, self-indulgent world at the beginning of the novel.

Rachel is "curiously conscious" of Dalloway's physical presence and appearance--"his well-cut clothes, his crackling shirt-front, his cuffs with blue rings round them . . ." (p. 55). Impressed with his stories at breakfast, Rachel decides that she has much to learn from him. She has "one enormous question" which she feels Dalloway can answer: "'Please tell me--everything.' That was what she wanted to say" (p. 56). A disjointed and ultimately unsatisfactory conversation between the two begins when Dalloway asserts, "I have not lowered my ideal." Rachel

¹⁵ Clive Bell, letter of 5 Feb. 1909, in Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography, I, 209.

simply, "But what is your ideal?" and hears Dalloway expound upon "unity of aim, of dominion, of progress," by which he means "the dispersion of the best ideas over the greatest area," by which he means the ideas of the English, who "seem, on the whole, whiter than most men, their records cleaner" (p. 64). Dalloway's proudest accomplishment is the shortening of the working day of thousands of girls in Lancashire by one hour; he is prouder of this "than I should be of writing Keats and Shelley into the bargain!" Rachel feels that she is one of those who write Keats and Shelley, and asks Dalloway what this has to do with "unity." He replies that he worships an angel in the house:

"I never allow my wife to talk politics. . . . For this reason. It is impossible for human beings, constituted as they are, both to fight and to have ideals. If I have preserved mine, as I am thankful to say that in great measure I have, it is due to the fact that I have been able to come home to my wife in the evening and to find that she has spent her day in calling, music, play with the children, domestic duties--what you will; her illusions have not been destroyed. She gives me courage to go on. The strain of public life is very great. . . ." (p. 65)

Pressing again to see how Dalloway's world view can enlighten her limited, "Keats and Shelley" perspective, Rachel describes for him an old widow who may have a few more lumps of sugar because Dalloway spends his life "talking, writing things, getting bills through, missing what seems natural." But "there's the mind of the widow--the affections; those you leave untouched" (p. 66).

Dalloway tells Rachel to "conceive of the state as a complicated machine; we citizens are parts of that machine," but Rachel finds this image incongruous with her image of a "lean, black widow, gazing out of her window, and longing for some one to talk to," and concludes, "The attempt at communication had been a failure." When she says to Dalloway, "We don't seem to understand each other," he answers, "No woman has what I may call the political instinct" (pp. 66, 67). Earlier, he insisted, "May I be in my grave before a woman has the right to vote in England!" (p. 42).

We recall here Virginia Woolf's strictures about Galsworthy and Kipling; like them, Dalloway seems to operate only with the male side of his brain. Rachel's direct contact with the masculine world as represented by Dalloway is abortive; her reaction to his sudden kiss is a horrible nightmare. Her relationship with Terence Hewet, and the moments of transcendent vision that they both experience, will represent a fulfillment of the possibility raised, only to be thwarted, aboard the Euphrosyne. But as Alice van Buren Kelley notes, the encounter with Richard Dalloway "makes the realities of life more clear" for Rachel, and she is now ready for the tutelage of Helen Ambrose.¹⁶ Winifred Holtby calls Helen the most convincing

¹⁶ Kelley, p. 16. Jane Novak finds Dalloway "perfectly designed" as the personification of the fatuousness

and clearly-drawn character in the novel, and writes that Helen "dominates the book like a presiding goddess."¹⁷

Jane Novak explains that Helen is a "human" goddess, and that her wisdom is "worldly"; therefore, she is qualified to preside over Rachel's awakening from a state of self-absorbed dreaminess.¹⁸

At Helen's first appearance in the novel, her clear-sightedness is stressed. She looks over the heads of Londoners "and knew how to read the people who were passing her." Her viewpoint is realistic as she thinks that some people are rich, some bigoted, and some "poor, unhappy, and rightly malignant. . . . When one gave up seeing the beauty that clothed things, this was the skeleton beneath" (pp. 11-12). When Helen boards the ship, she is described as "tall, large-eyed, draped in purple shawls"; she is "romantic and beautiful, not perhaps sympathetic, for her eyes looked straight and considered what they saw" (p. 14).

Helen's worldly experience has resulted in her rejection of the limitations of the single-sexed mind. She

of power politics and of the subjugation of women by adoration. Because he is a tutorial figure, she feels that it is appropriate for him to disappear from the action without a trace. However, "his character is made humanely complex by the account of his childhood, a particularization that is at odds with the simplicity of a flat characterization" (Novak, p. 77).

¹⁷ Holtby, p. 64.

¹⁸ Novak, p. 73.

finds most women of her age "boring" and thinks, when she first meets Rachel and finds her weak and indecisive, that "there was nothing to take hold of in girls--nothing hard, permanent, satisfactory" (p. 20). Helen condemns insincerity in women and is herself candid and intelligent: "Talk was the medicine she trusted to, talk about everything, talk that was free, unguarded, and as candid as a habit of talking with men made natural in her own case. Nor did she encourage those habits of unselfishness and amiability founded upon insincerity which are put at so high a value in mixed households of men and women" (p. 124). St. John Hirst, a Cambridge intellectual whose role in the Santa Marina section is somewhat analogous to those of Dalloway and Ambrose on board ship, likes Helen because she is atypical. "I feel as if I could talk quite plainly to you as one does to a man--about the relations between the sexes, about . . . and . . ." he tells Helen, who reassures him, "I should hope so" (p. 162). When Rachel announces her engagement to Hewet, and Helen becomes involved in their "little world of love and emotion," Helen, unlike many of the other characters, realizes that she likes Hirst because he took her outside that world, because "he had a grasp of facts" (p. 304).

Helen's foil is the conventionally feminine Clarissa Dalloway, who rattles on about London and the English, and about paying one's cook more than one's housemaid. When

her husband denounces the notion of women's suffrage, Clarissa echoes, "Unthinkable" (p. 42). When warships pass the Euphrosyne, Clarissa asks, "Ours, Dick?" As their ship dips her flag and Richard raises his hat, Clarissa "convulsively" squeezes his hand and cries, "Aren't you glad to be English?" (p. 69). At lunch afterwards, Clarissa quotes poetry as everyone talks "of valour and death, and the magnificent qualities of British admirals," and of the "splendid" life on board a warship (p. 69). The scene ends wryly: "No one liked it when Helen remarked that it seemed to her as wrong to keep sailors as to keep a Zoo, and that as for dying on a battle-field, surely it was time we ceased to praise courage" (p. 69).

Helen not only punctures the Dalloways' "true-blue Englishry," but deflates their pompous Victorian insistence upon the spiritual qualities of a wife and mother. Discussing the religious education of her children, Helen says, "So far, owing to great care on my part, they think of God as a kind of walrus," and when Ridley objects that "a little religion hurts nobody," she answers, "I would rather my children told lies" (p. 27).

Rachel's immediate response to her aunt's tutelage is evident in three scenes: First, there is the conversation between Rachel and Helen about the Dalloways. After they leave the ship, Helen calls Clarissa Dalloway "a thimble-pated creature" (p. 82) and dismisses them both as

"rather second-rate" (p. 83). Rachel had at first found the Dalloways fascinating, but now their "glamour" seems to have "faded" (p. 82). She concedes, "It's very difficult to know what people are like. . . . I suppose I was taken in" (p. 82). Second, there is the chapel scene at Santa Marina, which Lytton Strachey praised as "the best morceau of all."¹⁹ At an Anglican service, Rachel "for the first time in her life" sees the congregation as a "vast flock . . . tamely praising and acquiescing without knowing or caring . . . pretending to feel what they did not feel" (p. 228). Third, Rachel rejects the limited domesticity of Susan Warrington, who has recently become engaged. About her married life, Susan rhapsodizes:

"There's the ordering and the dogs and the garden, and the children coming to be taught," her voice proceeded rhythmically as if checking the list, "and my tennis, and the village, and letters to write for father, and a thousand little things that don't sound much; but I never have a moment to myself, and when I go to bed, I'm so sleepy I'm off before my head touches the pillow So it all mounts up!" (p. 261)

Susan, during the chapel service, had experienced "the sweetest sense of sisterhood" (p. 226), and is twice pictured on her knees, praying in her bedroom. After Susan displays her "mild ecstasy of satisfaction with her life and

¹⁹ Lytton Strachey, "To Virginia Woolf," 25 Feb. 1916, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters, ed. Leonard Woolf and James Strachey (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), p. 73.

her own nature," Rachel suddenly takes "a violent dislike to Susan" (p. 261). Significantly, Helen turns to Rachel at this moment and asks, "Did you go to church?" Rachel answers, "Yes, for the last time" (p. 261).

Clearly, Helen Ambrose is, as Winifred Holtby suggests, a character whom Virginia Woolf admires and makes a vehicle for her own thoughts.²⁰ Her mind is open and porous, freed from the restrictions of the conventionally feminine point of view, and to Helen are given intimations of a reality beneath the trivialities of tea-table conversation. While she can appreciate Hirst's "grasp of facts" in the conventional sense of the word, Helen also realizes that the true "facts of life" are "what really goes on, what people feel, although they generally try to hide it. . . . It's so much more beautiful than the pretences--always more interesting--always better" (p. 164). After a Sunday afternoon tea-party at Santa Marina, Helen thinks:

The little jokes, the chatter, the inanities of the afternoon had shrivelled up before her eyes. Underneath the likings and spites, the comings together and partings, great things were happening--terrible things, because they were so great. . . . It seemed to her that a moment's respite was allowed, a moment's make-believe, and then again the profound and reasonless law asserted itself, moulding them all to its liking, making and destroying. (p. 263)

We see, therefore, that Helen Ambrose is an equilibrium: intuitive by nature, she is also experienced in this

²⁰ Holtby, p. 65.

world, appreciating a grasp of fact while realizing that the exclusively intellectual sphere is severely limited. Alice van Buren Kelley, while perhaps overstressing Helen's visionary qualities, nevertheless calls this frank, open, and sincere character the "creator of a path" for Rachel,²¹ because Helen frees Rachel to pursue her own thoughts and wishes, and to sharpen her developing personality. At Santa Marina, Helen gives Rachel a room of her own. It is "large, private,-- a room in which she could play, read, think. . . ." It seems to Rachel "an enchanted place," where "things fell into their right proportions." Here, she reads and asks herself, "What is the truth? What's the truth of it all?" (p. 123).

Now, Rachel, who three months ago seemed insipid and indefinite, pictures herself as "the most vivid thing" in the landscape, like a statue in the middle of the foreground, "dominating the view" (p. 123). She is "less shy and serious" and seems "more definite and self-confident in her manner than before. Her skin was brown, her eyes certainly brighter, and she attended to what was said as though she might be going to contradict it" (p. 97). Rachel chooses to read not Defoe or Maupassant, as her aunt would have suggested, but "modern books." She reads whatever she likes, "reading with the curious literalness of one to whom written sentences are

²¹ Kelley, p. 11.

unfamiliar, and handling words as though they were made of wood, separately of great importance, and possessed of shapes like tables or chairs. In this way she came to conclusions, which had to be remodelled according to the adventures of the day, and were indeed recast as liberally as any one could desire, leaving always a small grain of belief behind them" (p. 124). In other words, Rachel tests the world of fiction against her experiences, her "adventures of the day." Just after Virginia Woolf describes this reading, which takes Rachel far from the circumscribed world of her aunts' home in Richmond, she creates for her protagonist the experience of a moment of illumination when Rachel senses a reality beneath "the small noises of midday":

It was all very real, very big, very impersonal, and after a moment or two she began to raise her first finger and to let it fall on the arm of her chair so as to bring back to herself some consciousness of her own existence. She was next overcome by the unspeakable queerness of the fact that she should be sitting in an arm-chair, in the morning, in the middle of the world. Who were the people moving in the house--moving things from one place to another? And life, what was that? It was only a light passing over the surface and vanishing, as in time she would vanish, though the furniture in the room would remain. Her dissolution became so complete that she could not raise her finger any more, and sat perfectly still, listening and looking always at the same spot. It became stranger and stranger. She was overcome with awe that things should exist at all. . . . She forgot that she had any fingers to raise The things that existed were so immense and so desolate She continued to be conscious of these vast masses of substance for a long stretch of time, the clock still ticking in the midst of the universal

silence. (p. 125; suspension points in the text of the novel convey the wandering of Rachel's thoughts.)

This is a moment of dissolution, and it will be contrasted with other moments in which Rachel envisions a pattern underlying everything. At this point, Rachel still has not defined herself in terms of another person. Significantly, just after she experiences this moment of dissolution, Rachel hears Helen knock at the door with a note. It is from Terence Hewet, who invites Rachel and Helen to a picnic he is arranging for the hotel guests. The words of Terence's note seem "astonishingly prominent" to Rachel, who has just experienced "complete" dissolution. Now, Terence's words "came out as the tops of mountains through a mist" (p. 126). Rachel is ready for the person who will bring her development to fruition.

Terence Hewet, like Helen, is an equilibrist. Like Helen, he sees ugliness as well as beauty in others; he finds the hotel guests "amiable and modest, respectable in many ways, lovable even in their contentment and desire to be kind" but knows that they are also stupid, insipid, and capable of cruelty to each other (p. 134). Terence, too, has intimations of a deeper reality; in the scene just after Rachel receives his note, he talks with Hirst about "seeing to the bottom of things," and says that we live "in a state of perpetual uncertainty, knowing nothing, leaping from moment to moment as from world to world"

(p. 127). As we might expect, Terence's mind is broad and open. He asks Hirst, who asserts that all women are "so stupid," whether "what really matters most" in life might not be the friendship of women (p. 108). One of the hotel guests tells Terence that he reminds her of a dear and delightful friend, a "brave soul"; when it transpires that the friend was a woman named Mary Umpleby, someone objects that Terence might be insulted by comparison to a woman. "On the contrary," Hewet remarks, "it is a compliment" (p. 113). Another guest praises him as having "something of a woman in him" (p. 247).

Terence provides a refreshing contrast to the isolated intellectualism of Ridley Ambrose and also of Hirst, about whom one guest says, "I feel one ought to be very clever to talk to him" (p. 113). When Rachel describes for Terence a typical day with her aunts in Richmond, Terence muses, "I've often walked along the streets where people live all in a row, and one house is exactly like another house, and wondered what on earth the women were doing inside." He asks Rachel if it doesn't make her blood boil, and feels that if he were a woman, he would "blow someone's brains out" (p. 215). Just as Helen's speeches and letters serve as a vehicle for Virginia Woolf's thoughts about the upbringing of women, so Terence, too, is in some respects a mouthpiece. He has several lengthy speeches about the position of women; one in particular

seems to prefigure the "looking-glass" passage in A Room of One's Own (see above, pp. 80-81):

"I believe we must have the sort of power over you that we're said to have over horses. They see us three times as big as we are or they'd never obey us. For that very reason, I'm inclined to doubt that you'll ever do anything even when you have the vote. . . . It'll take at least six generations before you're sufficiently thick-skinned to go into law courts and business offices. Consider what a bully the ordinary man is. . . ." (p. 212)

Terence sounds like the narrator of Three Guineas when he discusses the offices, titles, ribbons, and degrees essential to "the masculine conception of life." He exclaims, "What an amazing concoction! Judges, civil servants, army, navy, Houses of Parliament, lord mayors-- what a world we've made of it!" (p. 213). He clearly understands Hirst's limitations: "Not a day's passed since we came here without a discussion as to whether he's to stay on at Cambridge or to go to the Bar. It's his career-- his sacred career." He imagines the sister who is "told to run out and feed the rabbits because St. John must have the schoolroom to himself. . . . No one takes her seriously, poor dear" (p. 213).

Helen, too, recognizes Hirst's limitations, thinking of him as a good example of the clever young men who mistreat their bodies in the name of intellect and scholarship, and "thus elevate their minds to a very high tower from which the human race appeared to them like rats and

mice squirming on the flat" (p. 205). But again like Helen, Terence is broad-minded enough to understand Hirst and to like him. Hirst insults Rachel at a hotel dance, asking her, "Have you got a mind, or are you like the rest of your sex?" and insisting that women's inability to appreciate literature stems "partly from lack of training" and partly from "native incapacity" (p. 154). Just after this, Rachel tells Terence that men and women "should live separate; we cannot understand each other; we only bring out what's worst" (p. 156). But Terence brushes aside such generalizations as to the natures of the two sexes as "boring" and "generally untrue." He explains that Hirst has been living in a beautifully panelled room, hung with Japanese prints, talking about philosophy with his friends, who are "the cleverest people in England." He insists, "You can't expect him to be at his best in a ballroom. He wants a cosy, smoky, masculine place" (p. 157).

Unlike Hirst, who finds the idea of the dance "repulsive" and who sincerely feels that "there will never be more than five people in the world worth talking to" (p. 161), Terence sincerely likes to establish relationships with other people. He is a unifier. He organizes a picnic and invites the hotel guests; everyone agrees that it is a success. When he notices that he and Rachel have both been surveying the guests from a distance, Terence thinks that "she might have been thinking precisely

the same thoughts" as he himself. He asks her, "What are you looking at?" and Rachel, who had a few months earlier decided to look upon people as symbols, to play the piano and forget all the rest, answers, "Human beings" (p. 135).

At the picnic Terence has fused people into a unit. At a party honoring Susan Warrington and Arthur Venning, Rachel plays dance tunes after the musicians leave, and with her music, formerly the symbol for her retreat from human beings, she herself serves as a unifier. People begin to dance "with a complete lack of self-consciousness" (p. 166). First, the dancers execute their own steps, derived from figure skating, country dances, or other past experiences. Then, Terence calls for "the great round dance," and everyone dances in a circle, holding hands. When the dancing stops at dawn, Rachel continues to play the piano, and the listeners' "nerves were quieted. . . . Then they began to see themselves and their lives, and the whole of human life advancing very nobly under the direction of the music. They felt themselves ennobled. . . ." (p. 167). This scene seems clearly intended to show that under the influence of Terence, Rachel has united her art and therefore, her inner self, to actual people in the social world. This idea is reinforced by the moment of awareness which Rachel experiences the next day. Rachel wanders along a valley near the hotel and sees

trees "which Helen had said it was worth the voyage out merely to see," but to Rachel, "the trees and the landscape appear only as masses of green and blue. . . . Faces of people she had seen last night came before her; she heard their voices. . . . Hewet, Hirst, Mr. Venning, Miss Allan, the music, the light, the dark trees in the garden, the dawn,--as she walked they went surging around in her head, a tumultuous background from which the present moment . . . sprung more wonderfully vivid even than the night before" (pp. 173-74). Then, an "ordinary" tree seems to stop Rachel. To her, the tree seems "so strange that it might have been the only tree in the world." This seems to be "a sight that would last her for a lifetime, and for a lifetime would preserve that second" (p. 174).

Rachel sits under this tree which has taken on such significance and reads from her book a few sentences which seem "to drive roads back to the very beginning of the world, on either side of which the populations of all times and countries stood in avenues, and by passing down them all knowledge would be hers, and the book of the world turned back to the very first page" (p. 175). Rachel's vision is unlike the more abstract, impersonal vision of dissolution she had experienced earlier; now, her moment of illumination incorporates not only the faces of other people but the notion of the span from the beginning of time to eternity. Her next turn of thought is crucial.

After a long silence, she asks herself, "What is it to be in love?" Each word seems "to shove itself out into an unknown sea"; Rachel is "awed by the discovery of a terrible possibility in life," and sits under the tree "for some time longer" (pp. 175-76).

Terence, too, is disturbed by "an unusual feeling" (p. 184). He realizes that his conversation with Rachel "interested him profoundly" (p. 184). He feels that "they had been more open with each other than was usually possible" (p. 185). Terence walks to the Ambroses' villa and overhears a conversation between Rachel and Helen. A sense of openness and freedom is conveyed in the imagery of his breathless monologue after he sees Rachel. He runs back to his hotel, crying aloud that he is "plunging along . . . running downhill and talking nonsense aloud to myself about roads and leaves and lights and women coming out into the darkness--about women--about Rachel, Rachel." The night seems "immense" to Terence; the darkness seems to "numb" him, and he repeats as he walks, "Dreams and realities, dreams and realities, dreams and realities." When he goes inside, his room seems to him like a small, square box (p. 188), an obvious contrast to the sense of boundlessness, of something limitless, which he had experienced as he ran.

When Terence and Hirst next visit the villa, "Rachel's heart beat hard. She was conscious of an

extraordinary intensity in everything, as though their presence stripped some cover off the surface of things" (p. 200). Virginia Woolf handles the ensuing courtship primarily by creating conversations which are, as Jane Novak has pointed out, "the action of the plot of thought."²² In a conversation with Hirst, Rachel reveals that she dislikes Gibbon. When Hirst seems disdainful, Rachel asks, "How are you going to judge people merely by their minds?" (p. 201). In the discussion that is generated, she clearly aligns herself with Hewet. The two leave for a walk, and Terence realizes that "her body was very attractive to him" (p. 211). Rachel looks at him with large grey eyes "full of eagerness and interest"; the two have decided to try to understand each other, and they talk, from this point on, about the things that matter to them. Terence tells Rachel that he wants to write "a novel about Silence . . . the things people don't say. . . . It's the only thing worth doing" (p. 216). He explains that in his novels he wants to discover the reality behind the surface, and to combine the things that he learns. He is not like Hirst, whose intellect divides: "I'm not like Hirst. . . . I don't see circles of chalk between people's feet" (p. 218). He sees that Rachel, with her music, is attempting something similar to his

²² Novak, p. 74.

novel: "What I want to do in writing novels is very much what you want to do when you play the piano, I expect.

. . . We want to find out what's behind things, don't we?-- Things I feel come to me like lights. . . . I want to combine them. . . . Have you ever seen fireworks that make figures? I want to make figures. . ." (p. 219).

We have seen that Helen serves as a ruling deity in the first sections of The Voyage Out; she serves Rachel as creator of a path, just as, sewing, she chooses a thread from the "tangle" and creates "a great design" (p. 33). At one point, she is actually described as a goddess of fate: "With one foot raised on the rung of a chair, and her elbow out in the attitude for sewing, her own figure possessed the sublimity of a woman's of the early world, spinning the thread of fate. . ." (p. 208). Helen has guided Rachel toward the jungle expedition with Terence, who is also described as a deity: "At first he moved as a god; as she came to know him better he was still the centre of light, but combined with this beauty a wonderful power of making her daring and confident of herself. She was conscious of emotions and powers which she never suspected in herself, and of a depth in the world hitherto unknown" (p. 224). At this point, before the moment of total communion in the jungle, Rachel is conscious of "a depth in the world hitherto unknown," but unlike Terence,

she does not yet "make figures"; she has no sense of an underlying pattern. The climactic moment of the book, in terms of Rachel's development, will be a moment of vision in which she senses that a pattern underlies everything. Scenes of "moods and dimnesses," of a visionary nature, are counterpointed with scenes of dialogue about marriage, all climaxing in Rachel's epiphany.

Terence is the first to admit to himself that he is in love, and a long chapter is devoted to his thoughts about conventional marriage: "The worn husband and wife sitting with their children round them . . . was an unpleasant picture" (p. 241). Finally, in an exalted moment, he realizes that he and Rachel might love each other and retain their independence: "'Oh, you're free!' he exclaimed, in exultation at the thought of her, 'and I'd keep you free. We'd be free together. We'd share everything together. No happiness would be like ours. No lives would compare with ours.'" He opened his arms wide as if to hold her and the world in one embrace" (p. 244).

This sense of boundlessness, of something beyond the limited, restricted, conventional life of the individual, permeates the love scene in the jungle. As they start down the river, Terence feels that the two of them are "being drawn on together, without being able to offer any resistance" (p. 267). Sensing that the time is appropriate for him and Rachel to walk off into the woods together,

Terence thinks, ". . . the time had come as it was fated to come" (p. 269). James Naremore finds the ensuing love scene "mismanaged" in its treatment of sexuality; nevertheless, its purpose and method, the transfer of the sexual passion of the lovers to the richly sensual landscape, are obvious.²³ In their moment of intense emotional communion, Terence and Rachel "hardly spoke." Each professes love; they then embrace, drop to the earth, and quietly repeat each other's names. Rachel "was thinking as much of the persistent churning of the water as of her own feeling. On and on it went in the distance, the senseless and cruel churning of the water." After this, "a very long time seemed to have passed." The lovers rise from the ground and "walk on in silence as people walking in their sleep"; only now and then are they conscious "of the mass of their bodies" (p. 272). When they rejoin the group, it seems to Terence that the other people are "talking somewhere high up in the air above him, and he and Rachel had dropped to the bottom of the world together" (p. 274).

James Naremore notices that the sinking into a deeper consciousness in this scene resembles Rachel's earlier trancelike moods.²⁴ We have seen, however, that

²³ James Naremore, The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), p. 47.

²⁴ Naremore, p. 50.

Helen, Terence, and Rachel all experience such visionary moments. After the jungle expedition, there are other scenes in which Rachel and Terence sense a deeper communion not only between themselves, but with something outside themselves. The book as a whole records Rachel's progress from the solipsistic, early moments of dissolution to the moments of vision which incorporate a sense of unity with other people and a sense of a larger pattern. These are usually moments of silence. Just after the passage at hand, Rachel and Terence walk together. "Long silences came between their words, which were no longer silences of struggle and confusion but refreshing silences." Then, "very gently and quietly, almost as if it were the blood singing in her veins, or the water of the streams running over stones, Rachel became conscious of a new feeling within her." Finally, "with a little surprise at recognising in her own person so famous a thing," she says to Terence, "This is happiness," and he echoes her simple sentence. "The feeling had sprung in both of them at the same time." They now seem to be "sunk" in waters through which voices nearby never reach; someone calls Terence's name, but they both hear this as "the crack of a dry branch or the laughter of a bird," and when Helen kisses Terence in congratulation, Rachel feels that she is in a dream, hearing only broken fragments of speech (pp. 283-284).

As they stand together on the deck of the boat at night, Rachel and Terence experience a similar moment of deeper consciousness; the world around them seems "great" and "black" and "possessed of immense thickness and endurance." The two fix their eyes upon the stars: "The little points of frosty light infinitely far away drew their eyes and held them fixed, so that it seemed as if they stayed a long time and fell a great distance when once more they realised their hands grasping the rail and their separate bodies standing side by side" (p. 298). Such moments are juxtaposed with episodes consisting primarily of very real dialogue in a very real world, clearly intended to demonstrate the honesty, sincerity, and openness of their relationship. Herein, of course, lies a flaw in the novel, for the emotional vitality of the scenes of moods and dimnesses simply cannot be sustained during these homiletic conversations. Nevertheless, the substance of these conversations is important to a consideration of Rachel's new sense of direction, of what Dorothy Brewster calls the "voyaging out" of her personality.

There will be times, Terence tells Rachel, "when, if we stood on a rock together, you'd throw me into the sea" (p. 298). At one point, Terence expresses fear that marriage is "too great a risk," and, feeling that "they could never love each other sufficiently to overcome all these barriers," echoes her words at the dance about the sexes: "Men and

women are too different." Rachel exclaims, "Let's break it off, then," and the words act to unite them "more than any amount of argument." A brief illumination follows:

As if they stood on the edge of a precipice they clung together. They knew that they could not separate; painful and terrible it might be, but they were joined for ever. They lapsed into silence, and after a time crept together in silence. Merely to be so close soothed them, and sitting side by side the divisions disappeared, and it seemed as if the world were once more solid and entire, and as if, in some strange way, they had grown larger and stronger. (p. 303)

The union of Terence's more experienced, balanced view of life with Rachel's is stressed. Terence "had known more people" than Rachel; in discussing them, he tells her "not only what had happened, but what he had thought and felt, and sketched for her portraits which fascinated her of what other men and women might be supposed to be thinking and feeling, so that she became very anxious to go back to England, which was full of people, where she could merely stand in the streets and look at them." In return for the experience that Terence brings to Rachel, "she brought him . . . curiosity and sensitiveness of perception" (p. 299). Alice van Buren Kelley calls this "a miniature union of fact and vision" which will be more fully developed in the later novels,²⁵ but this is somewhat oversimplified: Terence is

²⁵ Kelley, p. 31

indeed experienced in the world of fact, but he is also sensitive and intuitive, with "something of a woman" in his nature. Rachel, at the beginning of the novel, is lost in the inner world of private intuitions and emotions, but the passage at hand occurs during her courtship; she has, by this time, voyaged out into the world of social action and fact.

For a second time, Terence tells Rachel that he finds in life "an order, a pattern which made life reasonable, or, if that word was foolish, made it of deep interest anyhow, for sometimes it seemed impossible to understand why things happened as they did" (p. 299). Furthermore, he tells her that people are neither as "solitary" nor as "uncommunicative" as she has believed earlier. Rachel feels that she has reached the ultimate moment of vision when she integrates these ideas into an understanding that there is a pattern of some kind underlying everything, that there is indeed a meaning in life:

She felt herself amazingly secure as she sat in her arm-chair, and able to review not only the night of the dance, but the entire past, tenderly and humorously as if she had been turning in a fog for a long time, and could now see exactly where she had turned. For the methods by which she had reached her present position, seemed to her very strange, and the strangest thing about them was that she had not known where they were leading her. That was the strange thing, that one did not know where one was going, or what one wanted, and followed blindly, suffering so much in secret, always unprepared and amazed and knowing nothing; but one thing led to another and by degrees something had formed itself out of nothing, and so one reached at last this calm,

this quiet, this certainty, and it was this process that people called living. Perhaps, then, every one really knew as she knew now where they were going; and things formed themselves into a pattern not only for her, but for them, and in that pattern lay satisfaction and meaning. When she looked back she could see that a meaning of some kind was apparent in the lives of her aunts, and in the brief visit of the Dalloways whom she would never see again, and in the life of her father. (p. 314)

Rachel has now answered a question she put to Terence earlier. She had said that she wanted to know "what's going on" behind the curtain which conceals "all the things one wants," and had lamented the sense of divisiveness she felt: "I hate these divisions. . . . One person all in the dark about another person. Now I liked the Dalloways, and they're gone. I shall never see them again. . . . Why should one be shut up all by oneself in a room?" (p. 302).

Rachel feels that this new "insight" is "simple" and will "never again desert her. . . . For the moment she was as detached and disinterested as if she had no longer any lot in life, and she thought that she could now accept anything that came to her without being perplexed by the form in which it appeared" (pp. 314-15). This sense of harmony and calm is similar to that recorded at the climactic moment of A Room of One's Own, when the narrator's mind is finally eased of the "strain" of discord and divisiveness. We remember that the "obvious reason" for the narrator's "unity of mind" is that "it is natural for the sexes to cooperate." In the androgynous mind, male and female powers

"live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating"; there is no special sympathy with women in a "fully-developed mind" which "does not think specially or separately of sex" (see above, p. 86). Rachel, like the writer of this essay, goes on to develop the idea of the androgynous balance between male and female perspectives. She realizes that the love she and Terence share is not merely "the love of man for woman. . . . Although they sat so close together, they had ceased to be little separate bodies. . . . There seemed to be peace between them" (p. 315). Although she and Terence will probably quarrel and "get annoyed because they were so different," the differences between man and woman seem "superficial, and had nothing to do with the life that went on beneath the eyes and the mouth and the chin, for that life was independent of everything else. . . . She was independent of him; she was independent of everything else. . . ." (p. 315). Influenced by the androgynous minds of both Helen and Terence, Rachel's growth throughout the novel has made possible the fulfillment of her relationship with Terence: "It was love that made her understand this, for she had never felt this independence, this calm, and this certainty until she fell in love with him, and perhaps this too was love. She wanted nothing else" (p. 315).

Rachel dies shortly after experiencing this moment of insight. Virginia Woolf criticism sometimes strains

for a direct cause-and-effect relationship. James Hafley, overlooking Rachel's final vision of pattern and unity, writes that Rachel "rejects all outside herself. To see oneself as reality and the social world as illusion is fatal."²⁶ James Naremore insists that Rachel's "sense of communion" cannot be sustained; she is one of Virginia Woolf's "creatures of sensibility" who "exemplify a death wish."²⁷ Alice van Buren Kelley feels that Rachel "must escape the factual world in which the vision can exist only sporadically . . . and she can do so only by dying."²⁸ However, the novel does not end with Rachel's death, or with Terence's grief-stricken notion that death brings "the union which had been impossible while they lived" (p. 353). This he thinks sitting by Rachel's body, but he must then walk from the room; he sees tables and cups and plates, and realizes that he must go on living. Critics intent upon analyzing the "death wish" in the novel may overlook the fact that the story goes on for some twenty pages after this scene.

In a letter to Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf explains that her purpose in writing The Voyage Out was

²⁶ James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 17.

²⁷ Naremore, p. 56.

²⁸ Kelley, p. 32.

"to give the feeling of a vast tumult of life, as various and disorderly as possible, which should be cut short for a moment by the death, and go on again--and the whole was to have a sort of pattern. . . ." ²⁹ Her perception of a pattern underlying the flux is, as we have seen, crucial to the novel. In the moments of illumination which form a counterpoint to the scenes of social action, Rachel, Terence, and Helen all feel the existence of a unity that transcends the limited life of the individual. From time to time, the idea of an underlying pattern is revealed, and the book as a whole is patterned around the accumulated moments of vision. After Rachel dies, life at the hotel and the villa goes on without her, in scenes constructed to convey the sense of pattern which Virginia Woolf wished to emphasize. One of the characters, Evelyn Murgatroyd, is at first bitter about Rachel's death. She sobs, "It was wicked . . . it was cruel--they were so happy. . . . There's no reason--I don't believe there's any reason at all!" (pp. 257-58). But Evelyn then returns to her room and picks up a photograph of her father and mother. Weeks before, Rachel had been interested in Evelyn's story about her parents' love affair. Now, Evelyn feels Rachel's presence in the room and senses a unity with Rachel and with something beyond the life of the present day:

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, "To Lytton Strachey," 28 Feb. 1916, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters, p. 75.

Suddenly the keen feeling of some one's personality, which things that they have owned or handled sometimes preserves, overcame her; she felt Rachel in the room with her; it was as if she were on a ship at sea, and the life of the day was as unreal as the land in the distance (p. 364)

More important than Evelyn's fleeting insight is the final perception of St. John Hirst. As we have seen, Hirst represents the exclusive world of intellect without intuitive truth. At one point, walking with Rachel and Terence, Hirst "was led to think of his own isolation. These people were happy. . . . He was much more remarkable than they were, but he was not happy. . . . He saw too clearly the little vices and deceits and flaws of life, and, seeing them, it seemed to him honest to take notice of them" (p. 311). Rachel pities Hirst "as one pities those unfortunate people who are outside the warm mysterious globe full of changes and miracles in which we ourselves move about; she thought that it must be very dull to be St. John Hirst" (p. 295).

Yet after Terence and Rachel become engaged, Hirst admits to them that he is aware of a vision in which he cannot share:

"D'you remember the morning after the dance?" he demanded. "It was here we sat, and you talked nonsense, and Rachel made little heaps of stones. I, on the other hand, had the whole meaning of life revealed to me in a flash." He paused for a second, and drew his lips together in a tight little purse. "Love," he said. "It seems to me to explain everything. So, on the whole, I'm very glad that you two are going to be married." (p. 312)

Although Hirst cannot be a part of this vision, he sees it. His growth beyond mere ratiocination prepares us for his perception of a pattern in the final scene of the novel. Hirst walks into the hotel and feels, first, a sense of kinship with the guests:

He was going to pass straight through the hall and up to his room, but he could not ignore the presence of so many people he knew, especially as Mrs. Thornbury rose and went up to him, holding out her hand. But the shock of the warm lamplit room, together with the sight of so many cheerful human beings sitting together at their ease, after the dark walk in the rain, and the long days of strain and horror, overcame him completely. (p. 373)

The scene is an obvious contrast to the ballroom scene, in which Hirst had found the company of the guests "repulsive." Now, he joins the group, and as he lies back in his chair, "the light and warmth, the movements of the hands, and the soft communicative voices soothed him; they gave him a strange sense of quiet and relief" (p. 374). Hirst seems to see the pattern build; the word "pattern" is repeated, bringing to mind the insights of both Terence and Rachel: "The movements and the voices seemed to draw together from different parts of the room, and to combine themselves into a pattern before his eyes; he was content to sit silently watching the pattern build itself up, looking at what he hardly saw." Hirst, who has previously insisted upon his own isolation and acknowledged his unhappiness, now experiences "a feeling of profound happiness" (p. 374).

Hirst's mind is hardly androgynous, and he experiences no overwhelming intimations of a unity between outer and inner experience, transcending the limitations of his individual existence. Here in the last scene, he is still the observer, watching through half-closed eyes "a procession of objects, black and indistinct, the figures of people picking up their books, their cards, their balls of wool, their work-baskets, and passing him one after another on their way to bed" (p. 375).

However, Hirst has progressed from a vastly oversimplified perspective. He had considered women stupid and the ball disgusting; only a handful of men were worth talking with. He had accepted without question his position in the schoolroom while his sister fed rabbits, and had taken hours of everyone's time discussing plans for "his sacred career." Then, in his role as the perceptive spectator of the developing relationship between Terence and Rachel, Hirst has come to feel that their love has something to do with "the whole meaning of life." That relationship was made possible by Rachel's pilgrimage under the guidance of the balanced and open minds of Helen and Terence. Having worked through the novel to examine those minds and that relationship, we can appreciate the fact that Hirst has come to acknowledge the limitations of the single-sexed mind. Hirst's echo of Rachel's vision of

an underlying pattern which gives satisfaction and meaning is perhaps Virginia Woolf's most effective technique for endorsing it.

We remember that Virginia Woolf stresses the importance of "the architecture of the whole," of "the effect of the book as a whole" upon the reader's mind. When he finishes the book, the "whole" should be exposed to the reader's view (see above, p. 78). Here, the final perception of Hirst, who has represented an unbalanced, exclusively intellectual masculine mind, does indeed seem to expose the whole of the book to view. The last twenty pages of The Voyage Out are no whimsical coda, but a significant finale: Even Hirst, after long days of strain, experiences "a strange sense of quiet and relief" as he partakes of Rachel's vision. Hirst's brilliant but narrow mind has begun to open, and we see that nothing is simply one thing.

