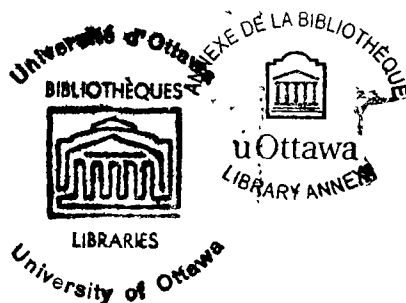


MICROCOSM AND MACROCOSM IN
THE NOVELS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

by

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fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts.



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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Marc Jean Thérien was born May 28, 1944, in Ottawa, Ontario. He received the Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, in 1965.

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INTRODUCTION

Virginia Woolf, in an essay entitled "Modern Fiction", analyses the deficiencies of fiction at the turn of the century. She argues that the older forms of fiction no longer are true to life. The writer's effort to provide a "likeness to life" is effort misplaced. It is an effort which ultimately will blot out "the light of his conception".

The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love, interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour. The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn. But sometimes, more and more often as time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion, as the pages fill themselves in the customary way.¹ Is life like this? Must novels be like this?

Mrs. Woolf, however, does not content herself with the mere condemnation of contemporary techniques but formulates in this now famous critical work some positive means by which life might be described. She calls upon the writer to examine "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day". The mind receives "a myriad impressions," some important, others not.

¹Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader: First Series (New York: Harvest Books, 1953), pp. 153-154.

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She goes on to comment that if a writer were free, he would not be constrained to create a plot or a "love interest"; he would not be forced to give to life an order it did not usually have.

Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little² other than custom would have us believe it.

The essence of her argument is that novelists such as Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy are, to use her term, "materialists". Their work, unlike that of Joyce, describes and centers on the external. The modern novelist would do well to explore the inner realm, the subject. The chief difficulty in doing this is that personality is never a fixed thing. It is always evolving, becoming something else. That interior tension upon which man's permanence is founded is difficult to seize upon and more difficult to explain. Man cannot be described effectively as an object for he is not opaque, fulfilled by his determinations. The being of an object pertains wholly

² Ibid. p. 154.

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to the material cosmos. It exists blindly beside other objects. The being of man, on the other hand, is lucid. It not only receives and contains light but sheds it. That is to say, man has not only an awareness of things, but he is aware of his awareness. His being does not exhaust itself in the simple act of existing. Man sees himself being; he knows he is; he affirms his existence. And to affirm one's being is to possess it. Each person naturally considers himself a separate fragment of the whole universe. Other beings gravitate about him. They are equally independent but somehow fit into a vast cosmic system. In the final analysis then, there is but one type of reality: the reality which objects, and man's own being among them, present to and for a consciousness. It is "this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit".

Consciousness appears to Virginia Woolf as a dynamic and spontaneous medium without any distinct borders. It is unlike matter which is the prisoner of space and time. To render consciousness, strictly speaking, is an impossible task for it does not exist with any fixity; it is constantly being created. Though consciousness cannot be formulated completely verbally, it can be described in its particular duration, symbolically in words.

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The eye is the most acute sense for Virginia Woolf in rendering consciousness, though hearing, taste, smell and touch play an important part also. The sense of smell for example, is best exemplified in Flush, Elizabeth Browning's cocker-spaniel of whom Virginia Woolf claims to be the biographer. There is also in Mrs. Woolf's major characters a sixth sense which can best be described as a quasi-mystical capacity for intuiting the consciousness of others. Ultimately, it is this capacity for intuition in her characters that permits, it will be seen, the effecting of the "moment". Mrs. Woolf, in adopting the interior monologue as a device, did not abandon the omniscient point of view technique for she sought to direct the stream of consciousness toward the build up in her novels of a "moment". There must be a degree of universalization so that the different threads of narrative intersecting and connecting throughout the novel merge into a coincidence in the absolute sense, a focus, a resolution of the parts into an intensity, into that crystallization of existence wherein is blended past and present, exterior and interior, which is the "moment". Mrs. Woolf intuits her characters in their apprehensions; she throws light upon them, renders them transparent, and casts the shadow which is none other than the tenebrous regions of their

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directed consciousness. The reality of consciousness is, for her characters, partly ecstatic, that is, enraptured with external phenomena, partly escape from Self, and it is also partly indwelling, penetration of Self. The introspective mind's encounter with reality is characterized by flux. But flux is not for Virginia Woolf a Bergsonian "melodic continuity" which consists in the substitution of durational values of motion and change for an ever-changing, ever-developing force apprehended intuitively. It is rather the action of reality fusing into a mental state, that is, the grouping of isolated moments, some blending into the others haphazardly as imagination, sustained by the emotive tension that each connection establishes between consciousness and reality, directs them.

The two chief problems then, that confronted Virginia Woolf at the outset of her career, were critical ones: the nature of consciousness and the relationship between consciousness and reality. The answers she provided to these questions explain the values and shortcomings in her works.

Virginia Woolf is rarely, as a novelist, a mere puppeteer. The organization of her novels permits the reader to see through the characters, to know them as people, not merely as façades. But also the reader sees

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things as the heroes or heroines see them and furthermore as minor characters see them. And lastly, the reader sees the protagonist as the minor characters see him, and as he sees himself.

Consciousness is, it has been suggested, a fugitive becoming, dynamic and englobing; it is an "unknown and uncircumscribed spirit". The fact of consciousness, the microcosm, raises the problem of its relation to that which is exterior to it, the macrocosm, and at the same time, raises the problem of its relation with itself. Mrs. Woolf, in considering the fact of consciousness, explores the apparently unresolvable paradox involved in a person's need to retain his individuality while at the same time seeking some real communion with others. The traumatic experiences of love and death resolve momentarily the problem of identity and communion by giving an awareness of man's kinship with his fellow man. But this communion is largely negative for it is a communion isolated within. It furthers also man's extraneousness, his loneliness. The dead, however, are historically active in determining the present.

The macrocosm, the external world, is not merely the surface, the present, but its depth, the past which presses upon and gives impulsion to the present. It may

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be affirmed with some epistemological certainty that there is a fundamental and almost classic dualism in the relation of consciousness to reality in the novels of Virginia Woolf. The world is distinct, an entity by itself, and consciousness projects a symbolic image of it. Self is at once subject and object. All psychological life is seen as a flux that envelops being from beginning to end, "a luminous halo". The rendered experiences of reality are necessarily affective in nature since they are usually organized by a character's consciousness.

Time for Virginia Woolf is essentially qualitative not quantitative. All measuring depends, however, on the existence of objects in relation the one to the other. Time necessarily then is a comparison between interior and exterior. Mrs. Woolf marks the solitude of the object as well as the subject in time. Their occasional meeting is the "moment". The "moment" marks the triumphant and illuminating coincidence of microcosm and macrocosm. It is formed by the successions and simultaneities of mind-time and chronological time reaching, through a concatenation of events, an intensity which, given the presence of some catalyst such as the impulsion of love or death upon life, of history upon the living, permits a transmutation to take place so that a whole whose borders are undefined is

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formed. This "moment" affords a total vision, an instant and total grasping of the complexities of life through an intuitive perception of its unity. The reader thus experiences the "moment" at the same time as the characters.

The "moment" then, is a concept similar to Joyce's "epiphany". But the "moment" is more than the revelation to reader or character or both of a new aspect of themselves, for it is a crystallization of existence; it is a formal vision. Both reader and character are meant by it to come to an understanding of what life is.

CHAPTER I

LOVE AND DEATH IN THE EARLY NOVELS

This chapter will study Virginia Woolf's three first novels, The Voyage Out, Night and Day, and Jacob's Room, to show how the "moment" is achieved. The breakdown of love as a means of coming to an understanding of life, and the gradual emergence of the theme of death as an explanation of the sense life holds, will be discussed. It will be seen that while The Voyage Out affirms the transitoriness of love, it illustrates the possibility of death's having some value for the living. Night and Day will be examined in order to prove the essential fragility of love as a solution to the loneliness of the self. Jacob's Room will be examined in order to show how the death of the hero serves to mark a more intense perception of the meaning of life.

It will be seen that the narrative events and the symbols in the three novels are organized in terms of the expression of a "moment" wherein the meaning of life is grasped. In the study of these novels, it will be seen that the growing complexity in thematic development is paralleled by a more elaborate structure.

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The Voyage Out, published in 1915, was Virginia Woolf's first novel. It is somewhat clumsily constructed. There is instability in character description. The minor characters "oscillate from background to foreground", Daiches suggests.¹ However, this is not always a fault in technique since their prominence or lack of it serves most of the time to mark Rachel's attitude towards them. The difficulty with this technique is that it appears somewhat arbitrary, somewhat disjunctive, to the reader.

The narrative method is conventional:

Externally the structure of this novel is completely conventional; it is narrated from the omniscient point of view that all the novels have in common; it contains description, narration, conventional thought transcription, and--predominantly--²conversation between two or more characters.

The novel divides readily enough into four parts, in chronological progression, which serve to mark the different stages of Rachel's induction to experience. The title, then, is symbolic and serves to describe Rachel's removal from the secluded life she led with her aunts at Richmond, and her progressive acquaintance with life till

¹David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (Norfolk: New Direction Books, 1963), p. 11.

²James Hafley, The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1963), p. 14.

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her untimely death, which is seen to be the final unifying, if incomprehensible experience, that binds personality to the external world.

The first of the four parts, occupying ninety-eight pages and six chapters, deals with Rachel's voyage from London to Santa Marina, a resort situated rather vaguely near the Amazon river. Rachel undertakes this voyage with her aunt, Helen Ambrose; and her uncle Ridley, who is forever busy editing Pindar; her father, Willoughby Vinrace; and an assortment of minor characters, whose function is choric.³

Rachel's aunt, Helen, serves thematically in the novel as a living illustration of one who has come to terms with experience, with life. Since water, in the novel, is used constantly as a symbol for life, time, and reality,⁴ Helen is associated with their ship, the Euphrosyne, sailing over the waters. It is perhaps no coincidence that the name of the ship is that of one of the Graces, Joy. The identification is made obvious in this passage:

The sea might give her death or some unexampled joy, and none would know of it. She was a bride going forth to her husband, a virgin

³Dorothy Bevis, "The Waves: A Fusion of Symbol, Style and Thought in Virginia Woolf," Twentieth Century Literature, (April, 1956), 8.

⁴Hafley, loc. cit.

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unknown to men; in her vigour and purity she might be likened to all beautiful things, for as a ship she had a life of her own.⁵

The main occurrence of this first part of the novel is the coming aboard of Mr. and Mrs. Dalloway, a politician temporarily out of Parliament and his somewhat spiritless, but kind, wife. They remain aboard till the next port of call. Their embarking serves two functions. The first is to provide new interest in a plot development that is beginning to fall flat, and the second, more important function, was to mark Rachel's first acquaintance with the world, with passion. Mr. Dalloway, coming upon Rachel alone on deck, attempts to make love to her. Rachel is amazed. Because of the sheltered life she had led, she does not understand his action. Yet she senses something important has taken place:

She became peaceful too, at the same time possessed with a strange exultation. Life seemed to hold infinite possibilities she had never guessed at. She leant upon the rail and looked over the troubled grey waters, where the sunlight was fitfully scattered upon the crests of the waves, until she was cold and absolutely calm again. Nevertheless something wonderful had happened.⁶

⁵Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 29.

⁶Ibid., p. 85.

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In a moment of emotion she looks out to sea; once more the identification of the water with life is maintained. However, Rachel does not comprehend her relationship to life. The sea mirrors her agitation. Rachel, as a result of this experience, has gained a deeper comprehension of life: "Rachel explained that most people had hitherto been symbols; but that when they talked to one they ceased to be symbols".⁷

She has now gained the ability to grasp the complexity of the individual instead of merely identifying him with his function in life. Because she has begun to understand people for what they are, she can begin to know herself and her relationship with life, with the sea:

The vision of her own personality, of herself as a real everlasting thing, different from anything else, unmergeable, like the sea or wind, flashed into Rachel's mind, and she became⁸ profoundly excited at the thought of living.

Though the ship is a symbol for Helen and hence for all those who can journey successfully through life, Virginia Woolf is careful, at the beginning of the ninth chapter, to remind the reader of the difference between the

⁷Ibid., p. 93.