CHAPTER IV

NIGHT AND DAY: "A LIGHTWEIGHT BOOK"

The intensity of the visionary passages in the final chapters of The Voyage Out corresponds to the "feverish intensity"¹ which went into its creation. Virginia Woolf finished the book in March, 1913, and when it was finally set in type, she attempted suicide and endured a subsequent period of madness which lasted until the autumn of 1915.² In July, 1916, she conceived the idea for a new novel. But this time, her intentions were less ambitious. Quentin Bell writes that she "deliberately . . . embarked upon something sane, quiet, and undisturbing. . . the heavyweight novel is succeeded by a lightweight book. . . . It was recuperative work."³ One difficulty in attempting to give the feeling of a "vast tumult" in The

¹ John Lehmann, Virginia Woolf and Her World (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 32.

² For descriptions of the symptoms, see Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972), II, 10-18, and Leonard Woolf's autobiography, Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963).

³ Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography, II, 42.

Voyage Out had been, she wrote to Lytton Strachey, "to give enough detail to make the characters interesting . . . which Forster says I didn't do."⁴ Now, she will pile up tedious details of everyday life in her longest book, Night and Day (1919).

John Lehmann calls this second novel "not only sane, but almost boringly so."⁵ E. M. Forster considers it her least successful novel:

In view of what preceded it and of what is to follow, Night and Day seems to be a deliberate exercise in classicism. It contains all that has characterized English fiction for good or evil during the last hundred and fifty years--faith in personal relations, recourse to humorous side shows, insistence on petty social differences. Even the style has been normalized, and though the machinery is modern, the resultant form is as traditional as Emma. Surely the writer is using tools that don't belong to her. At all events she has never touched them again.⁶

John Lehmann gives us what is perhaps the most succinct contrast between the second novel and the first:

⁴ Virginia Woolf, "To Lytton Strachey," 28 Feb. 1916, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters, ed. Leonard Woolf and James Strachey (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), p. 75. See E. M. Forster, rev. of The Voyage Out, by Virginia Woolf, Daily News and Leader, 8 April 1915, p. 7; rpt. in Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage, ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 53.

⁵ Lehmann, pp. 35-36.

⁶ E. M. Forster, "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf," Abinger Harvest (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1925), p. 106.

Night and Day lacks "moments of intense poetic suggestion."⁷ It has "scarcely any of the poetic overtones of The Voyage Out." To put it more bluntly, the second novel seems anticlimactic because Virginia Woolf refuses to dramatize her characters' mental life. In The Voyage Out, characters' thoughts and emotions, sometimes only partially realized, had nevertheless been poetically and subtly represented in scenes depicting Terence's breathless run at night, Rachel's dreams and reveries, and Helen's thoughts of "great things" beyond the afternoon's jokes and chatter. But now, the thoughts of characters will merely be described as the basis for authorial generalizations, forced into an ill-fitting comedy of manners.

What seems to have escaped notice is that in many important ways, Virginia Woolf merely rewrote her first novel without, this time, "moods and dimnesses." The heroines of both books seek equilibrium between the inner life of the individual imagination and the outer world of conventional society.⁸ Rachel Vinrace's father wanted her to become a hostess; we see immediately that Katharine Hilbery is one when we read the novel's opening sentence:

⁷ Lehmann, p. 45.

⁸ Dorothy Brewster writes of this book that "the night is the inner, the day the outer, in the perpetual interplay between the self and its environment." Dorothy Brewster, Virginia Woolf's London (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1960), p. 30.

"It was a Sunday evening in October, and in common with many other young ladies of her class, Katharine Hilbery was pouring out tea."⁹ Also like Rachel, Katharine recoils from Victorian domesticity: Rachel retreated to her music; Katharine escapes to mathematics. She thinks, "If you cannot make sure of people . . . you can hold fairly fast to figures" (p. 315). She says to a cousin, "I should like . . . to study mathematics--to know about the stars," because "I want to work with something in figures--something that hasn't got to do with human beings. I don't want people particularly" (p. 195). To Ralph Denham, who will become her fiancé, Katharine says, "I can't endure living with other people" because it is impossible to be "perfectly sincere . . . with one's friends" (p. 335). Denham replies, "Nonsense," and the ensuing dialogue, interspersed with too many teas and "too much social chit-chat," to borrow Winifred Holtby's phrase,¹⁰ continues for almost two hundred pages.

The conversations between Katharine and Ralph are at many points similar to those between Rachel and Terence. Like Terence, Ralph brings the heroine to an

⁹ Virginia Woolf, Night and Day (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1920), p. 9. All other references to the novel in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

¹⁰ Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London: Wishart and Co., 1932), p. 97.

understanding and acceptance of the social world. Moreover, Ralph's offer of a free and open relationship reminds us of Terence's saying, "You're free. . . . I'd keep you free. We'd be free together" (see above, p. 136), and of Rachel's echoing thought, "She was independent of him; she was independent of everything else" (see above, p. 143). Ralph offers Katharine a "friendship which should be perfectly sincere and perfectly straightforward." Neither person is to be "under any obligation to the other"; both must be "at liberty to break or to alter at any moment. They must be able to say whatever they wish to say" (p. 337). Katharine relates such a "friendship" to the attainment of balance between the inner self, night, and the environment, broad daylight:

As in her thoughts she was accustomed to a complete freedom, why should she perpetually apply so different a standard to her behavior in practice? Why, she reflected, should there be this perpetual disparity between the thought and the action, between the life of solitude and the life of society, this astonishing precipice on one side of which the soul was active and in broad daylight, on the other side of which it was contemplative and dark as night? Was it not possible to step from one to the other, erect, and without essential change? Was this not the chance he offered her--the rare and wonderful chance of friendship? (pp. 338-39)

As this "friendship" develops, Virginia Woolf is at pains to underscore the androgynous nature of the minds of both Katharine and Ralph. Like Rachel and Terence, Katharine and Ralph experience the moments of vision which

Virginia Woolf allows her more enlightened, balanced characters. Unfortunately, however, the epiphanies in this novel are used as springboards for ideas, for narrative generalizations, and the book as a whole is like a neatly wrapped package, ending with a section containing scene after scene of authorially described shared visions and individual moments of illumination.

The plot is elaborate. Katharine Hilbery is the daughter of distinguished and cultivated parents, and the granddaughter of a famous poet. She has become engaged to William Rodney, a pedant acceptable to her parents. Ralph Denham is a lower-middle-class law clerk who writes articles for Mr. Hilbery's review. Ralph comes to tea at the Hilberys' and becomes infatuated with Katharine, but out of loyalty he proposes to Mary Datchet, a suffrage worker and friend. As he and Mary are having lunch, Ralph catches a glimpse of Katharine through the window. Mary sees that Ralph loves Katharine, and refuses his proposal. Meanwhile, Katharine questions the sincerity of her own engagement, and agrees with William Rodney that her cousin, Cassandra Otway, might be more suitable for him. Finally, Katharine finds that she loves Ralph and accepts his proposal. William and Cassandra also become engaged. Mary's love for Ralph is supplanted by her satisfaction with her work.

Even a cursory examination of Virginia Woolf's emphasis upon the equilibrium maintained in the natures of both Katharine and Ralph will demonstrate her care in preparing for the moments of vision which their androgynous minds experience. Katharine's parents, like the Ambroses in The Voyage Out, are opposites. Mrs. Hilbery is imaginative, intuitive, and poetic; Mr. Hilbery, a scholar, is detached, aloof, and concerned with minute factual details. The narrator tells us in the opening scene at the Hilberys' table that their "elements" are "oddly blended" in their daughter. Katharine has a "likeness" to each of her parents: She has the "quick, impulsive movements of her mother" and the "dark, oval eyes of her father brimming with light upon a basis of sadness . . . or, one might say the basis was not sadness so much as a spirit given to contemplation and self-control" (pp. 12-13).

Because her mother, though delightful, is totally impractical (she is "beautifully adapted for life in another planet"), many domestic duties fall to Katharine, and she accepts the proposal of William Rodney largely as an escape. She thinks to herself, "I've got nowhere to live" (p. 293), and confides in her cousin:

But why I'm marrying him is . . . partly because I want to get married. I want to have a house of my own. It isn't possible at home. . . . I have to be there always . . . You don't know what our house is. You wouldn't be happy either, if you didn't do something. It isn't that I haven't the time at home--it's the atmosphere. . . . I'm not domestic. . . . (pp. 194-95)

She then confesses her desire to study mathematics, a science which she feels has an "unwomanly nature" (p. 46). To escape conventional Victorian domesticity, she is perfectly willing to enter into a marriage of convenience. When she receives William's letter of proposal, we are told that Katharine "was able to contemplate a perfectly loveless marriage, as the thing one actually did in real life" (pp. 107-08). Formally engaged, she thinks, "I don't care for William, and people say this is the thing that matters most, and I can't see what they mean by it" (p. 269). She believes that "to be engaged to marry some one with whom you are not in love is an inevitable step in a world where the existence of passion is only a traveller's story brought from the heart of deep forests and told so rarely that wise people doubt whether the story can be true." She then envisions "pages of neatly written mathematical signs" and decides that marriage is "no more than an archway through which it was necessary to pass in order to have her desire" (p. 216).

Katharine's individuality, openmindedness, and refusal to be bound by convention are directly responsible for the first moment of vision she experiences. It is one of a sense of pattern. Having half-admitted to herself that she is falling in love with Ralph and that her engagement to Rodney is a sham, Katharine clearly rejects traditional authority in favor of her individual intuition:

The rules which should govern the behavior of an unmarried woman are written in red ink, graved upon marble. . . . She was ready to believe that some people are fortunate enough to reject, accept, resign, or lay down their lives at the bidding of traditional authority . . . but in her case the questions became phantoms directly she tried seriously to find an answer, which proved that the traditional answer would be of no use to her individually. . . .

The only truth which she could discover was the truth of what she herself felt. . . . To seek a true feeling among the chaos of the unfeelings or half-feelings of life, to recognize it when found . . . is a pursuit which is alternately bewildering, debasing, and exalting. . . . (pp. 312-13)

At this point, Katharine thinks of William Rodney, Cassandra Otway, Mary Datchett, Ralph Denham, and herself, and she feels that "her mind . . . seemed to be tracing out the lines of some symmetrical pattern, some arrangement of life, which invested, if not herself, at least the others, not only with interest, but with a kind of tragic beauty." Anticipating later visions in which the life of solitude and the life of society combine in images of light, she envisions these figures as "lantern-bearers, whose lights, scattered among the crowd, wove a pattern, dissolving, joining, meeting again in combination" (p. 314). Katharine decides that she can best serve this vision by "letting difficulties accumulate unsolved, situations widen their jaws unsatiated, without making any rules for herself or others . . . while she maintained a position of absolute and fearless independence." In other words, Katharine resolves to trust her intuitive and individual vision, which is described as an "exaltation" (p. 315).

The narrator patly sets up Katharine's cousin, Cassandra Otway, as Katharine's foil: "Where Katharine was simple, Cassandra was complex; where Katharine was solid and direct, Cassandra was vague and evasive. In short, they represented well the manly and womanly sides of the feminine nature . . ." (p. 341). The conventionally feminine Cassandra, asking who will be dining at the Hilberys' one evening, is described as "anticipating further possibilities of rapture" when she thinks of the guests (p. 343). The dinner party itself "exhilarates" her; it seems to her that "the world held no more for her to marvel at"; each of the dinner guests is to her a "fascinating being" (pp. 345-46).

When Cassandra finally becomes engaged to William Rodney, she adoringly praises everything about him, ending with a sigh: "I hope we shall have a great many children. He loves children" (p. 433). The narrator relates that Cassandra spends an entire morning praising "William's perfections," repeatedly "giving fresh examples of her absorbing theme" (p. 434). Cassandra reminds us of both Clarissa Dalloway and Susan Warrington in The Voyage Out, perfectly conforming to the conventional sentiments voiced by Katharine's aunt Celia Milvain, who "beheld herself the champion of married love in its purity and supremacy." Mrs. Milvain says to Katharine, "Married love . . . is the most sacred of all loves. The love of husband and wife is the most holy we know. That is the lesson Mamma's children learnt from her" (p. 408).

Cassandra Otway is to Katharine what William Rodney is to Ralph Denham. To realize that Virginia Woolf has provided single-sexed minds as foils to androgynous minds, and then to find Cassandra engaged to William and Katharine to Ralph as the novel ends, is to see clearly the artificial nicety of her plot. A few excerpts from Rodney's conversations and the narrative descriptions of his attitudes will suffice to illustrate his inflexibility and what Virginia Woolf sees as his masculine preoccupation with scholarly, factual precision. Like St. John Hirst, Rodney represents the masculine intellect which "analyses and discriminates" (see above, p. 31). He tries to write poetry, but his intellect and not his emotions dominates the effort:

His theory was that every mood has its meter. His mastery of meters was very great; and, if the beauty of a drama depended upon the variety of measures in which the personages speak, Rodney's plays must have challenged the works of Shakespeare. Katharine's ignorance of Shakespeare did not prevent her from feeling fairly certain that plays should not produce a sense of chill stupor in the audience. . . . (pp. 319-40)

Cassandra reads William Rodney's play and pronounces it brilliant. "I think he's the cleverest man I've ever met," she tells Katharine (p. 353). But Katharine reflects that "these sorts of skill are almost exclusively masculine" (p. 140). She thinks, "No one could doubt that William was a scholar," bringing to mind the case of her own father, who, like Ridley Ambrose in The Voyage Out, is aloof and detached, concerned with factual minutiae:

Mr. Hilbery's study ran out behind the rest of the house, on the ground floor, and was a very silent, subterranean place. . . . Here Mr. Hilbery sat editing his review, or placing together documents by means of which it could be proved that Shelley had written "of" instead of "and," or that the inn in which Byron had slept was called the "Nag's Head" and not the "Turkish Knight," or that the Christian name of Keats's uncle was John rather than Richard, for he knew more minute details about these poets than any man in England, probably, and was preparing an edition of Shelley which scrupulously observed the poet's system of punctuation. (p. 108)

Mr. Hilbery and William Rodney: small wonder that one prefers the other as his son-in-law! Rodney again reminds us of the scholar Hirst when he says that there are "only five men in England" whose opinions matter (p. 40; see above, p. 130). Also like Hirst, Rodney delivers several speeches criticizing women in general. Recommending marriage for Katharine, he insists, "Not only for you, but for all women. Why, you're nothing at all without it; you're only half alive. . ." (p. 66). He complains to Ralph that he finds Katharine's life "odious" because she has "control of everything" and gets "far too much her own way" in the Hilbery household. Then to praise her, Rodney says that "She has taste. She has sense. She can understand you when you talk to her. But she's a woman, and there's an end to it" (p. 71). Elsewhere, he says of Katharine, "She knows enough--enough for all decent purposes. What do you women want with learning, when you have so much else?" (p. 175). Rodney boasts that he finds no difficulty in conversing with women: "You talk to them about their children,

if they have any, or their accomplishments--painting, gardening, poetry . . ." (p. 205). When William becomes engaged to Cassandra, Katharine sees that "William was very happy" in the light of Cassandra's self-effacing worship. "She [Katharine] learnt every hour what source of his happiness she had neglected. She had never asked him to teach her anything; she had never consented to read Macaulay; she had never expressed her belief that his play was second only to the works of Shakespeare" (p. 458).

Virginia Woolf gives two further indications that William's mind lacks intuition and imagination. Cassandra tells him, "There is no doubt what you do in a railway carriage, William. . . . You never once look out of the window; you read all the time" (p. 346). Riding in a railway carriage, looking at people and then giving the imagination free rein, is of course Virginia Woolf's symbol for the intuitive mind in her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (see above, p. 11). But as Katharine says to Rodney, "You nèver see what any one feels. . . . You think of no one but yourself" (p. 370).

A second scene which is revealing in the context of Virginia Woolf's critical writing takes place when Rodney confesses that he has not read The Idiot and that furthermore, "I don't understand the Russians." He tells Cassandra, "Read Pope in preference to Dostoevsky" (p. 280). In "Phases of Fiction" and elsewhere, Virginia Woolf praises

Dostoevski for his fascination with "the mind which entices us and the adventures of the mind that concern us," and for his analyses of the "chaos and complication" beneath the surface and of the "complexity" which "lies deep."¹¹

Katharine herself quotes from The Idiot, "It's life that matters, nothing but life--the process of discovering--the everlasting and perpetual process, not the discovery at all" (p. 135). The essence of life is change, and not, surely, Rodney's inflexibility and his obsession with mere surface realities. When Katharine and William sit out of doors and discuss the possibility of breaking their engagement, Katharine is "unconscious" of their surroundings and appearance, but Rodney is acutely "aware of their situation," noticing "with distress" that a strand of Katharine's hair has come loose and that some leaves have fallen onto her dress. "He wished that she would think of her hair and of the dead beech-leaves, which were of more immediate importance to him than anything else" (p. 246).

To Ralph Denham, this single-sexed, one-sided creature is a "little pink-cheeked dancing master . . . a gibbering ass with the face of a monkey on an organ," a "posing, vain, fantastical fop, with his tragedies and his comedies, his innumerable spites and prides and pettinesses"

¹¹ Virginia Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Collected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1941), II, 86, 88.

(p. 303). Ralph himself represents Rodney's exact opposite: He is open-minded, forgiving, sensitive, intuitive, and candid. In Ralph, we find many instances of the androgynous mind at work, even in the novel's first scene, where Ralph is described as having lips that are "at once dogged and sensitive. . . ." His eyes, although "expressive now of the usual masculine impersonality and authority," nevertheless might reveal "more subtle emotions under favorable circumstances, for they were large, and of a clear, brown color; they seemed unexpectedly to hesitate and speculate" (p. 17). Ralph is at this point being shown the Alardyce "things." This word is repeated throughout the opening scene, as Mrs. Hilbery guides the guests through her father's "shrine." Having viewed paintings, writing table, pen, slippers, spectacles, and walking stick, Denham betrays his impatience with such mundane details. He tells Katharine, "It must be a bore, showing your things to visitors" (p. 17). Mrs. Hilbery asks, "How do you like our things?" and when Denham holds out his hand as if to leave, she continues, "But we've any number of things to show you!" and proceeds to name more. "Dear things! Dear chairs and tables!" she exclaims. Ralph thinks of his farewell as an "escape" (p. 22).

Elsewhere throughout the novel, Ralph expresses dissatisfaction with the prosaic details of everyday life and shows his own sensitive concern with the more poetic

world of emotion and intuition. In a telling scene, this side of Ralph's nature is related to his sympathy for the position of women, clearly different from Rodney's unfeeling arrogance. Discussing with his sister, Joan, the lack of money for a brother's education, Ralph thinks that it was "unfair" that "all these burdens should be laid on her shoulders" (p. 31). When Joan suggests fewer servants, Ralph reflects, "It was out of the question that she should put any more household work upon herself," and pities Joan for being "enmeshed" in the "details of domestic life" (p. 34).

As Mary Datchett, the suffragette, talks at length to Ralph about the Women's Suffrage Bill, Ralph's thoughts turn to Katharine, and he pities Mary "for knowing nothing of what he was feeling." He advises, "You ought to read more poetry" (p. 131). The narrator reminds us at several points that Ralph reads poetry, and when Katharine's father opposes the unconventional notion of Katharine's being in love with someone other than Rodney, Ralph feels "a pulse or stress" which "began to beat at regular intervals in his mind, heaping his thoughts into waves to which words fitted themselves," and scribbles a poem of his own (p. 486).

Ralph clearly trusts his emotions. When Katharine tells him that she has thought of him as "a person who judges," Ralph interrupts her. "'No, I'm a person who feels,' he said, in a low voice" (p. 300). Shortly

afterwards, he says to Katharine, who is still at this point engaged to Rodney, "I doubt whether you make absolute sincerity your standard in life" (p. 335). He then argues that his and Katharine's relationship could be "perfectly sincere and perfectly straightforward" (p. 337). The discussion of his idea leads directly to Katharine's understanding that this "rare and wonderful" friendship with Ralph could enable her to attain a balance between "the life of solitude and the life of society," between the "contemplation" of "dark night" and the social activity of "broad daylight" (pp. 338-39).

The most telling scene between this couple, aside from the moments of illumination that are piled up in the final chapter, is usually overlooked in critical studies. We have stated that early in the novel, Katharine wanted to escape from the social world, because she found it impossible to reconcile "night" (the inner, private life of individual intuition and feeling) and "day" (the outer life, which Katharine calls the "barren prose" of daily life, p. 376). Because Katharine is not absolutely sincere, because the social system Virginia Woolf is criticizing is hypocritical, Katharine feels sure that she "cannot make sure of people." But Ralph Denham, like Terence Hewet in The Voyage Out, brings the heroine to an acceptance of human beings. This gives her hope that she can finally attain the unity of being she seeks. As Ralph and Katharine are walking near

his home, Ralph suddenly invites Katharine for tea. She notices, at the home in Highgate, ugly draperies, unshaded lights, and an untidy dining room. "Katharine decided that Ralph Denham's family was commonplace, unshapely, lacking in charm, and fitly expressed by the hideous nature of their furniture and decorations" (p. 375). Furthermore, the tea is informal, and Ralph's mother, though civil, refuses to make much over Katharine. The tea progresses awkwardly, punctuated by perfunctory remarks, and finally culminates in an "enormous and hideous silence" (p. 376). But then, the "six or seven" brothers and sisters begin to converse naturally, arguing about such matters as James's habit of sleeping late. The family is without artifice and seems good-natured as well as candid.

Therefore, Katharine changes her mind: "They appealed to her, and she forgot her cake and began to laugh and talk and argue with sudden animation. The large family seemed to her so warm and various that she forgot to censure them for their taste in pottery" (p. 378). We remember that Katharine, only days before, has voiced to Ralph the idea that one must "have no relations with people," and furthermore that in a family, "you're all herded together, you're in a conspiracy . . . the position is false" (p. 336). Now Ralph, seeing Katharine warm to his family, is "immensely pleased":

His deep pride in his family was more evident to him at that moment, than ever before, and the idea of living

alone in a cottage was ridiculous. All that brotherhood and sisterhood, and a common childhood in a common past mean, all the stability, the unambitious comradeship, and tacit understanding of family life at its best, came to his mind, and he thought of them as a company, of which he was the leader, bound on a difficult, dreary, but glorious voyage. And it was Katharine who had opened his eyes to this, he thought. (p. 379)

Just after Katharine leaves, Ralph sits alone in his room, and for the first time, he uses the word "love" to describe his feelings (p. 386). Standing outside the Hilbery home later that night, he sees Katharine as "a shape of light, the light itself," and her home as "a steady light which cast its beams, like those of a lighthouse, with searching composure over the trackless waste" outside (p. 395). One hundred-odd pages later, after the intricate threads of the plot have been unravelled, and after Ralph and Katharine have experienced both individual and shared moments of vision, the novel will end on this same note:

Pausing, they looked down into the river which bore its dark tide of waters, endlessly moving, beneath them. They turned and found themselves opposite the house. Quietly they surveyed the friendly place, burning its lamps. . . . Katharine pushed the door half open and stood upon the threshold. The light lay in soft golden grains upon the deep obscurity of the hushed and sleeping household. For a moment they waited, and then loosed their hands. "Good night," he breathed. "Good night," she murmured back to him. (pp. 507-08)

The tone is obviously one of reconciliation; this moment has been preceded, however, by scenes of doubt and misgiving, by what Josephine Schaefer calls alternating

"moments of apprehension."¹² Katharine insists at one point that Ralph loves only a romantic illusion; Ralph feels at times that he "loved only her shadow and cared nothing for her reality" (p. 473). Katharine, in another scene, "sharply resents" Ralph and feels that "she had no need of him and was very loath to be reminded of him." She says to Ralph, "I cease to be real to you. We come together for a moment and we part." They call such moments their "lapses." At times they sit, lost in thought, "depressed." Both realize that for the narrower and more limited characters, life seems easier. Ralph says, "almost bitterly," that "Rodney seems to know his own mind well enough." Katharine continues, "But we--we see each other only now and then--" and Ralph interjects, "Like lights in a storm." Katharine concludes, "in the midst of a hurricane" (p. 424).

And yet, interspersed among these melancholy moments, Ralph and Katharine experience what Schaefer calls the unifying "fits and snatches" by which they expose to each other their inner lives.¹³ A dozen of these shared moments comprise the final eighty pages of the novel; they contribute to making it "too long and lack[ing] vitality," to borrow

¹² Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Three-fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), p. 54.

¹³ Schaefer, p. 58.

Mrs. Holtby's frank assessment.¹⁴ At one point, Katharine tells Ralph that sometimes she looks at him and does not see him, "But I do see . . . heaps of things, only not you" (p. 422). When Ralph urges her to share her vision, Katharine finds that "she could not reduce her vision to words," because it "was no single shape colored upon the dark, but rather a general excitement, an atmosphere, which, when she tried to visualize it, took form as a wind scouring the flanks of northern hills and flashing light upon cornfields and pools." She concludes, "It's an imagination--a story one tells oneself" (p. 422). The significance of Katharine's effort to share her vision with Ralph is underscored when Ralph, explaining that he, too, has his visions, and that "you're with me in mine," declares to Katharine for the first time that he loves her (p. 423).

In a later scene, Ralph attempts to express his feelings for Katharine in a letter:

In an infinite number of half-obliterated scratches he tried to convey to her the possibility that although human beings are woefully ill-adapted for communication, still, such communion is the best we know; moreover, they make it possible for each to have access to another world independent of personal affairs, a world of law, of philosophy, or more strangely a world such as he had had a glimpse of the other evening when together they seemed to be sharing something, creating something, an ideal--a vision flung out in advance of our actual circumstances. If this golden rim were quenched, if

¹⁴ Holtby, p. 97.

life were no longer circled by an illusion (but was it an illusion after all?), then it would be too dismal an affair to carry to an end. . . . On the whole this conclusion appeared to him to justify their relationship. But the conclusion was mystical; it plunged him into thought. . . . In idleness, and because he could do nothing further with words, he began to draw little figures in the blank spaces, heads meant to resemble her head, blots fringed with flames meant to represent --perhaps the entire universe. (p. 487)

As Avrom Fleishman explains, this dot with a circle around it represents Ralph's relating of fact to illusion;¹⁵ hence it is a symbol which the androgynous, balanced minds of both Ralph and Katharine can appreciate. At the same time that Ralph draws this symbol, Katharine sits in her room drawing "lines of figures and symbols frequently and firmly written down"; pages and pages of mathematical equations pile up before her (p. 479). Now the reader shares an account of the sense of communion between Katharine and Ralph, when Ralph, having been delivered to the Hilbery home by Katharine's mother, suddenly walks into Katharine's room. Her papers fall to the floor. Ralph reads her mathematics as she reads his "unfinished dissertation, with its mystical conclusion." Each has, at this point, bared his soul to the other:

The moment of exposure had been exquisitely painful-- the light shed startlingly vivid. . . .
 "I like your little dot with the flames round it," she said meditatively.

¹⁵ Avrom Fleishman, Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1975), p. 40.

Ralph nearly tore the pages from her hand in shame and despair. . . . He was convinced that it could mean nothing to another, although somehow to him it conveyed not only Katharine herself but all those states of mind which had clustered round her since he first saw her pouring out tea on a Sunday afternoon. It represented by its circumference of smudges surrounding a central blot all that encircling glow which for him surrounded, inexplicably, so many of the objects of life, softening their sharp outline, so that he could see certain streets, books, and situations wearing a halo almost perceptible to the physical eye. (p. 493)

This narrative explication clearly likens Ralph's response to the symbol to one of G. E. Moore's "states of mind" (see above, pp. 72-74). Katharine is able to understand the significance with which Ralph invests it; she expresses her kinship with his view: "Yes," she says simply, "the world looks something like that to me too." Now the two people share a moment of illumination in which the "sharp outlines" of the present scene are, as in Ralph's symbol, "softened" by a halo of light representing an inner reality behind what Virginia Woolf calls the "cotton wool" of outer and obvious surfaces:

Quietly and steadily there rose up behind the whole aspect of life that soft edge of fire which gave its red tint to the atmosphere and crowded the scene with shadows so deep and dark that one could fancy pushing farther into their density and still farther, exploring indefinitely. Whether there was any correspondence between the two prospects now opening before them they shared the same sense of the impending future, vast, mysterious, infinitely stored with undeveloped shapes which each would unwrap for the other to behold . . . (p. 493)

To these minds, open, porous, resilient, with large visions of the inner and outer worlds, is given such a moment

in which the two seem bridged. To characters like Rodney and Cassandra, who, as Schaefer says, "live with more than half their faculties blunted" (p. 54), no such visions are given.¹⁶ Rodney and Cassandra remain encased in the cluttered rooms of Sunday teas which open the novel. Ralph and Katharine have earned their passage, in the final chapter, to what Schaefer calls a "larger world," represented by their bus ride through the city at night, and their walk through the streets. Their climactic moment of vision in Katharine's room is echoed in the final pages of the novel, as Katharine sees Ralph's face "isolated . . . in a little circle of light"; she envisions him as "a fire burning through its smoke, a source of life," and thinks of him "blazing splendidly in the night." As he talks, Ralph makes "more splendid, more red, more darkly intertwined with smoke this flame rushing upwards" (p. 503). When he begs her to speak of her first realization that she loved him, Ralph feels that "he had stepped over the threshold into the faintly lit vastness of another mind, stirring with shapes, so large, so dim, unveiling themselves only in flashes, and moving away again into the darkness, engulfed by it" (p. 504).

As they walk, Ralph and Katharine seem to achieve a balance between the imaginative, visionary quality of the

¹⁶ Schaefer, p. 54.

images which have taken on such significance for them and the everyday reality of ordinary life. They feel that they achieve a "state of clear-sightedness . . . travelling the dark paths of thought side by side towards something discerned in the distance which gradually possessed them both. They were victors, masters of life, but at the same time absorbed in the flame, giving their life to increase its brightness to testify to their faith" (p. 505).

As we have seen, the novel ends with Ralph and Katharine standing upon the threshold of her home, bathed in light which seems to signify the possibility that the private life of individual intuition and the outer life of social action have been united for these two by the experience of love. This remains, however, only as a possibility. Perhaps the most appealing feature of this novel is its honest qualification of what could have been a completely optimistic conclusion. Moments of vision, of unity or pattern experienced by the androgynous minds of Ralph and Katharine, are invariably fleeting, and they are qualified by moments of doubt and dissolution. There is, as Schaefer notices, "not one great vision but many small ones, and they remain separate, distinct, contradictory."¹⁷ Ralph, for example, experiences in the final chapter a vision in which fragments from the past begin to cohere:

¹⁷ Schaefer, p. 54.

"Do you remember Sally Seal?" he asked . . .
 "Your mother and Mary?" he went on. "Rodney and Cassandra? Old Joan up at Highgate?" he stopped in his enumeration, not finding it possible to link them together in any way that should explain the queer combination which he could perceive in them, as he thought of them. They appeared to him to be more than individuals; to be made up of many different things in cohesion; he had a vision of an orderly world. (p. 506)

Yet immediately after this vision of order and things in "cohesion," Ralph feels as he walks:

What woman did he see? And where was she walking and who was her companion? Moments, fragments, a second of vision, and then the flying waters, the winds dissipating and dissolving; then, too, the recollection from chaos, the return of security, the earth firm, superb and brilliant in the sun. (p. 507)

Just as Ralph's "vision of an orderly world" is undercut by this sense of dissipation and dissolution, Katharine's vision of unity is also qualified: Walking with Ralph, she feels that "she held in her hands for one brief moment the globe which we spend our lives in trying to shape, round, whole and entire from the confusion of chaos" (p. 503, italics mine).

What Ralph and Katharine realize is that the quest for balance between the inner life of the individual intuition and the outer life of solid objects and social activity, the struggle itself, is an exciting challenge, even without the certainty that the balance will be achieved or that it can be maintained. The narrow, precise, small-minded solutions that easily satisfy a William or a Cassandra will

never suffice for the androgynous mind. The single-sexed mind, trapped within the limitations of self, will invariably find life easier: the quest of Ralph and Katharine cannot, as Jean Guiguet notes, be called a "victory" and "the closing note is not without melancholy."¹⁸ Virginia Woolf herself mused in her diary:

L. finds the philosophy very melancholy. . . . Yet, if one is to deal with people on a large scale and say what one thinks, how can one avoid melancholy? I don't admit to being hopeless though: only the spectacle is a profoundly strange one; and as the current answers don't do, one has to grope for a new one, and the process of discarding the old, when one is by no means certain what to put in their place, is a sad one.¹⁹

We have examined Night and Day in terms of the author's intention--to write about certain characters' "gropings" toward a balance between night and day, inner and outer--as well as her qualification of the moments of balance and reconciliation which these characters experience. Such moments are ephemeral, and they alternate with moments of doubt and dissolution. But as E. M. Forster was quick to notice, the form is wrong. Virginia Woolf has written an Austenian social comedy, ending with two engagements, and with Mary Datchet, the suffrage worker, somewhat clumsily

¹⁸ Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), p. 212.

¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1954), 27 March 1919, p. 10.

disposed of (Ralph and Katharine stand outside Mary's window and decide that she is "working out her plans far into the night--her plans for the good of a world that none of them were ever to know" [p. 506]). Jane Novak concludes that Virginia Woolf does manage to improve her skill at plotting outer action; she moves her characters in space and time, organizes their partings and their reconciliations, and orchestrates the movements of the two plot lines.²⁰ However, Virginia Woolf's "hunting ground," as Winifred Holtby explains, "lies among the subtle gradations of sentiment, memory and association to which less delicate sight is blind"; for her, "conventional answers won't do." Night and Day is therefore wrong for her both in matter and in manner; her theme and her characters are "too big for her plot."²¹

Mrs. Holtby suggests that perhaps the failure of Night and Day is a "mercy" which forced Virginia Woolf "to seek new forms of expression,"²² for in her next novel, she will attempt to convey the sense of minds moving from one thought to another. The reader himself will evaluate the fragmented mental notes that Jacob Flanders and other

²⁰ Jane Novak, The Razor Edge of Balance: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1975), pp. 84-85.

²¹ Holtby, pp. 88, 91.

²² Holtby, p. 97.

characters make about themselves and each other, as the author renders mental action and imitates what Avrom Fleishman calls the "spurts of consciousness"²³ in which Jacob experiences personal growth.

As we shall see, however bold Virginia Woolf's technique in the novel that follows the Austenian Night and Day, Jacob's growth is, like Ralph's and Katharine's, in the direction of the androgynous mind, as Virginia Woolf persists in the fictive search for balance between what she calls the masculine and the feminine sides of the mind.

²³ Fleishman, p. 49.

CHAPTER V

JACOB'S ROOM: "ONE MUST FOLLOW HINTS"

James Hafley complains that in Jacob's Room (1922) "form has been superimposed upon content."¹ In her diary, Virginia Woolf admits as much. On 26 January 1920, she records that she has "arrived at some idea of a new form for a new novel":

. . . I figure that the approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular, but the heart, the passion, humour, everything as bright as fire in the mist. . . . The theme is a blank to me; but I see immense possibilities in the form I hit upon more or less by chance two weeks ago. . . . I still grope and experiment but this afternoon I had a gleam of light.²

She also writes to Lytton Strachey that with this novel she has made "the effort of breaking with complete representation" and that consequently, she sometimes "flies off into the air."³ She admits in her diary, "I expect I could have

¹ James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 52.

² Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1953), 26 Jan. 1920, p. 22; hereafter cited as AWD.

³ Virginia Woolf, "To Lytton Strachey," 9 Oct. 1922, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters, ed. Leonard Woolf and James Strachey (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), p. 146.

screwed Jacob up tighter, if I had foreseen, but I had to make my path as I went."⁴

As we shall see, the novel does indeed seem to "fly off into the air," and at times, the portrayal of the elusive and enigmatic Jacob Flanders may need "tightening." But in the four main sections of the novel, the development of Jacob's mind in the direction Virginia Woolf called androgynous can be clearly traced, increasing our understanding and appreciation of the moments of vision Jacob finally experiences. In the first section, Jacob rejects the purely feminine worlds and single-sexed minds of his mother, of a London prostitute, of a model, and of the traditionally domestic but more sincere and admirable Clara Durrant. Second, Jacob reacts against the rational and intellectual masculinity of the university; in this section, he develops an intuitive, almost mystical sense that Virginia Woolf identifies with the "woman part of the brain." Both in Cambridge and later on in London, Jacob is contrasted with his rational, analytical, fact-bound acquaintances.

Finally, in Greece, Jacob meets a woman whose mind clearly exhibits an androgynous nature similar to his own. Near the end of the novel, Jacob alone experiences what the narrator calls a "moment of flowering" that a "capacious brain" may undergo, and then together with the woman, Sandra

⁴ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 29 Oct. 1922, p. 53.

Williams, he shares a moment of unity and reconciliation which seems to encompass all movement and all time.

The novel's "form" is that of a series of vignettes, each characterized by broad leaps in time, space, and mental associations. We first see Jacob as a child playing upon the beach at Cornwall; then as an adolescent, studying Latin with a tutor and collecting butterflies; then as a student at Cambridge; then working in an office in London; then travelling to the continent; finally, we learn that he has been killed in World War I. Shifts from one character's thoughts or words to another's, shifts in time, and shifts in the angle of vision often occur in the same passage. Two examples suffice to illustrate. As the book opens, Jacob's mother, Betty Flanders, sits in the sand, weeping, and writes a letter. Her mind is simultaneously on the beach, in the garden, and at church:

Slowly welling from the point of her gold nib, pale blue ink dissolved the full stop; for there her pen stuck; her eyes fixed; and tears slowly filled them. The entire bay quivered; the lighthouse wobbled; and she had the illusion that the mast of Mr. Connor's little yacht was bending like a wax candle in the sun. . . . Tears made all the dahlias in her garden undulate in red waves and flashed the glass house in her eyes, and spangled the kitchen with bright knives, and made Mrs. Jarvis, the rector's wife, think at church, while the hymn-tune played and Mrs. Flanders bent low over her little boys' heads, that marriage is a fortress and widows stray solitary in the open fields, picking up stones, gleaning a⁵ few golden straws, lonely, unprotected, poor creatures.