⁸Ibid., pp. 94-95.

ship and the sea for the ship is also "an emblem of the loneliness of human life".⁹

The second part of the novel has two hundred and twenty pages and twelve chapters. The events take place entirely on land. The chief focal points of the action in this part are the hotel, where many visitors are staying, and the villa, where Rachel and her aunt and uncle live. The relationship established between the hotel and the villa seems to parallel that between personality and society. Rachel remains mostly at the villa though she ventures forth on occasion to the hotel. Ridley keeps to his room in the villa and edits Pindar. Rachel too, most of the time, keeps to hers and loses herself in music. Helen comments perceptively on the nature and importance of the room to Rachel:

Rooms, she knew, became more like worlds than rooms at the age of twenty-four. Her judgment was correct, and when she shut the door Rachel entered an enchanted place, where the poets sang and things fell into their right proportions.¹⁰

The room, then, represents an escape from the impingement of the world upon personality. Helen and Rachel venture forth to the hotel occasionally. They meet there,

⁹ Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

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among other people, St. John Hirst, and Terence Hewet, with whom Rachel will fall in love. Throughout this section, the visits to the hotel become more and more frequent. They serve to illustrate Rachel's gradual acceptance of society, of life. The first notable instance of her acceptance of people is at the dancing party. At that party, unknown to herself, she is falling in love with Terence Hewet. Returning home in a state of great exhilaration, she wonders:

"What is it to be in love?" she demanded, after a long silence; each word as it came into being seemed to shove itself out into an unknown sea. Hypnotised by the wings of a butterfly, and awed by the discovery of a terrible possibility in life, she sat for some time longer.¹¹

In this passage love is identified with the sea, and hence with life.

Terence Hewet meanwhile has also unconsciously been falling in love with Rachel. Encouraged by the success of the dance, he is prompted to organize an expedition to the top of a nearby mountain for the purpose of taking in the view. All the people from the hotel take to the idea. This proposition is also accepted by Helen and Rachel. Rachel and Terence, when they reach the top of the mountain, take a walk together. Inadvertently they come

¹¹Ibid., p. 207.

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upon a couple embracing. These two have just pledged their love. Shortly thereafter, their engagement is announced. This scene prefigures directly the embrace and engagement announcement of Rachel and Terence in the next part of the novel. The setting and circumstances are very similar.

Rachel is greatly perplexed by what she has seen.

She is beginning to realize that she loves Terence:

Why did he sit so near and keep his eye on her?
Why did they not have done with this searching
and agony? Why did they not kiss each other
simply? She wished to kiss him. But all the
time she went on spinning out words.¹²

Both Rachel and Terence are distressed by their apparent indifference to each other. Each identifies happiness with the sea. "I like seeing things go on . . . I love the freedom of it -- it's like being the wind or the sea."¹³ says Rachel. Terence talks and "some of the satisfaction of which he spoke came into his face as he gazed out to sea."¹⁴

After this expedition to the top of the mountain the links between the hotel and the villa are more pronounced. Personality and society, though still distinct, are drawn together:

¹²Ibid., p. 260.

¹³Ibid., p. 261.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 262.

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By degrees there was established a kind of correspondence between the two houses, the big and the small, so that at most hours of the day one could guess what was going on in the other, and the words "the villa" and "the hotel" called up the idea of two separate systems of life.¹⁵

At the end of this part, Rachel has come to wish intensely to comprehend the world and her place in it. She is slowly building up to the "moment" which will provide her with a true vision of life.

All day long she had been tantalized and put off. She had now reached one of those eminences, the result of some crisis, from which the world is finally displayed in its true proportions. She disliked the look of it immensely For the time, her own body was the source of all the life in the world, which tried to burst forth here Thus tormented she would twist her hands together, for all things were wrong, all people stupid. . . . What were they doing, those other people in the world?¹⁶

The third part is by far the shortest. It consists of two chapters totaling thirty-two pages. It takes place mainly on water. A trip has been organized. Rachel, Terence, Helen, and several other people will go up river by boat to a native village to buy curios. If Rachel's voyage to Santa Marina symbolized her induction into experience, this second voyage "coincides with Rachel's

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 268.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 315.

voyage to an understanding of herself."¹⁷ The boat makes a short stop to permit the passengers to stretch their legs: Terence and Rachel go for a walk; they affirm their love, and kiss. But Rachel becomes aware that love offers no permanence in life:

"Terrible--terrible," she murmured after another pause, but in saying this she 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.¹⁸

Terence, however, does not share this sentiment. He has been able to reconcile his personality with the ebb and flow of life. Like Helen in the first part, he is identified with a boat, and thus exemplifies one who has been able to come to terms with experience:

In some strange way the boat became identified with himself, and just as it would have been useless for him to get up and steer the boat, so it was useless for him to struggle any longer with the irresistible force of his own feelings. He was drawn on and on away from all he knew, slipping over barriers and past landmarks into unknown waters as the boat glided over the smooth surface of the river.¹⁹

Rachel's "moment" reveals itself to be tragic. She has come to see that life and love are not reconcilable.

¹⁷ Hafley, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁸ Woolf, op. cit., p. 332.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 326.

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It is significant that the fever that causes her death is said to have been caught on her voyage up the river.

The last part of the novel consists of one hundred and three pages divided into six chapters. This last part presents Rachel's failure to come to terms with life symbolically, through her death. Rachel wants to achieve unity:

It seemed to her now that what he was saying was perfectly true, and that she wanted many more things than the love of one human being -- the sea, the sky. She turned again and looked at the distant blue, which was so smooth and serene where the sky met the sea; she could not possibly want only one human being.²⁰

But the sense of Terence's and Rachel's isolation in the world is overpowering. Viewing themselves in a mirror, they realized their separateness as they see themselves as objects:

But it chilled them to see themselves in the glass, for instead of being vast and individual they were really very small and separate, the size of the glass leaving a large space for the reflection of other things.²¹

Rachel dies. The world moves on, but all is not lost. Rachel lives in Terence's memory. She has spurred other people to a defiance of death, to a search for understanding of life. The guests at the hotel ask in turn

²⁰Ibid., p. 370.

²¹Ibid., p. 371.

"What's the good of it all?" Mrs. Flushing's reaction is typical of the spirit of defiance Rachel's death has provoked:

She hated death; she was furious, outraged, indignant with death, as if it were a living creature. She refused to relinquish her friends to death. She would not submit to dark and nothingness. She began to pace up and down, clenching her hands, and making no attempt to stop the quick tears which raced down her cheeks. She sat still at last, but she did not submit. She looked stubborn and strong when she had ceased to cry.²²

Rachel's "moment" was a negative one then. She had achieved a vision of the world which affirmed the incompatibility of love and life, but her death has had meaning. There is after all a reconciliation; there is a union through death. Terence affirms it:

So much the better -- this was death. It was nothing; it was to cease to breathe. It was happiness, it was perfect happiness. They had now what they had wanted to have, the union which had been impossible while they lived. . . . It seemed to him that their complete union and happiness filled the room with rings eddying more and more widely. He had no wish in the world left unfulfilled. They possessed what could never be taken from them.²³

²² Ibid., p. 438.

²³ Ibid., p. 431.

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Night and Day, a novel of some thirty-four chapters and five hundred pages, was published in 1919. Though it differs considerably in content from The Voyage Out, it did not introduce many significant changes in technique.

In Night and Day people and events are shown progressively with a fairly apparent logical connection between each successive happening. The movement is one along a straight line. Its main concern is the exposition of the situation between Katherine and Ralph Denham, that is to say the reconciling of different personalities into the unity of love.²⁴

This work of fiction has all the appearances of a novel of manners. The plot line is developed consistently by indirection. It seems as if Mrs. Woolf was very little preoccupied with managing an ending along linear lines. William Rodney, a young, pretentious poet, will marry Katherine Hilbery. They are, however, not decided. The engagement is successively on and off. Meanwhile Ralph Denham wavers between love for Katherine and marrying Mary Datchet, a suffragette whom he admires but does not love. All is eventually resolved by the somewhat contrived introduction of Cassandra Otway, Katherine's cousin. William Rodney falls in love with her; Katherine realizes she loves Ralph; he realizes he loves her; and poor Mary

²⁴ Dorothy M. Hoare, Some Studies in the Modern Novel (London: Chatto & Windus, 1938), p. 37.

Datchet is left with her militancy in the political realm as the only shield she has against the world.

This would be scarcely enough to fill out the novel were it not for the large place given to conversation, to an analysis of what life is.

The title of the novel is symbolic of the struggle the characters are engaged in. "For better or worse they are engaged in working out some sort of satisfactory relation between their inner and outer lives, between night and day."²⁵ The central problems are the dichotomy between illusion and reality, between society and self. Ralph Denham, for example, feels he cannot love Katherine Hilbery because he thinks he does not see her as she is, but worships her as he would like to see her. Katherine does mathematics secretly in her room because it would be thought odd for a woman to entertain such a passion. William Rodney seeks consolation and praise from Katherine who cannot give it to him. Katherine is considered to be remote and aloof by her friends, especially by Ralph, who, himself, can never speak what he feels, and retires to his room as soon as he is home to avoid contact with his family.

²⁵Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Three-fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf, (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965), p. 53.

Daiches has commented perceptively upon the disjunction of form from content in this novel:

Night and Day is not a social comedy--that is, a study of the complications in the relationships of people whose behaviour can be explained generally in terms of the standards of the class to which they belong, with a resolution of those complications prepared for in advance by a certain disposition of probabilities in the pattern of events--but rather a novel of ideas, in which the actions of the chief characters spring not from prejudice or habit but from their own speculation about the nature of reality.²⁶

Ralph Denham, the eldest son of a family reduced almost to genteel poverty, has become accustomed to hard work. He is a young and promising lawyer who publishes critical articles now and then in Mr. Hilbery's review. He does not care for his work. This attitude has led him to establish an arbitrary division in his life.

His endeavour, for many years, had been to control the spirit, and at the age of twenty-nine he thought he could pride himself upon a life rigidly divided into the hours of work and those of dreams; the two lived side by side without harming each other.²⁷

Katherine Hilbery has established this division between Self and the world also. She helps her disorganized mother write what promises to be an interminable biography of her famous grandfather, a poet. She dreams meanwhile of

²⁶Daiches, op. cit., p. 21.

²⁷Virginia Woolf, Night and Day (London: The Hogarth Press, 1960), pp.129-130.

mathematics and astronomy all the while wondering about this division, and concluding: "It is life that matters, nothing but life--the process of discovering, the everlasting and perpetual process, not the discovery itself at all."²⁸

Ralph Denham, predictably, comes to find the life he leads intolerable. As in The Voyage Out, life is compared to water. Ralph is adrift. Life is meaningless.

He took his way languidly along the river embankment, away from home rather than towards it. The world had him at its mercy. He made no pattern out of the sights he saw. He felt himself now, as he had often fancied other people, adrift on the stream, and far removed from control of it, a man with no grasp upon circumstances any longer. . . . He rose, and looked into the river, whose swift race of dun-coloured waters seemed the very spirit of futility and oblivion.²⁹

Mary Datchet, a woman of fact, blind to the "dreams" Ralph and Katherine know, is forced to alter her narrow view of reality when she becomes aware of the fact that Ralph does not love her. ". . . life was full of complexity; life was a thing one must love to the last fibre of it."³⁰ She is brought to posit the same belief as

²⁸Ibid., p.132.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 161-162, 163.

³⁰Ibid., p. 178.

Katherine, that life must be grasped in its entirety. It is not surprising therefore, that when she has accepted the loss of Ralph's love, she feels as he had felt, adrift in the stream, adrift in life," . . . her mind plunged desperately for some hold upon slippery banks."³¹

Katherine, after telling Rodney, for the first time, that she will not marry him, ponders the reasons for her saying that she would. She concludes that she was trying to crush her world of "dreams" so that she might seize life. She is brought to the realization that the forsaking of "dreams" for fact, the solution Mary Datchet and William Rodney come to, is not satisfactory.

A moment of pessimism, a sudden conviction of the undeniable prose of life, a lapse of the illusion which sustains youth midway between heaven and earth, a desperate attempt to reconcile herself with facts -- she could only recall a moment, as of waking from a dream, which now seemed to her a moment of surrender. But who could give reasons such as these for doing what she had done?³²

Ralph does not have Mary's resiliency towards reality, however, since he is more on the side of "dreams" than facts and hence less satisfied with the "illogicality of life."³³ He feels trapped by it. He doubts that people

³¹Ibid., p. 200.

³²Ibid., pp. 254-255.

³³Ibid., p. 266.

can understand each other. In the struggle of life he "was no longer certain that he would triumph."³⁴ However, despite Ralph's despair, the possibility of his coming to terms with life is greater than Mary's, for while he cannot blend fact and "dream", Self and reality, he possesses both. Mary Datchet has no "dreams" and hence her vision of life is particularly dismal. It is totally fact centered. It is only half a vision or a vision half held:

She half held a vision; the vision shaped and dwindled. . . . Her vision seemed to lay out the lines of her life until death in a way which satisfied her sense of harmony. It only needed a persistent effort of thought, stimulated in this strange way by the crowd and the noise, to climb the crest of existence and see it all laid out once and for ever. Already her suffering as an individual was left behind her. Of this process, which was to her so full of effort, which comprised infinitely swift and full passages of thought, leading from one crest to another, as she shaped her conception of life in this world, only two articulate words escaped her, muttered beneath her breath -- "Not happiness -- not happiness."³⁵

The resolution between Self and reality Ralph gropes for is more wholesome. The reality he seeks is mysteriously associated with his love for Katherine. He tells her: "I see you everywhere, in the stars, in the rivers, to me you're everything that exists; the reality of

³⁴Ibid., p. 267.

³⁵Ibid., p. 273.

everything."³⁶ The resolution is implicit in his identification, symbolically, of Katherine with the stars, that is, his "dreams", and with the water, life, just as the resolution is implicit in Katherine's passion for mathematics, facts, and astronomy, "dreams". Thus, after Ralph tries to tell Katherine what he feels for her, they both bend over the balustrade and look at the flowing river, "as obeying a common instinct."³⁷ This is perhaps symbolic of their desire to comprehend life. When a temporary breakdown in their relationship occurs, Ralph reverts to conceiving life as he had before, in terms of unfavourable water:

Looking at his watch, he seemed to look deep into the springs of human existence, and by the light of what he saw there altered his course towards the north and the midnight ... Yes, one's voyage must be made absolutely without companions through ice and black water -- towards what goal?³⁸

Unconsciously, he has considered Mary Datchet's solution. Yet the instant Katherine arrives, belatedly, for her appointment, his outlook changes. He remarks, "Here she comes like a ship in full sail"³⁹ identifying her

³⁶ Ibid., p. 313.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 315.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 347.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 348.

symbolically with a more favourable expedition than the one he first conceived. And Katherine, as if to pursue the imagery, alludes to the pleasant view of "the ruffled gold of the Thames".⁴⁰

Katherine Hilbery, who is growing more conscious of the love she bears Ralph, no longer merely affirms that "it is life that matters" but now questions the relationship of Self to society, underlying en passant the symbolic significance of the novel's title:

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?⁴¹

She sees the resolution of the inner and the outer in the acceptance of Ralph's friendship.

Now that the solution has been glimpsed, the next one hundred and fifty pages serve to effect the solution according to the premises of the plot line. Katherine's cousin, Cassandra, arrives most conveniently for a visit. Katherine sees to it that Rodney and her cousin are able to

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 348.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 358-359.

spend much time together. Meanwhile, she spends her time with Ralph. Eventually the engagement between Katherine and William Rodney is broken off. William will marry Cassandra. Ralph need only reconcile his "dreams" with reality now. Katherine has tea in Ralph's room. The "dream" and the reality have merged by her going there. Ralph, the day after, reflects:

. . . 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 glimpsed 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 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 . . .⁴²

Ralph has perceived the unity of life. In his excitement he draws "blots fringed with flames meant to represent -- perhaps the entire universe"⁴³ which he later shows to Katherine. She affirms she likes them. In turn, she confides to him her private world by showing him her

⁴²Ibid., pp. 515-516.

⁴³Ibid., p. 516.

mathematical calculations. Fact and "dreams" become one in vision. The unity they sought is achieved.

As if the forces of the world were all at work to tear them asunder they sat, clasping hands, near enough to be taken even by the malicious eye of Time himself for a united couple, an indivisible unit.⁴⁴

The inner and the outer have been resolved. Cassandra knows that the "moment" has been achieved when she notes "that life in their presence is a heightened process, illuminating not only us but a considerable stretch of the surrounding world."⁴⁵ In short, the "luminous halo" has been achieved. A symbol central to Virginia Woolf's work is introduced to describe the nature of the "moment":

It seemed to her that the immense riddle was answered; the problem had been solved; she held in her hands for a brief moment the globe which we spend our lives trying to shape, round, whole, and entire from the confusion of chaos.⁴⁶

The realization that follows hard upon this vision is that they must avoid too close a contact with the world of fact, Mary's world. "To see Mary was to risk the destruction of this globe."⁴⁷ As Ralph had seen Katherine as his only

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 551.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 524-525.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 533.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 533.

reality, now Katherine sees Ralph in the same way, associating her vision symbolically with the blots circled by flames that Ralph had drawn to represent the universe: "He thought how obscure he still was to her, save only that more and more constantly he appeared to her a fire burning through its smoke, a source of life."⁴⁸

Lastly, in the final pages, the image of the globe representing the solidarity love provides merges with that of the river. The momentary triumph of love is affirmed:

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.⁴⁹

This security is felt, however, to be fragile.

Guiguet writes:

Yet despite this victory, the closing note is not without melancholy, for it is a fragile victory. The lovers know that the vision is intermittent; what they call their "lapses" constitute the very rhythm of the inner life, oscillating ceaselessly between communion and solitude. The difficulty of communication between human beings is the shadowy theme of the book, which alternates constantly with its daylight theme.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 533.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 537.

⁵⁰Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), p. 212.

What becomes most obvious in the reading of the novel is the inadequacy of its traditional form to contain the analysis of life Virginia Woolf portrayed, without being cumbersome and unmanageable. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that, the year this novel appeared, Mrs. Woolf was questioning the "ill-fitting vestments" of traditional fiction in the portraying of life, in her essay "Modern Fiction", which was examined in the introduction to this thesis.

Jacob's Room, Virginia Woolf's third novel, was published in 1922. It marks a break with her earlier attempts at fiction. In this novel, Mrs. Woolf revolts against the picaresque character which is the mere fabrication by an author of a mechanism to further plot. Jacob Flanders, the hero of the novel, exists only as the sum of the moments of his life the author cares to reveal. He is known to the reader as he is known to his friends, to his mother, to the people he passes on the street. Certain instants are concentrated upon. The reader never wholly possesses the character.

Much of the space in the novel is devoted to viewing Jacob indirectly through minor characters which the

omniscient narrator controls fully. These minor characters convey impressions of what Jacob is. When the narrator chooses to deal directly with Jacob, it is to render what he says. The narrator admits the impossibility of penetrating his consciousness fully. When any of Jacob's intimate thoughts are conveyed, the narrator carefully marks the precarious validity of these renderings by putting them between brackets. Hafley has seen a fault in technique in this double point of view:

There are, then, two narrators in charge of Jacob's Room; and while one of them is saying that Jacob is essentially unknowable, the other is doing a very good job of disproving that by making the rest of the characters as knowable as they can possibly be. The result is an unresolved disparity in point of view.⁵¹

The result is that Jacob appears ghost-like throughout the novel. He lacks character. He is not delineated. The fact is, of course, that this is precisely the way he must appear for he is meant to be not any one person but all those young men who were born, went up to Cambridge, set out to make their living, then died in the war.

We realize that Jacob is the young man who did not come back to his room. Moreover, his name--Flanders, his death in the war, his anonymity, the vagueness of his single identity indicate

⁵¹Hafley, loc. cit., p. 52.

that he is all the young men who did not come back to their rooms.⁵²

Jacob's Room may be compared to a Greek tragedy.

Jacob Flanders blindly pursues his fate, while his friends, the people around him, serve as a chorus commenting on the action, seeking to understand him and to know themselves through him, until they are able to understand life and Jacob's role in it upon his death. The fact that Jacob is continually being compared to great men, to Byron, to Ulysses, to Hermes, to an admiral (Nelson?) suggests an archetypal function as the sacrificial hero who perishes in the wars.

Mrs. Woolf devotes but two short chapters to Jacob's childhood and adolescence. In the first chapter she introduces the calling of the hero's name, "'Ja-cob! Ja-cob!' Archer shouted."⁵³ as a leitmotif that serves to mark what Jacob is for others. The second chapter describes the adolescence of Jacob. The chief character providing a view of Jacob in both these chapters, is Mrs. Flanders, his mother. Mrs. Flanders gives a clue to the reader of the kind of life the youthful dead have for the living through memory, prefiguring thereby the impact Jacob's death will

⁵²O'Brien Schaefer, op. cit., p. 70.

⁵³Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 6.

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have on the characters of the novel. She reflects upon the death of her husband two years before:

Had he, then, been nothing? An unanswerable question, since even if it weren't the habit of the undertaker to close the eyes, the light so soon goes out of them. At first, part of herself; now one of a company, he had merged in the grass . . . Seabrook was now all that; and when, with her skirt hitched up, feeding the chickens, she heard the bell for service or funeral, that was Seabrook's voice--the voice of the dead.⁵⁴

The third chapter deals with Jacob's initiation to Cambridge. The omniscient narrator views Jacob on the train through the intermediary of Mrs. Norman, a fellow traveller, whose only function is to provide the reader with a glimpse of Jacob. The narrator candidly affirms:

One must do the best one can with her report. Anyhow, this was Jacob Flanders, aged nineteen. It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done--⁵⁵

This affirmation that "one must follow hints" will recur. It is central to the conception of the novel as a whole. The indirect description of Jacob is pursued in the succeeding chapters, as Jacob vacations with friends, as he works in London, makes the acquaintance of Florinda, a woman whom such a florid name suits to perfection. All the while, the narrator deliberates upon the difficulty of

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

defining personality, of knowing who Jacob is rather than what he is. The difficulty in seeing the life beyond the facts is immense:

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 the conditions of our love.⁵⁶

The narrator continually affirms this difficulty of seeing a person and his relationship to life itself. Not everything can be grasped, can be communicated: "what remains is mostly a matter of guess work."⁵⁷

One fact, however, becomes clear. As the novel progresses the narrator's and the reader's understanding grows. It grows intuitively clearer, if he but "follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done." The reader learns, for example, that Jacob had "a violent reversion" for the imposed and stifling order of society; he "was ready to turn with wrath upon whoever it was who has fashioned life thus."⁵⁸ Like the heroines of

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

the earlier novels, Jacob is brought to resent the arbitrary division between Self and society.

Jacob is able, because of a legacy, to voyage to Greece. He comes to an intuitive understanding of himself there, by identifying with the past. There is in this chapter a foreboding sense of doom, a sense of the "flight of time which hurries us so tragically along".⁵⁹ Sandra Wentworth Williams, a minor character, reflects:

Now the royal band marching by with the national flag stirred wider rings of emotion, and life became something that the courageous mount and ride out to sea on--the hair blown back . . . and she herself was emerging from the silver spray--when she saw Jacob.⁶⁰

The association of "the royal band marching", the "national flag" and "life", "something that the courageous mount and ride out to sea on", with Jacob Flanders, foreshadows his death at war if one follows "hints". Here too, as in the two earlier novels, the true view of life is compared to a ship at sea. Shortly thereafter the narrator makes more explicit what life, the "something we mount", is, while affirming the novelist's inability to express it:

It is thus we live, they say, driven by an unseizable force. They say that the novelists never catch it; that it goes hurtling through

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 145.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 145.

their nets and leaves them torn to ribbons. This, they say, is what we live by -- this unseizable force.⁶¹

The life of an average person on an average day, the narrator goes on to explain, "the thrust of limbs engaged in the conduct of daily life" is superior to the "old pageant of armies drawn out in battle upon the plain."⁶² The theme of the novel is again implicit in this affirmation, for the life of an average person, Jacob, becomes significant and his death at war, a death not described, a death that is only an ordinary event in an ordinary day, is superior in significance to the armies on the plains.

It is interesting to note that the choric effect of the minor characters' thoughts is intensified as the novel progresses. Their speeches are more schematized. The evocation of Jacob by name only, ("Jacob! Jacob! she thought")⁶³ occurs much more frequently.

The war is declared. Jacob goes to war and is killed.

'The guns?' said Betty Flanders, half asleep, getting out of bed and going to the window,

⁶¹Ibid., p. 148.

⁶²Ibid., p. 155.

⁶³Ibid., p. 159.

which was decorated with a fringe of dark leaves.
 'Not at this distance,' she thought. 'It is
 the sea.'⁶⁴

In this passage, which perhaps suggests Jacob's death, there is a subtle identification made between war and life, the sea. As it has been suggested earlier, the ordinary day and the armies on the plains merge.