⁵ Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room (London: Hogarth Press, 1922), pp. 5-6. All other references to the novel in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

From Mrs. Flanders' point of view, the reader shifts back and forth to her son Archer's, to the painter Charles Steele's, to Jacob's as he catches a crab, sees a couple sunbathing, and picks up a sheep's skull, and finally to that of an omniscient narrator who describes some of the action as well as to that of a personal narrator who often intrudes into the story. For example, in the first vignette, Betty Flanders walks up the hill with her boys. The omniscient narrator describes the action; the personal narrator interpolates:

On she plodded up the hill.
 "What did I ask you to remember?" she said.
 "I don't know," said Archer.
 "Well, I don't know either," said Betty, humcrously and simply, and who shall deny that this blankness of mind, when combined with profusion, mother wit, old wives' tales, haphazard ways, moments of astonishing daring, humour, and sentimentality--who shall deny that in these respects every woman is nicer than any man? (p. 9)

As we shall see, this immediate, personal narrator states the novel's theme; the omniscient, impersonal narrator often contradicts it.

A second section of the novel nicely illustrates shifts in time and space. In Chapter XIII, a runaway horse is seen by two characters walking together. Without transition, the time leaps forward an hour as one of the characters dresses for tea. Then, the scene with the horse is viewed again, this time from the point of view of another

character, Julia Eliot, who is described in some detail by the omniscient narrator, and who looks at her watch and remembers that she is due at Lady Congreve's at five o'clock, twelve minutes hence. Again without transition, the "gilt clock at Verrey's" strikes five and is heard by a prostitute, Florinda, who sees a man who reminds her of Jacob. The reader then sees Jacob sitting in Hyde Park, talking with a chair ticket collector. His manner of speaking with the collector is the subject of the next scene, in which Fanny Elmer thinks of Jacob as Big Ben strikes five o'clock. The omniscient narrator then describes the Admiralty's communications with foreign capitals. Next, successive one-sentence paragraphs describe Jacob rising from his chair, Mrs. Flanders writing a letter, and a voice in Whitehall telling of a reception by the Kaiser. The narrator continues to describe brief scenes in London, on the moors, and in Greece. As the section ends, Betty Flanders thinks she can hear guns firing:

"The guns?" said Betty Flanders, half asleep, getting out of bed and going to the window, which was decorated with a fringe of dark leaves.

"Not at this distance," she thought. "It is the sea." Again, far away, she heard the dull sound, as if nocturnal women were beating great carpets. (pp. 165-75)

Unfortunately, critical attention to Virginia Woolf's technique in such scenes has sometimes overshadowed attention to the novel's subject. Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, for

example, finds that this scene, when Betty Flanders hears "nocturnal women beating great carpets," echoes a Cornwall woman's "beating her mat against the walls" and Turkish women's "beating linen on the stones" in earlier scenes.⁶ But to what critical purpose? Merely to assert that "that image, which conveys the sound of guns, gains a much richer effect because of the echoes it awakens."⁷ Jane Novak also studies the novel's "repetitions" of brief actions and images, concluding that these give it "continuity and design."⁸ Surely, however, one cannot claim for such devices as the exact repetition, in the last section, of early descriptions of eighteenth-century ceilings and carvings more than obvious, superimposed artifice. Such passages seem simply to be technical exercises, as does the effort to convey the simultaneity of experiences in Chapter XIII.

Perhaps these passages are the focus of a great deal of literary criticism because they mark so radical a departure from the conventional narrative patterns of the first two novels, or because Virginia Woolf herself admitted that she began with form, not content. But in order to appreciate

⁶ Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Three-fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), p. 74.

⁷ Schaefer, p. 74.

⁸ Jane Novak, The Razor Edge of Balance: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Coral Gables: Univ. of Miami Press, 1975), p. 99.

Jacob's Room more fully, we must consider Virginia Woolf's larger purpose in writing it. In 1918, two years before she began Jacob's Room, she wrote of Rupert Brooke: "One turns from the thought of him not with a sense of completeness and finality, but rather to wonder and to question still: What would he have been, what would he have done?"⁹ "Not with a sense of completeness and finality"--the phrase might describe the experience of reading Jacob's Room, for Virginia Woolf is saying in this novel that what we see of a person--his appearance, his possessions, his room, his social self--provides only hints of his spirit, or, in James Hafley's term, his "essence."¹⁰

Therefore, what she is saying is entirely in keeping with the manner in which she says it. It is through fragments, through the conflicting but composite impressions of Jacob's family, friends, and acquaintances, and through our own haphazard guesswork about the alternations between the outer appearances and the inner reflections called up by a name or an object, that we come to "know" anything about Jacob Flanders. The experience of trying to do so is the experience of reading the book; its "subject" is the effort itself, and as Jean Guiguet has remarked, this content

⁹ Virginia Woolf, "Rupert Brooke," TLS, 8 Aug. 1918, p. 371.

¹⁰ Hafley, p. 55.

"depends more on the reader who sounds it than on the author who created it."¹¹

Therefore, however radically different her method, Virginia Woolf's concern in the third novel is still with the interplay between outer and inner, between the actuality of the world of "facts" and essential reality. As Guiguet explains, "The alternation between realistic descriptions and inward analyses gives way to a constant confrontation between impressions and the inaccessible, indescribable experience they conceal; the impression left by the world around Jacob, by the four walls of his room, is constantly set against Jacob's innermost and essential self."¹² Ralph Freedman finds that in this novel, Virginia Woolf "constantly plays off the external perception of characters against their inner awareness of themselves and each other."¹³

Having posited that Virginia Woolf ascribed intuitive, imaginative, and poetic qualities to the "feminine" side of the brain and intellectual, rational, prosaic qualities to the "masculine" side, and that the more "androgynous" mind can experience a moment of vision in which there is

¹¹ Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), p. 224.

¹² Guiguet, p. 223.

¹³ Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 207.

harmony between inner and outer, we are now prepared to approach Jacob's Room from the standpoint of Jacob's growth in this direction. Virginia Woolf has intentionally presented him in enigmatic fragments; the personal narrator repeatedly reminds us that we cannot fully "know" him:

It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done. . . . (pp. 29, 153)

In any case life is but a procession of shadows, and God knows why it is that we embrace them so eagerly, and see them depart with such anguish, being shadows. And why, if this and much more than this is true, why are we yet surprised in the window corner by a sudden vision that the young man in the chair is of all things in the world the most real, the most solid, the best known to us--why indeed? For the moment after we know nothing about him.

Such is the manner of our seeing. Such are the conditions of our love. (pp. 70-71)

This was in his face. Whether we know what was in his mind is another question. (p. 93)

Whether this is the right interpretation of Jacob's gloom . . . it is impossible to say. . . . (pp. 47-48)

But though all this may very well be true--so Jacob thought and spoke--so he crossed his legs--filled his pipe--sipped his whiskey--and once looked at his pocket-book, rumpling his hair as he did so, there remains over something which can never be conveyed to a second person save by Jacob himself. Moreover, part of this is not Jacob but Richard Bonamy--the room; the market carts; the hour; the very moment of history. . . . Something is always impelling one to hum vibrating, like the hawk moth, at the mouth of the cavern of mystery, endowing Jacob Flanders with all sorts of qualities he had not at all--for though, certainly, he sat talking to Bonamy, half of what he said was too dull to repeat; much unintelligible (about unknown people and Parliament); what remains is mostly a matter of guess work. Yet over him we hang vibrating. (pp. 71-72)

And yet, in spite of such personal authorial intrusions insisting upon Jacob's unknowableness, the omniscient narrator still manages, as James Hafley points out, to do "a very good job" of disproving that.¹⁴ Hafley is concerned with the "unresolved disparity in point of view";¹⁵ our concern is to examine, from the standpoint of Jacob's development toward a balanced, androgynous mind, what we do know of him.

We learn about Jacob, first, as a child and adolescent; this section of the book is dominated by his mother. Second, in the Cambridge and London sections, we come to "know" him through his relationships with students, dons, several women, and other passing acquaintances in the male-dominated academic and business milieus. Finally, we read about his "grand tour," and in the chapters set in Greece, about his relationship with a woman whose life and mind seem to represent the balance between reason and intuition, between "prosaic daylight" and poetic imagination, that he himself has begun to achieve. Significantly, in this section, Jacob Flanders, soon to be killed in the war, experiences moments of vision that are dramatically and vividly rendered.

¹⁴ Hafley, p. 52.

¹⁵ Hafley, p. 52.

Jacob's mother, Betty Flanders, represents a purely feminine world. As we have seen, Virginia Woolf, in a personal aside, praises Mrs. Flanders' "haphazard ways," her "sentimentality," her "profusion," and her "moments of astonishing daring." Mrs. Flanders denies the "facts" of outer reality, insisting that the young boy Jacob leave the sheep's skull on the beach, calling it "horrid" (p. 8). When a hurricane rages outside the house, Mrs. Flanders tells her son Archer that the noise is "only the bath water running away" and insists that he think of fairies sleeping under the flowers (pp. 10-11). At the end of the book, she hears the "dull sound" of guns firing on the continent, but insists that "it is the sea" (p. 175). Mrs. Flanders spends hours dreaming of her deceased husband, Seabrook, and, in deference to his memory, turns down the marriage proposal of the Reverend Mr. Floyd, a Latin scholar ("Seabrook came so vividly before her" when she read Mr. Floyd's letter of proposal, p. 18). Acceptance would have been sensible, practical, rational--qualities she is totally without. Before leaving Scarborough, Mr. Floyd gives to the Flanders boys a kitten, which Mrs. Flanders proceeds to have neutered. Years later, she "smiles" at the thought of neutering the cat and rejecting Mr. Floyd (p. 20). She is a predictably protective mother:

Meanwhile, poor Betty Flanders's letter, having caught the second post, lay on the hall table--poor Betty

Flanders writing her son's name, Jacob Alan Flanders, Esq., as mothers do, and the ink pale, profuse, suggesting how mothers down at Scarborough scribble over the fire with their feet on the fender, when tea's cleared away, and can never, never say, whatever it may be-- probably this--Don't go with bad women, do be a good boy; wear your thick shirts; and come back, come back, come back to me. (p. 89)

Jacob does not, of course, "come back." His mother has said when he was young that he is "the only one of her sons who never obeyed her" (p. 21). When he sees the letter in question, he puts it aside, unread, and takes a prostitute to bed:

They shut the bedroom door behind them.

The sitting room neither knew nor cared. The door was shut; and to suppose that wood, when it creaks, transmits anything save that rats are busy and wood dry is childish. These old houses are only brick and wood, soaked in human sweat, grained with human dirt. But if the pale blue envelope lying by the biscuit-box had the feelings of a mother, the heart was torn by the little creak, the sudden stir. Behind the door was the obscene thing, the alarming presence, and terror would come over her as at death, or the birth of a child. Better, perhaps, burst in and face it than sit in the antechamber listening to the little creak, the sudden stir, for her heart was swollen, and pain threaded it. My son, my son-- such would be her cry, uttered to hide her vision of him stretched with Florinda, inexcusable, irrational, in a woman with three children living at Scarborough.

And the fault lay with Florinda. (p. 91)

We often see Mrs. Flanders thinking of Jacob and writing letters to him. Jacob, however, writes to his mother infrequently, and, she complains, his letters "tell me nothing that I want to know" (p. 138). Conversations with artists in Paris, a trip to Versailles, a "queer moment"

under an arc lamp in the Gare des Invalides, when a painter and his mistress draw together and separate from Jacob-- Jacob thinks that "nothing in the world was of greater importance" than these moments, and that the painter and his mistress were "the most remarkable people he had ever met" (pp. 129-30). However, we are told, "No--Mrs. Flanders was told none of this" (p. 129), and at another point, "Well, not a word of this was ever told to Mrs. Flanders" (p. 125).

Just as he writes the obligatory letters to his mother, Jacob makes the obligatory social calls on her friends and "connections." At tea with the wealthy Miss Perry, who had been "a little hurt" that he had not called earlier, because "your mother is one of my oldest friends," Jacob endures the banalities of tea-table chatter about the corner cabinet and bad poems submitted to the Saturday Westminster for prizes. Finally, we see that he finds his mother's friends unbearable: "'Running away so soon?' said Miss Perry vaguely" (pp. 101-02). Similarly, having lunch with the Countess of Rocksbeer, with whom he is rumored to be connected (p. 154), Jacob thinks, "A rude old lady" (p. 99). His mother's sphere, then, is completely excluded from the life Jacob is creating for himself.

We remember that Virginia Woolf characterized Mrs. Flanders with the phrase "blankness of mind." The personal narrator describes Florinda, a London prostitute, similarly.

"If Florinda had a mind, she might have read with clearer eyes than we can. She and her sort have solved the question by turning it to a trifle of washing the hands nightly before going to bed, the only difficulty being whether you prefer your water hot or cold, which being settled, the mind can go about its business unassailed" (p. 78). Jacob, although he emerges from the bedroom scene "beautifully healthy, like a baby after an airing, with an eye clear as running water" (p. 91), shares the narrator's rejection: it occurs to him, as he thinks of Florinda, to "wonder whether she had a mind at all" (p. 78). Florinda talks nonsense at dinner: "Jacob observed Florinda. In her face there seemed to him something horribly brainless" (p. 79). She is one of several women who represent the single-sexed mind; Florinda and others like her appear to Jacob as objects, as things. This is illustrated when he first sees Florinda at a Guy Fawkes bonfire:

Out of the faces which came out fresh and vivid as though painted in yellow and red, the most prominent was a girl's face. By a trick of the firelight, she seemed to have no body. The oval of the face and hair hung beside the fire with a dark vacuum for background. (pp. 72-73)

Jacob's attitude toward another girl who crosses his path in London is similar. Fanny Elmer, an artist's model, falls in love with Jacob when she meets him at the Empire Theatre (pp. 116-17). Fanny, who spends whole afternoons looking into shop windows, and sews a tassled outfit to wear

to a fancy dress ball at the Slade, tries to read Tom Jones because Jacob has recommended Fielding. However, she finds it "dull stuff . . . about people with odd names" (p. 121). But to Jacob, who never returns her affection, she says, "I do like Tom Jones." Jacob, obviously sensing her insincerity, tells her abruptly that he is leaving for Paris, just after the narrator has interjected, "Alas, women lie! But not Clara Durrant" (p. 122).

Clara is the one girl in the English section of the novel to whom Jacob is attracted. She is drawn in stark contrast to the Florindas and the Fanny Elmers, who in their "blankness of mind" completely lack rational, practical, or intellectual qualities; in the personal narrator's words, they are "all sentiment and sensation" (p. 153). But Clara, the sister of Jacob's school friend Timothy Durrant, is described as having "a flawless mind" and "a candid nature" (p. 122). When he first meets Clara at the Durrants' home, Jacob "did not wish [the dinner] to end"--a contrast to the teas and luncheons with his mother's friends, and also to an evening in Florinda's room when Jacob finds her so "stupid" that he cannot bear to stay with her (p. 81). We see Clara through Jacob's eyes when the two pick grapes from a vine:

"There!" she said, cutting through the stalk. She looked semi-transparent, pale, wonderfully beautiful up there among the vine leaves and the yellow and purple bunches, the lights swimming over her in coloured islands. (p. 61)

Clara then suggests that it is "absurd" for Jacob to return to London; he echoes, "Ridiculous" (p. 62). Clara writes in her diary that she is attracted to Jacob because of his sincerity: "He gives himself no airs, and one can say what one likes to him" (pp. 69-70). Like the woman Jacob will finally love, Clara hopes to preserve the "moment": "She wished the moment to continue for ever precisely as it was that July morning. And moments don't" (p. 70).

Clara's own sincerity is noticed by a friend of Jacob's who calls upon her while Jacob is on the Continent: Richard Bonamy thinks that "the virginity of Clara's soul appeared to him candid; the depths unknown" (p. 151). The personal narrator tells us that "to very observant eyes" Clara "displayed deeps of feeling which were positively alarming" (p. 153). Most important of all, we are told outright that "Of all women, Jacob honored her most" (p. 122).

Clara's flaw, in the narrator's eyes, in Jacob's, and in Richard Bonamy's, is incisively etched in a brief party scene. Jacob suddenly crosses a crowded room and asks Clara to leave with him. "'Yes, an ice. Quickly. Now,' she said" (p. 88). But half-way down the stairs, the two meet a group of the Durrants' friends, and Clara is soon immersed in introductions and polite banter (p. 88). Clara, in truth, is a hostess, trapped in the routine of social protocol; she often reminds us of Katharine Hilbery, and of the life Rachel Vinrace's father wanted for her. She does

not have the time to learn Italian or more than one piano sonata, because she is limited by her social role: She must give parties, accept invitations, write letters and fill up columns in order to help the poor of Notting Hill and Clerkenwell buy stockings and medicine (p. 83). The narrator calls her "a virgin chained to a rock (somewhere off Lowndes Square) eternally pouring out tea for old men in white waistcoats" (p. 122), and in describing her day, says that Clara "filled the vases, fetched the puddings, left the cards, and when the great invention of paper flowers to swim in finger-bowls was discovered, was one of those who most marvelled at their brief lives" (p. 83). Richard Bonamy marvels at her existence, which seems "squeezed and emasculated within a white satin shoe" (p. 151). Jacob, thinking of Clara's life introducing guests at parties, pouring tea, and visiting the dressmaker, realizes that "to sit at a table with bread and butter, with dowagers in velvet, and never say more to Clara Durrant than Benson said to the parrot when old Miss Perry poured out tea, was an insufferable outrage upon the liberties and decencies of human nature" (p. 122). As we shall see, when Jacob leaves England, he meets a woman who represents freedom from traditional feminine domesticity.

Jacob's character is further portrayed in relation to the lives of the men he meets at Cambridge, in the section of Jacob's Room described by Winifred Holtby as

"pure magic." Mrs. Holtby feels that Virginia Woolf makes the Cambridge section glow with "romantic glamour" which she might have felt when she visited with her brothers during "a wonderful May week."¹⁶

The fragmented descriptions of King's College Chapel, of sculling up the river, of Neville's Court at night, and of Jacob's room with its round table, low chairs, yellow flowers in a jar, notes, pipes, and books, may be, as Mrs. Holtby claims, "pure poetry." Jacob is created in part by the world he interacts with, and details of his late-night reading and heated discussions at Cambridge surely help us to "know" Jacob Flanders.

But there is, in the Cambridge sections, more than beautiful description. Jacob develops, in these years, an almost mystical, intuitive, poetic sense that is contrasted with the rational and intellectual male-oriented system of authority in the university. Looking out of the window of his room, he hears the muffled stroke of a clock, and feels that the sound conveys to him "a sense of old buildings and time; and himself the inheritor" (p. 43). Conversing with friends in their rooms, Jacob feels that their words are "inaudible"; he senses "the intimacy, a sort of spiritual suppleness, when mind prints upon mind indelibly" (p. 44).

¹⁶ Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London: Wishart and Co., 1932), p. 123.

¹⁷ Holtby, p. 125.

Just after he leaves Cambridge, he will be able to lose himself in reading the Phaedrus late at night, despite interruptions from the outer world; "in spite of the rain; in spite of the cab whistles; in spite of the woman in the mews behind Great Ormond Street who has come home drunk and cries all night long, 'Let me in! Let me in!'" (p. 108). Sculling on the river, Jacob becomes totally absorbed in the landscape:

The meadow was on a level with Jacob's eyes as he lay back; gilt with buttercups, but the grass did not run like the thin green water of the graveyard grass about to overflow the tombstones, but stood juicy and thick. Looking up, backwards, he saw the legs of children deep in the grass, and the legs of cows. Munch, munch, he heard; then a short step through the grass; then again munch, munch, munch, as they tore the grass short at the roots.

"Jacob's off," thought Durrant. . . . (p. 35)

In sharp contrast with Jacob in this scene is his Cambridge friend, Timothy Durrant, who is described in this passage as having a "methodical manner" (p. 35).

Timothy's rational precision is again contrasted with Jacob's poetic imagination when the two go to Cornwall by way of the Scilly Isles on a boating holiday. Timothy is concerned with "calculations"; his figures are "spelled out quite correctly"; he "writes up some scientific observations" and is concerned with "the exact time or the day of the month . . . in the most matter-of-fact way in the world" (p. 46).

Winifred Holtby quotes a long passage from this section calling it "a sea piece with the delicate sunlit colours of

Russel Flint."¹⁸ The description is of the mainland, seen from the sea, and it ends with a vision of the Cornish hills and stark chimneys:

Yes, the chimneys and the coast-guard stations and the little bays with the waves breaking unseen by any one make one remember the overpowering sorrow. And what can this sorrow be?

It is brewed by the earth itself. It comes from the houses on the coast. We start transparent, and then the cloud thickens. All history backs our pane of glass. To escape is vain. (p. 47)

Timothy Durrant, at this point, is making "scientific observations." Jacob, on the other hand, is in a "mood"; absorbed by the scene, he sits naked and "never spoke a word" (p. 48).

Timothy may be viewed as representative of Cambridge. Virginia Woolf devotes a great deal of time to describing the world of fact and order in its intellectual, authoritarian, masculine sphere--hardly the "romantic glamour" that Mrs. Holtby praises this section for. In King's College Chapel, the voices sound, the organ replies, and the "white-robed figures cross from side to side"; the scene is, the narrator assures us, "all very orderly" (p. 30). Jacob, having lunch at the home of a Cambridge don, thinks that the family's "belief in Shaw and Wells and the serious sixpenny weeklies" is "bloody beastly." He asks, "Had they

¹⁸ Holtby, p. 126.

never read Homer, Shakespeare, the Elizabethans?" George Plumer, the don, is described as having "cold grey eyes" with "an abstract light" in them. Jacob feels that the Plumers of the world have made the earth into "places of discipline" (pp. 33-34).

The omniscient narrator, too, scorns the rigidity of scholarship and the intellectual precision of Cambridge. With deft strokes, she quickly sketches a portrait of Huxtable, who "can't walk straight," looks "priestly," and whose brain works like a precise military muster:

Old Professor Huxtable, performing with the method of a clock his change of dress, let himself down into his chair. . . . Now, as his eye goes down the print, what a procession tramps through the corridors of his brain, orderly, quick-stepping, and reinforced, as the march goes on, by fresh runnels, till the whole hall, dome, whatever one calls it, is populous with ideas.
(p. 38)

Another don, Sopwith, entertains undergraduates in his room until midnight or later, "talking, talking, talking--as if everything could be talked"; Sopwith "sums things up." He, too, proselytizes; the narrator concludes: "A woman, divining the priest, would, involuntarily, despise" (p. 39).

The third don whose light the narrator sees burning above Cambridge is Erasmus Cowan, a Latin scholar who travels abroad and is then "thankful to be home again in his place, in his life, holding up in his snug little mirror

the image of Virgil." Cowan is in danger of turning into a mere technician: "the builder, assessor, surveyor . . . ruling lines between names, hanging lists over doors"

(p. 40). He is contrasted with a woman, Miss Umphelby, who lectures at Newnham. Just before she describes Miss Umphelby, the narrator imagines Virgil's surprise at finding Cowan as his representative: "Only--sometimes it will come over one--what if the poet strode in? 'This my image?' he might ask, pointing to the chubby man . . ."

(p. 40). Miss Umphelby's imagination leads her along the same line of thought:

And though, as she goes sauntering along the Backs, old Miss Umphelby sings him [Virgil] melodiously enough, accurately too, she is always brought up by this question as she reaches Clare Bridge: "But if I met him, what should I wear?" --and then, she lets her fancy play upon other details of men's meeting with women which have never got into print. Her lectures, therefore, are not half so well attended as those of Cowan, and the thing she might have said in elucidation of the text for ever left out. (p. 40)

Huxtable, Sopwith, and Cowan: representatives of the masculine order at Cambridge, with a humorous feminine counterpart, Cowan's imaginative rival. In substance, if not in tone, the section reminds us of similar accounts of the university system in A Room of One's Own as well as in Three Guineas (see above, p. 65). Significantly, Jacob, at the end of this section, walks away from the scene:

But Jacob moved. He murmured good-night. He went out into the court, He went back to his rooms. . . . Back from the Chapel, back from the Hall, back from the Library, came the sound of his footsteps, as if the old stone echoed with magisterial authority: "The young man--the young man--the young man--back to his rooms." (p. 45)

This is the last we see of Jacob at Cambridge. We have seen that he rejects the disciplined rigidity of the George Plumers of this world, and his walking away toward his own rooms, coming just after the narrator has described the mechanical intellectuality of the other dons, surely signifies his turning away from what this masculine sphere represents: pure intellect, precision, and reason; the world of "fact" and analysis.

Jacob is also sketched in contrast to the world of prosaic daylight in the London sections. The personal narrator surveys a crowd from the steps of St. Paul's and finds that though "each person is miraculously provided with coat, skirt, and boots; an income; an object," Jacob is "a little different," for in his hand he carries a book which he will read "as no one else of all these multitudes would do" (p. 65). Walking through the streets, Jacob's love of Greek "leaps out, all of a sudden," as it seems to him that "the flagstone rings on the road to the Acropolis" (p. 75).

In a role analogous to that of Timothy Durrant in the Cambridge section, Richard Bonamy serves as foil to Jacob's

developing personality in the London chapters. Bonamy, the narrator tells us, "couldn't love a woman and never read a foolish book":

I like books whose virtue is all drawn together in a page or two. I like sentences that don't budge though armies cross them. I like words to be hard--such were Bonamy's views, and they won him the hostility of those whose taste is all for the fresh growths of the morning, who throw up the window, and find the poppies spread in the sun, and can't forbear a shout of jubilation at the astonishing fertility of English literature. That was not Bonamy's way at all. (p. 138)

Bonamy realizes that "Jacob Flanders was not at all of his own way of thinking." Jacob "was not given much to analysis, but was horribly romantic," in Bonamy's eyes (p. 139). Nevertheless, while deploring the "romantic vein" in Jacob, Bonamy sees that along with this vein, there also runs in Jacob "something--something"; the "essence" of Jacob is a mixture. As the narrator says elsewhere, one word may be sufficient to describe a person's nature: "But if one cannot find it?" (p. 69). For always, "there remains over something which can never be conveyed to a second person save by Jacob himself" (p. 71). Still, we can further define Jacob through his relationship with Bonamy. In Greece, Jacob thinks to himself, "Bonamy talked a lot of rot" (p. 134). When Jacob writes to Bonamy a letter containing poetic phrases, Bonamy feels "apprehensive" reading what he calls "these dark sayings of Jacob's" because Bonamy's "own turn" is "all for the definite, the

concrete, and the rational" (p. 145). The narrator could not have made the point more precisely: Jacob has grown beyond the purely feminine world of his mother, her friends, and the girls he knows in London; moreover, "something" in him is also larger than the strictly intellectual, prosaic, fact-loving precision of Durrant and Bonamy.

Once in Greece, Jacob thinks of Bonamy "stuffed in his room in Lincoln's Inn" (p. 148). Riding a train to Olympia, he thinks how "tremendously pleasant it is to be alone; out of England; on one's own," and notices the "very sharp bare hills" and a mountaintop "from which one can see half the nations of antiquity" (p. 140). What the narrator calls "the wild horse in us" induces him to climb the mountain at Olympia. Once there, "stretched on the top of the mountain, quite alone, Jacob enjoyed himself immensely. Probably he had never been so happy in the whole of his life" (p. 143). Later, when Jacob is in Athens, he again sits on the top of the mountain, and the narrator tells us that Jacob's brain experiences a "moment of flowering" (p. 149). In fact, the Greek experience offers Jacob several such moments; they come after he has fallen in love with Sandra Wentworth Williams.

Sandra is first seen sitting at a hotel window in Olympia, watching the peasants carrying their burdens, and feeling, "I am full of love for every one. . . . Everything has meaning" (p. 140). The narrator tells us that Sandra's

beauty infuses the Greek landscape: As she stands, "veiled in white, in the window of the hotel at Olympia," she thinks, "How beautiful the evening was!" and the narrator continues, "and her beauty was its beauty" (p. 141). Before Jacob meets her, Sandra is once again related to Greece in the narrator's description:

Never did she do anything without dignity; for hers was the English type which is so Greek, save that villagers have touched their hats to it, the vicarage reveres it; and upper-gardners and under-gardners respectfully straighten their backs as she comes down the broad terrace on Sunday morning. . . . (p. 142)

Sandra is married to Evan Williams, a "temperamentally sluggish" man with "drooping bloodhound eyes and heavy sallow cheeks" who seems to be a historian with nothing to do but postpone publishing his monograph upon the foreign policy of Chatham. Evan "lives much in company with Chatham, Pitt, Burke, and Charles James Fox" and contrasts their rationally enlightened age unfavorably with ours (pp. 141, 142). Above all, he lives with "circumspection and deliberation" (p. 141). When Evan meets Jacob, he wonders immediately if Jacob "might do very well in politics" (p. 145). He is an impossible match for his wife, and tries to convince himself that it is "very pleasant" for her to have affairs (p. 142).

But while Sandra is imaginative, intuitive, and beautifully feminine, she is able to assimilate Evan's sluggish, prosaic outlook into her larger perspective.

There is no indication of bitterness toward him, no rejection of him. When Jacob sees Sandra on the terrace of the hotel, he notices that she seems able to encompass, to include in her vision, both prosaic, external details and imaginative awareness of a "truth" below the surface--both the outer and the inner worlds:

Very beautiful she looked. With her hands folded she mused, seemed to listen to her husband, seemed to watch the peasants coming down with brushwood on their backs, seemed to notice how the hill changed from blue to black, seemed to discriminate between truth and falsehood, Jacob thought. . . . (p. 144)

Jacob, at this point, has enjoyed the mountaintop in Olympia, has looked at the statues in the museum there, and has met Sandra. In the passage that immediately follows, he agrees to travel to Corinth with the Williamses, and writes to Bonamy that coming to Greece helps "protect oneself against civilization" (p. 145). This is the moment at which Bonamy, "civilized" in the manner from which Jacob needs "protection," is described by the narrator as being completely "definite, concrete, and rational," obviously representing the limited, single-sexed, exclusively masculine mind as opposed to the more open, androgynous mind which Jacob has begun to develop and to appreciate in Sandra.

In Corinth, Sandra "simply" tells Jacob about her motherless girlhood. Jacob, admiring her forthright conversation, thinks, "People wouldn't understand a woman talking as she talks" (p. 145). He admires her deftness in

climbing a rough hill, and notices that she wears breeches under her short skirt: "'Women like Fanny Elmer don't,' he thought. 'What's-her-name Carslake didn't; yet they pretend . . .'" (p. 146). Clearly, because of her imagination, her awareness of the subtleties in the beauty of the landscape as well as of the discrimination "between truth and falsehood," her openness in conversation, and her unconventional dress and manner, Sandra is contrasted with the more limited minds of the other women Jacob has known. Only Clara Durrant, described in terms of candor and purity of soul, approaches her, and as we have seen, Clara remains chained to the rock of domestic convention. In a significant passage, Jacob thinks, "Mrs. Williams said things straight out. He was surprised by his own knowledge of the rules of behaviour; how much more can be said than one thought; how open one can be with a woman; and how little he had known himself before" (p. 146).

In the great body of Virginia Woolf criticism, little has been made of this relationship. And yet Jacob was never described as being "in love" with any of the other women in the novel. In Athens, however, his thoughts about the problems of civilization, "which were solved . . . so very remarkably by the ancient Greeks," are compounded with thoughts of "Sandra Wentworth Williams with whom he was in love" (p. 149). Just as the narrator has twice identified Sandra with Greece, where Jacob's brain begins to "flower,"

so, at the Parthenon, does Jacob. The goddess on the left-hand side of the Erechtheum reminds him of Sandra: "He was extraordinarily moved, and with the battered Greek nose in his head, with Sandra in his head, with all sorts of things in his head, off he started to walk right up to the top of Mount Hymettus, alone, in the heat" (p. 151). Such climbing, as Avrom Fleishman reminds us, represents "a pursuit of cultural identity, individual fulfillment, and all the higher goals implied by the age-old symbol of the ascent of a hilltop."¹⁹ It is clearly Sandra Wentworth Williams who is responsible for this final and vital unfolding, prefaced by Jacob's experiences with the sources of consciousness who relate to and shape him at home, at Cambridge, and in London.

After he falls in love with Sandra, Jacob experiences two epiphanies in which opposites seem to be reconciled. Alone on the Acropolis, he has a vision that encompasses the idea of beauty and our response to it, of immortality and mortality, of stasis and flux, of unity and diversity, of light and darkness, of the prosaic world of the street and the eternal poetry of the Parthenon itself. Because of the scope of the vision, the passage deserves full quotation:

¹⁹ Avrom Fleishman, Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1975), p. 67.

The extreme definiteness with which they [the columns] stand, now a brilliant white, again yellow, and in some lights red, imposes ideas of durability, of the emergence through the earth of some spiritual energy elsewhere dissipated in elegant trifles. But this durability exists quite independently of our admiration. Although the beauty is sufficiently humane to weaken us, to stir the deep deposit of mud--memories, abandonments, regrets, sentimental devotions--the Parthenon is separate from all that; and if you consider how it has stood out all night, for centuries, you begin to connect the blaze (at midday the glare is dazzling and the frieze almost invisible) with the idea that perhaps it is beauty alone that is immortal. (p. 147-48)

Jacob can also appreciate the "odd" combination of opposites Athens itself offers, his vision now incorporating the "suburban" and the "immortal," as he sees statues of stately women juxtaposed with trays of cheap jewelry, the royal landau with a shepherd and his goats, and the "silent composure" of the Parthenon itself with "the blistered stucco, the new love songs rasped out to the strum of guitar and gramophone, and the mobile yet insignificant faces of the street" (pp. 147-48). The narrator calls this moment of balance one of the "moments of flowering" that a "capacious brain" may experience (p. 149).

The second "moment of flowering" occurs when Jacob and Sandra climb the acropolis together at night. If we accept Harvena Richter's suggestion that landscape description reflects facets of Jacob's personality,²⁰ this climactic moment is invested with the most profound significance,

²⁰ Harvena Richter, Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), p. 107.

for Jacob seems now to represent almost unlimited potential, and his individual life is associated with a universal, or cosmic, movement. The surroundings are suffused with a quality of boundlessness, as Jacob and Sandra seem to stretch wide enough to include all movement and all time. They are larger than time and space; they seem, in the bold shifts from eastern Europe to London, from the nations of the world to individuals, from projections into the future to the present moment in the streets of Athens, to encompass everything:

It was dark now over Athens. . . . The mainland of Greece was dark. . . . Violent was the wind now rushing down the Sea of Marmara between Greece and the plains of Troy. In Greece and the uplands of Albania and Turkey, the wind scours the sand and the dust, and sows itself thick with dry particles. And then it pelts the smooth domes of the mosques, and makes the cypresses, standing stiff by the turbaned tombstones of Mohammedans creak and bristle.

Sandra's veils were swirled about her. . . .

Now the agitation of the air uncovered a racing star. Now it was dark. Now one after another lights were extinguished. Now great towns--Paris--Constantinople--London--were black as strewn rocks. . . . (pp. 159,160)

The vision widens to include a view of Jacob's mother, who feels "oppressed" by the concept of eternity, sharply contrasting her limited, purely feminine outlook with the vitality and exhilaration of Jacob's moment on the Acropolis. Then, years in the future, we see Sandra in an English country house. Returning to the dark streets of Athens, we find that "all faces--Greek, Levantine, Turkish, English"--

look the same. The dawn then touches the Pyramids, St. Peter's, and "sluggish" St. Paul's, and the household of a foreign exchange clerk in London. There is a suggestion that this entire universe is bound together by a web of organic filaments: "So when the wind roams through a forest, innumerable twigs stir; hives are brushed; insects sway on grass blades; the spider runs rapidly up a crease in the bark; and the whole air is tremulous with breathing; elastic with filaments" (p. 162).

Of course, the moment of unity and reconciliation cannot last. Earlier in the novel, having described a moment of vision experienced while watching the waves, Virginia Woolf writes, "For if the exaltation lasted we should be blown like foam into the air. The stars would shine through us. We should go down the gale in salt drops--as sometimes happens" (p. 119). Of the moment when Jacob and Sandra climb the Acropolis, the personal narrator asks, "There was the Acropolis; but had they reached it?" She continues, "As for reaching the Acropolis, who shall say that we ever do it, or that when Jacob woke next morning he found anything hard and durable to keep for ever?" (p. 160). The question is similar to Sandra's "What for? What for?" recorded in the next paragraph, which projects her years into the future and shows how she will pull out the book Jacob has given her and "swing across the whole space of her life like an acrobat from

bar to bar" (p. 160). As she reviews her life, Sandra thinks that "she had had her moments," and as this paragraph directly follows the descriptions of her "moments" in Greece, we cannot doubt the significance with which Virginia Woolf intended for them to be invested.

Jacob, when we next see him, is sitting on the chair in Hyde Park, his pockets full of Greek notes, talking with Richard Bonamy. When he asks Jacob about Greece, Bonamy suddenly knows the truth. "'You are in love!' he exclaimed." Jacob blushes; Bonamy rises from his chair and walks off, cursing women (pp. 165-65). In our last glimpse of Jacob, he crosses a street in Piccadilly, having left the Hyde Park chair. This is his last action in the novel; his last thought, significantly, is of Sandra. After Bonamy leaves the chair, Jacob draws a plan of the Parthenon in the dust, and then takes out some papers. "It was not to count his notes" that he does so, the narrator warns. He "read a long flowing letter which Sandra had written two days ago at Milton Dower House with his book before her and in her mind the memory of something said or attempted, some moment in the dark on the road to the Acropolis which (such was her creed) mattered for ever" (p. 169).

And that, "for ever," is all that we can "know" of Jacob Flanders. "Does anybody know Mr. Flanders?" Mrs. Plumer had asked, while the don's family waited for Jacob to come to luncheon (p. 31). "It is no use trying to sum

people up," we have heard the personal narrator reply. But in "following hints," as she advises us, we have come to know something of the potential which Jacob represents. Jacob Flanders, killed at the age of twenty-six in 1914, is survived by all the other characters in the novel; these characters, in Ralph Freedman's phrase, "intersect with and create his world."²¹ While the characters of Jacob and those around him are not fully explored in the Austenian sense, and while the intersecting relationships in Jacob's Room lack Austen's neat conclusions, we may, as Freedman explains, consider the entire book to be the projection of Jacob's experience in a "variety of disconnected moments" and the exploration of character as "illuminating" these moments.²² Because Jacob develops beyond both the limited, exclusively feminine sphere and the limited, exclusively masculine sphere, he begins to achieve the equilibrium which Virginia Woolf found characteristic of the androgynous mind, and hence necessary for the experience of the moment of vision, the fleeting state of wholeness yielding deeper insight.

We have, then, begun to know Jacob Flanders, and when Bonamy stands in Jacob's empty room in the final paragraphs of the novel and calls, "Jacob, Jacob," the futile cry

²¹ Freedman, p. 211.

²² Freedman, p. 211.

seems to echo not only earlier cries (his brother Archer's, pp. 6-7, and Clara Durrant's, p. 166), but to remind us of Virginia Woolf's "wondering" and "questioning" about Rupert Brooke, turning from his memory without a sense of completeness and finality. The poignancy of Jacob's early death is further underscored by the wholeness he has begun to develop in his relationship with Sandra Wentworth Williams. Having encouraged us to "follow hints," Virginia Woolf provides a crucial one when she introduces Sandra. At Olympia, when Sandra experiences the moment "full of love for every one" and thinks, "Everything has meaning," she holds in her hand "a little book" containing "stories by Tchekov" (pp. 140-41). Chekhov is the writer with whom Virginia Woolf concludes her study of contemporary writers in the essay "Modern Fiction." She praises Chekhov for creating a vision in which deeper insight is provided by the totality of consciousness and things--in which everything, as Sandra says, does indeed have meaning. Her praise of Chekhov might well apply to her own slender novel:

No one but a modern, no one perhaps but a Russian, would have felt the interest of the situation which Tchekov has made into the short story which he calls "Gusev." Some Russian soldiers lie ill on board a ship which is taking them back to Russia. We are given a few scraps of their talk and some of their thoughts; then one of them dies and is carried away; the talk goes on among the others for a time, until Gusev himself dies, and looking "like a carrot or a radish" is thrown

overboard. The emphasis is laid upon such unexpected places that at first it seems as if there were no emphasis at all; and then, as the eyes accustom themselves to twilight and discern the shapes of things in a room we see how complete the story is, how profound, and how truly in obedience to his vision Tchekov has chosen this, that, and the other, and placed them together to compose something new.

Virginia Woolf concludes her essay by explaining that "we have been taught" that short stories should be "brief and conclusive," and that Chekhov is "vague and inconclusive." However, she continues to praise Chekhov and other Russian writers for "seeing further than we [the English] do, and "without our gross impediments of vision." She insists that the "inconclusiveness of the Russian mind" is "comprehensive and compassionate"; "our famous English novels" are, by comparison, "tinsel and trickery."²³

An "inconclusiveness" that is "comprehensive and compassionate"--it is difficult to imagine phrases that more aptly describe Jacob's Room. Critics who object that "Jacob escapes us"²⁴ or that "its centre, the character who might unite all the various scenes, is--not there,"²⁵ might

²³ Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," Collected Essays, II (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967), pp. 108-09.

²⁴ Dorothy Brewster, Virginia Woolf (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1962), p. 106.

²⁵ J. K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group: A Study of E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, and Their Circle (New York: Noonday Press, 1954), p. 334.

consider Ralph Freedman's conclusion: The "reflection of the picture" in both Chekhov's story and in Jacob's Room is "the image in the impressionistic painter's eye and that of the beholder."²⁶ This is much the same challenge Guiguet offers when he insists that the content of the novel depends a great deal upon what the reader brings to it. As we define Jacob in terms of his time and space--his boyhood, adolescence, studies at Cambridge, life in London and on the continent--and in terms of the consciousnesses of the other characters--of his mother, of the women in England, of men at Cambridge and in London, and finally of Sandra Wentworth Williams--we find that our eyes, as Virginia Woolf explains, accustom themselves to the "twilight" of a haunting novel. We, too, begin to "discern" the lines of Jacob's development and the significance of the "flowering" which his more androgynous mind experiences in Greece.

Finally, detractors of the novel might notice how it struck a contemporary, E. M. Forster, who wrote:

The coherence of the book is even more amazing than its beauty. In the stream of glittering similes, unfinished sentences, hectic catalogues, unanchored proper names, we seem to be going nowhere. Yet the goal comes, and the method and matter prove to have been one, and looking back from the pathos of the closing scene, we see

²⁶ Freedman, p. 213.

for a moment the airy drifting of atoms piled into a colonnade.²⁷

Forster goes so far as to call Jacob "the solid figure of a young man."²⁸ This might seem contradictory, well nigh impossible, in the light of the personal narrator's repeated admonitions against trying to "sum people up," and of the fragmentary, partially unfulfilled vision of life which the book itself presents. But by "following hints" in those fragments, and by studying the moments of deeper awareness in which Jacob does seem to grow, we find ourselves in the position of Chekhov's reader, as described by Virginia Woolf. An exact paraphrase of her analysis of "Gusev" describes the experience of reading her own novel: We see how completely in obedience to her vision she has chosen this, that, and the other, and placed them together to compose something new.

²⁷ E. M. Forster, "The Early Novels of Virginia Woolf," Abinger Harvest (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1925), p. 110.

²⁸ Forster, p. 109.

CHAPTER VI

MRS. DALLOWAY: "A DISCORDANCY"TO THE LIGHTHOUSE: "FOR NOTHING WAS SIMPLY ONE THING"Mrs. Dalloway: "A Discordancy"

David Daiches writes that although the continual shifts in point of view in the fragmented "chapters" of Jacob's Room do allow Virginia Woolf to "abandon" certain aspects of the traditional novel, she also "abandoned all conceptions of a plot as a means of interpreting reality."¹ Daiches feels that the character of Jacob is indeed conveyed "by a series of indirect strokes," but he also complains that the experiences of the book are not rendered "into a satisfactory unit."² Writing it, Virginia Woolf confides in her diary, "I have not thought my plan out plainly enough--so to dwindle, niggle, hesitate--which means that one's lost."³ But in her next novel, Mrs. Dalloway (1925), she carefully patterns the plot. She writes in her diary

¹ David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 61.

² Daiches, pp. 56, 62.

³ Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1954), 26 Sept. 1920, p. 27; hereafter cited as AWD.

that the design of the new novel is "so queer and so masterful" that she must "wrench" her substance to fit it.⁴

The design and technical innovations of Mrs. Dalloway have been widely and painstakingly analyzed. Virginia Woolf was possibly influenced by Joyce, although her preface to the Modern Library edition insists that her book grew "without any plan at all,"⁵ that in other words the plan of Ulysses did not inspire her. Jane Novak calls this rejoinder "disingenuous" in the face of the diary entry.⁶ In this novel, Virginia Woolf describes a day in London in June, 1923, as it is experienced by Clarissa Dalloway, her husband Richard, her old suitor Peter Walsh, and a shell-shocked veteran, Septimus Warren Smith, whom Clarissa never meets. Within the chronological framework of less than twenty-four hours, she uses, as did Joyce, the interior monologues of the characters to record memories that affect and explain the present, and she also uses external phenomena--the chiming of clocks, the passing overhead of a skywriting plane, the passing through the streets of a royal limousine and of an ambulance--as common perceptions which link otherwise unrelated characters and which move the narrative

⁴ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 19 June 1923, p. 57.

⁵ Virginia Woolf, Introd., Mrs. Dalloway, by Virginia Woolf (New York: Modern Library, 1925), p. viii.

⁶ Jane Novak, The Razor Edge of Balance: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1975), p. 109.

forward. Hence, as Daiches succinctly explains, we either move "freely in time within the consciousness of an individual," or we move "from person to person at a single moment in time."⁷

Daiches, Bernard Blackstone, Jean Guiguet, Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, and other critics have focused more upon technique than upon meaning; other commentators study Virginia Woolf's criticism of society, taking their cues from such diary entries as these: "I want to bring in the despicableness of people like Ott [Lady Ottoline Morrell]. I want to give the slipperiness of the soul. I have been tolerant too often,"⁸ and "I want to criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense."⁹

The polarization of criticism on this book points us to a problem with Mrs. Dalloway. Daiches, after analyzing the spatial and temporal structuring of the novel, suggests that the solid, upper-middle-class urban setting undercuts the attempted lyrical presentation of experience as fragmentary insights, that it is in fact at odds with the "subtle lyrical-cum-philosophical interpretation of experience" which the author aims to present.¹⁰ Jane Novak

⁷ Daiches, p. 65.

⁸ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 19 June 1923, p. 56.

⁹ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 19 June 1923, p. 56.

¹⁰ Daiches, p. 77.

is more pointed, locating the flaw in the concept of Clarissa's character: the discrepancy between her "mundane" and her "mythic" selves is too great.¹¹ Virginia Woolf attempts to render the mental states of a woman who at the end of the book experiences what is supposedly a climactic moment of vision, but her endeavor to "criticise the social system" constantly interferes with the reader's experience of Clarissa.

As we shall see, in the process of writing the novel Virginia Woolf decided that Clarissa was "tinselly," and invented what she called a "tunnelling process," recording characters' memories, in order to depict Clarissa as a young girl. This younger Clarissa represents the potential for the development of the androgynous mind, and as such she is loved by Peter Walsh. But in the older hostess Clarissa, we find that this potential has not been realized. In satirizing her protagonist's environment and her life as a hostess, Virginia Woolf robs Clarissa's "moment of vision" of its intended significance.

Clarissa is at one point described like a Goddess of Life. Her parties are supposedly an "offering" which she makes to "life": she brings "people together," and "it was an offering; to combine; to create; but to whom? An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. Anyhow, it

¹¹ Novak, p. 125.

was her gift."¹² But the criticism of the English social system in this novel outweighs the intended import of Clarissa's love of life, and of the moments in which she "plunges" herself into the London day.

For example, as the novel opens, Clarissa crosses the street on the way to buy flowers for her party. "What a morning . . . what a lark! What a plunge!" she thinks, and we see her enjoying the exhilaration of the moment:

In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June (p. 5)

This passage, and many like it are intended to depict what Schaefer praises as Clarissa's "joy in living."¹³ This is what Novak calls Clarissa's "Woolfian sensitivity to experience,"¹⁴ noticed also by Lytton Strachey when he told Virginia Woolf that she "covers" Clarissa "very remarkably, with myself."¹⁵ However, as the passage at hand continues,

¹² Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1925), pp. 184-85. All other references to the novel in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

¹³ Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Three-fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), pp. 107-08.

¹⁴ Novak, p. 127.

¹⁵ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 18 June 1925, p. 77.

Clarissa's thoughts are of the King and Queen at the palace, of her people who were "courtiers once in the time of the Georges," and above all of "going . . . to her party" (p. 6).

For Clarissa Dalloway, charming and well-bred, is precisely what Peter Walsh calls her: the perfect hostess (p. 93). In this novel, Virginia Woolf satirizes and openly criticizes not only the authoritative emblems of a society that imposes its will and its standards upon others,¹⁶ but she often satirizes and criticizes Clarissa herself. For this reason, Strachey found the book flawed:

No, Lytton does not like Mrs. Dalloway. . . . What he says is that there is a discordancy between the ornament (extremely beautiful) and what happens (rather ordinary--or unimportant). This is caused, he thinks, by some discrepancy in Clarissa herself: he thinks she is disagreeable and limited, but that I alternately laugh at her and cover her . . . with myself. So that I think as a whole, the book does not ring solid. . . .¹⁷

The diary entry goes on to admit that Virginia Woolf almost abandoned the novel because of the lack of emotional appeal in Clarissa; she admits that she "found Clarissa in some way tinselly." Elsewhere she writes, "The doubtful

¹⁶ The patronage system, pp. 111-12, 155-56, 162-63, 263; the medical profession, pp. 137-40, 142-54, 223; organized religion, pp. 16, 41-42, 187-89, 202-03; the English public school system, pp. 110, 262-63; power politics and the resulting wars, pp. 5-6, 25-26, 28, 99, 129-31.

¹⁷ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 18 June 1925, p. 77.

point is, I think, the character of Mrs. Dalloway. It may be too stiff, too glittering and tinselly."¹⁸ Even after she tried to round out her character by "inventing her memories," she admits that "some distaste for her persisted," and traces this to her dislike for Kitty Maxse, the model for Clarissa.¹⁹

Virginia Woolf's ambivalence about her protagonist results in a satiric undercutting of most of the scenes in which Clarissa expresses her appreciation of life's "exquisite moments." Thinking that "months and months" of her life were still untouched, Clarissa "plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there--the moment of this June morning on which was the pressure of all other mornings, seeing the glass, the dressing-table, and all the bottles afresh, collecting the whole of her at one point. . . ." But then she looks into the mirror and sees herself, not as a whole person but merely as "the woman who was that very night to give a party" (p. 54). She thinks of her home as a shrine, and feels when she returns to it like a nun who "feels fold round her the response to old devotions"--but these are only the "devotions" of the maid and of the cook whistling in the kitchen. Clarissa calls her feeling upon entering the house a "bud on the tree of life," and feels that this is but one

¹⁸ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 15 Oct. 1923, p. 60.

¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 18 June 1925, pp. 77-78.

of a "secret deposit of exquisite moments" from which she must repay "servants, yes, to dogs and canaries, above all to Richard her husband who was the foundation of it--of the gay sounds, of the green lights, of the cook even whistling" (pp. 42-43). Obviously, she invests her "exquisite moments" with undue significance.

The same is true of her thoughts about the party, which critics have taken as seriously as does Clarissa. Alice van Buren Kelley, for example, writes that the party is a "uniting force" which "sums it all up" and "includes representatives of as many forms of life as possible," from "the little seamstress Ellie Henderson . . . to the Prime Minister himself."²⁰ But this fulsome analysis of the party overlooks Clarissa's own displeasure at the inclusion of Ellie. She had deliberately excluded Ellie but on the day of the party a friend had written to ask if Ellie might come. Clarissa thinks, "But why should she invite all the dull women in London to her parties?" (p. 178). Richard, when Clarissa asks him what to do, simply says, "Poor Ellie Henderson," whereupon Clarissa thinks that "Richard had no notion of the look of a room" (p. 181).

In short, Ellie, the poor relation, will not do. During the party scene we learn that Ellie is "not quite happy" about being asked at the last minute and has "a sort of feeling

²⁰ Alice van Buren Kelley, The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 110.

that Clarissa had not meant to ask her this year" because, although they are distant cousins, the two had "rather drifted apart, Clarissa being so sought after" (p. 257). Contrasting with Clarissa's cruelty, the narrator deftly, sympathetically sketches Ellie: She panics at the thought of her small income and her "weaponless state (she could not earn a penny)." She is timid and "more disqualified year by year to meet well-dressed people who did this sort of thing every night of the season, merely telling their maids, 'I'll wear so and so,' whereas Ellie Henderson ran out nervously and bought cheap pink flowers . . . and then threw a shawl over her old black dress" (pp. 256-57). Richard notices that Ellie is alone and goes to speak to her. Clarissa never speaks with Ellie at the party, but instead thinks disparagingly of her as "tapering" and "dwindling" away, and notices that she "stands in a bunch at a corner, not even caring to hold [herself] upright" (p. 255). This is simply because Ellie is cold, but is of interest to Clarissa only because Ellie ruins "the look of a room."

Indeed, Clarissa feels dissatisfied with the party until the arrival of the Prime Minister. Then, as she escorts "her Prime Minister" around the room, she seems to "prance" and to "sparkle." She feels "that intoxication of the moment, that dilation of the nerves of the heart itself till it seemed to quiver" (pp. 264, 265). "Tinselly" she is indeed; A. D. Moody finds in the novel "a steady

judgment of her deep inadequacy, a grave insistence upon the death of her spirit in glittering triviality."²¹

Clarissa is at this point fifty-two. When in the course of the novel's composition Virginia Woolf found her "tinselly," she invented the "tunnelling process" of recording characters' memories of themselves and of each other, often of the same moment shared in the past.²² Inventing memories for Clarissa enabled Virginia Woolf to go on with the writing of the novel, and in examining these memories, we learn that the young Clarissa represents the potential for the development of the mind Virginia Woolf so admired--the balanced, resilient, androgynous mind, open and responsive to experience--and a far cry from the "glittering," stiff, and closed mind of the fashionable lady Clarissa becomes.

James Hafley praises Clarissa for her sense of unity with the rest of the world, citing an oft-quoted passage in which, he says, "Clarissa will not circumscribe herself, separate herself from anyone or anything else":²³

She felt herself everywhere; not "here, here, here"; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. (p. 231)

²¹ A. D. Moody, Virginia Woolf (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 19.

²² Virginia Woolf, AWD, 15 Oct. 1923, p. 60.

²³ James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 62.

But what Hafley fails to notice is that in context, this passage describes a moment in Clarissa's past, a moment she shared years ago with Peter Walsh during their courtship. Peter, earlier in the paragraph, thinks of Clarissa in "those days" as being "all aquiver . . . and such good company, spotting queer little scenes, names, people from the top of a bus. . . . Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter--even trees, or barns. . . . She believed . . . that our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary, compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide . . ." (pp. 231-32).

This is the Clarissa Dalloway to whom Peter Walsh had proposed in the early nineties (p. 88), and it is the memory with which he is still in love (pp. 74-75). But he returns after a long absence and finds, in the place of that intuitive, vibrant, imaginative young poetess (p. 114), a woman he describes as worldly (pp. 79, 115), conventional (p. 73), and insincere (pp. 73, 254). Now, Clarissa "cared too much for rank and society and getting on in the world. . . . These great swells, these Duchesses, these hoary old Countesses one met in her drawing-room, unspeakably remote as he felt them to be from anything that mattered a straw, stood for something real to her" (pp. 115-16). Peter sees Clarissa's life as "that network of visiting, leaving cards, being kind to people; running about with bunches of flowers, little

presents" (p. 117). He thinks that she "frittered her time away, lunching, dining, giving those incessant parties of hers, talking nonsense, saying things she didn't mean, blunting the edge of her mind" (p. 118).

Peter Walsh knew and loved Clarissa's mind years ago; it now has become "blunted," frittered away in triviality. Winifred Holtby writes that Virginia Woolf uses Peter "to say something that is true, to set against the lovely composed picture of Clarissa another standard of values, another way of life."²⁴ Peter is singularly qualified to do so. He, more than anyone else in the book, represents the androgynous mind, a mind not blunted by the social system which Virginia Woolf intended to criticize, for Peter has not been successful in that society's eyes (pp. 64, 112, 161-62), and has in fact lived outside it. Studying the fine furnishings and the maid carrying silver in Clarissa's home, he "detests" the "smugness" of it all, and thinks, "And this has been going on all the time! week after week; Clarissa's life; while I--he thought; and at once everything seemed to radiate from him; journeys; rides, quarrels; adventures; bridge parties; love affairs; work; work, work!" (p. 65). Describing Peter, the narrator explains that women "liked the sense that he was not altogether manly"--that is, there was "something unusual about him, or

²⁴ Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London: Wishart and Co., 1932), p. 155.

something behind him." He was "not the sort of man one had to respect; not like Major Simmons, for instance" (p. 237). Peter seems "easy, with gaiety and good breeding," but he also "saw through" things. He is "not old, or set, or dried in the least" (p. 75).

Peter is different from the other men in the novel: smug government officials who consider themselves self-sufficient; physicians who coerce others to their wills; in short, the pompous, prosaic, male power structure which Virginia Woolf succinctly satirizes with the Prime Minister's entrance at the party. Significantly, the thoughts are Peter's:

. . . they all knew, felt to the marrow of their bones, this majesty passing; this symbol of what they all stood for, English society. . . . Lord, lord, the snobbery of the English! thought Peter Walsh, standing in the corner. How they loved dressing up in gold lace and doing homage! There! That must be . . . Hugh Whitbread, snuffing round the precincts of the great. . . . Peter . . . had thanked God he was out of that pernicious hubble-bubble if it were only to hear baboons chatter and coolies beat their wives. (pp. 262, 263)

Peter, on the other hand, is willing to admit that he is "dependent upon others" (p. 241). Walking in the streets, he thinks of his own "susceptibility" (p. 107). Three times in the novel, he is shown unashamedly weeping (pp. 69, 97, 230). He understands the significance of memory: The effect of his relationship with Clarissa is "immeasurable" because "in absence, in the most unlikely

places, it [the memory] would flower out, open, shed its scent, let you touch, taste, look about you, get the whole feel of it and understanding, after years of lying lost" (p. 232). Such memories are described in Peter's interior monologues. He remembers Clarissa standing on a hilltop, "hands clapped to her hair, her cloak blowing out, pointing, crying to them--she saw the Severn beneath." He sees her in a wood, making the kettle boil, "the smoke curtseying, blowing in their faces; her little pink face showing through" (p. 233). Clarissa and Peter walk while the others drive; significantly, they discuss poetry, their talks interrupted only when Clarissa stops to cry out "at a view or a tree, and made him look with her" (p. 234). Peter in those days had intended to become a writer (p. 285), and his sensitivity, his openness to new experiences, his ready admission of his susceptibility and dependence upon others, remove him from the sphere of the single-sexed, masculine mind which characterizes most of the other male characters.

Not surprisingly, Peter experiences a significant moment of vision. Standing in the street, he hears the bell of an ambulance, and thinks about the victim. "I have that in me, he thought standing by the pillar-box, which could now dissolve in tears":

Why, Heaven knows. Beauty of some sort probably, and the weight of the day, which beginning with that visit

to Clarissa had exhausted him with its heat, its intensity, and the drip, drip, of one impression after another down into that cellar where they stood, deep, dark, and no one would ever know. Partly for that reason, its secrecy, complete and inviolable, he had found life like an unknown garden, full of turns and corners, surprising, yes; really it took one's breath away, these moments; there coming to him by the pillar-box opposite the British Museum one of them, a moment, in which things came together; this ambulance; and life and death. It was as if he were sucked up to some very high roof by that rush of emotion and the rest of him, like a white shell-sprinkled beach, left bare. (p. 230)

Virginia Woolf attempts to echo this moment, in which everything seems to come together, in the moment of vision which Clarissa experiences at her party. The ambulance which Peter sees is carrying the body of the deranged Septimus Smith. At the party, Clarissa hears of this suicide and withdraws to experience the moment which has called forth extravagant critical acclaim. However, the significance ascribed to this moment seems to me to be unwarranted. In the first place, Clarissa withdraws from the party merely because she is peeved that the Bradshaws have mentioned the suicide "in the middle of my party" (p. 279). "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" (p. 280). Second, there is the matter of her "kinship" with Septimus: "She felt somehow very like him--the young man who had killed himself" (p. 283). Virginia Woolf records in her preface to the Modern Library edition

that "in the first version Septimus, who later is intended to be her double, had no existence. . . . Mrs. Dalloway was originally to kill herself or perhaps merely to die at the end of the party."²⁵

She alters her original plan, then, to make "a study of insanity and suicide; the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side--something like that."²⁶ The parallels between Clarissa and Septimus, and the interrelation of their lives as well as between lives of the other characters--the crossing of paths and the sharing of auditory and visual perceptions--are, as Dorothy Brewster points out, "susceptible of geometrical diagramming," and their common symbols "so precisely worked out as to seem almost mechanical."²⁷ Both Clarissa and Septimus are likened to birds, both think about the dirge from Cymbeline, "Fear no more the heat of the sun," both are described in passages containing the phrase "the leaden circles dissolved in the air," both have a sense of kinship with trees, both are associated with roses, and both "throw it away"--Clarissa a coin into the Serpentine, Septimus his life.²⁸

²⁵ Virginia Woolf, Introd., Mrs. Dalloway, p. vi.

²⁶ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 14 Oct. 1922, p. 51.

²⁷ Dorothy Brewster, Virginia Woolf (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1962), p. 111.

²⁸ See Mrs. Dalloway, pp. 4, 14, and 20 for the bird imagery; pp. 6, 59, 211, and 282 for the line from

Finally, both think of themselves as making an offering, Clarissa with her party-giving, and Septimus with the sacrifice that he imagines his suicide to be ("I'll give it you," he screams as he jumps to his death, p. 284).

Hence one critic declares Clarissa to be endowed with "some of the ironic qualities of the pharmakos that adhere to Septimus" and another, that Septimus "consummates the symbolic sacrifice made by Clarissa when she threw a coin into the Serpentine."²⁹ But while in examining Clarissa's "moment of vision" one can clearly understand the author's carefully charted intention to fuse the disparate themes of the novel, the moment itself falls short of conveying intensity, emotion, or drama. It is simply clever.

Clarissa walks into a little room and tries to imagine the suicide:

Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her

Cymbeline; pp. 5, 72, 142, and 283-84 for the "leaden circles"; pp. 9, 12, and 32 for the sense of kinship with trees; pp. 103, 141, 178-79, 182, and 211 for the associations with roses. Josephine O'Brien Schaefer makes much of the fact that the phrase "the leaden circles dissolved in the air" appears twice within parentheses and twice outside parentheses. Schaefer, pp. 107-18.

²⁹ Avrom Fleishman, Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1975), p. 88; Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), p. 235.

body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. 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! (p. 280)

Then she thinks that "a thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death" (pp. 280-81).

Then Clarissa criticizes herself: "She had schemed; she had pilfered. She was never wholly admirable. She had wanted success. Lady Bexborough and the rest of it" (p. 282), and she realizes that "no pleasure could equal . . . this having done with the triumphs of youth, lost herself in the process of living" (p. 282). She "did not pity him [Septimus]," but "felt glad he had done it; thrown it away" (p. 283). Finally, she feels that "he made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun" (p. 284).

But at the end of this "moment," Clarissa returns to her party in no more than the role of a successful hostess minding her guests. She thinks, "But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter"

(p. 284). Grateful that the young man's death has thrown into relief the "beauty" and "fun" of her own life, the lady of fashion returns to the large room where her party continues. If there is any indication in the book itself that "Septimus by his death has purged the corruption from Clarissa's life," as Alice van Buren Kelley claims,³⁰ I find it so scant as to be invisible. Kelley surveys the assortment of characters at Clarissa's party, which she claims "provides the uniting force" for the novel, and finds it significant that "the only essential figure who is missing after the party is well under way is Septimus."³¹ But however profound the absence of Septimus may seem to a critic, we must admit that in terms of the book itself, Clarissa Dalloway, who loves a lord (p. 270) and draws up her guest list with concern for "the look of a room," simply would not have considered him eligible.

Jean Guiguet suggests that Virginia Woolf found the process of writing this novel difficult precisely because she so greatly enriched her original subject.³² Beginning with her notion of the study of insanity and suicide, the world seen by the sane and the insane, she progressed to the notion of criticizing the social system, and then, after "a year's groping," to using the tunnelling

³⁰ Kelley, p. 111.

³¹ Kelley, p. 110.

³² Guiguet, p. 229.

process, by which I tell the past by installments, as I have need of it."³³ At that point, in mid-October, 1923, she found the project so ambitious that she almost gave it up; she admits that her tremendous effort has been "to pour everything in."³⁴ Herein lies the flaw, for in treating Clarissa's environment and her life as a hostess, she robs the supposedly climactic moment of vision of its intended vitality, and robs Clarissa herself of the power to arouse the reader's sympathy.

To the novelist's credit, she knew it and confessed it. She agreed with Strachey's criticism, calling Mrs. Dalloway a "flawed stone."³⁵ After the novel was published, she recorded her desire to convey, in a new novel, a sense of deeper emotion: "I want to learn greater quiet and force. But if I set myself that task, don't I run the risk of falling into the flatness of N. & D.? Have I got the power needed if quiet is not to become insipid?"³⁶

To the Lighthouse: "For Nothing Was Simply One Thing"

Virginia Woolf's question is answered affirmatively and brilliantly in To the Lighthouse (1927). Whereas

³³ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 15 Oct. 1923, p. 60.

³⁴ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 26 May 1924, p. 61.

³⁵ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 18 June 1925, p. 77.

³⁶ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 30 July 1925, p. 80.

Mrs. Dalloway is, as Daiches notes, "denuded of a certain necessary vitality,"³⁷ we now have a novel free of the preaching which Virginia Woolf complained of in the writing of others (see above, p. 12). A. D. Moody complains that Mrs. Dalloway emphasizes Clarissa's society to the detriment of the character herself,³⁸ but in To the Lighthouse, criticism of the social system is no longer a major purpose. In the new novel, Virginia Woolf will succeed in what Winifred Holtby describes as the effort "to draw all past and present . . . all time, all life, all movement into oneself,"³⁹ an effort similar to that made at the climax of Mrs. Dalloway, and which there, because the author had tried to "pour everything in," was a failure.

To be sure, the "social scene" is again criticized in To the Lighthouse, but deftly, subtly, and with a sure touch. Ralph Freedman feels that the setting, a large summer house on an island in the Hebrides, allows the author leisurely to examine "a picture of middle-class academic society at the beginning of the Georgian era."⁴⁰ Among the academics is Charles Tansley, a scholar, who writes his dissertation about "the influence of something

³⁷ Daiches, p. 77.

³⁸ Moody, p. 19.

³⁹ Holtby, p. 139.

⁴⁰ Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 227.

upon somebody" (elsewhere, it is about "the influence of somebody upon something").⁴¹ Speaking in "the ugly academic jargon" Mrs. Ramsay cannot follow, he tells Mr. Ramsay about his friends who win prizes, and insists that women "can't paint, can't write" (pp. 22, 75, 137).

William Bankes, a scientist, finds family life "trifling" and "boring," wishing only "to be alone and to take up that book" (p. 134). He examines his own hand "as a mechanic examines a tool beautifully polished and ready for use" (p. 133), and looks at Lily Briscoe's painting as if making a "scientific examination" (p. 82). When Lily thinks of Bankes's devotion to science, "sections of potatoes rose before her eyes" (p. 39). Augustus Carmichael, a poet, lies on the lawn all day in an opium haze; years later he happens to "grow famous" because the war "revives people's interest in poetry" (p. 202). Now people say that his poetry is "so beautiful" and "publish things he had written forty years ago" (p. 288).

Mr. Ramsay, a metaphysician, has as his life's work the pondering of "subject and object and the nature of reality" (p. 38). He argues that "the arts are merely a decoration imposed on the top of human life; they do not express it" (p. 67). Mr. Ramsay "never tampered with a

⁴¹ Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927), pp. 22, 156. All other references to the novel in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

fact" because "facts" are "uncompromising" (p. 11); both Lily Briscoe and his son James hate his "exactingness" (pp. 58, 223). As we might expect, this fact-bound intellectual, whose work involves "his libraries and his lectures and his disciples" (p. 43), resembles other single-sexed masculine minds in Virginia Woolf's fiction: he likes for men to work "and women to keep house, and sit beside sleeping children indoors" (p. 245). Freedman describes this treatment of characters as "sharp satire."⁴² Social issues, too, are raised: Mrs. Ramsay discusses the need for hospital and dairy reforms (pp. 89, 155) and tries to "elucidate the social problem" by visiting the poor in London and making records of "wages and spendings, employment and unemployment" (p. 18). War casts its shadow over the lyric middle section, "Time Passes," as "ominous sounds like the measured blows of hammers dulled on felt . . . cracked the tea-cups," and, after the "silent apparition of an ashen-coloured ship," there is a "purplish stain" upon the sea, "as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly, beneath." Andrew Ramsay is killed when "a shell exploded" and "twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France" (p. 201). There is even criticism of the fashion in painting: influenced by a Mr. Paunceforte, "all the pictures" are now "pale, elegant, semi-transparent,"

⁴² Freedman, p. 227.

although Lily Briscoe "would not have considered it honest to tamper with the bright violet and the staring white" in her own painting (pp. 23, 31-32).

But this "outer life," as Jane Novak describes it,⁴³ is in perfect equilibrium with the "inner" experience of the characters in To the Lighthouse. Virginia Woolf, like Lily Briscoe in the final section, "The Lighthouse," balances all the elements of her world in the art of this novel, which she calls "easily the best" of her books. In her diary she says that it is "freer and subtler" than Mrs. Dalloway. It is "a hard, muscular book. . . . It has not run out and gone flabby." She suggests that with To the Lighthouse, she may "have made my method perfect and it will now stay like this and serve whatever use I wish to put it to."⁴⁴ Jane Novak succinctly praises her achievement:

The novel's physical and psychic worlds compel belief; we can hear and feel the sea and enter the minds of the characters, never doubting the full reality of either. Inner and outer experiences complement and enrich each other.⁴⁵

Novak realizes that this novel has the power to involve the reader in Lily Briscoe's quest for balance; like Lily, our

⁴³ Novak, p. 130.

⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 23 Nov. 1926, p. 101; 14 Jan. 1927, p. 102.

⁴⁵ Novak, p. 130.

original responses to the Ramsays become modified, so that finally we are able to share her moment of vision.

This is accomplished largely through technique. Of the novel's many perceptive commentators, Erich Auerbach and Mitchell Leaska seem to me most lucid in analyzing the method. Auerbach examines a passage from the first section (pp. 42-46) in which the narrative moves in and out of the minds of Mrs. Ramsay, James, "people," Mr. Bankes, the Swiss maid, and the tentative, questioning narrator, who "renders the impression" received from the characters, but who is "doubtful of its proper interpretation."⁴⁶ Auerbach explains:

The writer as narrator of objective facts has almost completely vanished; almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the consciousness of the *dramatis personae*. . . . We are not given the objective information which Virginia Woolf possessed regarding . . . objects of her creative imagination but what Mrs. Ramsay thinks or feels about them at a particular moment. Similarly we are not taken into Virginia Woolf's confidence and allowed to share her knowledge of Mrs. Ramsay's character; we are given her character as it is reflected in and as it affects various figures in the novel. . . . The tone indicates that the author looks at Mrs. Ramsay not with knowing but with doubting and questioning eyes--even as some character in the novel would see her in the situation in which she is described, would hear her speak the words given.⁴⁷

And, one might add, as the reader sees her and hears her

⁴⁶ Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 531-32.

⁴⁷ Auerbach, pp. 534-35.

speak, so that he, the reader, also seems called upon to question, to hesitate, to speculate.

Auerbach calls the seventeen consciousnesses which flow in the novel, sometimes separately, sometimes merging in the same sentence, the "multipersonal representation of consciousness."⁴⁸ Leaska explains that because these characters are given to us "piecemeal, elusively" by the narrator, we often do not see them "conclusively." At the end of the novel, the character "remains the sum of our impressions, a fluid personality."⁴⁹ Leaska calls Virginia Woolf's method "additive": "Our impression grows as the character's reflections and impressions--as well as those he elicits from others--grow. Thus our understanding too, in a sense, is additive: it is a continual synthesis of accumulated impressions" by which we explore "the quality and complexity of human relationships."⁵⁰

The angle of vision through which we accumulate and finally synthesize impressions is, at key scenes and episodes, Lily Briscoe's. It is Lily who experiences at the conclusion the reconciliation between her memories of Mrs. Ramsay's intuitive, sensitive, imaginative femininity

⁴⁸ Auerbach, p. 536.

⁴⁹ Mitchell Leaska, Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse: A Study in Critical Method (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1970), p. 64.

⁵⁰ Leaska, pp. 64, 63.

and Mr. Ramsay's rational, intellectual, fact-bound masculinity, achieving finally "that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr. Ramsay and the picture [which was originally of Mrs. Ramsay]; which was necessary" (p. 287). As the novel opens, we share with Lily the view that Mr. Ramsay is a tyrant and Mrs. Ramsay a martyr; as it progresses, we become involved, as does Lily, in the quest for balance. As Jane Novak explains, Virginia Woolf is saying in the novel what Lily thinks: "If only she could put them together, she felt, write them out in some sentence, then she could have gotten at the truth of things" (p. 219).

We have noted Lily's uncompromising integrity as an artist. True to her vision, she feels that she struggles "against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: 'But this is what I see; this is what I see,' and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her" (p. 32). She is also independent from social convention, refusing to marry because, as Alice van Buren Kelley explains, "she must be able to maintain her objectivity in order to weigh all of life equally and so capture in her art the balanced reconciliation of fact and vision."⁵¹

⁵¹ Kelley, p. 127.

When Lily thinks of Mrs. Ramsay's insistence that "they must all marry," she gathers a "desperate courage" to "urge her own exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that" (p. 77). Lily reminds us of Terence Hewet and of Ralph Denham when she longs for sincerity in relationships between men and women (p. 139). Like other characters with balanced, androgynous minds, Lily is open to experience, asking throughout the novel, "How did one add up this and that? What does it mean then, what can it all mean? . . . Who knows what we are, what we feel? . . . What does it mean? How do you explain it all?" (pp. 40, 217, 256, 266).

Lily is also extremely intuitive, sensing the feelings of others "as in an X-ray photograph" (p. 137). Walking with William Bankes, she feels as if in a "fume" the "essence of his being," and feels herself "transfixed by the intensity of her perception" (p. 39). At the dinner party, she senses that Mrs. Ramsay is calling Lily to her rescue, because the diners seem to sit "separate" and to lack "coherence"; Lily therefore proceeds to talk "nicely" with Tansley, serving as catalyst for the feeling of cohesiveness and stability that results.

In her art, Lily strives for unity and balance, "the question being one of the relations of masses, of lights and shadows. . . . It was a question . . . how to connect

this mass on the right with that on the left" (pp. 82-83). It is a question of bringing "the parts . . . together" (p. 220). Ten years after Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party, she will describe as a "moment of revelation" and an "enormous exultation" (pp. 220, 262) her first vision, in which she had decided, "Yes, I shall put the tree further in the middle; then I shall avoid that awkward space" (p. 128). As Sharon Kaehele and Howard German explain, much of the imagery in the first section of the novel identifies Mrs. Ramsay with trees,⁵² rendering this vision unbalanced. The truly androgynous vision takes place only after Lily has gained deeper insight into the Ramsays' relationship.

Early in the novel, when Lily tries to "add up this and that" about the Ramsays, she feels much of what the reader initially feels. Mr. Ramsay is "petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; he is spoilt; he is a tyrant" (p. 40). He is "afraid to own his own feelings"; he cannot say "This is what I like--this is what I am," which Lily finds "distasteful." She "wonders why such concealments should be necessary; why he needed always praise . . ." (p. 70). He is described as "the egotistical man" who "plunged and smote like an arid scimitar . . . demanding sympathy" (p. 60). His demands for sympathy are called "imperious" and "coercive" (pp. 222, 248).

⁵² Sharon Kaehele and Howard German, "To the Lighthouse: Symbol and Vision," Bucknell Review 10 (1962), 345.

The boy Andrew tells Lily that his father's books are about "subject and object and the nature of reality," explaining, when Lily protests that she has "no notion what that meant," that she should "think of a kitchen table . . . when you're not there." A scrubbed, austere kitchen table becomes Lily's symbol for Mr. Ramsay's work: he passes his days, she thinks, "in this seeing of angular essences, this reducing of lovely evenings, with all their flamingo clouds and blue and silver to a white deal four-legged table" (p. 38). There is nothing of the imaginative or the intuitive in him. His goal is to reduce truth to its most abstract essence, seeing it stretching before him like an alphabet. Reaching "Z" symbolizes for him attaining perfect truth; he has reached "Q," and "very few people in the whole of England ever reach 'Q'" (p. 53). He is of the class of men who plod and persevere, "repeating the whole alphabet in order, twenty-six letters in all, from start to finish," as opposed to "the gifted, the inspired who, miraculously, lump all the letters together in one flash--the way of genius" (p. 55). His plodding, steadfast devotion to reaching "Z" is described as "a vigilance which spared no phantom and luxuriated in no vision" (p. 69).