Jacob's friend, Bonamy, and Mrs. Flanders, representative figures for the vast number of minor characters in the novel, go to Jacob's room to clean up. His presence in the room is still felt.

Jacob's "room" is gone; of that there can be no doubt. But Bonamy goes to the window; the noise and the struggle of life going on outside lead him to call out the name of his friend. Jacob himself--the essential Jacob--is still alive in the confusion and flux of life itself.⁶⁵

Bonamy cries out: "Jacob! Jacob!". The evocation of his name is sufficient to recreate his existence in memory. Bonamy and Mrs. Flanders achieve a vision of the complexity of life and the function of death as a crystallization of it as an "unseizable force" that "the courageous mount and ride out to sea on". Jacob exists in memory as the center of this converging vision.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 167.

⁶⁵Hafley, op. cit., p. 54.

Thus, ultimately, the "failure" of the novel to present a readily definable central character is justifiable. Jacob serves to embody the sense of loss for those myriad people who have seen a generation of young men killed wantonly in the war. Jacob serves as a symbol that brings their fragmented vision of the world to a unity, to a comprehension of the stormy, changing, every flowing sea of life.

If Jacob were made of more solid flesh, if he were more definite materially, if his inner being were more strongly drawn and more substantial, so that he existed in his own right and stood out from the book, like a character in Thackeray for instance, the very purpose of the novel would be destroyed. The vagueness, the lack of certainty, the disconcerting quality of this work, and the kind of uneasiness, insecurity and frustration it leaves with the reader, may perhaps be faults in relation to absolute standards in the art of fiction. But in relation to what the author has set out to express, it must be acknowledged that these characteristics are qualities.⁶⁶

In this chapter, Virginia Woolf's three first novels, The Voyage Out, Night and Day, and Jacob's Room, were studied to show the achieving of the "moment", while demonstrating the breakdown of love as a means of coming to an understanding of life, and the gradual emergence of the theme of death to explain the sense life holds. While

⁶⁶Guiguet, op. cit., p. 225.

The Voyage Out affirmed the transitoriness of love, it illustrated the possibility of death's having some value for the living. Night and Day made manifest the essential fragility of love as a solution. The death of the hero in Jacob's Room served to mark a more intense perception of the meaning of life. In the three novels, the narrative events and the symbols are organized in terms of the expression of a "moment" wherein the meaning of life is grasped.

As the theme of each novel became more complex, the structure grew more elaborate. The Voyage Out was somewhat clumsily constructed and displayed some instability in character description. It displayed no startling originality in technique. Night and Day had all the appearances of a novel of manners. The plot line, however, was consistently developed by indirection. Jacob's Room was the first novel to mark a break. The hero was viewed indirectly through minor characters whom the omniscient narrator controls fully. The three novels exemplified the gradual development of a technique to better serve the expression of the "moment."

CHAPTER II

DEATH AND HISTORY IN THE LATER NOVELS

The first chapter of this thesis considered Mrs. Woolf's first three novels. The problems sketched in The Voyage Out, Night and Day, and Jacob's Room, became central in the author's later works. The search for a technique commensurate with the complexity of the problems considered was resolved with the publication of Mrs Dalloway. The later novels were an exploration in depth of these problems.

This second chapter, then, will consider these novels. In Mrs Dalloway, Clarissa's understanding of the suicide of her double, Septimus, leads to an understanding of life. In To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay's life and death prove that death is a part of life. The essential kinship of man with his past in the battle of life is put into relief. In Orlando, the author deals imaginatively with the bearing of the past upon the present to reveal the complexity of the individual who seeks to understand what he is in relation to his age and culture. The Waves traces the growth of an awareness, through six characters, of what life is, and of what death brings to life. The Years establishes the nature of death and history for

the living by means of a chronicle of family life through several generations. In Between the Acts, the collective experience of culture gives meaning to all the familiar gestures. All the novels build up to a "moment" wherein the sense of life is grasped in all its richness through a realization of the meaning of history, that is, of all the past lives and deaths.

Lrs Dalloway, a novel that appeared in 1925, differs considerably from Jacob's Room, the novel that precedes it and is closest to it in theme. The book has no chapter divisions. Instead of viewing central characters from the outside through the agency of minor characters, Mrs. Woolf links, by means of chronological occurrence, the interior monologue of a central character with the consciousness of another. Clock time or an external object impinges upon the consciousness of one character while his or her interior monologue ranges from past to present, from memory to anticipation, in order to effect a translation in space by means of this momentary concentration on some external phenomenon, a car, an airplane skywriting, the booming of Big Ben, to a different consciousness, emphasizing thereby the diversity as well as the unity of interactions at a given moment.

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One critic explains the technique as follows:

Characters are related to each other by existing contemporaneously, by coexistence in time: moments of time are related to each other by coexistence within the retrospect of the individual.

There is in Mrs. Dalloway a regular alternation of these two methods: we are either moving freely in time within the consciousness of an individual, or moving from person to person at a single moment in time.¹

Two spheres of interpenetration may be further distinguished. They are those of Clarissa Dalloway and of her double Septimus Warren Smith. This doubling serves to express the positive and negative aspects of Self in relation to reality. Certain characters in the novel provide links between these two worlds. Peter Walsh, coming from a visit to Clarissa, sees Septimus and his wife Rezia. Bradshaw, the psychiatrist who treated Septimus for his madness, goes to Clarissa's party and reveals Septimus' suicide. Lastly, Clarissa herself identifies with the mad Mr. Smith. Though the relationship established between Septimus and Clarissa is synthetic, it nevertheless expresses a psychological reality, the need for solitude and the demands of society.

Clarissa Dalloway is a woman reconciled with life, though not understanding it:

¹Daiches, op. cit., p. 65.

For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life.²

She is able to face the destruction of time and to accept the apparent annihilation of the here and now because she believes in a transcendancy over death through collective memory:

. . . but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself.³

Yet life can be viewed in another way. There is, in the realization of the mercilessness of time a dismaying sense of futility, a sense of dispossession. Septimus Warren Smith cannot come to comprehend why the war should have claimed his friend, Evans, who comes to symbolize for him all the innocent victims death ravishes. "The world

²Virginia Woolf, Mrs Dalloway (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 6.

³Ibid., pp. 11-12.

raised its whip; where will it descend?"⁴ he thinks.

Septimus feels that the world is about to burst into flames.

Ultimately, the tenacity with which death attacks life, the difficulty that communication entails leaves man with a sense of loneliness, a sense of irremediable self-hood in time. Love only makes the lover more conscious of his solitude. This is what Rezia affirms when she says: "To love makes one solitary".⁵

Opposed to this partial view of life is another partial, though perhaps more tenable view. Clarissa believes in the possibility of intuitive communion between people. She muses upon these moments of kinship:

It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores. Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed.⁶

Septimus is just as aware of the necessity of coming to an intimate understanding of life: "Communication is health; communication is happiness, communication, he

⁴Ibid., p. 17.

⁵Ibid., p. 27.

⁶Ibid., p. 36.

muttered."⁷ But, unlike Clarissa, he cannot balance personality and society. His physician, the eminent Sir William Bradshaw, terms Septimus' madness as "not having a sense of proportion".⁸ Bradshaw's sense of proportion is, of course, a madness of another kind since he is responsible partly for Septimus' suicide. His too glib capitulation to a world of facts wherein all symbolic visions of life are banished is instrumental in the formation of Septimus' belief that he is a criminal being punished for not surrendering himself to the aridity of the scientific world:

But if he confessed? If he communicated?
Would they let him off then, Holmes, Bradshaw?
'I-I-' he stammered.
But what was his crime? He could not
remember it.⁹

Septimus cannot yield to Bradshaw's false gods, Proportion and her sister: "Conversion is her name and she feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose, adoring her own features stamped on the face of the populace." Septimus will not, he cannot, surrender his identity to that extent.

⁷Ibid., p. 103.

⁸Ibid., p. 107.

⁹Ibid., p. 109.

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Clarissa, like Rezia, is aware of the solitary condition of those who love:

And there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect, thought Clarissa, watching him open the door; for one would not part with it oneself, or take it, against his will, from one's husband, without losing one's independence, one's self-respect--something, after all, priceless.¹⁰

With Clarissa however, there is always a compulsive urge to unite diversities, to transcend one's individuality:

But to go deeper, beneath what people said (and these judgements, how superficial, how fragmentary they are!) in her own mind now what did it mean to her, this thing she called life? . . . And she felt quite continually a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom?¹¹

She is aware of the problem of isolation that the familiar symbol of the room serves to express:

And the supreme mystery which Kilman might say she had solved, or Peter might say he had solved, but Clarissa didn't believe either of them had the ghost of an idea of solving, was simply this: here was one room; there another. Did religion solve that or love?¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 131-132.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 135.

¹² Ibid., p. 141.

Rezia feels the same sense of isolation when Septimus, in his madness, thinks the world is on fire. She is always aware that "they were alone in the room."¹³

Septimus ultimately comes to symbolize the destruction of personality by time if a vision of the world is not achieved. All goes up in flames. "Universal love: the meaning of the world. Burn them! he cried."¹⁴

It is interesting to note that when Sir William Bradshaw comes to Clarissa's party she dislikes him instinctively, sensing perhaps, the ruthlessness of his factual outlook. The news of Septimus' death, a man she has never known causes her to imagine her own suicide:

He had killed himself- but how? Always her body went through it, when she was told, first, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her 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!¹⁵

Reflecting upon death after having identified with Septimus, she stumbles upon its meaning. Death is a

¹³ Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 203.

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defiance; it is an attempt to communicate, to come to the centre of that which mysteriously evades them. Her identification with Septimus is at last made most explicit:

She felt somehow very like him--the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved into the air. But she must go back. She must assemble.¹⁶

Clarissa is pleased not so much with Septimus' death as with that spirit of defiance he possessed. She feels he found a way to combat life, to somehow give it an order through his death. She learns then, by linking life and death in the continual flow of time, to see the world as it is. She then returns to the party, to "assemble". The party is a symbol of the type of significance, of order, Clarissa is trying to give to life. At the party, she has mingled, greeted her friends; she has rendered life intense, luminous. She has made the "moment".

PETER WALSH

~~Her husband~~ reflects:

What is this terror? what is this ecstasy?
he thought to himself. What is it that fills
me with extraordinary excitement?

It is Clarissa, he said.
For there she was.¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid., p. 206.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 214.

Clarissa's party is then much more than a mere gathering. It is a symbol of the resolution of personality and society. It is the positive side of the resolution of personality and society that Septimus achieved through death. Clarissa, like Septimus, is sensitive to the richness of life. If Septimus serves as a symbol to show the effect of death upon the living, Clarissa serves as an illustration of the effect of "being" upon the living.

The structure of Mrs Dalloway, then, is contrapuntal. The themes intertwine and oppose one another as do the characters. The entire novel chronologically takes place during one day in London, yet it ranges in mind-time more than eighteen years, shifting from one place, one country to another. Septimus and Clarissa answer each other thematically also. "their reality consists not of themselves as persons but of their relationship to each other as forms."¹⁸

¹⁸ John Hawley Roberts, " 'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf," PMLA, LXI (September, 1946), 857.

To the Lighthouse, considered by many critics to be Mrs. Woolf's best novel, appeared in 1927. The novel has three main divisions bearing the titles: "The Window", "Time Passes", and "The Lighthouse". These parts serve a very definite function. The first part reveals Mrs. Ramsay, the central character, during one day. She is, in this section fulfilling a function similar to that of Clarissa in Mrs Dalloway. She "assembles". Sitting by the window, a symbol of the transparent but real barrier between personality and society, she draws people towards her, organizing responses and enriching life.

The second section, the shortest, which covers a period of ten years, describes the effects of time and change on life by recounting the gradual decay of the cottage, and by listing parenthetically the major changes in the characters' lives: marriage and death. Mrs. Ramsay's death is set down.

The third section affirms the triumph of personality over time through memory. It records the achieving of a vision by a character similar to Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, who is able to reconcile life and death in "being".

Mrs. Ramsay's quality of "assembling" is shown clearly when her husband states that she must console him:

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 sense restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life--the drawing room the kitchen; above the kitchen the bedrooms; and beyond them the nurseries; they must be furnished, they must be filled with life.¹⁹

Mrs. Ramsay's effort is to seek to triumph over life by giving it an order most of her family could not see it had. She did not categorize reality as did her husband, by setting it out as so many letters of the alphabet, then seeking to possess each one in turn, to exhaust each letter then move on to the next, fully realizing that "L" will never be reached. Her effort is to apprehend life wholly through intuition and thereby come to terms with its diversity by an understanding of its fundamental unity.