This individual, whom Virginia Woolf created in order partially to help exorcise the ghost of her father,

Leslie Stephen,⁵³ declares that women are irrational. The "folly" and "vagueness" of their minds enrages him (pp. 50, 249). His wife, he complains, "flies in the face of facts" (p. 50). He likes to think, therefore, that she is "not clever," exaggerating in his mind "her ignorance, her simplicity," as he observes her reading. Probably, he thinks, she did not understand what she read (p. 182).

As it happens, Mrs. Ramsay has not only "understood" what she has read, apprehended it intellectually, but she has experienced it, has aesthetically appreciated a Shakespeare sonnet:

It didn't matter, any of it, she thought. A great man, a great book, fame--who could tell? . . . Dismissing all this, as one passes in diving now a weed, now a straw, now a bubble, she felt . . . There is something I want--something I have come to get. . . .

She reads the sonnet (No. 98) about the passing of time and the endurance of love:

"Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose," she read, and so reading she was ascending, she felt, on to the top, on to the summit. How satisfying! How restful! All the odds and ends of the day stuck to this magnet; her mind felt swept, felt clean. And then there it was, suddenly entire; she held it in her hands, beautiful and reasonable, clear and complete, the essence sucked out of life and held rounded here--the sonnet. (pp. 177, 178, 181)

This is the mind, sensitive, intuitive, creative, and imaginative, which Mr. Ramsay assumes cannot "understand"

⁵³ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 28 Nov. 1929, p. 135.

the poem. But Mrs. Ramsay, who critics agree represents Virginia Woolf's fullest depiction of the feminine vision, says anyway that she has no time for books (p. 43). She, not Clarissa Dalloway, is Virginia Woolf's Goddess of Life. Her art is in living; Herbert Marder describes her as "creating with the whole of her being."⁵⁴ She deplores "strife, divisions, differences of opinions (p. 17) and finds peace in the notion of "a summoning together" (p. 96). She is in anguish when her dinner party seems to lack cohesiveness: "Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (p. 126). When the disparate elements of the dinner scene are finally unified, she feels "a coherence in things, a stability" (p. 158). Significantly, when Mrs. Ramsay, the "fountain and spray of life" (p. 58) leaves the room, "a sort of disintegration set in; they wavered about, went different ways" (p. 168).

In the first few pages of the novel, we are largely exposed to Mrs. Ramsay's mental activity and secondarily, to the point of view of several other characters. The contrasting traits of Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay are delineated: "Facts" about the wind convince him that the next day's weather will prohibit a trip to the lighthouse;

⁵⁴ Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 128.

her imagination insists that it will be "fine tomorrow," so that James, who "hates" his father and would like to gash a hole in his breast with an axe, will not be disappointed (pp. 58, 10). Mitchell Leaska has traced in detail the impressions we receive from Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts:⁵⁵ she is kind and generous in her thoughts about the light-housekeeper and about a one-armed man hanging circus posters; she is sympathetic and loving toward James; she knows that others remark her extraordinary beauty; she gives her children freedom to explore and to bring home crabs and seaweed; she alone feels compassion for the Swiss maid whose father is dying. William Bankes thinks of her as "very clearly Greek, straight, blue-eyed. . . . The Graces assembling seemed to have joined hands in the meadows of asphodel to compose that face. . . . 'Yet she's no more aware of her beauty than a child,' said Mr. Bankes" (p. 47). As Charles Tansley walks with her to town, his mood changes and he feels an "extraordinary pride" simply in walking with "the most beautiful person he had ever seen," and imagines her "with stars in her eyes and veils in her hair, with cyclamen and wild violets" (p. 25). Lily Briscoe, first appearing in the novel as she paints her picture, feels that she herself "had much ado to control her impulse to fling herself (thank Heaven she had always resisted so

⁵⁵ Leaska, pp. 65-76.

far) at Mrs. Ramsay's knee and say to her--but what could one say to her? 'I'm in love with you?' No, that was not true. 'I'm in love with this all,' waving her hand at the hedge, at the house, at the children"--in other words, at Mrs. Ramsay's creation (p. 32).

The novel celebrates a marriage of these opposites: on the social level, the "feminine" and the "masculine"; on the symbolic level, light and lighthouse; on the level of artistic creation, Lily's painting and the aesthetic experience of the novel itself. Mrs. Ramsay needs her husband's precise, rational, factual, masculine strength. During the dinner party, "she let it uphold and sustain her, this admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence, which ran up and down, crossed this way and that, like iron girders spanning the swaying fabric, upholding the world, so that she could trust herself to it utterly" (p. 159). Mr. Ramsay, in turn, needs the sympathetic, fertile sense of being "at the heart of life" which she provides:

Mrs. Ramsay, who had been sitting loosely, folding her son in her arm, braced herself, and, half turning, seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force, burning and illuminating (quietly though she sat, taking up her stocking again), and into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare. . . . It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile. . . . (pp. 58-59)

Sensing his feelings, Mrs. Ramsay conveys to her husband the reassurance and sympathy he needs, and then feels "throbbing through her" the "rapture of successful creation." This throbbing pulse seems "to enclose her and her husband and to give to each that solace which two different notes, one high, one low, struck together, seem to give each other as they combine" (p. 61).

However, this marriage of opposites, like Lily's painting, is often tenuous and difficult. Years later, Lily thinks, "It was no monotony of bliss" (p. 296). The Ramsays' quarrel over the trip to the lighthouse illustrates this. When Mrs. Ramsay tells James that the weather may change, "The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him [Mr. Ramsay]. . . . She flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies. He stamped his foot on the stone step. 'Damn you,' he said" (p. 50). Mrs. Ramsay finds his inflexibility devastating: "To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilisation so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency that, without replying, dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked" (p. 51).

In scenes such as this, the reader becomes involved in the act of balancing, of modifying the initial impressions of the Ramsays, who are hardly the simplistic villain/martyr couple which some critics have made of them. For example, in the passage at hand, when Mr. Ramsay offers "very humbly" to ask the Coastguards if it might not rain, Mrs. Ramsay feels that "there was nobody whom she revered as she revered him. . . . He said, It won't rain; and instantly a Heaven of security opened before her" (p. 51). Mrs. Ramsay, Lily comes to see, needs for men to be "trustful, childlike, reverential" in their attitude toward her (p. 13).

In the last section of the novel, Lily remembers the "rhapsody" of "self-surrender" which she has seen in Mrs. Ramsay's face; she sees her face in a "rapture of sympathy, of delight," in the reward of masculine approval which "evidently conferred[on her] the most supreme bliss of which human nature was capable" (pp. 224-25). Lily finds the self too vital to be thus drained; but Mrs. Ramsay remains at the service of "the greatness of man's intellect, even in its decay," and "the subjection of all wives . . . to their husbands' labours." When she insinuates this feeling to Charles Tansley, Mrs. Ramsay calls forth from him the worship of her beauty described above; when she serves boeuf en daube to William Bankes, he feels that "she was a wonderful woman. All his love, all his reverence, had returned;

and she knew it." Lily opposes playing this feminine role; she thinks that Mrs. Ramsay "gave him what he asked too easily" (p. 71). Furthermore, she deploras Mrs. Ramsay's "mania for marriage," feeling that in her match-making, Mrs. Ramsay attempts "to dominate, wishing to interfere, making people do what she wished" (pp. 109, 92). Lily, and not Mrs. Ramsay, represents the truly androgynous nature in this novel.

Lily also grows in her understanding of Mr. Ramsay. We have analyzed our initial impressions of him and have shown that they are likely to be as negative as our response to Mrs. Ramsay is sympathetic; we have shown how both the reader and Lily Briscoe balance their experience of Mrs. Ramsay. Now, we must demonstrate that Mr. Ramsay is also complex. He provides what Mrs. Ramsay needs. He holds to the truth as he perceives it, courageously and uncompromisingly. His conversation with Tansley outside the window comforts her, as it drowns out the sound of the pounding waves which "remorselessly beat the measure of life" (p. 28). He inspires in her "reverence, and pity, and gratitude too, as a stake driven into the bed of a channel upon which the gulls perch and the waves beat inspires in merry boatloads a feeling of gratitude for the duty it is taking upon itself of marking the channel out there in the floods alone" (pp. 68-69). As he looks at his wife sitting in the window, he thinks her "lovely, lovelier now than ever he thought,"

but although he wishes "urgently" to speak with her, he resolves not to interrupt her meditation, respecting her individuality while sensing her sadness and sorrowing that "he could not reach her, he could do nothing to help her" (p. 100).

But the deepest appreciation of Mr. Ramsay's nature, and the recognition that both his and his wife's forms of truth are essential to the balanced vision, comes in the final section, "The Lighthouse." Here, scenes showing Cam, James, and Mr. Ramsay approaching the lighthouse in a boat alternate with Lily's reflections as she paints on the terrace. The children, now teenagers, move toward a vision that encompasses both their mother's and their father's perceptions, just as Lily, on shore, symbolizes the equilibrium between feminine and masculine visions when she completes her painting.

The choice of Cam and James as the children who journey to the lighthouse with their father is singularly appropriate. This has been generally overlooked in critical studies. The younger Cam was a rebel, dubbed "Cam the Wicked" by Mr. Bankes, defying her nursemaid when told to "give a flower to the gentleman." "No! no! no! she would not! She clenched her fist. She stamped" (p. 36). Lily thinks of her as "that wild villain" when Cam "dashes past" Lily's easel and "would not stop for her father, whom she grazed also by an inch" (pp. 83-84). Significantly, Cam

does answer her mother's call. For their mother's vision had satisfied both Cam and James when they were young children: Mrs. Ramsay persuaded Cam that a sheep's skull hanging in the nursery might be "a mountain, a bird's nest, a garden," and wrapped it in her green shawl. For James, who screamed if anybody touched it, she left it hanging there: "They had not touched it; it was there quite unhurt" (pp. 171-72). Now, Cam still rebels against her father, vowing with James to "stand by each other and carry out the great compact--to resist tyranny to the death" (p. 243).

As we have seen, the young James murderously hated his father. Like his mother, he belongs to "that great clan which cannot keep this feeling separate from that. . . . To such people even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallise and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests" (p. 9). His mother thinks of James as "that bundle of sensitiveness" and twice thinks that "none of her children was as sensitive" as James (pp. 66, 89). James hates his father's insensitivity, his "exactingness and egotism," and as the trip to the lighthouse finally begins, he thinks of his father's "tyranny, despotism . . . making people do what they did not want to do, cutting off their right to speak," as a black-winged harpy that "struck and struck at you" (pp. 273-74). The ten-year old memory of his father's voice

insisting, "You won't be able to go to the Lighthouse," comes to him like "a blade, a scimitar, smiting through the leaves and flowers even of that happy world and making it shrivel and fall" (p. 276).

At this point, both children remember and appreciate only their mother's vision, represented by the beams of light from the lighthouse. Mrs. Ramsay has repeatedly been identified with the light (pp. 96, 97, 99, 158) and Mr. Ramsay with a stake, a knife, a blade (pp. 10, 69, 276). Now it is his reality, the factual truth of the physical lighthouse itself, which Cam and James must recognize. Their reconciliation with their father parallels Lily's as she paints on shore, and the trip to the lighthouse comes to represent the union of their father's truth with their mother's. As Kaehele and German succinctly state, the lighthouse therefore symbolizes "the harmonious union of their complementary qualities--courage with sympathy, intellect with intuition, endurance with fertility."⁵⁶ The reader, whose eye has been focused upon the lighthouse since the book's opening page, finds that he shares the children's and Lily's growing awareness: Virginia Woolf has achieved the razor's edge of balance in art which Lily seeks.

At the beginning of the trip, Cam had tried to focus her eyes upon the house, and her mind upon her memories of

⁵⁶ Kaehele and German, p. 332.

the past and her pact with James to "fight tyranny to the death." But as Mr. Ramsay talks with the fisherman about a shipwreck, Cam begins to feel "proud of him without knowing quite why," realizing that "had he been there he would have launched the lifeboat, he would have reached the wreck" (p. 246). She feels admiration for his courage: "He was so brave, he was so adventurous, Cam thought" (p. 246). As the lighthouse looms larger, Cam begins to feel that the past is "unreal" and now "this was real, the boat and the sail" (p. 249). Her father, she realizes, offers security and stability: "This is right, this is it, Cam kept feeling. . . . Now I can go on thinking whatever I like, and I shan't fall over a precipice or be drowned, for there he is, keeping his eye on me, she thought" (p. 304).

James, meanwhile, shifts his image of the tyrant from that of a black harpy to that of a wagon wheel crushing someone's foot, and then realizes that the wheel itself is innocent (p. 275). At the same time, he begins to feel respect and sympathy for his father's uncompromising love of truth: "Yes, thought James, while the boat slapped and dawdled there in the hot sun; there was a waste of snow and rock very lonely and austere; and there he had come to feel, quite often lately, when his father said something or did something which surprised the others, there were two pairs of footprints only; his own and his father's. They alone knew each other" (pp. 274-75). Just after this

thought, James contrasts his early memories of the lighthouse with the physical lighthouse as it now appears:

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 whitewashed rocks; the tower, stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white; he could see windows in it; he could even see washing spread on the rocks to dry. So that was the Lighthouse, was it? (pp. 276-77)

Thus the actual lighthouse, now seen as "a stark tower on a bare rock," seems to complete James's vision of reality: "It satisfied him. It confirmed some obscure feeling of his about his own character. . . . He looked at his father reading fiercely with his legs curled tight. They shared that knowledge. 'We are driving before a gale--we must sink,' he began saying to himself, half aloud, exactly as his father said it" (p. 302). When his father finally praises the precision of James's sailing, Cam thinks that James has "got it at last. For she knew that this was what James had been wanting, and she knew that now he had got it he was so pleased that he would not look at her or at his father or at any one" (p. 306). Both children now recognize that life contains their father's truth as well as their mother's; both feel, "What do you want? they both wanted to ask. They both wanted to say, Ask us anything and we will give it you" (pp. 307-08).

But Mr. Ramsay takes nothing from them. Instead, as if in homage to his wife's essence, he is now involved

in giving: first, in giving praise to James; now, in taking packages to the lighthousekeeper as Mrs. Ramsay had wanted to do years before. The last words he speaks are, "The parcels for the Lighthouse man," as he springs "lightly, like a young man, holding his parcel, on to the rock" (p. 308). As Alice van Buren Kelley suggests, the voyage seems to symbolize, for him, the recognition that "although men are isolated from one another factually, some greater force unites them."⁵⁷

Kaehele and German have shown how carefully the two strands of action in this section--the voyage to the lighthouse and Lily's reveries as she paints on shore--are patterned to amplify each other. In both plot lines, there are verbal echoes, with phrases and rhythms repeated in the minds of Lily and of those in the boat, as well as similarities in actions and descriptions.⁵⁸ But as Ralph Freedman points out, it is the progress of Lily's thought that lends poetic dimension to the reconciliation that is taking place on the water.⁵⁹

The first two scenes of what Freedman calls Lily's "internal drama" are dominated by her memories of Mrs. Ramsay. In the first, she remembers a scene on the beach

⁵⁷ Kelley, p. 136.

⁵⁸ Kaehele and German, pp. 339-40.

⁵⁹ Freedman, p. 237.

in which her feelings of antagonism for Charles Tansley had disappeared under Mrs. Ramsay's influence. She thinks of Mrs. Ramsay's "power" to "resolve everything into simplicity," because Mrs. Ramsay could make "of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent)":

In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay had said. "Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!" she repeated. She owed it all to her. (pp. 240-41)

In the second scene, Lily again thinks of Mrs. Ramsay and calls to her, but this time she is also occupied with thoughts of Mr. Ramsay (p. 254). "There he sits," she thinks as she watches the boat, and she feels "weighed down" by the sympathy she had not been able to give him. This, she knows, makes it difficult for her to paint. As she thinks of Mr. Ramsay's "almost gallant, almost gay" manner with another character, Minta Doyle (he would pick a flower for her, lend her his books), she seems more sympathetic to him. Just after this memory, she realizes that her painting should be "beautiful and bright . . . on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron" (p. 255) --both Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay must be present for her to

capture the balanced vision in her painting. Then, as Lily gets her canvas into perspective (p. 256), she also gets Mrs. Ramsay into truer perspective, as she thinks about the failure of the Rayleys' marriage, which Mrs. Ramsay had prompted.

The third scene on shore begins with Lily's memory of her reaction to Mrs. Ramsay's death, but then emphasizes a "brown spot in the middle of the bay," Mr. Ramsay's boat. Lily thinks, "Where are they now?" At this point, Freedman feels, Lily's vision "has finally prescribed its arc from one pole to the other--the cry for Mrs. Ramsay, who lives only in the mind, has become, in the process of aesthetic recognition, a search for Mr. Ramsay 'out there.'"⁶⁰

Unlike the preceding three scenes, the fourth begins with Lily's looking at the sea (pp. 279-30). She recognizes that "her feeling for Mr. Ramsay changed as he sailed further and further across the bay" (p. 284). Now, she has a feeling that she has experienced before, when she "felt something emerge" from below the surface realities, when "life was most vivid. . . . One glided, one shook one's sails . . . between things, beyond things. Empty it was not, but full to the brim" (p. 285). This is a feeling of "completeness," of "some common feeling" that holds the whole of her memories of "the Ramsays, the children,

⁶⁰ Freedman, p. 240.

and all sorts of waifs and strays of things besides" (p. 286). As she remembers feeling that she was in love with that scene ten years ago, she realizes that she as an artist is one of those lovers "whose gift it was to choose out the elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene, or meeting of people (all now gone and separate), one of those globed compacted things over which thought lingers, and love plays" (p. 286).

Just at this moment, Lily looks again at Mr. Ramsay, and realizes that her quest has been to achieve "that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr. Ramsay and the picture" (p. 287). She then looks at the poet Carmichael and remembers that he did not like Mrs. Ramsay, and as if in further quest for balance, she thinks again of Mrs. Ramsay's faults (pp. 290-92). Recognizing that her earlier understanding was limited and partial, she thinks now that she needs "fifty pairs of eyes" to see Mrs. Ramsay with (p. 294). Then, significantly, Lily envisions Mr. Ramsay stretching out his hand to Mrs. Ramsay. "One wanted, she thought . . . to be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, It's a miracle, it's an ecstasy" (p. 300)--wanted, in other words, the opposite forces in equilibrium, both the simple table which has represented for her Mr. Ramsay's truth, and the visionary

feeling of ecstasy which the memory of Mrs. Ramsay calls forth. As this section ends, Lily calls again to Mrs. Ramsay and seems to see her sitting in her chair knitting. "There she sat." But then, unsatisfied, Lily walks to the edge of the lawn and asks, "Where was that boat now? And Mr. Ramsay? She wanted him" (p. 300).

The final scene on shore is a recapitulation of this awareness, of Lily's recognition that her vision must bridge the opposite forces, must be androgynous. Kaehele and German are perceptive in stressing the significance of the line, drawn in the center of the canvas, which is Lily's final solution and which completes her painting. They explain that Lily, having finally achieved "an attitude which combined the perspectives of both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay and makes reality simultaneously factual and miraculous," can draw this line in the center which "restores the balance" between the two, because the line echoes the novel's repeated associations of Mr. Ramsay with a blade or a tower.⁶¹ Therefore, Lily's ultimate vision symbolizes the equilibrium between opposite forces which Virginia Woolf envisioned as masculine and feminine.

The novel is remarkable in its power to convey to the reader what Virginia Woolf, in "A Sketch of the Past,"

⁶¹ Kaehele and German, pp. 344, 346.

calls the true artist's feeling that there are two sorts of being: there is the "nondescript cotton wool" of mundane, prosaic reality, and there are "shocking" moments of intuition. All artists, she explains, feel that "there is a pattern hid" behind this prosaic cotton wool; moreover, the "real novelist" conveys a sense of "both sorts of being."⁶² Lily Briscoe, completing her painting, conveys this sense of pattern after she progresses from her feeling of being "alone . . . cut off from other people" when she condemns Mr. Ramsay (p. 223), to her appreciation of the full significance of both his and Mrs. Ramsay's perceptions. Hence Lily's appreciation of what Virginia Woolf calls the "pattern hid behind the cotton wool" is finally represented in the formal relationships in the painting: both the painting and the novel To the Lighthouse symbolize Virginia Woolf's aesthetics and convey "both sorts of being" in the androgynous vision.

⁶² Virginia Woolf, Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), pp. 70, 71.

CHAPTER VII

THE WAVES: "SOMETHING UNBROKEN"

Jean Guiguet tackles a formidable critical chore when he attempts to convey a sense of the essence of Virginia Woolf's most intricate, dense, and subtle novel, The Waves (1931). We cannot, he explains, consider the six consciousnesses whose "soliloquies" comprise the dramatic sections of the book as real "characters," and we cannot take literally the verb "say" which introduces each speaker, because "the voice it refers to speaks through no mouth, has no individual timbre, does not use the language of everyday."¹ Instead, what Bernard, Rhoda, Louis, Susan, Jinny, and Neville "say" is "what will affect the reader's sensitivity and intelligence so as to make him conceive and feel, as though by direct experience, the conscious or subconscious reality which might form the stuff of their true interior monologue, in the usual sense of the term."² As Joseph Warren Beach explains, the "soliloquies" of the six "include in one undifferentiated mass what these people perceive through their senses, what they consciously think,

¹ Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1965), pp. 298-284.

² Guiguet, p. 286.

and what they feel about themselves and one another without being actually conscious of it."³

What The Waves conveys to the reader, therefore, is the quality of consciousness of what Beach calls six "psychic entities."⁴ Guiguet analyzes the disappearance in this novel of the traditional settings, of clock time, and of incidents, and concludes that because "time no longer exists to give order to their speech, space no longer exists to contain them and the things around them . . . and events no longer exist to form a story or stories in which they might play their part and become characters," we are left with "only the cluster of impressions on which the psyche has fed."⁵

Virginia Woolf herself warns us against considering the six protagonists as "characters" in the traditional sense when she reacts to a review in The Times. "Odd that they should praise my characters," she writes, "when I meant to have none."⁶ Guiguet explains that The Times

³ Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies in Technique (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1932), p. 495.

⁴ Beach, p. 492.

⁵ Guiguet, p. 288.

⁶ Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1953), 5 Oct. 1931, p. 170; hereafter cited as AWD.

critic meant to praise "complete and self-sufficient individuals deliberately drawn and brought alive for us as such by the author," when instead we have in each protagonist a "bundle of tendencies and faculties," a "collection of fundamental individual traits."⁷ Guiguet advances the possibility that "the very essence of life," or of "the moment through which we grasp life," may lie in the rich complexity of these qualities of consciousness.⁸

"The moment through which we grasp life" is a phrase which takes on profound significance when we examine The Waves in terms of the moment of vision as experienced by the androgynous mind. The "fundamental traits" of the six psyches range from qualities Virginia Woolf saw as masculine--the rational, the analytic, the prosaic, the intellectual, the paternal--to qualities she ascribed to the feminine side of the brain--the imaginative, the sensitive, the intuitive, the poetic, the maternal. Twice in the novel, the six come together to form a whole: both times, a moment of vision is experienced. A third such "epiphany" takes place in the ninth and final section, which is a "summing up" in the consciousness of the one truly androgynous protagonist, Bernard. He feels, "I am not one person; I am many people," and, "For this is not one life; nor do I always know if I am

⁷ Guiguet, p. 298.

⁸ Guiguet, p. 296.

man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny or Rhoda. . . ." ⁹ Bernard's is the state of mind Virginia Woolf discussed in A Room of One's Own: he is "creative, incandescent, and undivided"; in his "unity of mind" in the final section, nothing is "held back." He represents the "natural fusion" of "all [the] faculties," all the facets of both masculine and feminine sides of the brain, balanced "in harmony together" (see above, p. 86).

Bernard introduces most of the dramatic sections, and constantly observes and comments upon each stage in the development of the other five qualities of consciousness. In the first stage, the six are like the waves which seem merged with the sky in the descriptive prelude (p. 7). The song of the birds has no form; they sing a "blank melody" (p. 8); they are much like the children, who are barely able to distinguish between themselves and others. Bernard intuits the sorrow of one of them, Susan, and goes to comfort her with his phrase-making. "But when we sit together, close," he says, "we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory" (p. 16).

Yet although the children distinguish themselves from each other by only the finest lines, they are already

⁹ Virginia Woolf, The Waves (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931), pp. 276, 281. All other references to the novel in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

subtly differentiated. What Guiguet calls the "collection of fundamental individual traits" in the differing qualities of consciousness is readily apparent. Bernard, who will always be in love with words and phrases, sits in the classroom and likens words to birds, giving dimension to the abstraction of the Latin vocabulary: "They flick their tails right and left as I speak them. . . . They wag their tails; they flick their tails; they move through the air in flocks, now this way, now that way, moving all together, now dividing, now coming together" (p. 20). But even as a nascent writer, Bernard's imagination reaches beyond the limitations of the art-for-art's-sake perception. Sensing that Susan is unhappy, he goes "gently" to her, "to be at hand, with my curiosity, to comfort her when she bursts out in a rage and thinks, 'I am alone'" (p. 14). Already, he represents the unifying power of the creative imagination, bringing his vision into the world of experience, using it to comfort Susan as he creates for her a fantasy about the town of Elvedon (pp. 16-18).

Jinny, while she is sociable like Bernard, will remain restricted to the world of the senses. Here in the first section, she suddenly kisses Louis and feels that "I dance. I ripple . . . I lie quivering flung over you" (p. 13). She is acutely receptive to sensory experience, feeling that the back of her hand is burning (p. 10). Her first words are, "I see a crimson tassel . . . twisted with gold

threads" (p. 9), anticipating her total absorption in the physical world of a glittering society.

Susan's future as a woman who lives close to the elemental facts of life, and as the mother of a large family, "glutted with natural happiness," is foretold in the classroom when she shuns the abstractions of words, preferring to see them as "stones one picks up by the seashore" (p. 20). When she feels anger and jealousy at seeing Jinny kiss Louis, Susan "spread her anguish out" among roots of beech trees, making her emotions part of the natural world (pp. 13-14). Her closeness to this world is again emphasized when she twice says that she sees insects in the grass (pp. 15, 16). Susan's instinctive sympathy with the elemental world is also reflected in her straightforward, basic emotions: "I love and hate," she says (p. 16), and when she sees servants kissing in the garden, she seems to see "a crack in the earth and hot steam hisses up" (p. 25).

Rhoda is unlike Susan, who adheres closely to the natural world of trees and the earth, or Jinny, who revels in the superficialities of society. Nothing concrete has meaning for Rhoda; she lives in her dreams, pretending, in this first section, that the petals she floats in a basin are her ships. Rhoda will always be lonely, and here in the beginning, she identifies with one bird that sings alone after the others have flown off together (p. 11).

She feels that "the world is entire, and I am outside of it, crying, 'Oh, save me, from being blown for ever outside the loop of time!'" (pp. 21-22). The other children "look with understanding" at their arithmetic problems, complete them, and leave, but Rhoda becomes lost in abstraction, drifting from the specific figures to a sense of timelessness and loss:

The others are handing in their answers, one by one. Now it is my turn. But I have no answer. The others are allowed to go. . . . I am left alone to find an answer. The figures mean nothing now. Meaning has gone. The clock ticks. The two hands are convoys marching through a desert. The black bars on the clock face are green oases. The long hand has marched ahead to find water. The other painfully stumbles. . . . It will die in the desert. The kitchen door slams. Wild dogs bark far away. Look, the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with time; it holds the world in it. I begin to draw a figure and the world is looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop. . . . (p. 21)

Anticipating her suicide, Rhoda's final reception of impressions in this section conveys her desire to escape from herself. This time, Rhoda, like all the soliloquists at one time or another, is associated with the waves:

I mount; I escape; I rise on spring-heeled boots over the tree-tops. But now I am fallen. . . . Let me pull myself out of these waters. But they heap themselves on me; they sweep me between their great shoulders; I am turned; I am tumbled; I am stretched, among these long lights, these long waves, these endless paths, with people pursuing, pursuing. (p. 28)

Louis is also an outsider, and he senses Rhoda's agony in the schoolroom (p. 22). Louis feels that the

others "lash" him and "laugh at my neatness, at my Australian accent" (p. 20). James Hafley writes that Louis believes that "the whole world is himself."¹⁰ Louis feels that his roots are threaded "round and round about the world," that they go "down to the depths of the world," and that his eyes are the "lidless eyes of a stone figure in a desert by the Nile" (pp. 20, 12). Later, as we shall see, his effort will be to impose his sense of the world and of himself upon others--"to stamp that identity absolutely upon all with which he comes into contact," in Hafley's description.¹¹

Jean Guiguet concedes that of the six protagonists, Neville "remains slightly blurred" to him.¹² This may have to do with Neville's infatuations with other men, which Hafley dwells upon; more likely, it is because Neville in the middle and last sections is a divided self, torn between conflicting impulses. However, in this first section Neville emerges as a fact-driven lover of precision. Experiencing sensation, he feels that "Stones are cold to my feet . . . I feel each one, round or pointed, separately" (p. 10). In the classroom, in contrast with Bernard's imaginative response to words, Neville is factual and precise

¹⁰ James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 111.

¹¹ Hafley, p. 111.

¹² Guiguet, p. 298.

about language. "Each tense," he says, "means differently." Language for him has to do with "distinctions" and "differences in this world" (p. 21). He reminds us of Virginia Woolf's characterization of the masculine intellect, which discriminates and analyzes (see above, p. 31). Neville is analytical even in this early stage, withdrawing from the others to scrutinize coldly his reactions upon hearing about a man's throat being cut (pp. 24-25). He cannot bear what seems to him to be the imprecision and indecisiveness in Bernard, feeling that Bernard is "like a dangling wire, a broken bell-pull," or like "the seaweed hung outside the window, damp now, now dry." He declares, "I hate dangling things; I hate dampish things. I hate wandering and mixing things together" (p. 19).

James Hafley feels that Neville's lifelong search for happiness with some one other man is anticipated in his distaste for Bernard's comforting Susan, but perhaps it is the "mixing things together" in Bernard's story-telling, bringing as he does the world of his imagination into Susan's world of insects and tree roots, that Neville may be reacting against.

At any rate, it is immediately clear that we are involved with five limited perceptions, and one which attempts to unify, to "melt" these psychic entities into a whole with his special gift, his creative imagination. Apart from the neutral narrative voice, it is Bernard who

comments and interprets for us: Bernard sees Louis's "neat sand-shoes firmly printing the gravel" (p. 22); Bernard intuits and assuages Susan's anguish, and Bernard, anticipating in the first section his role in the ninth and final section, "sums up" as he lies in bed at the end of the day, feeling as he falls asleep that the day is "copious, resplendent . . . pouring down the walls of my mind, running together" (p. 27). As Alice van Buren Kelley points out, Bernard is the novel's closest proximation to a "reliable observer," noting that if an italicized descriptive interlude describes the shadows of leaves on the house as blue fingerprints, Bernard will see "blue, finger-shaped shadows of leaves beneath the windows" (p. 10).¹³

Moreover, Bernard introduces all but two sections of the novel. As the second section opens, he tells us that the children are now leaving to go away to school. Just as the outlines of their different characteristics emerge more markedly in this section, so the brightening light in the descriptive interlude marks the waves as clearly blue and green, the rocks "which had been misty and soft" as harder and marked with red clefts, and the grass as "sharp stripes of shadow" (p. 29). It is a section of firmer definitions: Jinny, for example, thinks that she

¹³ Alice van Buren Kelley, The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 155.

would like a red dress to "wind about my body, and billow out as I came into the room, pirouetting. It would make a flower shape as I sank down . . . on a gilt chair" (p. 34). She likes watching her body "ripple" in the mirror. When she plays tennis, "my soles tingle" and "the pulse drums so in my forehead . . . that everything dances. . . . All is rippling, all is dancing; all is quickness and triumph" (p. 46). She is already aware of her confinement within the present world of the senses: "I cannot follow any word through its changes. I cannot follow any thought from present to past. . . . I do not dream" (p. 42). She feels "the wish to be singled out; to be summoned, to be called away by one person who comes to find me, who is attracted towards me, who cannot keep himself from me. . . ." (p. 46). She longs to wear necklaces and white dresses, and to be singled out by one man at a party in a brilliant room: "I tremble, I quiver, like the leaf in the hedge, as I sit dangling my feet, on the edge of the bed . . ." (p. 55). The reception of impressions by her peculiar consciousness takes on a distinctly sexual coloring:

I will pick flowers; I will bind flowers in one garland and clasp them and present them--Oh! to whom? There is some check in the flow of my being; a deep stream presses on some obstacle; it jerks; it tugs; some knot in the centre resists. Oh, this is pain, this is anguish! I faint, I fail. Now my body thaws; I am unsealed, I am incandescent. Now the stream pours in a deep tide fertilising, opening the shut, forcing the tight-folded, flooding free. To whom shall I give all that now flows through me, from my warm, my porous body? (p. 57)

Jinny has more lines in this section than in any other, for as Kelley explains, she is by this time "fully formed."¹⁴ Jinny realizes that a man in a train has noticed her, and feels that "my body instantly of its own accord puts forth a frill under his gaze. My body lives a life of its own" (p. 63). And, as Kelley concludes, "that life is all she has."¹⁵

Susan is acutely aware of the artifice of her disciplined, restricted schooldays. Longing for the natural life and cycle of seasons in the country, she tears off days from the calendar, calling them "crippled." When she can leave, "my freedom will unfurl, and all these restrictions that wrinkle and shrivel--hours and order and discipline, and being here and there exactly at the right moment--will crack asunder" (p. 53). Her hatred of the "carbolic smell of corridors and the chalky smell of schoolrooms," and of "the glazed look of every one" ("All here is false; all is meretricious") parallels her hatred of the city, where "the houses are all glass, all festoons and glitter," and where people mechanically look at shop windows with their heads bobbing up and down "all at about the same height" (pp. 61, 33, 62). Susan thinks of this hatred as a "hard thing" that has grown in her, and realizes that it

¹⁴ Kelley, p. 160.

¹⁵ Kelley, p. 160.

will dissipate when she can "give and be given" naturally, in the "cold green air" with the "smell of turnip fields in it" in the country. There, her "things" are natural: her shells, her eggs, her squirrel and her doves, her "curious grasses" (pp. 33, 54).

Rhoda, in the second section, sinks deeper into estrangement from people and from involvement with the "real world." Susan calls Rhoda's face "mooning and vacant" (p. 41). Rhoda herself feels, "I have no face. Other people have faces; Susan and Jinny have faces; they are here. Their world is the real world. The things they lift are heavy. They say Yes, they say No; whereas I shift and change and am seen through in a second" (p. 43). When she is with people, Rhoda tries to imitate their "extraordinary certainty"; when she is alone, she falls into nothingness (pp. 43, 44). Rhoda grows into greater insubstantiality in this section, feeling that "month by month things are losing their hardness; even my body now lets the light through; my spine is soft like wax near the flame of the candle. I dream; I dream" (p. 45). During the summer holidays, Rhoda suffers humiliation at a garden party when she cannot make herself cross a puddle. She recovers from her anguish only by laying her hand against a brick wall. Living in the world reminds her of the "intermittent shocks" of a springing tiger, an "emerging monster" (p. 65).

Louis emerges in the second section as an authoritarian who delights in the imposition of order. He likes "the orderly progress" of marching "two by two" into chapel. He "rejoices" in the "authority" of the headmaster (pp. 34, 35). As we might expect, Louis is "the best scholar in the school" (p. 52), but he is torn between his desire to confront the "grained oak doors" which symbolize for him the established order, and his sense of a timeless, spaceless unity, of companionship with Virgil and Plato, and of his existence since the time "in the long, long history that began in Egypt, in the time of the Pharoahs, when women carried red pitchers to the Nile" (p. 66). However, as noted in the first section of The Waves, Louis attempts to impose his sense of identity and of the order of things. As Alice van Buren Kelley notes, every sentence of his vision of continuity and pattern (p. 35) begins with the pronoun "I."¹⁶

Neville persists in his affinity for precision: he wants to "explore the exactitude of the Latin language, and step firmly upon the well-laid sentences, and pronounce the explicit, the sonorous hexameters of Virgil; of Lucretius; and chant with a passion that is never obscure or formless the loves of Catullus" (p. 32). Devoted to exactitude and

¹⁶ Kelley, p. 159.

rationation, Neville dislikes Bernard's "shades" of "innumerable perplexities" and his "moodiness." Again, he calls Bernard a "dangling wire, loose" (p. 38). He needs instead "some one whose mind falls like a chopper on a block" (p. 51).

Yet Neville's sense of order differs from Louis's. Neville calls the headmaster a "brute" because he finds him "unwarmed by imagination" and therefore considers his "words of authority . . . corrupted" (p. 35). Neville imaginatively perceives the "huge uproar" of the surge of life in the London train station, but he cannot seem to integrate his imaginative faculties into the world of people. Twice in this section, he longs for privacy (pp. 52, 60), and twice, he envies Bernard because Bernard can talk easily with a horse-breeder or a plumber on the train (pp. 69, 70). Neville cannot even read in the presence of these representatives of "this piffling, trifling, self-satisfied world . . . the mediocrity of this world, which breeds horse-dealers with coral ornaments hanging from their watch chains. There is that in me which will consume them entirely" (p. 70). Neville realizes that his feelings for the horse-dealers is contemptuous (p. 71), and that his anguish over their "triumph" in the world will drive him to "refuge" in a university. "That is my triumph; I do not compromise" (p. 71).

Only Bernard, even at this early stage, has a sense of unity and wholeness. Others become more aware of distinctions and differences in the second section, but Bernard says, "I am unaware of these profound distinctions. My fingers slip over the keyboard without knowing which is black and which white" (p. 49). Sensing that both Louis and Neville "feel the presence of other people as a separating wall," Bernard insists, "I do not believe in separation. We are not single" (p. 67). Bernard wants to unify as much of human consciousness as possible, weaving people together with words, asking, "But what is the difference between us?" and urging Neville to "let me talk":

The bubbles are rising like the silver bubbles from the floor of a saucepan; image on top of image. I cannot sit down to my book, like Louis, with ferocious tenacity. I must open the little trap-door and let out these linked phrases in which I run together whatever happens so that instead of incoherence there is perceived a wandering thread, lightly joining one thing to another. (p. 49)

And then, for Neville's amusement, Bernard makes up a story about the headmaster. He is also beginning to write, filling a notebook with "valuable observations upon the true nature of human life," realizing that "my book will certainly run to many volumes embracing every known variety of man and woman. . . . I have a steady unquenchable thirst" (pp. 67-68). Riding in a railway carriage, Bernard lets his imagination create another story, this time about a

man who boards the train, just as Virginia Woolf's imagination plays upon "Mrs. Brown" (see above, p. 11).

While Bernard admires the "precision" and "exactitude" of both Neville and Louis, he knows that as one who "dabbles" in "warm, soluble words," he himself will never possess those qualities (p. 69). However, because he uses his gifts as a writer to unify rather than to separate, to include rather than to exclude, Bernard already knows that their perception is more limited than his (p. 69).

By the third section, the distinctions between these six qualities of consciousness have been firmly established. Now, each ventures from the security represented by boarding school into the adventures of a less sheltered life; their fears are echoed in the song of the birds in the descriptive interlude (pp. 73-75). Rhoda, as we might predict, feels terror at a party in London because "I know no one. I shall twitch the curtain and look at the moon. Draughts of oblivion shall quench my agitation. The door opens; the tiger leaps. The door opens; terror rushes in; terror upon terror, pursuing me" (p. 105). Rhoda admits that she is not at home in the external world: "I hate all details of the individual life" (p. 105). She attempts to lose herself in her dreams of pools, marble columns, and a swallow "on the other side of the world," but people approach her. She feels that "they seize me," that their scorn and ridicule "pierce me," that their tongues are "whips." She longs to

be alone, dreaming that she is "mistress of my fleet of ships," but "these men and women, with their twitching faces, with their lying tongues," seem to cast her up and down "like a cork on a rough sea." She feels that the waves are breaking, and that "I am the foam that sweeps and fills the uttermost rims of the rocks with whiteness" (pp. 105-07).

Rhoda feels that Jinny "rides like a gull on the wave" at the party. Jinny revels in the glittering social world. She feels that the bodies of the people "communicate," and that "this is my calling. This is my world" (p. 101). She seems to be "shining in the dark," and delights in sensation: the feel of her silk dress against her leg, the stones of her necklace on her throat, the pinch of her shoes. She feels that she is fluttering and rippling, experiencing a moment of "ecstasy" when she drinks wine with a dancing partner and fixes a flower in his coat, fulfilling her dream in the second section. She loves feeling "our bodies, his hard, mine flowing," when they dance, and then, feeling "slackness and indifference" come over her, Jinny looks for another man: "Oh, come, I say to this one, rippling gold from head to heels. 'Come,' and he comes towards me" (pp. 103-05).

Unlike Jinny, who ripples and flutters from one man to the next, Susan anticipates the fullness of a relationship with the one man who will be father to her children:

For soon in the hot midday when the bees hum round the hollyhocks my lover will come. He will stand under the cedar tree. To his one word I shall answer my one word. What has formed in me I shall give him. I shall have children; I shall have maids in aprons; men with pitchforks; a kitchen where they bring ailing lambs to warm in baskets, where the hams hang and the onions glisten. I shall be like my mother, silent in a blue apron locking up cupboards. (pp. 98-99)

In seeing her life as the natural evolution from one generation to the next, Susan integrates herself with the elemental order of things: "I think I am the field, I am the barn, I am the trees. . . . I cannot be divided, or kept apart. . . . I think sometimes . . . I am not a woman, but the light that falls on this gate, on the ground. I am the seasons, I think sometimes, January, May, November; the mud, the mist, the dawn" (pp. 97-98).

Like Susan's, Louis's receptions of sensations and his perceptions are by now predictable: He feels that the "streamers of my consciousness" are "perpetually torn and distressed" by the "disorder" of the people he sees (p. 93). Louis senses again that he is the companion of Plato, of Virgil, and that his deep roots extend to women carrying pitchers in Egypt (p. 94), but now he insists that because he cannot express his vision to "this aimless passing of billycock hats and Hamburg hats and all the plumed and variegated head-dresses of women," he will reduce this fluidity and "disorder" to his own arbitrary sense of order. Twice, he declares flatly, "I will reduce you to order" (pp. 94, 95).

Bernard sums Louis up for us, recognizing that Louis sees people as fragments which he will mold: "I . . . often feel his eye on us, his laughing eye, his wild eye, adding us up like insignificant items in some grand total which he is for ever pursuing, in his office" (p. 92). Bernard also describes Neville: ". . . you wish to be a poet; and you wish to be a lover. But the splendid clarity of your intelligence, and the remorseless honesty of your intellect . . . bring you to a halt. You indulge in no mystifications. You do not fog yourself with rosy clouds, or yellow" (p. 85). Bernard sees that while Louis attempts to superimpose his sense of order upon his sense of boundlessness and universality, Neville swings between the opposing forces of inspiration and precision, of imagination and intellect. As Neville sits by the river, he cries, "Oh, I am in love with life," and feels, "I am a poet, yes . . . I see it all. I feel it all. I am inspired. My eyes fill with tears." However, although words seem to "gallop" within him, he distrusts them, "cannot give myself to their backs; I cannot fly with them. . ." (pp. 82-83).

On the one hand, Neville is "the most slavish of students," recording in a notebook "the curious uses of the past participle," and feeling that addicting oneself to perfection would be "a glorious life." But on the other hand, he realizes that "one cannot go on for ever cutting these ancient inscriptions clearer with a knife," and thinks,

"I would rather be loved, I would rather be famous than follow perfection through the sand" (pp. 87-88). Bernard sees that because Neville "above all . . . desires order," he will ultimately reject the lyric disorientation of life; he imagines that Neville draws his curtain and bolts his door (p. 90).

Bernard does much interpreting and commenting in this third section, as if in preparation for his crucial role in the fourth. He not only comments upon other characters, but grapples with the problem of his own identity: "I am more selves than Neville thinks. . . . I am not one and simple, but complex and many," he thinks. "I . . . have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard" (pp. 76, 89). One aspect of his consciousness is "abnormally aware of circumstances," intuiting the feelings of people riding in a railway carriage. He feels the "pain" of another student and invites him for dinner. This side of his nature, he thinks, would be described in a biography as "the sensibility of a woman" (p. 76). As if to fix Bernard's perception as clearly androgynous, Virginia Woolf then has Bernard think that the biography would also explain that his feminine sensibility was joined with "the logical sobriety of a man" (p. 76). He can "sit like a toad in a hole, receiving with perfect coldness whatever comes"; at the same time, he can "sympathize effusively" (p. 77). He thinks: "Very

few of you who are now discussing me have the double capacity to feel, to reason" (p. 77). We see clearly that Bernard's "psychic entity" represents the androgynous balance.

Bernard is both a feeler and a reasoner, and he speaks plainly for the necessity of uniting those opposite forces: a "perfectly simple human being, could go on, indefinitely, imagining," as Rhoda perhaps tries to do, but Bernard sees that one must "integrate, as I do" (p. 80).

Bernard constantly and naturally integrates his imaginative delight in phrase-making and story-telling ("my charm and flow of language. . . ," p. 84) with his curiosity about and empathy for other people. He enjoys "bringing into play all that Neville ignores in me" when, jubilant, he rejoices in hearing hunting-songs shouted below his window, and of thinking of little boys in caps and of china being smashed. He sees under the window an old woman carrying a bag, and thinks of her "rheumaticky" hands which need a warming at the fire. "That I see and Neville does not see; that I feel and Neville does not feel. Hence he will reach perfection, and I shall fail and shall leave nothing behind me but imperfect phrases littered with sand" (p. 91)--in other words, nothing but the book he gathers material for, realizing that its fate will be similar to that of Lily's painting, which she knew would remain rolled up in an attic.

We have said that except for Bernard, the other visions of reality represent only partial perceptions. When these parts are united in a moment of true communion in the fourth section, it is Bernard's androgynous mind which appreciates the moment fully, and which comments for us. The six have come together in a restaurant to "celebrate" a seventh, Percival, who is seen only indirectly, in relation to the others. Just what Percival symbolizes remains an unresolved critical question, but we may examine him briefly and offer a suggestion. Percival is almost always seen in action. He is first described by Bernard, who sees him flick his hand to the back of his neck, and who thinks, "for such gestures one falls hopelessly in love for a lifetime" (p. 36). Louis notices how "everybody followed Percival" to the playing field; his "magnificence" reminds Louis of "some medieval commander. A wake of light seems to lie on the grass behind him"; Louis adores his magnificence and is jealous (p. 37). Neville marvels that Percival "seems to understand more" of Shakespeare and Catullus than Louis, and that while he, Neville, "shall be a clinger to the outsides of words all my life," Percival intuits the meanings of words, senses their insides, their essences (pp. 47, 48). Neville knows that although Percival rides on a train reading only a detective novel, he "understands everything" (p. 71). Neville admits that he has for Percival an "absurd and

violent passion," thinking that as Percival lies naked on his bed there is "not a thread, not a sheet of paper . . . between him and the sun, between him and the rain, between him and the moon . . ." (p. 48).

Clearly, Percival represents a sort of medieval oneness, a wholeness which the others lack. And yet there is about him an animal-like unconsciousness: he "breathes heavily" and walks "clumsily"; his speech is "slovenly"; Neville expresses "contempt" for Percival's mind because "he cannot read" (pp. 36, 48). Bernard calls his eyes "oddly inexpressive" and "pagan," thinking that Percival is "remote from us all in a pagan universe" (p. 36). When he pulls Percival from his bed, Bernard thinks of it as "some vast cocoon" into which Percival burrows (p. 84). Like an animal, Percival "buffets" his admirers "good-humouredly with a blow of his paw" (p. 82). Neville, realizing that Percival "among guns and dogs" will answer Neville's poems with picture post cards, calls him "oblivious, almost entirely ignorant" (p. 60).

I would like to suggest, then, that Percival represents a unity of being which, however the others revere it, is totally unconscious, and which finds viability and articulation only as it is played upon by the consciousnesses of the six major protagonists. Jean Guiguet feels that Percival never acquires reality, that he remains simply

"purely possible."¹⁷ His is a life of unconscious action, and while the other six love the possibility which Percival represents, he cannot endure without being raised to the level of human consciousness, and he dies in India, thrown by his horse. Bernard, and not Percival, will complete the pattern that the other different visions of reality form.

Neville recognizes this. As Bernard joins the other five in the restaurant, Neville thinks that Percival will turn the unity they have formed "to vapour." But if it were not for Percival, everyone would already feel complete upon Bernard's arrival: "But now, perceiving us, he waves a benevolent salute; he bears down with such benignity, with such love of mankind . . . that, if it were not for Percival . . . one would feel, as the others already feel: Now is our festival; now we are together" (pp. 121-22).

Bernard, before his arrival, has already woven the other five together in his imagination. Feeling "called upon to provide, some winter's night, a meaning for all my observations--a line that runs from one to another, a summing up that completes," he captures each of the five in a phrase: Louis is "stone-carved, sculpturesque"; Neville is "scissor-cutting, exact"; Susan has "eyes like lumps of crystal"; Jinny is "dancing like a flame, febrile,

¹⁷ Guiguet, p. 296.

hot, over dry earth"; and Rhoda is "the nymph of the fountain always wet" (pp. 115, 116-17). Alice van Buren Kelley has demonstrated that these instinctive phrases are deeply significant, because each represents the totality of the protagonist described. The word "stone-carved" connects Louis with the Sphinx and therefore with his vision of universality, yet also reflects the "limitations, the inflexibility of his plans" to impose order. Neville's "incisive mind cuts through to abstract essence," yet trims away the imaginative vision. Susan's eyes are lumps of raw crystal because they "reflect the unpolished but precious raw material of the natural world." Jinny's flame "parches the land, thus drying out any traces of the visionary sea and denying the continuity implied in the fecundity of irrigated soil." Rhoda has never left the sea of her dreams, "and so is always wet."¹⁸

Bernard feels himself coming to life when he draws the line from one to the other, when he sums up: "They drum me alive." In unity with the other five, "I am many-sided" (pp. 117, 116). His peculiar quality of consciousness plays characteristically upon the unconscious totality of being represented by Percival, as do the psyches of the other five protagonists: Bernard captures the moment in words, just as he has recently captured the

¹⁸ Kelley, p. 176.

essences of his friends with his phrases :

We who have been separated by our youth . . . who have sung like eager birds each his own song and tapped with the remorseless and savage egotism of the young our own snail-shell till it cracked . . . or perched solitary outside some bedroom window and sang of love, of fame and other single experiences . . . now come nearer; and shuffling closer on our perch in this restaurant . . . sitting together now we love each other and believe in our own endurance. (p. 123)

He then says that the seven are like "a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves--a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution" (p. 127). More than any of the others, Bernard realizes that any "summing up that completes" must include all the perceptions of reality which the seven represent.

Jinny, when she first sees Percival, notices that he is not well-dressed, and insists that "my imagination is the bodies. I can imagine nothing beyond the circle cast by my body." Susan remembers the servants making love in the garden, Louis thinks of himself making announcements to "the world of ship-brokers, corn-chandlers, and actuaries," Rhoda speaks of tigers leaping and pools on the other side of the world, and Neville remembers his analysis of his feelings when he learned that a man's throat had been cut. Echoes of earlier images also resound through the longer speeches. Rhoda, for example, says that she has no face, and fears that one moment does not lead to another,

that one moment cannot merge in the next. "To me they are all violent, all separate"; they are shocks of sensation that "leap" upon her (p. 130). Susan detests "the smell of carpets and furniture," longing for wet fields and farmers who twist herbs. "The only sayings I understand are cries of love, hate, rage, and pain. . . . I shall never have anything but natural happiness. . . . I shall lie like a field bearing crops in rotation" (p. 131). Susan also sees that "I shall be debased and hide-bound by the bestial and beautiful passion of maternity"; she will live for and through her children (p. 132). Louis still finds relics of himself in the Egyptian sand; Neville laments the "swiftness" of his mind which is "too strong for my body" (pp. 127, 129).

Clearly, then, the protagonists are strongly aware of their differences in this section. They are like the birds in the descriptive interlude, who "sang in hot sunshine, each alone. . . . Each sang stridently, with passion, with vehemence. . . . They sang as if the edge of being were sharpened . . ." (pp. 108-09). At this time the sun is high in the sky, and whatever its light touches "became dowered with a fanatical existence" (p. 110). The waves themselves fall with "energy and muscularity" (p. 108). At this time that the six protagonists feel most strongly the sense of themselves, they also sense the importance of their coming together, their moment of unity.

Even Jinny, whose perception is perhaps the most narrowly limited, senses the momentousness of this "one moment" in which is held "love, hatred, by whatever name we call it, this globe whose walls are made of Percival, of youth and beauty, and something so deep sunk within us that we shall perhaps never make this moment out of one man again" (p. 145). Louis would like to "hold it for ever," this "thing that we have made, that globes itself here" (p. 145). Rhoda finds her dreams in it: "forests and far countries on the other side of the world . . . are in it; seas and jungles; the howlings of jackals and moonlight falling upon some high peak where the eagle soars." Neville finds "happiness in it . . . a table, a chair, a book with a paper-knife stuck between the pages"; Susan finds the sequence of "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday; the horses going to the fields, and the horses returning; the rooks rising and falling . . . whether it is April, whether it is November" (pp. 145-46).

But the descriptive interlude has foretold not only the intensity of this moment of integration, but has predicted that the moment cannot last: the birds' song "ran together in swift scales like the interlacings of a mountain stream whose waters, meeting, foam and then mix. . . . But there is a rock; they sever" (p. 109). Bernard recognizes this. He knows that the six have proved that "we can add to the treasury of moments" and that "we too are creators. We too have made something that will join the

innumerable congregations of past time," but he knows also that they are moving from this present moment into the future, and he asks, "What is to come?" (p. 146). Neville also questions, "How fan the fire so that it blazes for ever? How signal to all time to come that we, who stand in the street, in the lamplight, loved Percival?" for "Percival is gone" (pp. 146-47).

The rest of the book offers Bernard's answer to this question. Percival dies, and Bernard is at first so overcome by a sense of chaotic meaninglessness that he cannot speak. It is Neville who, in precise, clipped tones, relates Percival's death: "He is dead . . . He fell. His horse tripped. He was thrown" (p. 151). Bernard speaks next, wondering at the "incomprehensible combination" and "complexity of things": the birth of his son coincides with Percival's death. Bernard refuses to accept the natural sequence of things: "I still resent the usual order" (p. 155). He insists that he is "outside the sequence," and goes to an art gallery to be exposed to the influence of artists whose minds, like his, are "outside the sequence." He realizes that Percival, who stayed always within the natural sequence, was "my opposite. Being naturally truthful, he did not see the point of these exaggerations, and was borne on by a natural sense of the fitting." Bernard sees Percival as "a great master of the art of living" who spread calm and indifference around him (pp. 155, 156).

However, in becoming absorbed with the paintings Bernard realizes that he is holding himself "outside the machine" or the "usual order" of things, and returns to the world of tradesmen calling, and of "books and little ornaments" (p. 158).

The sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth sections of The Waves counterpoint the development of the other five qualities of consciousness with Bernard's effort to reach beyond their limited perceptions and beyond the "sequences" of the usual order of things. As James Hafley explains, all the characters except Bernard restrict their lives "by refusing to reach beyond their individual separateness."¹⁹ Louis becomes totally fact-driven. "This is life," he thinks. "Mr. Prentice at four; Mr. Eyres at four-thirty." He operates a steam-ship company and has fallen "half in love with the typewriter and the telephone," on which he gives "commands": "I have fused my many lives into one; I have helped by my assiduity and decision to score those lines on the map there by which the different parts of the world are laced together. . . . I press on, from chaos making order" (p. 168). Louis's cane represents his authority; living has become for him the "colossal labor" of driving "a violent, an unruly, a vicious team" (p. 201).

¹⁹ Hafley, p. 115.

Neville continues to be at war with himself, feeling at the end of the day that he needs privacy "to set this hubbub in order. For I am as neat as a cat in my habits. We must oppose the waste and deformity of the world, its crowds eddying round and round disgorged and trampling. One must slip paper-knives, even, exactly through the pages of novels, and tie up packets of letters neatly with green silk, and brush up the cinders with a hearth broom. Everything must be done to rebuke the horror of deformity. Let us read writers of Roman severity and virtue; let us seek perfection through the sand" (p. 180). But Neville's desire to create order and his love of precision are always in conflict with his desire to be a poet and lover: "I am not a disinterested seeker, like Louis, after perfection through the sand. Colours always stain the page . . ." (p. 181). He accepts, as Kelley points out, a compromise for each dream.²⁰ By the seventh section, Neville has resigned himself to having "patience and infinite care," realizing the futility of asking, like Louis, for a reason, or of flying, like Rhoda, to some far grove to look for statues: neither the rational nor the imaginary seems satisfactory, and he awaits another lover to comfort him in his middle age (pp. 196-98).

²⁰ Kelley, p. 184.

Susan has slipped so deeply into the natural pattern that she no longer notices the passing of the seasons. She feels, "I am glugged with natural happiness" (p. 173). Susan is "fenced in, planted here like one of my own trees"; sometimes she feels "sick of natural happiness . . . sick of the body, sick of my own craft, industry, and cunning, of the unscrupulous ways of the mother who protects, who collects under her jealous eye at one long table her own children, always her own" (p. 191).

Jinny, who has always been limited to the life of the body, still sees existence as a series of lovers who will come to her if she beckons (p. 175). Realizing that "we who live in the body see with the body's imagination," she knows that "I cannot take these facts into some cave and, shading my eyes, grade their yellows, blues, umbers into one substance" (p. 176). The unifying imaginative vision is beyond her scope. Therefore, Jinny decorates her Christmas tree "with facts again with facts" (p. 174).

Rhoda, in these final sections, anticipates her own dissolution. She journeys to the south of Spain and looks through a mist toward Africa, feeling that no one goes with her except "flowers only, the cowbird and the moonlight coloured may," and feeling herself sink and settle on waves, the white petals of her early dreams darkening with sea water and sinking. "Rolling me over the waves will shoulder me under. Everything falls in a tremendous shower,

dissolving me" (p. 206). She is entirely unlike Bernard; she has "dreaded" life and has "hated" human beings, feeling that their faces and brown-paper parcels have "stained" and "corrupted" her (p. 203).

Each of the five, then, has become ossified, more strictly rigid and limited in his perceptions than before, more trapped within the limitations of self. Only Bernard, whose mind remains open, resilient, questioning, and receptive, refuses to accept the narrow patterning of the other consciousnesses. Bernard is, of course, sometimes torn by doubts about what seems at times to be the meaningless, chaotic nature of life; Nancy Topping Bazin has likened the rising and falling of his thought-processes, alternating between moments of integration and inner satisfaction and moments of disintegration and dissatisfaction, to the rhythm of the waves.²¹ For example, in the seventh section, Bernard, now a married man with a family, stands shaving one morning and feels that his existence has become "merely habitual" (p. 184). He flees to Rome to try to recover enough detachment to analyze the stages of his life.

But soon Bernard recaptures the sense of himself that he had expressed at the reunion: "My being only glitters when all its facets are exposed to many people" (p. 186).

²¹ Nancy Topping Bazin, Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1973), p. 147.

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enters this image into his notebook, and waits for "some winter's evening" when he will "coax into words" the fragmented "dots and dashes" which wait to be combined into a whole (pp. 188, 189).

Bernard arranges a final meeting of the six protagonists at Hampton Court, hoping that "another arrangement will form, another pattern. What now runs to waste . . . will be checked" (p. 210). Neville sums up the limited perspectives of the other five when he says, "Change is no longer possible. We are committed" (pp. 213-14). For example, Louis still makes charges with "my reason" and implores the others to notice his cane and the reputation of his steamers; he is happiest alone, luxuriating in gold and purple vestments. Jinny still "notes all clothes always" and sees exactly what is before her: a scarf, a glass, a flower. "I like what one touches, what one tastes." She realizes that she has turned grey and gaunt, but doubts the value of any perception beyond hers: "My imagination is the body's I am not afraid." Rhoda has visions of parrots shrieking in jungles and "midnight pools" behind the salt-cellars and stains in the table cloth, and seems aware of her impending death: ". . . I shall fall alone through this thin sheet into gulfs of fire" (pp. 220, 222, 223, 224).

But Bernard refuses to accept Neville's notion of fixity. As if in preparation for the moment of unity that

the six will join to create, and over which he will preside, Bernard insists, "But it is only my body--this elderly man here whom you call Bernard--that is fixed irrevocably--so I desire to believe" (p. 216). In his phrase-making, Bernard constantly reaches outside himself and becomes something more than himself. Although he hasn't the credentials of Neville or the authority of Louis, "I am wrapped around with phrases, like damp straw; I glow, phosphorescent. And each of you feels when I speak, 'I am lit up. I am glowing'" (p. 217). Bernard is "very tolerant" and "easily pleased"; he can sleep in a haystack or in the best room: "I don't mind the fleas and find no fault with silk either." The "red lines" of precision are too limited for his sense of the brevity of life (p. 217). Unlike Louis, who has formed "unalterable conclusions," Bernard's philosophy, "always accumulating, welling up moment by moment, runs like quicksilver, a dozen ways at once" (p. 218).

Now Bernard hears silence falling and introduces the moment in which the six are united: "As silence falls I am dissolved utterly and become featureless and scarcely to be distinguished from another" (p. 224). He notices that "anxiety is at rest" in the other five, and the six of them walk together, arm in arm, with the "light" of both "brain and feeling" flickering in them (p. 227):

"The iron gates have rolled back," said Jinny.
"Time's fangs have ceased their devouring. We have triumphed over the abysses of space, with rouge, with powder, with flimsy pocket-handkerchiefs."

"I grasp," I hold fast," said Susan. "I hold firmly to this hand, any one's, with love, with hatred; it does not matter which."

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

"The flower," said Bernard, "the red carnation that stood in the vase on the table of the restaurant when we dined together with Percival is become a six-sided flower; made of six lives."

"A mysterious illumination," said Louis, "visible against those yew trees." (pp. 228-29)

As this moment passes, Bernard sees that it holds all human things, all space; in fact, all of life:

"Marriage, death, travel, friendship," said Bernard; "town and country; children and all that; a many-sided substance cut out of this dark; a many-faceted flower. Let us stop for a moment; let us behold what we have made. Let it blaze against the yew trees. One life. There. It is over. Gone out." (p. 229)

Now Neville describes the protagonists as passive and exhausted; Jinny's scarf seems moth-colored, and Susan's eyes are "quenched." Even Bernard, significantly, feels that the sequence of ordinary things has triumphed, and they are all beckoned by the "knock, knock. Must must must. Must go, must sleep, must wake, must get up" of the ordinary routine. However, what has been generally unnoticed by critics is the persistence of Bernard's open and imaginative receptivity to life in his long speech which ends this

section. Bernard still weaves stories; his creative imagination is still intact. He watches the small shopkeepers and wonders about their earnings, their movie-going, their gardens, and their Sunday dinners. He hears again the chorus of boys which had made him jubilant years ago:

"Still they are singing as they used to sing" (p. 234).

He balances his awareness of the surface realities with his sense of something beneath the surface: "I am like a log slipping smoothly over some waterfall. . . Here is the station, and if the train were to cut me in two, I should come together on the further side, being one, being indivisible" (p. 235). As if combining this intense awareness of inner life with the "prosaic daylight" of Piccadilly, he concludes, "But what is odd is that I still clasp the return half of my ticket to Waterloo firmly between the fingers of my right hand, even now, even sleeping" (pp. 234-35).

Bernard does not, then, seem to be at a low ebb after the reunion in section eight. His gravest doubts come during the ninth and final section, his summing up. The monologue is delivered as a speech to a stranger whom Bernard meets in a restaurant; it alternates between moments of despair and moments of affirmation. At the beginning, he has the feeling that "something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed. This, for the moment, seems to be my life." In order to "give

you my life," Bernard must "tell you a story." But soon, he feels tired of stories, tired of phrases (p. 238). At times he feels that life is a "dust dance" and that all is "mutable, vain" (p. 285). At one point, he cries, "Lord, how unutterably disgusting life is! What dirty tricks it plays us, one moment free; the next, this. Here we are among the breadcrumbs and the stained napkins again. That knife is already congealing with grease. Disorder, sordidity and corruption surround us" (p. 292).

But welling up into these moments of despondence are moments of integration which find resolution in Bernard's final perception. As he analyzes his past life, Bernard realizes that he has always searched for the fragile "crystal, the globe of life as one calls it" (p. 256), using his tools as a writer to try to see life as a "solid substance, shaped like a globe" (p. 251). He thinks about the differences between his five friends and realizes that the "globe" of his life must contain the combined truths of Jinny, Neville, Louis, Rhoda, and Susan, created as a whole in the balanced vision which he now attempts to convey to the stranger. Rhoda, Louis, and Neville represent, to varying degrees, the visionary side of life: Bernard must keep this in mind while recognizing the importance of the social and domestic existence, and of the natural sequence of life, in which "Tuesday follows Monday; then comes Wednesday" (p. 257). His mind is neither simple nor single-sexed;

it represents a balanced multiplicity of "many Bernards" (p. 260), this diversity ultimately forming a perfect, androgynous unity. Bernard thinks of Louis's desire for perfection, of Rhoda's flying past everyone on her way to the desert, of Susan's love and hate of the sun or the grass, of Neville's extreme precision, of Jinny's restrictive sensuality, and realizes that in relating to the stranger their fragmented visions, he himself has "visited each of my friends" in order to seek, among the "phrases and fragments" which he then creates, "something unbroken" (p. 266).

The "something unbroken" is Bernard himself. The others, unlike Bernard, have clung to their separate identities. Bernard, however, represents the unifying creative imagination which renews itself again and again. Thinking of his constant efforts to create his phrases in his middle age, he remembers the temptation to surrender to the "nonentity of the street" and to the "stupidity of nature" (pp. 265, 269). He calls his despair the "lowest indentation" of the "curve of [his] being . . . useless on the mud where no tide comes" (p. 269). But then he recalls the spirit with which he conquered this low ebb. His creativity unifies; it "pieces together":

I took my mind, my being, the old dejected, almost inanimate object and lashed it about among these odds and ends, sticks and straws, detestable little bits of wreckage, flotsam and jetsam, floating on the oily

surface. I jumped up, I said, "Fight." "Fight," I repeated. It is the effort and the struggle, it is the perpetual warfare, it is the shattering and piecing together--this is the daily battle, defeat or victory, the absorbing pursuit. The trees, scattered, put on order; the thick green of the leaves thinned itself to a dancing light. I netted them under with a sudden phrase. I retrieved them from formlessness with words. (pp. 269-70)

This vigorous, unifying spirit of affirmation permeates much of the rest of the final section. Bernard realizes that "I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am--Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs" (p. 276). He finds truth in the "immersion" which the six underwent when they were united (p. 278) and then reiterates his many-faceted, androgynous wholeness: I do not know, he insists, "if I am man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny, or Rhoda. . . . I ask 'Who am I?' . . . Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know. . . . I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. As I talked I felt, 'I am you.' This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome" (pp. 281, 288-89).

At this moment in which there seems to be no division between his many selves, Bernard feels on his forehead the blow "I got when Percival fell." On his neck he feels the kiss Jinny gave Louis; in his eyes, Susan's tears; and in

his vision, Rhoda's dream (p. 289). Now all of his lives are combined into a whole, and he is "immeasurably receptive, holding everything, trembling with fullness, yet clear, contained--so my being seems" (p. 291).

This moment of revelation, experienced by Bernard's androgynous mind, ends, and as Bazin points out, Bernard has not translated his vision into a work of art.²³ He suddenly feels that he, "who had been thinking myself so vast, a temple, a church, a whole universe, unconfined and capable of being everywhere on the verge of things and here too, am now nothing but what you see--an elderly man, rather heavy, grey above the ears" (p. 292). Leaving the restaurant, he feels that life is disgusting; he drops his book of phrases "to be swept up by the charwoman" (pp. 292, 294).

The book ends with one italicized phrase which concludes the descriptive interludes: "The waves broke on the shore" (p. 297). This can be taken to mean Bernard's death, but as James Hafley points out, waves have broken upon the shore all through the descriptive interludes. In this last section, as Hafley goes on to explain, the wave is a "vital impetus" which rages against immobility and

²³ Bazin, p. 165. Bazin insists that Bernard is "overwhelmed by the meaningless, chaotic nature of life," and that his failure to write his novel "seems indicative of Virginia Woolf's increasingly pessimistic view of life." Bazin, p. 165. Bazin's concern with what she calls Virginia Woolf's "despair" causes her to overlook the positive vitality of The Waves.

death; it is in this sense that the waves break on the shore at the end of the novel.²⁴

Moreover, the final sentence has been anticipated in an earlier passage which helps us to interpret it. Bernard, at low ebb, feels "spent," feels that "force ebbs away." Then suddenly, he says, "But wait--I sat all night waiting--an impulse again runs through us; we rise, we toss back a mane of white spray; we pound on the shore; we are not to be confined" (p. 267). This rising and breaking of waves on the shore therefore represents life itself, and we notice that Bernard's final lines, also spoken after a moment of disillusion, contain a similar recognition: the undulation of the waves is order. Life's flux, as Hafley explains, is its unity; furthermore, "just as individuals are used by the sea of flux in its constant becoming, so the individuals of the book are used by its central intelligence as a means for this realization."²⁵

The unity Bernard has sought, and that he creates in his summary and with his life, is the diversity which he sees as the essence of his existence. Perfectly balancing the "waves of darkness" which cover everything in the descriptive interlude, dawn seems to kindle the sky at the end of the dramatic section. Bernard leaves the restaurant

²⁴ Hafley, p. 121.

²⁵ Hafley, P. 121.

and thinks, "Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again." He feels that within himself, the wave also rises: "It swells; it arches its back. I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising beneath me like the proud horse whose rider first spurs and then pulls him back." He perceives that "the enemy" who approaches him in old age is death, but he rides against him like a young man, striking him with his spurs. "Against you will I fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!" (p. 297).

As Alice van Buren Kelley concludes, the importance of Bernard's efforts to conquer chaos and to order his vision is demonstrated both in his life and in his summation.²⁶ But Kelley and other critics overlook the crucial relationship between Bernard's androgynous mind and his creation of unity among the six qualities of consciousness in the fourth, eighth, and ninth sections of The Waves. Bernard's perception in the last section grows from a sense of despair that all is "mutable" to a final moment of illumination: mutability itself is permanence, the undulation of the waves is order, the very diversity of his many selves is unity. Hence his androgynous mind represents "something unbroken" among the "phrases and fragments" he has woven together.

But Bernard's ability to create unity finds no aesthetic equivalent in his projected novel. The book, of course, is

²⁶ Kelley, p. 199.

Virginia Woolf's: it is The Waves. As Bazin concludes, "What he leaves undone, Virginia Woolf accomplished: The Waves is the book Bernard might have written."²⁷

And how like him, as we succumb briefly to the biographical fallacy, we notice that Virginia Woolf is. We have seen that both writers are receptive and curious, unable to resist the imaginative impulse to create stories about railway travelers. Each writer also describes his work in terms of a fin in the water: Bernard, in Rome, sees a fin turning in a "waste of water" and notes this as a "mark" in the "margin of my mind" which he will later "coax into words" (p. 189). When he experiences moments of disillusion and despair, he sees the fin sinking back into the sea, or, at times, sees nothing breaking "with its fin that leaden waste of waters" (pp. 245, 284). Virginia Woolf, in her diary, describes her original conception of The Waves as a "fin in the waste of water which appeared to me over the marshes out of my window at Rodmell." She feels that when she completes the novel, she has "netted" that fin.²⁸ Bernard, too, "netted" the fragments of his existence, pieced them together, and "retrieved them from formlessness with words" when his creativity conquered his futile dejection (see above, p. 306).

²⁷ Bazin, p. 42.

²⁸ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 7 Feb. 1931, p. 165.

More important, Virginia Woolf, like Bernard, has something of all of the protagonists of The Waves in her. As Jean Guiguet explains, she shares with Neville his love of books; with Louis, his love of action; with Susan, her femininity and earthy love of nature; with Jinny, sociability and sensuality; with Rhoda, hypersensitivity and love of solitude.²⁹ Bernard, thinking of the moment of wholeness when the six were united, uses the word "immersion" (p. 278); Virginia Woolf, describing her goal in writing The Waves, uses similar imagery to explain "the moment":

The idea has come to me that what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea.³⁰

In just such a moment, the qualities of consciousness represented by the protagonists of The Waves are unified through Bernard's effort, and through the novel as a work of art. As C. B. Cox explains, the six ultimately represent not simply aspects of one writer's personality but of the human personality; he discusses the imaginative impulse, the desire to impose order, delight in personal relationships, joy in motherhood, and the life of solitude.³¹

²⁹ Guiguet, p. 296

³⁰ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 28 Nov. 1928, p. 136.

³¹ C. B. Cox, The Free Spirit: A Study of Liberal Humanism in the Novels of George Eliot, Henry James, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Angus Wilson (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), p. 333.

Because Virginia Woolf ascribed some of these qualities to the masculine and some to the feminine sides of the brain, we can understand the androgynous nature of the moments of equilibrium achieved in The Waves. The moments occur when Louis's intellect, his scholarship, his authoritarian imposition of order, and Neville's precision, extending even to his search for precisely the right lover, and Jinny's restriction to the world of surfaces, her fact-trimmed Christmas tree, are balanced with Rhoda's visionary imagination and Susan's intuitive, creative, maternal instinct.

But just as nothing is simply one thing in Bernard's final vision, so these "protagonists" are not, as in the early novels, simply representatives of the single-sexed mind. The scholarly Louis, for example, experiences moments in which he senses timelessness and universality; Neville, though he is precise and analytical, wants poetry in his life; the visionary Rhoda tries to cling to brick walls and the hard door of everyday existence. One side of Louis's personality, one side of Neville's, and the totality of Jinny's represent the intellectual, precise, scholarly, fact-bound perception that Virginia Woolf called masculine. The conflicting sides of both Louis's and Neville's psyches, the totality of Rhoda's, and the primary aspects of Susan's represent the imaginative, poetic, visionary, instinctively maternal perception that she called feminine. When these

qualities of consciousness are "immersed" in Bernard's creative powers, the moments of vision which the two "reunions" and his final summation convey to the reader represent the fulfillment of Virginia Woolf's quest for balance on "the razor's edge between two opposite forces."

Moreover, as James Hafley explains, the catastrophe of The Waves is particularly satisfying to the reader because Bernard's answer to the problem of unity and diversity coincides with the use of the wave imagery. The incessant rhythm of the waves' undulation is order itself; this is the order mirrored in the novel. This answer, as Hafley concludes, is "never given in terms with which he [the reader] can cope logically, or in terms that arouse his reason. . . . The latent meaning [comes] only as an affirmation by the reader of Bernard's answer to the problem."³² Bernard, then, becomes the quintessential equilibrist, balancing in his unified vision the diverse perceptions of the other protagonists; The Waves is the aesthetic equivalent of the vision he experiences.

Hafley reads with the open and resilient mind that Virginia Woolf called androgynous, as do many of her critics. Hafley quickly surveys the novel's detractors; one is tempted to note that many of them read with what she would have called the single-sexed mind, criticizing either

³² Hafley, pp. 121, 122.

her departure from the form of the conventional novel, or the apparent lack of a central idea or mood in The Waves.³³ Of those who praise the novel, none seems to me to come closer to its essence than Ralph Freedman, who calls it a "lyrical novel." Recognizing that the "detached" formal poetry of The Waves "leads to a suppression of the usual landmarks of the novel," Freedman explains that "within its dense and seemingly immobile structure, a narrative movement and a fictional world are retained, acting through the set monologues spoken by the cast of figures."³⁴ Freedman sees that the monologue in The Waves is based upon Virginia Woolf's conception of "the moment" which arises from "an awareness of one's relationship with oneself, with others and things, finally with life as a whole"; therefore, the moments of vision in this novel embody "all the complex elements of the book as a vision combining awareness and fact into a universal image of man's relations with life."³⁵

The consciousness that experiences the unity of these "complex elements" is Bernard's; the creativity that renders

³³ Hafley, pp. 122-23.