She took a look at life, for she had a clear sense of it there, something real, something private, which she shared neither with her children nor with her husband. A sort of transaction went on between them, in which she was on one side, and life was on another, and she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was of her; and sometimes they parleyed (when she sat alone); there were, she remembered, great reconciliation scenes; but for the most part, oddly enough, she must admit that she felt this thing that she called life terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance. There were eternal problems: suffering; death; the poor.²⁰

¹⁹Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1963), p. 43.

²⁰Ibid., p. 69.

Mrs. Ramsay realizes that only death provides the ultimate victory over life. With the loss of personality that death brings, the fret of life is lost; things come together in peace and repose.

The triumph of death is to afford, like the lighthouse she identifies with, "a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability".²¹ Personality, then, is likened to a lighthouse scanning the sea, life, and acting as a beacon, a drawing and organizing force. Indeed, Mrs. Ramsay reflects, "she was searching, she was beautiful like that light."²²

The triumph of the first section, the triumph of that day which is representative of a victory Mrs. Ramsay achieves every day, is her commanding presence at dinner. She serves to soothe ruffled feelings, to bring everything, all personality, into harmony for a few fugitive moments. Yet there is little permanence in this harmony. It has to be remade continually: "it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past."²³ The action

²¹Ibid., p. 73.

²²Ibid., p. 74.

²³Ibid., p. 132.

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of "assembling" must be perpetuated generation after generation:

. . . and she felt, with her hand on the nursery door, that community of feeling with other people which emotion gives as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically (the feeling was one of relief and happiness) it was all one stream, and chairs, tables, maps, were hers, were theirs, it did not matter whose, and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead.²⁴

The second part of this novel, "Time Passes" asks the meaning of life while presenting bleakly the destruction of all cherished things. The restless sleeper may ask the sea, "a sharer of his solitude" what the sense of it all is. He will find no answer.

Almost it would appear that it is useless in such confusion to ask the night those questions as to what, and why, and wherefore, which tempt the sleeper from his bed to seek an answer.²⁵

The seething of the sea of life affords no answer. Mrs. Ramsay dies. Her daughter Prue dies in childbirth not long after her marriage. Her son Andrew is killed at war. There indeed seems to be no answer to the destructiveness of time.

That dream, then, of sharing, completing, finding in solitude on the beach an answer, was but a reflection in a mirror, and the mirror itself was but the surface glassiness which

²⁴Ibid., p. 146.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 148-149.

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forms in quiescence when the nobler powers sleep beneath? Impatient, despairing yet loth to go (for beauty offers her lures, has her consolations), to face the beach was impossible; contemplation was unendurable; the mirror was broken.²⁶

Night and day, month and year run "shapelessly together".²⁷

Lily Briscoe, in the opening pages of the third section wonders:

What does it mean then, what can it all mean? . . . What does it mean?--a catch-word that was, caught up from some book, fitting her thought loosely, for she could not, this first morning with the Ramsays, contracted her feelings, could only make a phrase resound to cover the blankness of her mind until these vapours had shrunk. For really, what did she feel, come back after all these years and Mrs. Ramsay dead? Nothing, nothing--nothing that she could express at all.²⁸

The problems of death and change are unfathomable. Yet a meaning gradually emerges through the memory of what Mrs. Ramsay was. Her name flits continually in Lily's consciousness. She recalls her power to assemble. Mrs. Ramsay "resolved everything into simplicity."²⁹ There is the feeling that something survives regardless of the passage of years. The realization of Mrs. Ramsay's

²⁶Ibid., p. 155.

²⁷Ibid., p. 156.

²⁸Ibid., p. 167.

²⁹Ibid., p. 185.

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intuitive ability to comprehend the living leads Lily to the inevitable question:

What is the meaning of life? that was all-- a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come.³⁰

Reflecting thus, Lily experiences a revelation; she sees life as Mrs. Ramsay had seen it by remembering her. "In the midst of chaos there was a shape."³¹

Meanwhile, Mr. Ramsay and his children, Cam and James, are sailing towards the lighthouse, completing the voyage that had been put off in the first section. This voyage becomes symbolic of the vision they achieve about the permanence of personality, regardless of change, through collective memory. The task that Mrs. Ramsay could not accomplish wholly during her lifetime, the instilling of an intuition about the nature of life, is accomplished in her death. The destructive force of time cannot alter all. The characters of the third section experience a vision of life, a "moment" wherein all the sense of life is seen and comprehended. At the very moment Mr. Ramsay lands at the lighthouse, Lily completes her painting:

³⁰Ibid., p. 186.

³¹Ibid., p. 186.

With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.³²

Lily has drawn a line in the centre. She has achieved the balance desired, discovered the centre of life.

Mrs. Ramsay's sense of what life was has led others, through the passage of time and the experience of death, to the same discovery. She is a beacon that guides others towards life's meaning.

Although the fate of individuals shrinks to parenthetical importance in the great cosmic or even global drama, those same individuals can give a significance to their own existence that may outlast themselves.³³

Mrs. Ramsay's position in this novel is central, then, even when she is absent. The solution provided to the impingement of time is twofold:

Without denying those two ineluctable truths, solitude and death, To the Lighthouse makes of them the two fundamental experiences through which the human being, aspiring towards a single truth, a single light, reaches these and fulfills himself.³⁴

³²Ibid., p. 242.

³³O'Brien Schaefer, op. cit., p. 135.

³⁴Guiguet, op. cit., p. 255.

Orlando, which appeared in 1928, is a strange novel. Virginia Woolf termed it a biography in an attempt to describe its elusive form. This work describes the life of Orlando, from the age of sixteen to the age of thirty-six, a period ranging from about 1586 to 1928. Time sits lightly upon his shoulders. What is even more surprising is that, towards the end of the seventeenth century Orlando undergoes a strange experience, a change in sex. Orlando is a composite yet real person embodying the cultural evolution of England. He serves to describe the elusiveness of personality and to express the "incommunicable mystery to which there is no other answer".³⁵

Mrs. Woolf's treatment of the central problems of life is lighthearted in this novel, but it is no less profound. The same questions are asked and a fuller answer than that which has up to now been provided is glimpsed at. The problem of life and death at the outset is unresolved:

Are we so made that we have to take death in small doses daily or we could not go on with the business of living? And then what strange powers are these that penetrate our most secret ways and change our most treasured possessions without our willing it? Had Orlando, worn out by the extremity of his

³⁵ Guiguet, op. cit., p. 271.

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suffering, died for a week, and then come to life again? And if so, of what nature is death and of what nature life? Having waited well over half an hour for an answer to these questions,³⁶ and none coming, let us go on with the story.

As the novel develops, the urgency of the questions grows more apparent. What is the significance of mutability? Week succeeds week and month follows month, yet the complexity is the same. Life flows on. Also time acts somewhat differently on man than it does on external nature. There is indeed, a form of interaction.

But Time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and fade with amazing punctuality has no such simple effect upon the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by a second. The extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation.³⁷

Virginia Woolf states half-jocularly here the dichotomy between chronological and mind-time that is at the heart of man's vision of the world. She has created Orlando to be, to a sense, a symbol of the past's activity upon the present by rendering him contemporary to all occurrences in the historical realm.

³⁶Virginia Woolf, Orlando, A Biography (New York: Signet Books, 1963), p. 44.

³⁷Ibid., p. 63.

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Since Orlando lives for such a length of time, she (for by now Orlando is a woman) has learned that love does not provide a permanent shield to protect one from the onslaught of time.

Lovers she had in plenty, but life, which is after all of some importance in its way, escaped her. "Is this," she asked-- but there was none to answer, "is this what people call life?"³⁸

The division of life into facts or "truth" and dreams is always destructive. In The Voyage Out Rachel's death was symbolic of an incapacity to render life whole by marrying facts and dreams as Katherine and Ralph had done in Night and Day. Part of the cause of Septimus' suicide was his inability to reconcile his personality with the demands of society as Clarissa had done. Life must be seized intuitively by characters, in the manner of Helen Ambrose, Mrs. Dalloway, and Mrs. Ramsay; it must not be reduced to formulas such as the Mary Datchets, the Bradshaws and the Mr. Ramsays use. Dreams and facts must merge. This is what Orlando's biographer has him affirm:

By the truth we are undone. Life is a dream. 'Tis waking that kills us. He who robs us of our dreams robs us of our life--(and so on for six pages if you will, but the style is tedious and may well be dropped).³⁹

³⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 133.

The decades fly by and still Orlando, for all her living, does not seem to be any closer to an answer, though she could be heard to exclaim: "Upon my soul, what a life this is!" (For she was still in search of that commodity.)⁴⁰ The narrator comments, in a whimsical mood, that Orlando pauses a year to think and leaves him with nought to do, since her inner thoughts cannot be rendered.

Orlando lives on into the twentieth century. On the eleventh of October, 1928, she is struck by the fact that it is the present moment. "For what more terrifying revelation can there be than that it is the present moment?" the narrator comments. Orlando is suddenly caught up in the wonder of life:

The very fabric of life now, she thought as she rose, is magic. In the eighteenth century, we knew how everything was done; but here I rise through the air; I listen to voices in America; I see men flying--but how it's done, I can't even begin to wonder. So my belief in magic returns.⁴¹

Orlando is brought to reflect on what life means to her. Each object of the present moment seems charged with the significance of the past. The whole of history presses upon the present.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 139.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 196.

And indeed, it cannot be denied that the most successful practitioners of the art of life, often unknown people by the way, somehow contrive to synchronise the sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system so that when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison, and the present is neither a violent disruption nor completely forgotten in the past.⁴²

Orlando undergoes after this realization a very odd experience. She senses that there are seventy-six different times ticking inside her; she feels possessed of

these selves of which we are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own, call them what you will . . . for everybody can multiply from his own experience the different terms which his different selves have made with him . . .⁴³

Personality is affirmed to be a complex web of relations. The past is in the present, the lives of all those that have gone before are in the life of any person now living: this is what Orlando has come to realize. It is her function to direct all these lives, to give them meaning.

. . . for she was, to hear her talk, changing her selves as quickly as she drove--there was a new one at every corner--as happens when, for some unaccountable reason, the conscious self, which is the uppermost, and has the power to desire, wishes to be nothing but

⁴² Ibid., pp. 191-192.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 201-202.

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one self. This is what some people call the true self, and it is, they say, compact of all the selves we have in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain self, the me, self, which amalgamates and controls them all.⁴⁴

Ultimately then, the "moment" presented in Orlando, the vision of life, is larger in scope than any previous one for it includes not only the significance of death upon life and the necessity to assemble the conflicting elements of reality into the unity of vision, but it further affirms the role that memory must play in the understanding of life and, more generally, the impulsion of history, social and cultural, upon the living.

. . . the present is conceived less as the end towards which the past has moved than as one among many possible vantage points from which to observe the ever changing flux of time and experience.⁴⁵

The Waves, which appeared in 1931, is perhaps Mrs. Woolf's most complex novel structurally. The novel consists of nine different sections divided by descriptive symbolic passages depicting the sun, sea, and land from dawn to dusk in an effort to represent the span of a human life. The six characters of the novel, Bernard, Neville, Louis,

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 202-203.

⁴⁵ Daiches, op. cit., p. 99.

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Susan, Jinny, and Rhoda continually ponder their relationship with each other, reality, and a symbolic character who never speaks, Percival. Percival is killed in a foolish accident while playing polo in India. Yet, this inane accident creates bonds which intimately link each character with Percival forever, and furthermore, permit each character to attain a sort of union with the others in remembrance and defiance.

Critics, writing about The Waves, generally condemn Virginia Woolf for not creating wholly believable characters. However, the characters of this novel cannot assume a total identity since they are not whole characters but are the symbolic selves of a unified and complex consciousness. They are the selves that merge, as in Orlando (cf. supra) to form the "Captain Self", the "Key Self" which "controls them all". Like Orlando, who is now a man, now a woman, these characters are either male or female. Each group embodies functions comparable to the Jungian "animus" and "anima" as well as serving to express the personal and collective unconsciousness which eventually emerges in Bernard's final soliloquy, wherein a balance is achieved. O'Brien Schaefer writes:

The I of the characters in The Waves is potentially the reader's I. Virginia Woolf carefully standardizes the diction, the imagery, the patterns by means of which the

characters express themselves, so that a single identity seems to encompass the whole vast inner monologue. The reader's consciousness is one of the chief unifying elements in the novel which becomes, in its way, a means of enlarging that consciousness. Each time a new I occurs, the reader, still full of the I just finished speaking, must shift his perspective a little. As he does so, the I's, though distinct, overlap. The reader embodies both, and each. The result is the sensation of hearing one's own voice.⁴⁶

The lives of the characters are described from childhood to old age by means of highly stylized indirect monologues wherein references to elements in reality serve a symbolic function. Each character identifies with some object either seen or heard early in the novel. This object reappears throughout the novel to mark that character's attitude towards reality. Bernard, for example, sees a ring in a loop of light which ultimately becomes the symbol for a true vision of life, a "luminous halo". Louis, on the other hand, hears the stamping of a great beast. This comes to symbolize for Louis, the man of facts, the incomprehensibility and savageness of the world. Furthermore, the position of each character in relation to life is different. There is a gradation in Mrs. Woolf's characters:

In their orientation toward time she creates a pattern in which Susan occupies a medial position between Louis and Jinny. Whereas Louis inhabits all history and Jinny lives

⁴⁶O'Brien Schaefer, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

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in the present moment, Susan lives within the ordained limits, the possible four-score years and ten, of a single human life. Similarly Bernard occupies a position between the extremes of Susan and Rhoda. Susan is always completely inside experience, utterly incapable of viewing an affair with detachment. Rhoda, on the other hand, is completely outside experience, unable to relate herself at any point to what is happening. Bernard remains unmerged in experience; he is clearly and complicatedly related to his experiences and yet still capable of noting extraneous events which surround them.⁴⁷

Bernard emerges at the end of the novel in a desirable position for viewing life as a whole. The others converge toward him. He is the only character intimately identified with Percival, a symbol for the person who has ordered life. Bernard, in the end, can reconcile history with the present moment, fact and dreams; he can achieve the proper balance required for an integral vision of life. This is the general impetus of the novel.

It is interesting to note that throughout the novel Bernard is accorded a larger and larger part of the indirect interior monologue until, in the final section, he alone speaks, recapitulating what has happened in all the character's lives, summing up, unfolding a vision of life, drawing all the disparate elements into cohesion as Percival had done, symbolically, at the party given upon his leaving for India.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 144-145.

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Mrs. Woolf is careful always to mark the transitions from one character's reflexions to another's by means of a common referential object. In the passages where this is not possible, when the boys and girls are at different schools, she marks the transition from one group to another by separating the sections by means of asterisks.

Another interesting point is that, aside from Bernard who dies at the very end of the novel, Rhoda is the only soliloquizing character to die. Of the six characters, Rhoda is the one whose function it is to be outside experience. She is a victim, like Septimus, incapable of accepting any part of life:

Look, the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with time; it holds the world in it. I begin to draw a figure and the world is looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop; which I now join--so--and seal up, and make entire. The world is entire, and I am outside of it, crying, "Oh, save me from being blowing for ever outside the loop of time!"⁴⁸

Rhoda is outside the luminous ring, Bernard's symbol for life grasped in its entirety.

Neville, a man of solitude has seized upon Bernard's intuitive capacity for seeing life in its wholeness and luminosity. Neville says of Bernard: "He sees everyone with blurred edges."⁴⁹

⁴⁸Virginia Woolf, The Waves (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 17.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 43.

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Throughout the novel Bernard is in quest of his identity and of his relationship with life. It is suggested that all the characters' identities are slowly converging into his:

What am I? I ask. This? No, I am that. Especially now, when I have left a room, and people talking, and the stone flags ring out with my solitary footsteps, and I behold the moon rising, sublimely, indifferently over the ancient chapel --then it becomes clear that I am not one and simple, but complex and many. . . . They do not understand that I have to effect transitions; have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard.⁵⁰

It is not surprising therefore that Neville, in searching for his identity, links himself with Bernard. He is less Neville than an adumbrated double of Bernard:

As he approaches I become not myself but Neville mixed with somebody--with whom?--with Bernard? Yes, it is Bernard, and it is to Bernard that I shall put the question. Who am I?⁵¹

Thus, at the party, the function of Percival as an integrating force grows immediately clearer. Percival possesses, like Mrs. Dalloway, and Mrs. Ramsay, that instinctual and intuitive capacity for resolving life's diversity at least momentarily into unity. Hence the

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 64.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 71

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characters, fragmented before, assume a single identity in communion with him:

'It is Percival,' said Louis, 'sitting silent as he sat among the tickling grasses when the breeze parted the clouds and they formed again, who makes us aware that these attempts to say, "I am this, I am that," which we make, coming together, like separate parts of one body and soul, are false. . . .'⁵²

Bernard, reflecting upon "the swelling and splendid moment created by us from Percival"⁵³ is able to perceive that not only can a momentary glimpse of life be achieved but that, furthermore, people such as Percival can operate as agents of integration for both personality and life. The ultimate realization is that we are able to overcome determinations.

We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time. We too, as we put on our hats and push open the door, stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road.⁵⁴

The possibility of subjugating chaos and of contributing to the stream of life, the "illumined" road is exemplified in the novel. Birth and death fulfill a

⁵² Ibid., p. 117.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 125.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

function. They have a meaning that must be grasped.

Bernard reflects:

such is the complexity of things, that as I descend the staircase I do not know which is sorrow, which is joy. My son is born; Percival is dead. I am upheld by pillars, shored up on either side by stark emotions; but which is sorrow, which is joy? I ask, and do not know, only that I need silence, and to be alone and to go out, and to save our hour to consider what has happened to my world, what death has done to my world.⁵⁵

The life and death of Percival and his survival through memory is an illustration of the continuity and permanence life has for those who see it whole. Death then is not an end. It is a step in the continual flow of life. Death is something that every individual fights, and cannot overcome. But death nevertheless is subjugated to the living and by the living. Individuals perish, but life always survives, going on impetuously, heedless, from one generation to the next, bringing with it the collective memory of all that has been which directs and gives impetus to the present. This is the solution Louis obscurely grasps:

Who are you? Who am I?-- that quivers again its uneasy air over us, and the pulse quickens and the eye brightens and all the insanity of

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 130.

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personal existence without which life would fall flat and die, begins again.⁵⁶

In the final section, Bernard speaks, almost directly, it seems, to the reader. He tries to impart a vision of life. The "moment" of this novel grows larger still for there is an attempt not only to present it objectively to the reader as the central character experiences it, but also to bring the reader to an experiencing of it. Bernard recounts or rather interprets all that has been said before. Explaining the different reactions of the characters to life, he says, "we suffered terribly as we became separate bodies"⁵⁷ intimating thereby that the early integration had been destroyed by the onslaught of life. Bernard comes to realize that life has to be accepted in its disturbing and even painful diversity:

People turned up in great quantities, not cut out, like the first faces (Neville, Louis, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda), but confused, featureless, or changed their features so fast that they seemed to have none. And blushing yet scornful, in the oldest condition of raw rapture and scepticism, I took the blow; the mixed sensations; the complex and disturbing and utterly unrepared for impacts of life all over, in all places at the same time.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 199.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 207.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 218.

One has to discover the essential fragility of a unified vision of life. "The crystal, the globe of life as one calls it, far from being hard and cold to the touch, has walls of thinnest air. If I press them all will burst."⁵⁹

Next Bernard concentrated upon the meaning of birth and death, recalling that his child was born at the time of Percival's death. "Into this crashed death -- Percival's."⁶⁰ He concluded that Percival's death, remembered, affords moments of uninterrupted community. Childhood and adulthood have been compared; the inevitable truth of life has been discovered:

But I now made the contribution of maturity to childhood's intuitions--satiety and doom; the sense of what is unescapably our lot; death; the knowledge of limitations; how life is more obdurate than one had thought it.⁶¹

Bernard comments explicitly on the comparison of life to a single day when he says, "our life adjusts itself to the majestic march of day across the sky."⁶² Thus life is comparable to a day; it begins in darkness; it grows in intensity, in warmth, in brilliance; it declines; there is

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 220.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 226.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 231.

⁶² Ibid., p. 233.

a final sunset radiance; it is no more. Yet Bernard can affirm always, "Life is pleasant; life is good."⁶³

The unity between the diverse aspects of personality is gradually being achieved. Bernard says:

. . . what I call "my life", it is not one life that I look back upon; 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.⁶⁴

Shortly thereafter he says again that he does not know whether he is "man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny or Rhoda--so strange is the contact of one with another."⁶⁵ Bernard senses that life has been imperfect. He feels that he has been deserted by his selves. All things are doomed to the "dust dance".⁶⁶ Bernard sensing that he is dying feels that he has been dispossessed of his identity. "But how describe the world seen without a self?"⁶⁷ He realizes too that he can now meet any person. It does not matter, for "All this affair of 'being' is over."⁶⁸ The "moment" has been achieved. He can see the

⁶³Ibid., p. 233.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 237.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 242.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 245.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 247.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 248.

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world whole and come to an understanding of himself. He feels no division between himself and Neville, Susan, Jinny, Rhoda, and Louis.

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.⁶⁹

He is able to set the story of his life before the reader "as a complete thing".⁷⁰ All things have merged into life itself.

The dispossession of the old fragmented identity is achieved:

'Immeasurably receptive, holding everything, trembling with fullness, yet clear, contained--so my being seems, now that desire urges it no more out and away; now that curiosity no longer dyes it a thousand colours. It lies deep, tideless, immune, now that he is dead, the man I called "Bernard", . . . ⁷¹

Bernard dies to become life itself, continually fighting and defeating death, as Percival had.

Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again.

. . . I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising beneath me like a proud horse whose rider first spurs and then pulls him back. What enemy do we now perceive advancing against us, you whom I ride now, as we stand pawing this stretch of pavement? it is death.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 248.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 249.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 250.

Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's, when he galloped in India. I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!⁷²

Thus the "moment" achieved in The Waves is entire, englobing all characters, their reality, and the reader into a "luminous halo"; the final section verges on poetry. It becomes the paean of life itself.

The Years, which appeared in 1937, is a surprising novel at first glance, if it is considered in the light of The Waves. On the surface, it appears to be a step backwards for Virginia Woolf. It has most of the outward trappings of a novel by Bennett or Galsworthy.

There is nothing startling in the technique of this novel. Conversation is reported in the usual fashion, thought processes are indicated indirectly in the third person and the direction of the thought is made clear by all the usual signposts and explanatory phrases. There is no obvious sign here of the lyrical flow of To the Lighthouse or the complex interweaving of consciousnesses that we find in Mrs. Dalloway; nor is there anything of the formal monologue of The Waves.⁷³

The book chronicles the life of three generations of Par_eters to establish the nature of the impulsion of

⁷²Ibid., pp. 255-256.

⁷³Daiches, op. cit., p. 112.

death upon life, of history upon the living. The years alter and destroy, but something remains in the family; it is the stream of life. Life flows, until finally at Delia's party a "moment" is achieved wherein the reality of life is grasped in all its richness, instantaneous and eternal, transcending mere chronology. It is the ever present "luminous halo". The book then, is much more than a chronicle of a family; it is the representation of a process of living. Guiguet expresses it thus:

A string of encounters, most frequently by chance: a tea-party, a dinner, an evening gathering; a door opens, someone comes in; the place and the hour expand like a bubble; and people carry on their usual behaviour, their usual train of thought, which belong to the past and the future as much as to the present: of the twelve months or twelve years that separate two meetings, we know practically nothing; yet they are that indefinable substance that clings to human beings to produce something that cannot be grasped or described: life.⁷⁴

Despite its tradition apparel The Years is, as a novel, the suitable counterpart of The Waves. If The Waves described the gradual integration of personality into the stream of life from the inside, from the point of view of personality, The Years describes the merging of personality and life from the outside through time. The nature

⁷⁴Guiguet, op. cit., p. 310.

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description so prominent in The Waves is present in The Years also, though they have been carefully integrated into the structure of the novel as a whole. The novel is made up of ten unequal sections which cover the years 1880, 1891, 1907, 1908, 1910, 1911, 1913, 1914, 1917, 1918, and of a final section entitled "The Present Day". The years are marked by deaths of private and national importance: a mother, a father, Parnell, the king. Children grow up; times change; summer follows spring. The everyday lives of ordinary people converge ultimately into a "moment" of significance which reveals the nature of life and the influence of the past upon the present.