³⁴ Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 256, 268.

³⁵ Freedman, pp. 256, 268.

it aesthetically is Virginia Woolf's; finally, the receptivity that determines an appreciation of it is the reader's. To suggest that the "immersion" of the differing qualities of consciousness in a moment of vision can be experienced most fully by what Virginia Woolf calls the "androgynous" mind is simply to elucidate a major feature of this intricate and compelling work of art.

CHAPTER VIII

THE YEARS: "DANGEROUSLY NEAR PROPAGANDA"
BETWEEN THE ACTS: "SCRAPS, ORTS,
 AND FRAGMENTS"

The Years: "Dangerously Near Propaganda"

In 1932, Virginia Woolf wrote that "after abstaining from the novel of fact all these years--since 1919--and N. & D. is dead--I find myself infinitely delighting in facts for a change."¹ She called her nascent work an "essay novel," and said that "it's to take in everything, sex, education, life, etc.: and come, with the most powerful and agile leaps, like a chamois, across precipices from 1880 to here and now."² Jean Guiguet notes the familiar ambitions and tendencies: the wish to include everything, the concern with mastering time, the longing for a change.³ But Virginia Woolf soon realized that the "essay" portions were aesthetically incongruous with what she calls the

¹ Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. Leonard Woolf (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1954), 2 Nov. 1932, p. 184; hereafter cited as AWD.

² Virginia Woolf, AWD, 2 Nov. 1932, p. 183.

³ Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1965), p. 303.

"straight narrow passages of narrative";⁴ a four and a half-year struggle had begun. She wrote five versions of the book, and rewrote some passages as many as twenty times.⁵

She did not "infinitely delight" in the "novel of fact" for long. On February 2, 1933, her diary entry records her decision to leave out the "interchapters" (the Essays), and on April 25, 1933, she wrote, "I want to give the whole of the present society--nothing less: facts as well as the vision. And to combine them both. I mean, The Waves going on simultaneously with Night and Day. Is this possible?"⁶ Is it possible, in other words, to fuse the world of everyday matter and facts, of what she calls elsewhere the "vibration of daily custom,"⁷ with the inner, the unexpressed, with what Guiguet calls "all that lies between the surface of human beings and their depths"?⁸

⁴ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 5 Jan. 1933, p. 187.

⁵ See Grace Radin, "'I Am Not a Hero': Virginia Woolf and the First Version of The Years," Massachusetts Review, 7 (1975), 195-208, and "'Two Enormous Chunks': Episodes Excluded during the Final Revisions of The Years," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 80:11 (Winter 1977), 221-51; see also Mitchell A. Leaska, "Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 80 (1977), 172-210.

⁶ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 25 April 1933, p. 191.

⁷ Virginia Woolf, "Reading," Collected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967), II, 25; hereafter cited as CE.

⁸ Guiguet, p. 311.

Her diary records her preoccupation with this task: "How give ordinary waking Arnold Bennett life the form of art? . . . The discovery of this book . . . is the combination of the external and the internal. I am using both, freely. . . . It struck me tho' that I have now reached a further stage in my writer's advance. I see that there are four? dimensions: all to be produced, in human life: and that leads to a far richer grouping and proportion. I mean: I; and the not I; and the outer and the inner--no I'm too tired to say: but I see it. . . ."9

Guiguet feels that in The Waves Virginia Woolf is successful in "producing" the "I" and the "inner."¹⁰ But she wanted in The Years (1937) to combine these with the "not I," the "outer," which she elsewhere calls "narrative" or "representational."¹¹ Here, she fails. Eleanor Fargiter, the only character in the novel whose mind reflects the androgynous balance, experiences moments of vision which seem significant to her. But this experience of what Virginia Woolf calls the "internal" and the "I" is not successfully "fused" with "the world of everyday matter and facts" in The Years. Eleanor's perceptions,

⁹ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 31 May 1933, p. 201; 11 Jan. 1935, p. 229; 18 Nov. 1935, p. 250.

¹⁰ Guiguet, p. 316.

¹¹ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 22 May 1934, p. 212; 30 Sept. 1934, p. 218.

which usually involve a sense of pattern and a feeling that the future will bring deeper understanding, are undercut at every turn by the author, using several different techniques. The novel as a whole reflects a condition of repression and a sense of fragmentation and meaninglessness. In her anxiety about the political and social situation, Virginia Woolf has in this novel violated her own artistic strictures, for she uses The Years to teach and to preach.

We remember that in Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf's criticism of the social system interferes with the reader's experience of Clarissa. In The Years, the problem is similar. But this time, we shall consider the possibility that the failure, as Virginia Woolf herself suggests, is "deliberate."

Guiguet writes that the narration itself, in trying to convey "the surface, the appearance of the 'not I' and 'the outer,'" misses "its solidarity, its hardness, its constraint and cohesion." He explains that the "facts" of the novel lack weight; the events lack consequence; the gestures "do not connect up into action."¹² Guiguet feels that whereas The Waves successfully showed how far Virginia Woolf's sensibility could take her in exploring the "strata" submerged in the human consciousness, her action in The Years was doomed: her nature, he writes, was "too

¹² Guiguet, p. 316.

as "pure fiction or as targeted autobiography, its wholeness is not easily perceived, and its potential meaning never wholly understood."¹⁶

Instances of ambiguities and unresolved questions which can be answered by referring to the holograph abound in Leaska's essay. For example, in the 1908 section, there is a puzzling reference to Rose Pargiter's locking herself in the bathroom and cutting her wrist with a knife; the memory is awakened again in the final "Present Day" section.¹⁷ In 1908, Rose calls this incident one of the "awful" things children "can't tell anybody"; she has also in her mind another episode that took place when she was ten: she was nearly molested and a deviant exposed himself to her. Her errand at that time had been to buy "a box of ducks" for her bath (p. 28). Leaska relates this to an experience in Virginia Woolf's childhood. In a letter, she writes that her half-brother, George Duckworth, stood her on a ledge and explored "my private parts."¹⁸ In the

¹⁶ Leaska, "Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years," pp. 185-86.

¹⁷ Virginia Woolf, The Years (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1937), pp. 158, 359. All other references to the novel in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

¹⁸ Virginia Woolf, as quoted by Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), I, 144.

holograph, specifically erotic details clarify the incident; in the published version, it is merely a fragment of action and then of conversation which will be echoed in the final section, and which the reader will supposedly remember and grasp as significant.

Another puzzle is presented in the conversations of Eleanor's niece, Peggy, a doctor who realizes that she is limited, prosaic, and fact-bound: "I'm good . . . at fact-collecting. But what makes up a person. . . the circumference,--no, I'm not good at that" (p. 353). Peggy is keenly analytical, recognizing and examining the pleasure she feels when told that she is brilliant (p. 362), and she realizes that unlike Eleanor, she cannot "give up brooding, thinking, analysing" to "enjoy the moment" (p. 384). We can see that Peggy serves as foil to Eleanor's intuitiveness and her open-mindedness, but as Leaska argues, we cannot really understand Peggy when she turns to her brother and "viciously" insists that he "live differently" (p. 391). "Too much material has been eclipsed" from the holograph, Leaska suggests; in it, he finds pointed allusions indicating that Peggy lives the Sapphic life.¹⁹ Still a third character whose situation remains ambiguous in the published text is Sara, who in the holograph was called Elvira. In her diary, Virginia Woolf worries that

¹⁹ Leaska, "Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years," p. 197.

Elvira "may become too dominant" and that "I hardly know which I am, or where: Virginia or Elvira."²⁰ Elsewhere in the diary, she confuses Elvira with Eleanor.²¹

Leaska calls this "mix-up" significant because Virginia Woolf probably "saw Elvira and Eleanor as two parts of the same person--herself!"²² Noting that Elvira (Sara) reads the Antigone in an early section and that Eleanor mentions the play near the end of the novel, Leaska suggests that both Elvira and Eleanor are "subordinated" or "crushed" in a male-dominated world: Elvira (Sara) is physically crippled, but only from the holograph notes do we learn that she calls herself "the hunchback" and hates her father. Eleanor is in robust health, but we learn from the holograph that she feels that she is entombed by the Victorian patriarchy.²³

Leaska proves that such ambiguities are "seemingly endless"²⁴ by providing a seemingly endless screed of them. A further problem with the novel is its division into the

²⁰ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 25 April 1933, p. 191; 25 March, 1933, p. 189.

²¹ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 30 Aug. 1932, p. 215.

²² Leaska, "Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years, p. 203.

²³ Leaska, "Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years, p. 204.

²⁴ Leaska, "Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years, p. 177.

"years" themselves, the sections which give The Years what Virginia Woolf called its "curiously uneven time sequence." Here, Leaska finds more pargeting. The years are 1880, 1891, 1907, 1908, 1910, 1911, 1914, 1917, 1918, and the "Present Day," 1934. Leaska suggests that in making these choices, Virginia Woolf consciously omitted crucial "blocks of time" in her own life. For example, leaping from 1880 to 1891 eliminates her own birth, her father's beginning his work on the demanding Dictionary of National Biography, and George Duckworth's sexual fondlings. Between 1891 and 1907, Virginia Stephen's mother died, she had her first mental breakdown, her half-sister Stella Duckworth died, her father died, she tried to commit suicide, and her beloved brother Thoby died. In 1909, her manuscript of Memoirs of a Novelist was rejected. In each of the other gaps between the "years," Leaska finds other periods of depression, madness, and suicide attempts.²⁵

The result of all this glossing, editing out, and smoothing over, of all this "pargeting," is a fractured, fragmented, puzzling, and oftentimes frustrating novel. The Years does indeed suffer from the lack of surface "solidity, hardness, constraint, and cohesion" that Guiguet notices, although he had no access to the material Leaska employs to explain the causes for the final effect.

²⁵ Leaska, "Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years, p. 207.

Leaska writes that because the novel is marked by "splinters of memory, fragments of speech, titles of quoted passages left unnamed or forgotten, lines of poetry or remnants of nursery rhymes left dangling in mid-air, understanding between characters incomplete, and utterances missing the mark and misunderstood," we as readers are challenged to rely upon "the fertility of our own imaginations to fathom some meaning."²⁶ Guiguet finds that The Years is not so much the story of the Pargiters as "stories about Pargiters," characters who are half known by each other, and, unfortunately, also "half known by readers."²⁷ He feels that Virginia Woolf's efforts to "synthesize" the two orders of reality, that of facts and that of vision, is "insecure and intermittent and consequently fails to convince the reader," who "loses his way and grows weary" between the final sections.²⁸ Moreover, as we shall see, there is a possibility that the structure and style of the novel are deliberately fragmented, contradictory, and perplexing. This possibility is troubling, for it leads us to suggest that Virginia Woolf, sensitive as she was to the social and political situation in the thirties, succumbed to the very dangers she herself had warned

²⁶ Leaska, "Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years, p. 177.

²⁷ Guiguet, pp. 311, 310.

²⁸ Guiguet, p. 312.

against: she uses her novel to teach and to preach (see above, p. 12).

James Hafley praises The Years as "possibly the best, and certainly one of the most interesting, of Virginia Woolf's novels," but he treats the book as a social study, dealing primarily with its "change from society to society--the social shift."²⁹ When he discusses Eleanor's climactic "moment of vision" in the "Present Day" section, Hafley concedes that "the whole past is not explicitly charged into the present moment," and that while Eleanor "does recapture and hold time past in time present," this is accomplished only "implicitly," and is "not given the emphasis or role it had received in the earlier books."³⁰

Virginia Woolf herself, reading the proofs of The Years, declared that the novel was "so bad" that "I must carry the proofs, like a dead cat, to L. and tell him to burn them unread."³¹ As Quentin Bell explains, Leonard Woolf did indeed have serious doubts about the novel; Virginia Woolf had divined them, and brooded over "a certain

²⁹ James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 136.

³⁰ Hafley, p. 143.

³¹ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 3 Nov. 1936, p. 261.

tepidity in [his] verdict" in her diary.³² When most of the reviews were unfavorable, she wrote in her diary, "Dead and disappointing--so I'm found out and that odious rice pudding of a book is what I thought it--a dank failure."³³

Having examined her early hopes as well as a possible explanation for the curious novel that resulted, we are prepared to consider The Years in the light of its "moment of vision" as experienced by Eleanor Pargiter. Eleanor is the only central character in the book who tries to discover a pattern behind the superficialities of everyday life, and at the end of the novel, she experiences a moment of revelation in which a pattern of some sort seems clear to her. As we might expect, Eleanor is delightfully free of the narrow, rigid, unbalanced outlook which Virginia Woolf calls "single-sexed." There are, of course, contrasts, "fixed" characters. They are, as Joanna Lipking has noticed, "ineluctably statuesque or theatrical," and the "rigidity" of their "conventional" roles is satirized.³⁴ Strictly masculine and prosaic, and totally lacking in

³² Virginia Woolf, AWD, 9 April 1936, p. 259. See also Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972), II, 195.

³³ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 2 April 1937, p. 270.

³⁴ Joanna Lipking, "Looking at the Monuments: Woolf's Satiric Eye," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 80 (1977), 141.

sensitivity, creativity, or intuition, is Eleanor's father, Colonel Abel Pargiter. A typical Victorian patriarch, he is exactly like all the other men in his Club: "men of his own type, men who had been soldiers, civil servants, men who had now retired" (p. 4). He presides over his children in typical Victorian fashion, entertaining them with stories about his career in India, rewarding his sons for making high marks, and providing handsomely for the educations--of the sons.³⁵

Colonel Pargiter is thoroughly fact-bound and totally insensitive. When he walks through the Park, he "marches" with his coat "closely-buttoned, looking straight ahead of him." The narrator points out that he sees neither the "very green" grass nor the branches of trees (p. 6). He catches himself envying his brother's more spontaneous and colorful life style, but takes solace from the thought that he, Abel, has made more money (p. 125). When his wife dies, the Colonel expects Eleanor, without question, to take on the burdens of motherhood and housekeeping, and of caring for him in his later years. Eleanor must keep the household books; rather than thanking her, her father questions the costs (p. 92). After a busy morning,

³⁵ Rose Pargiter sees her brother studying in the schoolroom and thinks, "Perhaps it was Greek, perhaps it was Latin" (p. 17). Neither is available to her. Years later, she reminds him that "He had the school-room. Where was I to sit? 'Oh, run away and play in the nursery!'" (p. 359).

Eleanor must take the time to buy a present for him to give a niece; at luncheon with him, she wonders, "What had he been doing . . . Taking shares out of one company and putting them in another?" (p. 104).

When the thought that Eleanor "has her own life to live" crosses the Colonel's mind, "a spasm of jealousy" passes through him (p. 104). When he is old, Eleanor sets out his chessmen for him, and follows his orders to "put 'em away Keep 'em safe somewhere," otherwise communicating with her by grunts and groans (p. 150). Eleanor must break off a conversation with a cousin who interests her because "Papa's expecting me"; the cousin realizes that "Papa's expecting me" has precluded Eleanor's deeper friendships with others (p. 180). The idea of Abel Pargiter's crippling paternalism reverberates into the "Present Day" section, when Eleanor's nephew, North, remembers that Sir William Whatney had once loved her. North thinks, "She had never married. Why not? he wondered. Sacrificed to the family, he supposed --old Grandpapa without any fingers" (p. 372).³⁶

³⁶ Mitchell Leaska finds that in the original draft, Abel Pargiter is a more generalized embodiment in which "all fathers together with all their faults have been embodied"; he is "the Victorian prototype which called forth from Woolf a flood of abuse and accusation." Leaska speculates that the more "softened" characterization in the final published version evolved "in order to prevent Leslie Stephen from becoming a loathsome ghost." Leaska, "Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years," pp. 179, 180.

There is something of the Colonel in each of his three sons. Martin Pargiter, like his father, deals in stocks and hands out silver. He is in the "best of spirits" after a visit to his stockbroker, and when he unexpectedly meets his cousin Sara in front of St. Paul's, he says, "A penny for your thoughts, Sal!" (pp. 224, 228). Soon afterwards, he drops a six-pence into a flower-vendor's tray to assuage his annoyance with himself: he had failed to tip a waiter who deliberately kept back some of the change (p. 235). At the end of the novel, Martin slips coins into the hands of the children who sing an unintelligible song (p. 430). Also like his father, who worried about being seen walking near his mistress' house (p. 6), Martin frets about appearances, repeatedly insisting that Sara keep her voice down in a restaurant because "somebody's listening" (pp. 229, 231), and leaving tips so that he will be well thought of (p. 234). Just as Colonel Pargiter had played God with his family, so Martin decides that he has become the "God" of Crosby, the old family servant (p. 220). He treats Crosby much as Colonel Pargiter treated Eleanor; he is condescending to her, and he wishes to avoid thinking about her personal life (pp. 220, 222). Martin realizes that in the family home at Abercorn Terrace, "all those different people had lived, boxed up together, telling lies," but this feeling is undercut by

its ironic juxtaposition with an incident in which Martin himself, now an adult, lies to Crosby in order to get rid of her, and admits it to himself (p. 222).

The narrator describes a remark Martin makes to his cousin, Kitty, as being spoken "with his usual tiresome irony" (p. 262). Kitty, in turn, senses that Martin "despises" her (p. 263), and reminds him, at the party in the "Present Day" section, that he "hated . . . everything" (p. 418). Martin's concern for "proper" appearances; his thoughts about "better families" (p. 245), his disdainful irony, and his foppishness (Eleanor calls him a "dandy" [p. 149]), all remind us of another inflexible, single-sexed, exclusively "masculine" character, William Rodney in Night and Day.

Another Pargiter son, Edward, is a scholar in the mold of St. John Hirst and Neville. He is first mentioned as a schoolboy who wins prizes (p. 34), and when we first see him he sits studying at Oxford, seeking perfection like Neville, "cutting ancient inscriptions clearer with a knife":

He caught phrase after phrase exactly, firmly, more exactly, he noted, making a brief note in the margin, than the night before. Little negligible words now revealed shades of meaning, which altered the meaning. He made another note; that was the meaning. His own dexterity in catching the phrase plumb in the middle gave him a thrill of excitement. There it was, clean and entire. But he must be precise; exact; even his little scribbled notes must be clear as print.
(p. 50)

Later, in the 1891 section, Edward walks in Oxford on a fall day. At first he notices "smell, sound, and colour" during his "brisk constitutional," but he concludes by searching for the precise line in Greek or Latin which can sum up his impressions, neatly and rationally (p. 90). The reader deduces that Edward was at one time in love with his cousin Kitty, but Kitty finds him "intellectual . . . a little remote" (p. 183). In our last glimpse of Edward before the "Present Day" section, he is lecturing "troops of devout school mistresses on the Acropolis. Out came their notebooks and down they scribbled every word he said" (p. 200).

At the party, Edward's nephew North senses something "sealed up" in his uncle, and indeed, the imaginative, sensitive, intuitive qualities that might have quickened and grown in Edward are now atrophied. North conveys the compliments of a former pupil to Edward and sees that his uncle is "vain . . . touchy . . . established"; Edward is "too formed" (p. 407). Like the five qualities of consciousness in The Waves, Edward in late middle age has become "too black and white and linear. . . ." He "can't flow" because his emotions and his sensibility are "locked up, refrigerated" (pp. 408, 409). Kitty simply calls him "supercilious" (p. 418). Like the Cambridge dons in Jacob's Room, Edward has become "a priest . . . a guardian of beautiful words" (p. 409).

A third brother, Morris, goes into law. In the 1880 section, Morris shows no interest in the Levys, a poor family Eleanor visits. He cares for nothing but the bar: "His passion was for the Law" (p. 34). Eleanor laments his lack of sympathy and their fact-bound, superficial conversations, thinking that "they always talked about facts--little facts" (p. 34). In the 1891 section, Eleanor visits Morris in the Law Courts, hears him argue a case, and finds her brother and the other barristers "awful, magisterial" in their uniformity. This atmosphere in which Morris has chosen to live stifles Eleanor's receptivity to people. She thinks that it "forbade personalities" and therefore, before the case is finished, Eleanor flees (pp. 111, 112).

Several of the women in the family are as limited and as narrow as the men. Milly settles for "several large estates" (p. 376) in her marriage to Hugh Gibbs, a typical squire who talks about nothing but "girls and horses" (p. 53). When they discuss the Devonshire weather at breakfast, Milly and Hugh are interested in whether or not the leaves are still "too thick for shooting," and nothing else (p. 90). At the final party, Milly's thirty-year relationship with her husband seems to North Pargiter like nothing but "tut-tut-tut--and chew-chew-chew. It sounded like the half-inarticulate munchings of animals in a stall. Tut-tut-tut and chew-chew-chew--as they trod

out the soft steamy straw in the stable; as they wallowed in the primeval swamp, prolific, profuse, half-conscious . . ." (p. 375). Another sister, Delia, seems to break the conventional mold with her passionate crusade for Irish independence, but then her dreams are "dashed" when the "wild rebel" she thought she had married becomes "the most King-respecting, Empire-admiring of country gentlemen" (p. 398). A third, Rose, devotes herself entirely to a life of action. There is nothing of the sensitive, the intuitive, or the visionary in Rose. As a child, she pretends that she is "Pargiter of Pargiter's Horse" (p. 27). Throughout the novel, she is described as being like a "military man" (pp. 169, 170, 358, 415, 416, 420). Rose devotes her adult life to one political cause after another, throwing bricks, being jailed and force-fed. There is no indication that Rose is a sympathetic character; she "likes fighting" (p. 358) and receives, for her window-smashing, a decoration which she keeps in a cardboard box (p. 420).

Rose is interesting, presumably, because of her childhood trauma, the encounter with the exhibitionist. How else explain a conversation she has in 1910 about drunken men at a public-house, during which Rose buttons her suit "as if she were making ready" (p. 173)? Evidently the traumatic experience is responsible for what Victoria

Middleton calls Rose's "inner rigidity."³⁷ At any rate, Rose's restriction to the sphere of political activity is clearly delineated. She is among the least poetic, least sensitive characters Virginia Woolf has created.

Each of the characters we have described is trapped within the limitations of self. Except for a fleeting sensation Delia experiences at her mother's funeral (p. 87), no moment of vision is experienced by any of them. There are other characters whose perceptions seem more balanced, whose minds might be what Virginia Woolf calls "androgynous." But for the most part, these characters cannot create for themselves lives that are meaningful or satisfactory.

For example, Kitty Pargiter, a cousin, is the daughter of an Oxford don, and sees that that life is "obsolete, frivolous, inane" (p. 74). Like Katharine Hilbery, Kitty is asked to pour tea and entertain at dinner-parties (p. 60); even worse, she is expected to help her father with his history of the college (p. 81). As we have seen, Kitty knows that Edward is too intellectual, remote, and supercilious. Kitty knows what she does not want. But what life does she settle for? She becomes Lady Lasswade, raises a family, travels to country estates, goes to the opera, and drops in on political meetings where

³⁷ Victoria S. Middleton, "The Years: 'A Deliberate Failure,'" Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 80 (1977), 164.

she insists that "force is always wrong" (p. 179). Kitty's husband loves hunting; she hates it (p. 249). She gives the obligatory dinner parties and detests the chatter of the women after dinner (pp. 259, 260). Each party is merely, she knows, a "prelude to another party" (p. 264). After one of these parties, Kitty escapes by train and then chauffeur-driven car to her husband's estate, where she enjoys the woods even though "nothing of this belonged to her; her son would inherit; his wife would walk here after her" (p. 277). She loves feeling "warm, stored, and comfortable" as she lies back in her chair, happy because "she had nothing to do--nothing whatever" (p. 275). When she is old, Kitty lives on this estate most of the time, and says at the final party that "the old days were bad days, wicked days, cruel days" (p. 401). She remarks wryly that "one can live as one likes . . . now that one's seventy" (p. 421).

Another Pargiter cousin, Sara, also rejects everyday reality, but she is unlike Kitty, who is content to lie silent, without thinking, on the ground (p. 278). Sara constantly invents stories and songs. Unlike Bernard, however, Sara has no interest in summing up or in creating unity from diversity. Her singing and her fantastic stories merely help her to escape from the world of people and events, or to evade an unpleasant reality. As a young girl, when she is left in bed to rest while others go to a

party, Sara pretends that she is "a root; lying sunk in the earth; veins seem to thread the cold mass; the tree put forth branches; the branches had leaves. '--the sun shines through the leaves,' she said, wagging her finger," although the "actual tree" she is looking at has no leaves at all (p. 133). When her cousin Rose asks her to attend a political meeting, Sara at first finds the idea repugnant, and shrouds her reaction in nonsense songs (p. 172). Later, when she tells her sister Maggie about the meeting, she again resorts to lines of poetry and flights of the imagination. Hence Sara avoids conveying, realistically, the actual events of the meeting (pp. 186-88). This happens again when Sara describes the marriage of other cousins to Martin. Martin, always a man of this world, thinks that Sara was "skipping over railings" in her disjointed fanciful account of the cousins' lives (p. 239).

When her young cousin North leaves to fight in World War I, Sara bitterly attacks his enthusiasm about his service in what she calls the "Royal Regiment of Rat-Catchers," and then, to veil her distress, takes up poker and tongs and "plays" "God save the King, Happy and Glorious, Long to reign over us" (p. 285). During a visit from North years later, Sara breaks into another of her absurd lyrics to conceal her regret that she and North ended their correspondence (p. 320). When she describes for North her one effort at finding a job, she again veils the

experience in fantasy, and North must ask, "How much of that was true?" (pp. 341-42). Margaret Comstock finds Sara's repudiation of the rich man's press, of the newspaper job which she considered and then rejected, admirable. She praises Sara for choosing, instead, the "poverty and ghettoization that are and have been the condition of women."³⁸

Be that as it may, Sara is clearly a character who is estranged from normal existence. Her deepest relationship is with the homosexual Nicholas Pomjalovsky, who attempts repeatedly--and unsuccessfully--to convey to others his somewhat misty vision of a unity of people, religions, and laws (pp. 281, 296, 309). At the final party, Sara sings a ditty about the Queen of England, and Nicholas says that she can never act for herself, cannot even choose her stockings, because she has created no life for herself. "She lives in dreams . . . alone . . . singing her little song" (p. 370).

There is, in The Years, only one central character who lives neither wholly in dreams and visions nor in the narrow limitations of daily custom. Eleanor Pargiter is obviously intended to be a character of androgynous balance. She is in part "feminine" as Virginia Woolf understood

³⁸ Margaret Comstock, "The Loudspeaker and the Human Voice: Politics and the Form of The Years," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 80 (1977), 273, 274.

the term: she is sensitive, imaginative, intuitive, and somewhat visionary. At the same time, she exhibits the more "masculine" outlook--prosaic, rational analytical: she keeps books, rents cottages, plans careers for her brothers, attends meetings of social workers, and defends England's retaliation against Germany in the war (pp. 35, 91-92, 105, 175-78, 286).

The Years contains many passages which portray Eleanor sympathetically and which describe her flashes of insight, finally culminating in a moment of vision which she experiences at the party in the "Present Day" section. Eleanor is clearly meant to be a unifier. As the novel opens, one of her sisters thinks of her as "the soother, the maker-up of quarrels, the buffer between her and the intensities and strifes of family life" (p. 14). Eleanor's sensitivity, her receptivity to experience, and her curiosity are emphasized at several points. Like her sensitive cousin Sara, who reads Sophocles and seems to feel what Antigone feels (p. 136), Eleanor intuits her way into what she reads: she seems to share an experience her brother Martin describes in a letter (p. 108), and, reading Rénan and thinking about Christianity, she feels that she receives a "little spark" and that she herself is "skipping over all those mountains, all those seas" (p. 154).

We notice Eleanor's openness to new experience, her flexibility, and her curiosity when, in her early

thirties, she rides an omnibus and feels that her fellow passengers are "settled" with "their minds made up"; she, on the contrary, feels always that she is the "youngest person in an omnibus" (p. 101). Always curious and interested in countries and people unknown to her, Eleanor visits Spain in her fifties and feels that England is "small, smug, and petty" by comparison (p. 205). She again sees Sir William Whatney, now retired, at this time and thinks that "his life was over," while hers is just beginning (p. 213). In her seventies, Eleanor travels to India, and then plans another visit to "another kind of civilisation. Tibet, for instance" (p. 335). Eleanor's niece Peggy thinks, "Everything interests her," as the two ride in a taxi, and Eleanor, repeatedly "distracted by the sights in the street," punctuates their conversation with her exclamations and questions (pp. 335, 336).

Eleanor's ability to join both the visionary and the concrete in what Herbert Marder calls her "unified vision"³⁹ is stressed from the beginning. In the 1891 section, she thinks that an old ink-corroded walrus is a "solid object" which "might survive them all," but feels also that the walrus, which Martin had given her mother, is "a part of other things--her mother, for example," and

³⁹ Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 103.

that even if she threw it away, "It would still exist somewhere or other" (p. 91). At a social workers' meeting, she feels that she can "divide herself into two," that part of her can follow the argument while the other "walked down a green glade and stopped in front of a flowering tree" (p. 176). She wishes that she could "get at something, something deeper." At this point, she draws on paper a dot from which spokes radiate, the same symbol she had drawn when she realized that the walrus was more to her than a solid factual object (pp. 177, 91). This symbol seems intended to represent the "unified vision" Marder attributes to Eleanor.

Virginia Woolf serves Eleanor a generous portion of these significant "moments." During an air raid, Eleanor and the other cousins have supper in the cellar of their cousin Maggie and her French husband, Renny. In this scene, Nicholas shares with Eleanor his ideas ("We do not know ourselves, ordinary people; and if we do not know ourselves, how then can we make religions, laws, that . . . fit" [p. 281]), and Eleanor suddenly feels that this is very profound; in fact, "I've so often thought it myself." Soon, she begins to feel that "a little blur had come round the edges of things. . . . Things seemed to have lost their skins; to be freed of some surface hardness" (pp. 282, 287). Margaret Comstock feels that at this point, Eleanor "transcends" the air raid, because

the talk with Nicholas "takes on real meaning for her." Eleanor, she explains, experiences "a state of warmth in which a meaningful whole is created. . . . She and Nicholas create meaning co-operatively."⁴⁰ Alice van Buren Kelley calls Eleanor's perception in the air raid scene one of her "moments of infinite awareness."⁴¹

After the air raid, Eleanor walks in the streets and marvels at "a broad fan of light . . . sweeping slowly across the sky," which seems to "take what she was feeling and to express it broadly and simply, as if another voice were speaking another language" (pp. 229-300). Herbert Marder finds this sensation significant because it brings to mind Virginia Woolf's association of the lighthouse with a union of the sexes.⁴² James Hafley writes that the unintelligible song of the children at the end of the novel echoes this voice speaking in another language, and therefore delineates what Hafley calls Eleanor's "complete awareness" when she finds the children's song beautiful.⁴³

⁴⁰ Comstock, p. 257.

⁴¹ Alice van Buren Kelley, The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 220.

⁴² Marder, Feminism and Art, p. 145.

⁴³ Hafley, p. 142.

Such moments as these prepare us for Eleanor's experiences at the final party. There, she muses about her past, visualizing it as "millions of atoms" which "danced apart and massed themselves" (p. 366). She asks herself how these atoms "compose what people call a life," and then feels the "hard little coins" which she happens to be holding. She thinks, "Perhaps there's 'I' at the middle of it," and remembers her drawing of dots from which spokes radiate. This somehow leads her to the thought that there may be a pattern underlying life; she wonders if "everything" might "come over again a little differently," if there may be "a pattern, a theme recurring, like music; half remembered, half foreseen? . . . a gigantic pattern, momentarily perceptible," and this thought gives her "extreme pleasure" (p. 369). She tries to voice her feelings to her nephew, North: "It's been a perpetual discovery, my life. A miracle" (p. 383). To Renny, whom she greatly admires, Eleanor says that "things have changed for the better. . . . We're happier--we're freer. . . . I feel . . . so happy!" (pp. 386, 387).

The connections between her feelings of happiness and tangible objects like the coins or the spotted walrus are indicated in the next scene. Eleanor dozes off, and when she wakes up, "she shut her hands on the coins she was holding, and again she was suffused with a feeling of happiness. Was it because this had survived--this keen sensation (she was waking up) and the other thing, the solid

object--she saw an ink-corroded walrus--had vanished?" (p. 426). Herbert Marder concludes that the walrus and the coins symbolize the "prosaic object and the economics of daily life" which Eleanor is able to incorporate into her understanding of "the something within the individual" which "endures." Hence her vision includes both a "spiritual principle" and "a part of the tangible life around her."⁴⁴

This is Eleanor's final revelation:

There must be another life, she thought. . . . Not in dreams; but here and now, in this room, with living people. She felt as if she were standing on the edge of a precipice with her hair blown back; she was about to grasp something that just evaded her. There must be another life, here and now, she repeated. This is too short, too broken. We know nothing, even about ourselves. We're only just beginning, she thought, to understand, here and there. She hollowed her hands in her lap. . . . She held her hands hollowed; she felt that she wanted to enclose the present moment; to make it stay; to fill it fuller and fuller, with the past, the present, and the future, until it shone, whole, bright, deep with understanding. (pp. 427-28)

Eleanor then notices that a new day is dawning, and watches from the window as a young couple get out of a taxi and enter a house down the street. Eleanor and her sister Delia had witnessed a similar scene years ago. Then, it had symbolized for them their independence from the Victorian patriarchy; now, it gives Eleanor a sense of satisfaction and completion. "There," she murmurs, "there!"

⁴⁴ Marder, Feminism and Art, pp. 102, 103.

(p. 434). Then she holds out her hands to one of her brothers and twice asks, "And now?" Alice van Buren Kelley is one of several critics who feel that this signifies renewal and hope: "For the pattern has begun again and life stretches new and full before her," Kelley concludes.⁴⁵ James Hafley calls the conclusion "a consciousness of triumph in the future," because "the present moment is no longer simply an end in itself; it is at once an end and a means."⁴⁶

As we have seen, admirers of this novel praise Eleanor's efforts to comprehend life. I should like to assert, however, that Virginia Woolf deliberately undercuts Eleanor's perceptions at every turn. In scene after scene, Eleanor's feelings about the importance of her insights are deflated by narrative reversals. Her sense of the "little spark" she receives from reading Rénan is quickly doused when the door opens and Rose appears, flabbergasting Eleanor, who has lost an entire week in time and has dated her correspondence accordingly (p. 156). When Eleanor muses about getting to "something deeper" at the social workers' meeting, she has a sudden insight, seeing "the only point that was of any importance," but just as she starts to speak, people begin to leave. Her great revelation is never shared or recorded (p. 178). When she

⁴⁵ Kelley, p. 223.

⁴⁶ Hafley, p. 144.

decides that Whatney's life is over and hers just beginning, she immediately falls asleep (p. 213).

During the air raid, her "meaningful" exchange with Nicholas is marred by halting, broken speech and jerky transitions: "'I was saying,' he went on, 'I was saying that we do not know ourselves, ordinary people; and if we do not know ourselves, how then can we make religions, laws that--'"; here, Nicholas "used his hands," searching for a word. He repeats the word "that," and Eleanor supplies, "That fit--that fit." Nicholas then repeats, "that fit, that fit," and Eleanor concludes, "that fit" (p. 281). Eleanor tries twice to expound upon this thought, but halts both times, first because Nicholas reacts with a "puzzled" look, and finally because Renny enters with the wine (pp. 281, 282).

And the wine, in turn, is responsible for her next "moment of infinite awareness," by which Kelley means the sensation of a "little blur," of freedom from "some surface hardness." In context, we learn that Eleanor feels this way because she has been drinking wine that "seemed to caress a knob in her spine" (p. 282). When she drinks her second glass, she reminds herself that wine goes to her head, that "she had not drunk wine for months," and that "she was feeling already a little blurred; a little light-headed" (p. 284). Further weakening Comstock's insistence upon Eleanor's creation of a "meaningful whole"

in this scene is Renny's reaction to Eleanor's exclamation when the raid finally ends. "I'm glad I'm alive. Is that wrong, Renny?" she asks, and proceeds in her thoughts to credit him with "immense supplies of emotion." But Renny startles her with a sudden reply: "I have spent the evening sitting in a coal cellar while other people try to kill each other above my head" (p. 295).

There is a similar reversal after Eleanor marvels at the "broad fan of light" which seems to express her thoughts in another language. Marder seems to strain for a point when he invests this beam with the significance of the lighthouse in other novels, and Hafley's relating it to Eleanor's moment of awareness at the end of The Years also seems tenuous: In the passage at hand, the reader learns that Eleanor is merely looking at a searchlight which probes the sky after the air raid (p. 300).

At the final party, Eleanor's perceptions are again undercut. When she wonders how the millions of "atoms" that make up life are related, and remembers her symbolic drawing, she starts to speak, feeling that "she must put her thoughts into order," must "find words." But unlike Bernard in his final summing up, Eleanor realizes that "I can't find words. I can't tell anybody" (p. 367). After her feeling of "extreme pleasure" that there may be a "gigantic pattern," she wonders, "But who makes it? Who thinks it?" and then, "her mind slipped. She could

not finish her thought" (p. 369). To her rapturous speech which ends "so happy," Renny, who is for Eleanor "the man I should like to have married," replies, "Tosh, Eleanor, tosh" (p. 387). Just after she tells her nephew North that her life has been a "perpetual discovery" and a "miracle," she feels light-headed and is glad to "attach herself to something solid," by which she means her niece Peggy, whom she sees reading by the bookcase. At precisely this point, Peggy is reading and bitterly affirming this sentence: "The mediocrity of the universe astonishes and revolts me . . . the pettiness of everything fills me with disgust . . . the paucity of the human spirit crushes me" (p. 383). After she experiences the feeling that she wants to "enclose the present moment" and fill it with deep understanding, she turns to Edward, but realizes that trying to talk is "useless . . . it must drop. It must fall" (p. 428).

Finally, and most important, Eleanor's query "And now?" which is taken to signify her hope for the future, her sense, in Hafley's phrase, "that life is improvable as well as everlasting,"⁴⁷ is emphatically and devastatingly undermined by the novel's most remarkable stylistic technique: the force of empty repetition. In the 1891 section, Virginia Woolf hints at the significance of the

⁴⁷ Hafley, p. 144.

novel's incessant repetitions of images, events, and phrases that the characters speak or think. In the early section, Sara, still a child, mimics her father's sententious admonition, "'That is a reason, I should have thought,' said Sir Dibgy, surveying his daughters, 'to--er--to--er--reform one's habits.'" (p. 127). Sara looks at her father, and repeats his words. The narrator explains, "Emptied of all meaning, she had got the rhythm of his words exactly" (p. 127, italics mine). In similar fashion, the often monotonous repetitions of this novel undermine what critics have taken to be its meaning. Some of these repeated actions are the cooing of pigeons (pp. 75, 115, 176, 187, 433), the exasperation of several Pargiters with the wick of the tea kettle (pp. 10, 151-52, 166, 181, 260), flocks of birds settling (pp. 181, 260), and a cab's stopping under a window (pp. 18, 434). In her trenchant essay, Victoria S. Middleton surveys such repeated actions and finds them "sterile" because they "acquire the general status of myths or rituals but are devoid of spiritual or communal purpose." Unlike the plane and the clock chimes in Mrs. Dalloway, Middleton explains, these repetitions "do not serve to join multiple minds by connecting thought processes."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Middleton, p. 164.

As Middleton notices, specific words and phrases are also repeated throughout the novel. She focuses, not insignificantly, upon the genealogy of the word "poppy-cock."⁴⁹ But the phrases repeated most emphatically are Nicholas'. At the supper party in 1917, Nicholas talks about Napoleon and says to Eleanor, "We were considering the psychology of great men" (p. 281). In the "Present Day" section, North Pargiter returns from Africa to find Nicholas discussing "Napoleon; the psychology of great men" (p. 309). Nicholas, who tells Eleanor in 1917 that "the soul . . . wishes to expand, to adventure; to form--new combinations" (p. 296), has himself formed no "new combinations" as the years pass. Sara notices in 1917 that "people always say the same thing" and that what Nicholas always says is, "Oh, my dear friends, let us improve the soul!" (p. 297). In 1935, she tells North that Nicholas spends his days repeating his ideas in public lectures "about the soul" (p. 323). Sara mimics him perfectly, catching his manner exactly, even his repetition of the word "fit" (p. 315). Eleanor, says Sara, continues to repeat her conversations with Nicholas; she still asks, "'Can we improve--can we improve ourselves?' sitting on the edge of the sofa" (p. 316).

⁴⁹ Middleton, p. 165.

Sara has noticed that Eleanor's question is itself a repetition. Virginia Woolf deals with both its form and its substance in Three Guineas, which was the "essay" half of the "essay-novel" as she first conceived of The Pargiters in 1932.⁵⁰ There, she observes, "It seems as if there were no progress in the human race, but only repetition."⁵¹

Hence it is caustically ironic that when Eleanor "cannot finish" her thought about the "gigantic pattern," she turns to Nicholas. "'Nicholas,' she said. She wanted him to finish it; to take her thought and carry it out into the open unbroken; to make it whole, beautiful, entire" (p. 369). But Nicholas, as we have seen, is himself the embodiment of sterile repetition. Eleanor turns to him to find him talking about Sara's stockings, one blue and one white. When he next speaks, it is in an effort to deliver a speech at the close of the party. He is repeatedly interrupted, and concludes, finally, "I was going to drink to the human race. . . The human race . . . which is now in its infancy, may it grow to

⁵⁰ She definitely thought of The Years and Three Guineas as one unit. She wrote in her diary in 1938, "anyhow that's the end of six years floundering, striving, much agony, some ecstasy: lumping The Years and Three Guineas together as one book--as indeed they are." Virginia Woolf, AWD, 3 June 1938, p. 284.

⁵¹ Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1938), p. 66.

maturity!" Nicholas thumps his glass on the table, and then, the episode ends with a devastatingly short, flat, monosyllabic anticlimax: "It broke" (p. 426).

We have read that Sara notices how often people repeat themselves, and that her own mimicry tends to "empty" of their meaning the phrases she repeats. We realize, then, that Eleanor's final revelation (pp. 427-28) is undermined by its echoes of Nicholas' empty phrases about the human race's knowing nothing and "just beginning." Eleanor's last words, "And now?" are still more harshly mocked. They, too, are emptied of meaning. As Middleton notices, they are a repetition echoing Eleanor's earlier question "And then?"

Because Eleanor repeats herself with this phrase, Middleton correctly surmises that the repetition "practically answers her."⁵² But the phrase does more than echo the earlier question. Here at the conclusion, in a phrase that supposedly denotes expectancy, Eleanor is mimicking the mimic. Sara, in the 1917 section, had said, "And now?" when the dinner party was moved to the cellar because of the air raid (p. 290). At that time, "They all looked as if they were waiting for something to happen." What happens is that Maggie enters with a plum pudding. In the "Present Day" section, what happens is that the sun rises and "the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary

⁵² Middleton, p. 169.

beauty, simplicity, and peace" (p. 435). These final words of description form an ironic counterpart to their parallel in the 1917, the anticlimax of the plum pudding.

For this "air of beauty, simplicity, and peace" is, as Middleton notices, "utterly alien" to the novel.⁵³ In each of the other sections, unpleasant details (a flower vendor's noseless face, a bloody piece of mutton, slimy green cabbage, a blob of spittle in one bathtub and a ring of grease and hairs in another) accrue and are finally capped with images of death, suppression, hypocrisy, or rejection. The 1880 section ends with Rose Pargiter's funeral, described as a "shrouded and subdued morning party" as the grave-diggers come forward and rain begins to fall (p. 88). At the close of the 1891 section, Colonel Pargiter feels old and sad, resenting his brother's wealth and his family; it is autumn and leaves are falling (p. 128). The 1907 section ends with Eugenie Pargiter's cowering and apologizing to her "querulous and cross" husband, who chides her for forgetting to put a new lock on a door (p. 145). At the end of the 1908 section, Eleanor tells Martin about someone's death; at the end of the 1910 section a man in the street shouts "The King's dead!" (pp. 159, 191). At the end of the 1911 section, "Darkness reigned" (p. 213).

⁵³ Middleton, p. 170.

As the 1913 section closes, Martin, having lied to get rid of old Crosby, turns away from her (p. 223). At the end of the 1917 section, an old tramp thrusts "a hunk of bread on which was laid a slice of cold meat or sausage" under Eleanor's nose, asking jeeringly, "Like to see what I've got for supper, Lady?" (p. 301). The 1918 section ends on a cold November day as Crosby "totters" in the streets muttering about the blob of spittle in the bath she must clean; as she walks, "The guns went on booming and the sirens wailed" (p. 305).

Then in the final section, we come to Eleanor's "And now?" which, as we have seen, is in itself an empty repetition, followed by the final sentence with its "extraordinary beauty, simplicity, and peace" of the new day, a description which contradicts the entire novel which has preceded it. Middleton, without noticing that Eleanor exactly repeats Sara here, nevertheless concludes that the novel shows us "that this cycle of lives will simply repeat itself."⁵⁴ The "peace" of the concluding statement is as incongruous to the novel as a whole as was Maggie's plum pudding to the air raid.

Moreover, as Nancy Topping Bazin has noticed, Eleanor's vision of the couple who leave the taxi and walk into a house down the street represents Eleanor's turning

⁵⁴ Middleton, p. 169.

away from the life of the novel.⁵⁵ Eleanor does not, as do Lily and Bernard, synthesize her experiences into a vision that we can call "androgynous" or that we, as readers, can share, because the vision contradicts the import of the novel as a whole. She simply looks at the taxi and exclaims, "There." For the reader, the taxi signifies nothing more than a repetition of an action in the past. It is, like the other repetitions at the party, one of what Schaefer calls "a series of echoes that have no significance beyond the fact that they refer back to the years preceding the evening of the party."⁵⁶ While Eleanor may feel that the taxicab completes something, the reader does not.

Herbert Marder, however, insists that the scene is satisfying for three reasons. First, Eleanor's "there" is an echo: a cousin had twice repeated "there" in the 1907 section when she danced for her daughters. Second,

⁵⁵ Nancy Topping Bazin, Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1932), p. 190. Bazin is interested in The Years as a reflection of Virginia Woolf's emotional instability during the 1930s. She feels that the novel was written "to show the movement towards war in the 1930s to be due to the patriarchal nature of the English . . . society" and to demonstrate "the inadequate and destructive nature of a predominantly masculine society." Bazin, p. 185.

⁵⁶ Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Three-fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), p. 181.

the scene repeats the 1880 scene in which the cab "revealed Delia's frustration." Third, the taxicab in the "Present Day" section signifies that Eleanor is "achieving her own fulfillment, symbolically casting off her spinsterhood."⁵⁷ This seems to me a strained and puzzling interpretation. Is not "there" as empty as the other echoes? And must Eleanor's spinsterhood be cast off?

Victoria Middleton makes the interesting suggestion that Virginia Woolf intentionally surprises the reader with Eleanor's "serenity of mind utterly alien to the novel," and as convincing evidence she provides a note in the diary: Virginia Woolf writes of The Years that "its failure is deliberate."⁵⁸ This idea is compelling, especially if one uses Three Guineas as a gloss. As Middleton concludes, The Years is "the product of the very conditions that Virginia Woolf said would destroy art: anxiety and confusion about the political future, the breakdown of community, and the loss of social and aesthetic decorums." Therefore, The Years "turns in on itself": it is the "anti-novel" in the Woolf canon.⁵⁹ Virginia Woolf deliberately undercuts Eleanor's moments of vision, which

⁵⁷ Herbert Marder, "Beyond the Lighthouse: The Years," Bucknell Review, 15 (1967), 68, 69.

⁵⁸ Middleton, p. 171.

⁵⁹ Middleton, p. 171.

the narrator tells us have meaning for Eleanor, but which the author undermines by narrative reversals and by the force of sterile repetition, emptying them of meaning for the novel as a whole, and hence for its reader. Finally, at the end of the "Present Day" section, Eleanor's feelings are followed by a description that is ironically incongruous with the meaningless, fragmented life of the rest of the novel.

Eleanor Pargiter has indeed been set in contrast to other rigid, narrow, and conventional characters, and her mind does seem open to new experience; it seems flexible, and possibly, in the early sections, androgynous. But unlike Bernard, whose creative energy leads him to a final effort to make unity out of the multiplicity of the other qualities of consciousness in The Waves, Eleanor at the end turns away from the scene around her, finding private satisfaction in a private symbol: her "moment of vision" is a sham. Middleton calls it a "magic trick" which Virginia Woolf deliberately lets us see through "in order to destroy the illusion" of beauty, simplicity, and peace with which she ends the novel.⁶⁰

Virginia Woolf had written of such a peaceful vision in Three Guineas. There, she makes the assertion for which The Years provides fictive support. To feel certain of

⁶⁰ Middleton, p. 169.

"a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only" and to speak of "the capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity" is now hopeless: ". . . that would be to dream."⁶¹ In Three Guineas, she insists that we must leave "the dream" and turn to "the fact," by which she means a photograph of a dictator or tyrant. The photograph, she writes, is "the picture of evil."⁶² Unfortunately, her novel The Years reflects the same condition of repression and is, in its "deliberate failure," directed towards matters that she herself considers extra-literary. The undercutting of the moment of vision serves a purpose: that purpose is didactic: The Years exceeds what she herself defines as the reach of art. "This fiction," she acknowledges in her diary in 1935, "is dangerously near propaganda."⁶³

Two years earlier, she had warned that while her novel could hold "millions of ideas . . . history, politics, feminism, art, literature," there should be "no preaching." But as it progresses, she seems to realize that she has not escaped from what Middleton calls "the burden of self-consciousness."⁶⁴ Discussing the progress of the novel

⁶¹ Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas, p. 218.

⁶² Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas, p. 219.

⁶³ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 13 April 1935, p. 236.

⁶⁴ Middleton, p. 171.

with her in 1935, Leonard Woolf found it necessary to remind her of her own stricture: "He says politics ought to be separate from art."⁶⁵ It is telling that he felt the need to make this statement. She knew that it was true, and the severe fits of depression that marked the repeated revisions of The Years surely testify to her agony. Quentin Bell writes of Leonard's doubts and disappointment upon reading some of the first galley proofs, and remembers that "Virginia's own doubts and the doubts that she divined in Leonard were enough to bring her to the verge of collapse."⁶⁶ Finally, after two periods of what Virginia Woolf herself calls "catastrophic illness,"⁶⁷ she gave the complete, corrected proofs to her husband. "If he told her the truth he had very little doubt that she would kill herself," Bell writes. And so Bell labels Leonard Woolf's response "duplicity."⁶⁸ Virginia Woolf records this moment in her diary: "Suddenly L. put down his proof and said he thought it extraordinarily good."⁶⁹ However, she simply did not believe him, try as she might to "cling to L's verdict."⁷⁰ The Years, she was convinced, was a "complete failure." The

⁶⁵ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 2 Oct. 1935, p. 247.

⁶⁶ Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972), II, 195.

⁶⁷ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 11 June 1936, p. 259.

⁶⁸ Bell, II, 196, 197.

⁶⁹ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 3 Nov. 1936, p. 262.

⁷⁰ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 9 Nov. 1936, p. 262.

supposedly climactic scenes in which Eleanor perceives a pattern, talks with Nicholas, and faces the future saying "And now?" are dismissed in the diary as "feeble twaddle" and "twilight gossip."⁷¹

It is interesting that those scholars seeking sociological and other extra-literary implications do not share in this dismissal. They are involved with the "little hoard of ideas" which Virginia Woolf sadly calls the residue of her years of work on the novel.⁷² But for those concerned with fiction as fiction and with Virginia Woolf as artist, she is as always her own best critic: In 1940, thinking of The Years, she spoke of it as "that misery."⁷³

Between the Acts: "Scraps, Orts, and Fragments"

The Years, like Mrs. Dalloway and Night and Day, suffers from the burden of its social criticism. Between the Acts (1941), like The Waves and To the Lighthouse, was intended to be a more balanced work. Now, the general sense of disorientation and fragmentation of The Years is compressed into Virginia Woolf's shortest novel. The action takes place at Pointz Hall, an old country house, beginning on a June night in 1939 and ending after a village

⁷¹ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 16 March 1936, p. 257; 16 Jan. 1936, p. 255.

⁷² Virginia Woolf, AWD, 31 Dec. 1936, p. 264.

⁷³ Virginia Woolf, AWD, 23 Nov. 1940, p. 345.

pageant the next day. The pageant itself reminds us of Orlando. With echoes of lines from Shakespeare, Byron, Shelley, and Tennyson, it traces the history of England in three tableaux suggesting the Elizabethan, Augustan, and Victorian ages, and ends with an epilogue which suggests the present day. The ordered, formalized structure of the pageant is counterpointed with the often disordered, fragmented, and lyrical thoughts and conversations of the spectators: that is, of the human drama that takes place "between the acts" of the pageant itself.

But whereas in The Years, a central character experienced moments of vision which were, to her, significant, and which the author deliberately undermined, in Between the Acts no single character experiences a sense of what Virginia Woolf feels the artist must convey, the moment in which one thing seems to melt into another, in which "separate fragments" cohere in "one harmonious whole."⁷⁴ Jean Guiguet writes that in Between the Acts "nothing is stressed, nothing is probed. . . . Half a dozen characters catch our attention in turn without holding it." These characters, Guiguet complains, are "incomplete, without solidity. These are faces glimpsed for a few hours, and they do not live beyond this brief encounter." The book suffers, he continues, from a "shattered . . .

⁷⁴ Virginia Woolf, "A Letter to a Young Poet," Collected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967), II, 241.

centre of reference." Each of the characters is "merely sketched in, too lightly to constitute the essential interest of the book."⁷⁵

Moreover, the novel is marked by fractured and trivial conversations, repetitions of meaningless phrases, and frequent ellipses. This vacuous fragmentation has called forth mixed critical reactions. F. R. Leavis writes that except for the name on its cover, the novel's "extraordinary vacancy and pointlessness, the apparent absence of concern for any appearance or grasp or point" would make it unworthy of critical analysis.⁷⁶ W. H. Mellers finds in it "extreme vacuousness," with characters "completely lacking in interest and vitality (even of a negative order)."⁷⁷ Louis Kronenberger calls it "by all means her weakest" novel and writes that it "represents only another step in her steady creative decline. . . . It is merely from start to finish an evasion of the problems it raises. It introduces us to people . . . and, instead of exploring them, makes us sit with them while they watch a pageant. . . . Even an ironic intention of showing that the real people are as dead and done for as the stage

⁷⁵ Guiguet, pp. 323, 328.

⁷⁶ F. R. Leavis, "After To the Lighthouse," Scrutiny, 10 (1942), 295-298.

⁷⁷ W. H. Mellers, "Virginia Woolf: The Last Phase," Kenyon Review, 4 (1942), 386.

puppets cannot justify . . . dabbling in human beings. . . . The book ends with two of the real people about to confront each other: it should, of course, have begun there."⁷⁸ Melvin Friedman writes that "a unifying principle is nowhere to be found" in Between the Acts; he finds only "purple patches which fail to conform to the intended structure of her book."⁷⁹

On the other hand, Ann Yanko Wilkinson and Marilyn Zorn, in separate studies, insist that form and statement in Between the Acts are identical, supporting their assertion in their analyses of the pageant. While neither of these critics is concerned with Virginia Woolf's search for an androgynous ideal, both deal with the sense of communal vision shared by the characters at the climax of the pageant. There is, this novel suggests, no androgynous balance in the nature of any single individual, and hence no moment of vision for any one character. A brief examination of several of the characters will support this assertion. But the characters will indeed be connected, not as actors in the formalized play, but as participants in real human drama. The moment of vision will be shared by all, during the pageant, which, like Lily Briscoe's

⁷⁸ Louis Kronenberger, "Virginia Woolf's Last Novel," The Nation, Oct. 11, 1941, p. 344.

⁷⁹ Melvin Friedman, Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955), p. 208.

painting, brings together and unifies. As Wilkinson summarizes, "So the drama becomes part of life; and life enters the drama. Art and society become complementary; the orderly and the chaotic, the permanent and the mutable."⁸⁰

We must first examine the individual characters in order to understand their fragmentation, their incompleteness, the "manyness," as James Hafley distinguishes it,⁸¹ which ultimately comprises the oneness of the communal moment of vision experienced during the pageant. Several characters clearly represent the potential for what James Naremore calls "some kind of androgynous synthesis,"⁸² but none ever achieves it individually. In every case, the potential for androgynous balance goes unrealized. Isa Giles, for example, is clearly one of Virginia Woolf's creative, intuitive, poetic, sensitive, "feminine" characters. She is a poetess and a dreamer, writing her verses in secret, hiding them in an account book so that her husband Giles will not suspect.⁸³ Isa wanders through

⁸⁰ Ann Yanko Wilkinson, "A Principle of Unity in Between the Acts," Criticism, 8 (1966), p. 59.

⁸¹ Hafley, p. 155.

⁸² James Naremore, The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), p. 235.

⁸³ Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1941), pp. 15, 50. All other references to the novel in this chapter will be found in parentheses at the end of each quotation.

the pages of the novel, reciting silently or aloud snatches of her own verse as well as allusions to Spenser and to nursery rhymes. She is aimless, totally lacking in direction. She thinks of herself as the last donkey in a desert caravan (pp. 155, 176); she seems paranoid at the thought of being left behind: "I grieving stay. Alone I linger, I pluck the bitter herb by the ruined wall . . ." (p. 112).

Isa feels herself "entangled" by "her husband, the stockbroker" (p. 5), whom she now finds disappointingly conventional: "Giles now wore the black coat and white tie of the professional classes, which needed . . . patent leather pumps. 'Our representative, our spokesman,' she sneered" (p. 215). Several times during the day, she turns in her thoughts from her husband to the farmer Haines, whom she vaguely desires. She is also drawn to the artistic and effete sensibility of William Dodge, a homosexual. Alice van Buren Kelley, who perhaps overemphasizes Isa's visionary qualities, goes so far as to suggest that Dodge serves as Isa's "double" because both "live in a world divorced from the body."⁸⁴ But Isa, however "too lightly" Virginia Woolf may have sketched her, is surely not bodiless: her lust for Haines is plainly described; and at the end of the novel, when she faces her husband alone

⁸⁴ Kelley, p. 238.

for the first time that day, the imagery is clearly sexual (p. 219).

Giles Oliver is one of Virginia Woolf's men of action, with something "fierce, untamed" in his expression (p. 47). But in the face of the impending war, he feels impatient and helpless, feels himself "manacled to a rock . . . and forced passively to behold indescribable horror" (p. 60). To vent his frustration, Giles kicks stones along the road and crushes with his shoe a snake swallowing a toad. As James Hafley points out, when Giles does act, the action "moves away from consciousness and creative perception to material action, in a path opposite to that of vital impetus."⁸⁵

The other couple in the masculine-feminine dialectic of the book are Giles's father, old Bart Oliver, and his widowed sister, Lucy Swithin. Virginia Woolf only slightly dramatizes the reason/intuition polarization which these two delineate: instead, she states it flatly. Bartholomew represents all that is fact-bound, precise, and rational. "He would carry the torch of reason till it went out in the darkness of the cave." But as for Lucy, "For herself, every morning, kneeling, she protected her vision" (pp. 205-06). Bart looks "sardonically" at his sister and muses, "She was thinking, he supposed, God

⁸⁵ Hafley, p. 152.

is peace. God is love. For she belonged to the unifiers; he to the separatists" (p. 118). He reminds us of Mr. Ramsay when Lucy suggests, fingering her crucifix, that "we can only pray" for fine weather for the pageant, and Bart snorts, "And provide umbrellas" (p. 23). When Isa thinks of the sea and recalls Lucy's typical exaggeration about its distance from Pointz Hall, she asks Bart, "Are we really . . . a hundred miles from the sea?" Her father-in-law replies, "'Thirty-five only'. . . as if he had whipped a tape measure from his pocket and measured it exactly" (p. 29). During the pageant, Bart's heartiest applause is for eighteenth-century Reason (p. 123). Lucy reminds Bart of Swinburne's swallow, who can forget cruel realities, while he himself cannot share in this imaginative vision (p. 116).

Lucy Swithin, perching on her chair, is likened by the narrator to one of the swallows which, Lucy thinks, come to her barn every year from Africa (p. 116). She takes solace from the sense of pattern and cycle which Isa, feeling the repetitions empty, calls "entrapment." The book opens and closes with Lucy's reading of her favorite book, an outline of history, which enables her to see existence as an unbroken pattern (pp. 8, 218). During the pageant, she thinks, "The Victorians . . . I don't believe . . . that there ever were such people. Only you and me and William dressed differently" (pp. 174-75).

Her imaginative flights are called "one-making." She thinks, "Sheep, cows, grass, trees, ourselves--all are one." She beams "seraphically" at the vane on the distant church steeple and decides, ". . . we reach the conclusion that all is harmony, could we hear it. And we shall"

(p. 175). Lucy's imagination allows her to "increase the bounds of the moment by flights into past or future; or sidelong down corridors and alleys . . ." (p. 9).

Making sandwiches, she thinks about stale bread, and skips in her associations from yeast to alcohol, then to fermentation and inebriation, winding up lying "under purple lamps in a vineyard in Italy, as she had done often" (p. 34).

Unlike her brother, Lucy Swithin intuitively William Dodge's discomfort when others guess at his homosexuality, and gives him a tour of the house which seems to "heal" his wounds (p. 73). Her reaction to the pageant is also totally different from her brother's: Lucy experiences the play imaginatively, telling the dramatist, Miss LaTrobe, that she has made her, Lucy, feel that she could have played Cleopatra (p. 152).

But however important Lucy may seem as a representative of the intuitive and visionary qualities which Virginia Woolf ascribed to the "feminine" side of the brain,⁸⁶ it cannot be denied that she is a slightly

⁸⁶ See especially Kelley, who praises Lucy's resistance to "any threat to her vision" and her

ridiculous figure. The narrator says that Lucy often seemed to have "no body," to be "up in the clouds, like an air ball," her mind touching the ground only "now and then with a shock of surprise" (p. 166). Words that seem to Lucy "symbolical" are often merely clichés, as in a scene in the house with Dodge, when Lucy thinks about the children's nursery as the "cradle of the race" (p. 71).

Moreover, there is the question of her religion. Her optimistic sense of an unending pattern is predicated upon her faith; she often "caresses her cross" or "fingers her crucifix" or looks toward the church steeple during her musings (pp. 175, 204, 23). James Naremore calls her "religiosity" both "amusing" and "genteel," and feels that her viewpoint is undercut.⁸⁷ Naremore sees that Bart is hardly an unsympathetic character when he snorts at Lucy's crucifix and realizes that her religion makes her "imperceptive": Lucy assumes that they "ought" to thank Miss LaTrobe for the pageant, but Bart, the realist, knows that Miss LaTrobe had been "excruciated by the Rector's interpretation, by the maulings and manglings of the actors . . . 'She don't want our thanks, Lucy,' he

religion as being "anything but passive," and Margaret Church, who makes "S-within" from the name "Swithin," indicating to Church that "Mrs. Woolf saw her as a person whose inner recognition of reality was paramount." Kelley, pp. 229-30. Margaret Church, Time and Reality: Studies in Contemporary Fiction (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 72.

⁸⁷ Naremore, p. 238.

said gruffly. What she wanted . . . was darkness in the mud; a whiskey and soda at the pub . . ." (p. 203).

And he is right. Miss LaTrobe, the playwright, feels that her creation is a failure. Unlike Lily Briscoe, who, although fatigued, puts down her brush with a sense of completion, and unlike Bernard, whose creative energy finally triumphs, Miss LaTrobe has created a pageant which nets little, in the end, except the need for a drink. It is true that something fleeting seems to rise up in her as she settles into the pub, but because she had begun to imagine, when she left the site of this year's pageant, another play similar to the present failure (p. 210), the reader is left in justifiable doubt about the value or meaning of her art. Her pageant is long and clumsy, and at times, it seems to be inflicted upon the audience, as if to punish them for casting Miss LaTrobe, a lesbian, as an outsider. She thinks that everyone else is "swathed in conventions" and "couldn't see, as she could, that a dish cloth wound round a head in the open looked much richer than real silk" (p. 64). Outraged that she has had to shorten the original play, she rages against the audience: "Curse! Blast! Damn 'em!" (p. 94). When, for the fifth time, the words of the villagers are swept away by the wind, Miss LaTrobe decides that "this is death" (p. 140). Critics seem not to have noticed that between each of the acts of the pageant itself, Miss LaTrobe

thinks bitterly and swears vehemently about the failure of her play: "It was a failure, another damned failure! As usual" (pp. 93, 140, 180).

Before Miss LaTrobe leaves the grounds of Pointz Hall for the bar, starlings attack the tree behind which she has hidden during the performance, ironically contradicting her earlier feeling that nature, during awkward moments, had taken "her part" in the form of a brief shower and the mooing of cows (pp. 180, 181).

Her pageant seems intended to delineate a sense of historical continuity, and to convey, as the Rev. Mr. Streatfield afterwards asserts, that "we are members of one another. Each is part of the whole. . . . We act different parts; but are the same" (p. 192).⁸⁸ Each of the

⁸⁸ Streatfield's speech is drowned out by the sound of a formation of airplanes overhead. This interruption, scattered conversations peppered with references to the oncoming war, and Giles Oliver's troubled musings about the situation in Europe are examined by critics interested in the 1939 setting of Between the Acts. Warren Beck, for example, insists that "in substance and intention . . . it is fundamentally historical and sociological, representing the English between the acts of appeasement and war." Reminding us that Virginia Woolf wrote the book "with the bombs already falling on England," Beck finds that Between the Acts "brings England's case up to date" in its disclosure of the "emergent problems of the modern individual's fate in terms penetrating, humane, and therefore implicative against totalitarianism's harsh impersonality." Warren Beck, "For Virginia Woolf," in Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press), pp. 245, 253. For Virginia Woolf, as Jean Guiguet suggests, the interest of the book seems to lie elsewhere, in its mixture of genres--novel, poems, and play. Guiguet, p. 328. In her diary, she calls it "an interesting attempt in a new method . . . a richer pat, certainly, a fresher than that misery The Years." Virginia Woolf, AWD, 23 Nov. 1940, p. 345.

"acts" of the pageant is, as James Naremore points out, "the same play about love between the sexes."⁸⁹ The Elizabethan drama, parodying Shakespeare, involves "a false duke; and a Princess disguised as a boy . . . and Ferdinando and Carinthia--that's the Duke's daughter, only she's been lost in a cave . . . And they marry" (p. 88). Isa Giles realizes that although some of the play's external actions may differ, "there were only two emotions: love; and hate. There was no need to puzzle out the plot" (p. 90). The pageant supports her thought: the eighteenth-century play, parodying Restoration comedy, is a comedy of mistaken identities, but finally Flavinda wins her Valentine, and Lady Harraden and Sir Spaniel Lilyliver, two aged schemers, are exposed in their venality. Emphasizing that this age is similar to those that preceded it, the chorus chants, "The earth is always the same, summer and winter and spring; and spring and winter again; ploughing and sowing, eating and growing . . ." (p. 25).

The Victorian act also involves lovers, but this time they are properly married, and their family prays together and sings "Rule Britannia." The Elizabethan scene was presided over by the Queen; the Augustan, by the figure of Reason. Now, Constable Budge oversees the nineteenth-century vignette. The Constable equates his job,

⁸⁹ Naremore, p. 233.

protecting and directing "the purity and security of all 'Er Majesty's minions," with the universal imposition of Victorian standards ("purity . . . prosperity and respectability"). Those who fail to conform must fester in prisons and mines (pp. 162-63).

The obvious hypocrisy of the Victorian scene causes discomfort to some members of the audience, but not to the degree endured by everyone in the final scene which is called "Present Time." Here, for ten minutes, nothing at all happens. Miss LaTrobe had "wanted to expose them, as it were, to douche them, with present-time reality." But members of the audience simply fidget and irritably consult their programs. "Something was going wrong with the experiment. 'Reality too strong,' she muttered. 'Curse 'em!'" (pp. 179-80). Then the players hold up mirrors in which members of the audience see themselves. ". . . ourselves. So that was her little game! To show us up, as we are, here and how [sic] The mirror bearers squatted; malicious; observant; expectant; expository" (p. 186).

Marilyn Zorn feels that at this point, Virginia Woolf is saying through Miss LaTrobe and her pageant that "recognition can lead to reconciliation" if people will surrender the roles they play and relate to each other as selfless, honest, and whole human beings.⁹⁰ We have seen

⁹⁰ Marilyn Zorn, "The Pageant in Between the Acts," Modern Fiction Studies, 2 (1956), 34-35.

that the characters are incomplete and fragmented; Miss LaTrobe calls them "scraps and fragments" in her thoughts (p. 122), and after the display of mirrors, the gramophone expresses her idea: "Before we part, ladies and gentlemen, before we go . . . let's talk in words of one syllable, without larding, stuffing, or cant. . . And calmly consider ourselves. Ourselves. . . . Liars most of us. Thieves too Consider the gun slayers, bomb droppers here or there. They do openly what we do slyly. . . ." The voice goes on to call the people "scraps, orts, and fragments," but then, noting "our kindness to the cat" and "the resolute refusal of some pimply dirty little scrub in sandals to sell his soul," the voice announces that there is now something to be "affirmed" (pp. 187, 188). This brings the audience together for the climactic, communal moment of vision. Things come together:

Like quicksilver sliding, filings magnetized, the distracted united. The tune began; the first note meant a second; the second a third. Then down beneath a force was born in opposition; then another. On different levels they diverged. On different levels ourselves went forward; flower gathering some of the surface; others descending to wrestle with the meaning; but all comprehending; all enlisted. The whole population of the mind's immeasurable profundity came flocking; from the unprotected, the unskinned; and dawn rose; and azure; from chaos and cacophony measure; but not the melody of surface sound alone controlled it; but also the warring battle-plumed warriors straining asunder: To part? No. Compelled from the ends of the horizon; recalled from the edge of appalling crevasses; they crashed; solved; united. And some relaxed their fingers; and other [sic] uncrossed their legs. (p. 189)

But this center does not hold. Between the Acts does not end with this harmonious moment shared by the characters. The studies by Zorn, who writes that this moment "must be read . . . as a making of the moment eternal,"⁹¹ and by Wilkinson, who claims for this last "act" of the pageant a principle of "unification by which Art, Life, and History are created"⁹² overlook the pages describing the "dispersion" of the audience, the disillusionment of Miss LaTrobe, and finally, the last scene of the novel, in which Isa and Giles Oliver "must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night" (p. 219). There is a further echo of barbarism and savagery in the paragraph preceding the novel's conclusion, "Then the curtain rose. They spoke" (p. 219). Scholars stressing the significance of Miss LaTrobe's creation, or the vision of Lucy Swithin, usually ignore these lines: "The house had lost its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks" (p. 219). Not only is the moment of vision, in which Zorn finds that the artist "hold[s] up the mirror of Reality and catch[es] there the human soul, creating . . . Harmony"⁹³ fleeting, but it is threatened by hostile and predatory forces.

⁹¹ Zorn, p. 33.

⁹² Wilkinson, p. 63.

⁹³ Zorn, p. 35.

The fragmented, disoriented, unbalanced nature of the characters as well as of the substance of this novel suggests Virginia Woolf's doubt that the androgynous, unified, harmonious mind even exists. And the thirty-page section following the moment of "profundity" and unity at the pageant conveys her suspicion that even if many minds, although fragmented or single-sexed, can come together, the resulting moment will be of no lasting significance for anyone.

In The Years, Virginia Woolf gave Eleanor Pargiter moments of vision and deliberately undercut them; now, in Between the Acts, she writes only one paragraph in which the audience experiences a sense of harmony. The rest of the novel seems clearly intended to invalidate that moment. Hence the form of the drama, with its "scraps, orts and fragments" of dialogue, thought, plot, and character, and without a final act, does indeed become the form as well as the content of the novel as a whole. Its message, as Naremore explains, is "embedded in the very form of the work."⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Naremore, p. 236.

CONCLUSION

Many critics, studying the events surrounding Between the Acts--the war and Virginia Woolf's suicide in 1941--have concentrated upon the "darkness" of her last novels. Josephine Schaefer calls the last section of her study "The Vision Falters";¹ Jean Guiguet finds in Between the Acts a "deep disillusionment, akin to despair," and therefore calls it a "categorical" expression of her pessimism.² Nancy Topping Bazin relates the pessimism of The Years and Between the Acts directly to the suicide, finding in a quotation from the diary ("We live without a future") Virginia Woolf's "despair that the androgynous whole would ever be established on earth," and hence the motive for her suicide.³

Ending a study of Virginia Woolf on such a note would seem to present three problems. In the first place,

¹ Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Three-fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), pp. 167-99.

² Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), pp. 326-27.

³ Nancy Topping Bazin, Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1973), p. 222.

Between the Acts is unfinished. James Hafley finds it "not quite finished in comparison with the earlier novels,"⁴ and James Naremore calls it "technically at least, an unfinished work, since Virginia Woolf never made whatever final revisions she might have considered necessary."⁵ Ralph Freedman mentions the novel only fleetingly with the phrase "had she lived to complete it."⁶ Louis Kronenberger concedes that "the book had not been finally revised," and James Southall Wilson refers to it as "the unrevised manuscript of a completed short novel."⁷ We have seen what extensive and laborious revisions the other novels received; therefore, the speculation that there might again have been major deletions and additions seems reasonable.

Second, the Bell biography, Leonard Woolf's autobiography, and Virginia Woolf's notes clearly indicate that the state of her health, and not the state of the world, was the cause of her suicide. It seems rash to hypothesize otherwise.

⁴ James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 160.

⁵ James Naremore, The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), p. 219.

⁶ Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 268.

⁷ Louis Kronenberger, "Virginia Woolf's Last Novel," Nation, 11 Oct. 1941, p. 344; James Southall Wilson, "Time and Virginia Woolf," Virginia Quarterly Review, 18 (1942), 273.

Third, and most important, such assessments overlook the novels as literature. In a simple and moving plea, James Hafley, speaking about Virginia Woolf at the MLA convention in 1976, states, "All that I do wish and propose here is to insist that her creative art--whatever may be said of the non-fiction and of the social or other interests of the artist herself--is particularly unsuited to serving any cause whatsoever save that of the primacy of the imagination."⁸

Hafley goes on to analyze Virginia Woolf's "version of things" as "supremely satisfying because expressive of its creator's ideal and at the same time subject to change. . . . Solution by conjecture, then dissolution by comparison, then resolution by fresh conjecture: that is the rhythm of lived life in this art." Hafley calls for a close examination of the essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in which "vision through character is . . . the vision of the seer." Virginia Woolf says in that essay that writing "involves referring each word to my vision,"⁹ much as she had spoken of the rapture of creation in "A

⁸ James Hafley, "Virginia Woolf and the Art of Lying," English Section 175, MLA Convention, New York, 27 Dec. 1976. Except as noted, the following quotations and paraphrases are from this paper.

⁹ Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Collected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1967), I, 322.

Sketch of the Past." Hafley emphasizes her familiar insistence that a novel should be complete in itself, that "everything was inside the book, nothing outside,"¹⁰ and argues that the "end" of a Virginia Woolf novel is one of instruction only if this is "instruction in the act of creation itself." The experience of the novel is "momentary: beauty and truth are one only in art--or at least only with certainty in art," and then "the moment passes; but the moment has satisfied and another will satisfy later on in change. Art is the record of the vision, the fixing of the moment. . . ."

Virginia Woolf's art, then, conveys to the reader such "moments of vision"; for the reader who experiences them, these moments "satisfy." Hafley avoids the ungraceful term "experiential," but the word applies, as the whole of her fiction invites the reader to experience and to remember these moments of vision. To suggest that Virginia Woolf herself sought the balance and wholeness of mind she called "androgynous" and to find that she has in her fiction created certain androgynous minds through which she conveys the experience of the moment of vision is simply to suggest one approach to her work, which may appeal to one sort of reader. It is not to deny to other

¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," p. 327.

readers, as Hafley explains, "whatever they wish from Virginia Woolf's art." He offers as an example the critical debate over whether the endings of the novels "augur for hope or despair about the future." She herself, who wrote that "nothing was simply one thing," would probably agree.

But Hafley cannot resist concluding that if we know precisely what the mark on the wall is, i.e., a snail, then the mark has been properly defined and "the remarks on the mark are ended." But unknown, the snail will "nourish that imagined, imaginary fabric that is the lie, the art, the ideal reality of life itself." It is the composite memory of the experiences of the moments of vision that comprises for this reader the experience of Virginia Woolf's art; hence it can never be precisely "known" or clearly "defined" except as experienced, and therefore, constantly "nourishing" and enriching.

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