The chief occurrence of the year 1880 is the death of Mrs. Pargiter. Delia, a daughter, observing the burial proceedings is overcome, as had been Bernard, by the curious blend of living and dying that makes up reality:

Earth dropped on the coffin; three pebbles fell on the hard shiny surface; and as they dropped she was possessed by a sense of something everlasting; of life mixing with death, of death becoming life. For as she looked she heard the sparrows chirp quicker and quicker; she heard wheels in the distance sound louder and louder; life came closer and closer ... ⁷⁵

The years pass; the seasons come and go. Mrs. Woolf carefully describes their passing. Always the

⁷⁵Virginia Woolf, The Years (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1937), p. 87.

question is, "What is the meaning of it all?" Eleanor, the eldest daughter, arranges to sell the Pargiter's house after the death of her father. The faithful old servant, Crosby, is pensioned. Eleanor, as many of Virginia Woolf's characters, associates living with a ship at sea:

Again the sense came to her of a ship padding softly through the waves; of a train swinging from side to side down a railway-line. Things can't go on for ever, she thought. Things pass, things change, she thought, looking up at the ceiling. And where are we going? Where? Where?⁷⁶

The central problem, though the years succeed one another, remains unsolved. What is life and what is the role of the individual in it? How is separateness to be overcome and unity achieved?

Where does she begin, and where do I end? she thought. . . . On they drove. They were two living people, driving across London; two sparks of life enclosed in two separate bodies; and those sparks of life enclosed in two separate bodies are at this moment, she thought, driving past a picture palace. But what is this moment; and what are we? The puzzle was too difficult for her to solve it. She sighed.⁷⁷

Instant falls upon instant, and event upon event. There is no possibility of putting a stop to the flow. There seems to be no organizing force to give a unity to

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 213.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 334.

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the whole. Eleanor, now in her seventies, reflects that she has not yet seized the essence of life:

My life, she said to herself. That was odd it was the second time that evening that somebody had talked to her about life. And I haven't got one, she thought. Oughtn't a life to be something you could handle and produce-- a life of seventy odd years. But I've only the present moment, she thought. . . . Millions of things came back to her. Atoms danced apart and massed themselves. But how did they compose what people called a life? . . . Perhaps there's "I" at the middle of it, she thought; a knot; a centre; . . . ⁷⁸

Yet it occurs to her as she thinks on, that there is perhaps after all a pattern. One life perhaps is not enough to gain a sense of the whole. Rather life succeeds life until it is suspected that all that occurs has happened before:

Does everything then come over again a little differently? she thought. If so is there a pattern; a theme, recurring, like music; half remembered, half foreseen? . . . a gigantic pattern, momentarily perceptible? The thought gave her extreme pleasure: that there was a pattern. But who makes? Who thinks it? Her mind slipped. She could not finish her thought.⁷⁹

Delia's party serves to illustrate the repetitive pattern of life. Just as Eleanor had met people at a party years ago, talked of many things, so too, now her nephews and nieces now meet people and engage in much the same

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 366-367.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 369.

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conversation. Then life seems to be "a perpetual discovery", a "miracle".⁸⁰ Life then ceases to be something particular and becomes something general and englobing.

She felt, or rather she saw, not a place, but a state of being, in which there was real laughter, real happiness, and this fractured world was whole; whole, vast, and free. But how could she say it?⁸¹

Each human life is but "a narrow ripple in human consciousness;"⁸² it is a bubble in the stream of life. Each moment is filled with past, present, and future, Eleanor realizes. The years have passed; lives have been lived; and yet there "The sun had risen, and the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace."⁸³ Day succeeds day, as year follows year, century, century. Though there be hardship, change, and death, the collective community of man is preserved.

The texture of life is preserved throughout the novel:

The episodes which develop one by one as the book proceeds are necessarily not only as indicating the cumulative nature of experience,

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 383.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 390.

⁸² Ibid., p. 410.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 435.

but as describing the original events about which later memory hovers. Episodes in the childhood of the Margiter children are described in the beginning of the book, and they reappear later on, when the children are middle-aged or old, as part of the texture of their consciousness.⁸⁴

The Years suffers, however, from overstatement.

The very quality of the writing makes its length unnecessary. The full meaning has been there for quite a long time before the book comes to a close. 1917 is as good a date as 1937 for completing the recurring cycle. Indeed, each day is a microcosm of all life, as Virginia Woolf demonstrated so brilliantly in Mrs. Dalloway.⁸⁵

This novel lacks the subtlety of The Waves. The point of view of the novel, the outward description of the merging of personality and reality through time into life, left the work open to repetition, for it was only, perhaps, through repetition that the passing of years, and the similarity of one life to another could be described. Virginia Woolf herself spoke of the work as "that odious rice pudding of a book", and "a dank failure."⁸⁶ The novel however, is important inasmuch as it shows the continuity of the author's work, and also inasmuch as it is helpful in coming to an understanding of her last novel, Between the Acts.

⁸⁴Maiches, op. cit., p. 118.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 120.

⁸⁶Guiguet, op. cit., p. 318.

In Between the Acts, which appeared in 1941 shortly after the author committed suicide, Virginia Woolf attempts in a more serious vein what she had undertaken in Orlando, and, unsuccessfully, in The Years: to trace the impulsion of history upon the living.

A subtle counterpoint runs through the novel. The pageant retraces British history theatrically, while, between the acts, those actually living comment upon their past symbolically represented. The collective experience of culture leads the protagonists to an awareness of the essential and never ending movement of life into death. They experience in a "moment" the meaning of all the familiar gestures, the sense of what life is.

Thakur expresses the significance of the novel this way:

Whereas in Orlando and The Years Virginia Woolf treats time in its historical perspective showing the changes that a society undergoes, and in Mrs. Dalloway, and to a lesser extent in The Waves, she shows the inner durée and the outer clock time affecting individual personalities, in Between the Acts, bringing all her ideas about time together, she not only records inner, clock, and historical time, but also brings in prehistoric time. Besides time and its effects, in this novel she gives us a more mature vision of life and reality. . . . The stress is on all aspects of life equally--the physical as well

as the spiritual--the social as well as the individual--the active as well as the contemplative.⁸⁷

Mrs. Woolf has in this novel telescoped time. The chronological time of this novel is less than twenty-four hours. The pageant however, goes from Chaucer to the present day. What occurs during the pageant serves to explain what occurs between the acts.

The ordering power behind the vision to be achieved is Miss La Trobe, a figure like that of Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay, or Lily Briscoe, a person who has the power of creating, of assembling for a moment the diversity of human life:

Now Miss La Trobe stepped from her hiding. Flowing, and streaming, on the grass, on the gravel, still for one moment she held them together--the dispersing company. Hadn't she, for twenty-five minutes, made them see? A vision imparted was relief from agony ...for a moment...one moment.⁸⁸

The audience watching the pageant is subtly brought to reflect on the nature of life as they observe familiar faces performing less familiar roles. The odd viewer reflects:

⁸⁷N.C. Thakur, The Symbolism of Virginia Woolf (London: Oxford university Press, 1965), pp. 141-142.

⁸⁸Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941), p. 98.

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"You think people change? Their clothes, of course...but I meant ourselves...Clearing out a cupboard, I found my father's old top hat...But ourselves--do we change?"⁸⁹

The recurring song intoned by the villagers is symbolic of the inevitable progress of time:

Digging and delving, the villagers sang passing in single file in and out between the trees, for the earth is always the same, summer and winter and spring; and spring and winter again; ploughing and sowing, eating and growing; time passes....⁹⁰

As later they sing the same song, they add, "but we remain forever the same..."⁹¹ Miss La Trobe, as if to preserve the truth of the affirmation, orders them to sing more loudly.

As the pageant progresses the viewers become more engaged in the proceedings. It is as if the pageant somewhat mysteriously held them together. "Time was passing. How long would time hold them together? It was a gamble; a risk..."⁹² The pageant moves on into the Victorian age. As it progresses the spectators are more convinced of their community with history:

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 120-121.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 125.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 139.

⁹² Ibid., p. 151.

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"The Victorian," Mrs. Swithin mused. "I don't believe," she said with her odd little smile, "that there ever were such people. Only you and me and William dressed differently."⁹³

Finally the present moment is reached. The means Miss La Trobe chose in order to portray the present time is particularly clever. Mirrors are held up to the audience and they view themselves:

So this was her little game! To show us up, as we are, here and now. All shifted. Even Bart, even Lucy, turned away. All evaded or shaded themselves--save Mrs. Manresa who, facing herself in the glass, used it as a glass; had out her mirror; powdered her nose; and moved one curl, disturbed by the breeze, to its place.⁹⁴

The audience's reaction is interesting. They fear to know themselves. Even Mrs. Manresa's nonchalance in front of the looking glass is evasive, since she uses the occasion to put on make-up, hence to perfect, symbolically, the mask she wears in facing the world. The audience is disturbed by seeing itself reflected in mirrors because the glasses have brought them to the realization that they too are an intimate part of the action of the pageant. Fact and dream or fancy have been joined together to provide a unified vision. Stage and life are one. They are the present actors in life's eternal pageant. Logically enough, the only one to express his delight with the outcome of this trick is old Bartholomew, a villager who senses, precisely because of his age, the truth about the passage of time.

⁹³Ibid., p. 174.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 186.

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The gramophone puts the question directly to the audience:

Look at ourselves, ladies and gentlemen!
Then at the wall; and ask how's this wall,
the great wall, which we call, perhaps
miscall, civilization, to be built by
 (here the mirrors flicked and flashed)
orts, scraps and fragments like ourselves?⁹⁵

The audience instinctively seizes upon the unity that binds them together regardless of their apparent diversity: "they crashed; solved; united."⁹⁶ The local clergyman gives a speech wherein the significance of the pageant is made clear:

To me at least it was indicated that we are members one of another. Each is part of the whole. . . . We act different parts; but are the same. That I leave to you. . . . Dare we, I ask myself, limit life to ourselves? May we not hold that there is a spirit that inspires pervades..." . . . "I leave that to you. I am not here to explain. That role has not been assigned to me. I speak only as one of the audience, one of ourselves. I caught myself too reflected, as it happened in my own mirror..." (Laughter) "Scraps, orts and Fragments! Surely, we should unite?"⁹⁷

A collection is then taken up. The collection becomes a symbol of their unity in common endeavour. The sound of airplanes flying in formation overhead is heard.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 188.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 189.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 192.

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The meaning of their unity, then, is made more clear. The year is 1941. The planes are defending all the history, the "pageantry" they hold dear. The unity achieved, has through the symbolism of the planes, not only social importance, but national and cultural importance as well.

The pageant has also a personal significance, for it has helped to re-establish the sense of communion between two of the main characters, Isa and Giles. Isa has been upset by the attention Giles has been paying to the flirtatious Mrs. Manresa. This is, it is suggested, perhaps not the first of his infidelities. Isa reacts violently:

"The father of my children, whom I love and hate." Love and hate--how they tore her asunder'. Surely it was time someone invented a new plot, or that the author came out from the bushes...⁹⁸

There is implied, however, in the expression "the father of my children" the sense of a necessary continuity. This is expressed more clearly when Isa and Giles are alone during the evening:

Alone, enmity was bared; also love. Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night.⁹⁹

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 215.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 219.

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The pageant of life continues. Generation succeeds generation. The eternal problems of birth and death, of love and loneliness, of solitude and society, go on. Giles and Isa's position is paralleled to that of all people in all times:

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.
Then the curtain rose. They spoke.¹⁰⁰

The curtain rises. They too accept their part in the play that is life, and speak their lines. The accidents change but the essence of the play is always the same. This is the vision of life that is achieved between the acts.

In this chapter, the importance of death and the impulsion of history upon the living in the achieving of the "moment" was studied. In Mrs Dalloway, Clarissa's understanding of the suicide of her double, Septimus, leads to an understanding of life. In To the Lighthouse, Mrs. Woolf is concerned with the relationship of personality to time, change, and death. Mrs. Ramsay's life and death prove that death is a part of life. It ends separation by putting into relief the essential kinship of man with his past in the battle of life. In Orlando Mrs. Woolf deals imaginatively with the bearing of the past upon the present

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 219.

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in an attempt to plumb the depth of human existence and the complexity of the individual who seeks to understand what he is in relation to his age and culture. The Waves traces symbolically the growth of an awareness of what life is through six characters intimately linked with a seventh who never speaks but with whom they commune in remembrance and in defiance. The Years chronicles the life of a family through several generations to establish the nature of the impulsion of death upon life and of history upon the living. In Between the Acts the collective experience of culture leads the protagonists to an essential awareness of the meaning of all their familiar gestures. In all the novels, by means of various symbols and techniques, the episodes build up to a "moment" wherein the sense of life is grasped in all its richness and wholeness. In this "moment" the meaning of death for the living, more, the meaning of history, that is, of all past lives and deaths, is understood.

CHAPTER III

THE "MOMENT"

This chapter seeks to explain the nature of the "moment" in terms of phylogenetic and ontogenetic consciousness. Ontogenetic consciousness will be seen to be a consciousness which grows and develops itself in contact with reality by absorbing and reacting to it, and by reviewing and re-evaluating reality within itself through voluntary and involuntary memory, through association. Phylogenetic consciousness, it will be seen, implies ontogenetic consciousness but adds to mind-time the dimension of chronological time. An awareness of both the phylogenetic and the ontogenetic consciousness is essential to the establishing of a proper relationship between characters and reality, between microcosm and macrocosm in time.

This examination will permit a new formulation of the nature of the "moment." It is the succession and the simultaneities of mind-time and chronological time reaching through a concatenation of events an intensity, which given the presence of a catalyst such as the impulsion of love or death upon life, or of history upon the living, permits a transmutation to take place so that a whole whose borders are undefined is formed. This "moment" is a formal "vision", a crystallization of existence through art.

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Time, for Virginia Woolf, is essentially qualitative, not quantitative. It is the measure of becoming. Clock time appears to be pragmatic and illusory. Time, then, in Mrs. Woolf's novels, is synonymous with duration. It follows that this measuring may be most easily accomplished when a new fact of consciousness is being measured against voluntary or involuntary memory, that is, when the relationship established is wholly within the consciousness and not dependent on the consciousness' grasp of the world around it. More tenuous and difficult to establish is the organization of consciousness to express a "moment" of intensity which crystallizes existence into a series of configurations wherein past and present, exterior and interior, merge into a vision characterized not by dimension but by intensity.

Consciousness comes to know itself gradually and intuitively through its own mediation as it acts upon reality. Reality and consciousness become integral to each other. This significant conjunction between consciousness and the world is the result of a distillation through mind-time of manifold contradictory elements such as solitude and society, loneliness and love, death and life, permanence and change.

Reality includes the whole of time, as well as all space, and we can grasp but fragments

of it. Virginia Woolf discovered through her senses, so to speak, the truth that Kant found intellectually: that space and time are human concepts, that we look, to use Kant's illustration, through spectacles that cause us to organize our experience in terms of time and space--terms which are purely relative to ourselves. This view of reality accounts, in part, for the ever-recurring image of the sea in Virginia Woolf's books. The sea laps all the shores of the world; it has been and will be, so it seems to us mortals, through all time. The waves disturb its depths no more than the years ripple the surface of eternity.¹

In the first two novels, The Voyage Out and Night and Day, Mrs. Woolf adhered scrupulously to the conventional treatment of time and space while interesting herself more fully, however, with mind-time, chiefly by considering the effects of memory on consciousness in a rather obvious way.

In The Voyage Out and Night and Day, we have the classic concept of space, in which beings and things are set out; it determines their closeness or distance, their contact or separation. Its solidity, its fixedness, enable it to include and define movement, and consequently temporal succession.²

Jacob's Room introduces a more synthetic use of time-space co-ordinates by making them marginal. Chronological time is broken down. The author dwells upon

¹J. K. Blackstone, The Bloomsbury Group: A Study of E.M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, and their Circle (New York: Noonday Press, 1963), pp. 141-142.

²Guiguet, op. cit., p. 383.

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certain haphazard moments or incidents in Jacob's life. Space and chronological time also become further disjunct because they are recorded marginally as momentary preceptions by characters not central to the action. Yet the emptiness of Jacob's room after his death reaffirms a paradox. The passage of chronological time, though it impinges but slightly on mind-time, appears, because of death, victorious. Yet the return of Bonamy and Mrs. Flanders to Jacob's room and their evocation of him through memory reaffirms the essential subjugation of chronology and space to mind-time since in a "moment" the totality of Jacob's life can be seized and salvaged from the darkness of non-conscious existence by involuntary memory.

Jacob, killed in the war, has indeed become a thing. Others survive him to carry on the vague networks of life indefinitely, dying and recreating themselves, while the things, now lacking their "magnet," soon to be scattered, retain a meaning of their past relationships with the hero.³

Mrs Dalloway makes effective use of chronological time to superimpose a time-montage or a space-montage on a character's consciousness. Clock time serves to mark the shift from one to another, for Mrs. Woolf:

. . . she takes the two categories of time and space and uses them in almost regular

³Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 212.

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alternation in order to effect transitions between different situations. Once we have been introduced to a character we remain for some time inside that character's mind, going back and forth in time as the character recalls the past or plans the future. And after we have remained within one character's mind for some time, Virginia Woolf, bringing that character's reverie up to the present moment, reminds the reader of someone else who is pursuing his own train of thought at the same moment. Thus we either stand still in time and move from character to character, or we stand still in space, remaining with one character and moving up and down in time with his consciousness.⁴

These devices make possible the counterpoint between Clarissa and Septimus through links the booming of Big Ben and the royal car, the airplane skywriting, and Dr. Bradshaw provide, given the direction of an omniscient narrator.

The simultaneity afforded by these techniques prepares for the "moment" which coincides with the identity Clarissa feels with Septimus upon his death:

Clarissa and Septimus, as the two protagonists, do not complement one another only because they are aspects of a divided personality in a clinical sense, or even because they share a divided point of view, as we have observed it in Hesse and occasionally in Gide. Rather, they are components of an impersonal insight in which they are briefly united in the end. The goal of Mrs. Dalloway as a novel lies in this impersonal moment in which Clarissa is liberated and brought into a union with life, in which she is "defined."⁵

⁴Daiches, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

⁵Freedman, op. cit., p. 215.

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Jacob's triumph over time had been to gain through death an existence through involuntary memory in the consciousness of others, to retain the sense his life possessed in some form regardless of the greatest obstacle chronological time can present: death. This was the vision Jacob's Room afforded.

Mrs Dalloway expands upon this vision. Like Jacob's death, Septimus' death is catalytic. Septimus' failure to reconcile the life of self and the life of society brings Clarissa to an intuitive awareness of the demands of both, and ultimately to a view of life. Septimus through death is vanquished by time in that he is robbed of his individual selfhood. His act however is not wholly wasted; he stirs an awareness and an identity in the person of Clarissa, who in an obscure and intuitive sense assumes his act and resolves it into life, into victory rather than defeat.

Clarissa intuitively grasps the meaning of Septimus' vision, which he could communicate only by death. She thereby absorbs into herself the significance which Septimus holds for the reader; and yet she retains her own special power to create in the imperfect fallen realm of human relations, a power which Septimus wholly lacked. In her handling of the conclusion to this novel Mrs. Woolf attempts to make clear that we must retain the limiting protecting identity which is ours in time if we are to triumph over time.⁶

⁶John Graham, "Time in the Novels of Virginia Woolf", University of Toronto quarterly, (January, 1949), 189-190.

The insight or vision of life in Mrs Dalloway is as impersonal as it is in Jacob's Room. The reader's awareness of the significant resolution of death into life that is effected is not, as it is for Clarissa, on a pre-conscious or subconscious level. Clarissa does not know she has achieved an integration. She does not know why she must go back to the party to play out her role as an "assembler" in life.

It is the symbolic, private meaning of all this which illuminates for Clarissa her actions and the actions of the humanity (the woman going to bed, the young man who killed himself) around her; and it is the symbolic significance which illuminates for the reader the meaning of the commonplace in the mind of Clarissa.⁷

The reason for this is simple enough. The majority of the central symbols used in Mrs. Woolf's novels, the lighthouse being perhaps the best example, are not operative on the level of the character's consciousness, but rather are operative on the level of the central directive intelligence, that is, of the omniscient narrator.

Virginia Woolf's symbols are aesthetic symbols rationally created to suggest and give insight into the ineffable in human thought and feeling, or, to heighten and make splendid the desired emotions and ideas. . . .⁸

⁷Robert Humphrey, Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 103.

⁸Thakur, op. cit., p. 4.

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Thus the role of Septimus in Mrs Dalloway, as the very idea of the double suggests, is more symbolic than literal. This is not to say that Septimus is not important thematically on a literal level as well. The simultaneity of the consciousness of two people who can recall a whole life within a single day has the advantage of proving that durational values are independent of clock time, and that the mind can contain the world while illustrating the communion which must exist between the "I" as a part of the world and the "I" of consciousness.

The life of consciousness is seen to be vital and to triumph over time only inasmuch as it can sustain the osmotic process between mind and reality to the advantage of the mind, of dreams, of vision, rather than to the advantage of reality, that is, the submission of the spontaneity of the mind, of the imagination, of the involuntary memory to cold logic, to facts.

In Mrs Dalloway, Septimus, who is unable to come to terms with reality, to assimilate the outer with the inner, is brought to suicide. Dr. Bradshaw, who is cast as the worshipper of facts, of the goddesses of proportion and conversion, is denied any comprehension of human life or values. Clarissa, who can penetrate Bradshaw's world without being contaminated by it, and who can attain an

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empathetic union with Septimus, is able to co-ordinate these worlds, the inner and the outer, and thus create the "moment" in all its richness at the party. "Clarissa has become an embodiment of imagination in which the conflict between mind and "other" is unified at last."⁹ Graham comments appropriately, ". . . Clarissa, returning to the party, symbolizes the transfiguration of time."¹⁰

The structure of To the Lighthouse serves admirably to show the triumph of personality over time. The first section of To the Lighthouse is similar in several ways to the last part of Mrs Dalloway. The duration in chronological time of this first section is less than six hours. It too centres about a party of sorts. Unlike Mrs. Dalloway, however, Mrs. Ramsay already possesses an intuitive and unconscious power to assemble. Throughout the section her awareness of this power grows.

Mrs. Ramsay's special power, appreciated by her guests, is in the fusion of the chance-collected, discordant, even recalcitrant individuals. Out of three ordinary sounds Browning's musician made not a fourth sound but a star, and out of her unpromising miscellany Mrs. Ramsay makes a communion.¹¹

⁹Freedman, op. cit., p. 225.

¹⁰Graham, op. cit., p. 190.

¹¹E. K. Brown, Rhythm in the Novel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), p. 66.

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Mrs. Ramsay, however, is aware of the fragility of the communion she can effect. The problem of achieving a sustained osmotic process between mind and reality is stated in the first part on a symbolic level also:

Mrs. Ramsay, the champion of the trip to the lighthouse, is opposed by her husband, who answers her opening remarks: "'But,' said his father, stopping in front of the drawing room window, 'it won't be fine.'" Thus the basic situation is infused with symbolic meaning in the opposing of two forces. The general relationships of the characters, the struggle after answers to basic problems of knowledge, the search for keys to memories and impressions take on the significance that comes with a mystical quest. It is, in Virginia Woolf, all a matter of insight, for the symbolic values cannot be defined; and when one finds them, one knows it only by intuition, by "sensing" it.¹²

The problem at the end of the first section remains unsolved. The second section, which is a rendering of the effect of chronological time on the lives of the characters of the first section seems to spell out the ultimate defeat of Mrs. Ramsay. All is decay. Mrs. Ramsay dies, and with her so it seems, her power of effecting reunions, communions. Yet the third section affirms the contrary emphatically. Mrs. Ramsay's death serves to give greater intensity to this third part. Graham expresses it this way:

It is important she should die, for death is the most powerful assault which time can make on her vision. It sweeps her away, but

¹²Humphrey, op. cit., pp. 101-102.

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it cannot destroy the lighthouse; and by the time she dies, the lighthouse has become the meaning of Mrs. Ramsay.¹³

The third section affirms in a twofold way the triumph of Mrs. Ramsay's vision of life. The "moment" of this novel, is in a sense, the fusion of the "moments" of Jacob's Room and Mrs Dalloway. The vision of life Mr. Ramsay comes to is represented symbolically by his sailing to the lighthouse. It parallels the "moment" in Jacob's Room in that it is achieved by means of the catalyst of death. Mr. Ramsay might be compared to Bonamy and Mrs. Flanders, who sense the meaning of life by a return to view the familiar objects which serve as an evocation of what Jacob was. Mr. Ramsay, in returning to the cottage after ten years finds all the familiar objects and gains through viewing them an integral vision of life that his symbolic voyage serves to express.

Lily Briscoe's vision is much more complex. It is achieved partly as Mrs. Dalloway's was. By reflecting upon the sense of Mrs. Ramsay's death, she is able to perceive the meaning and the relationship of death and life. More, she comes to understand that she is assuming Mrs. Ramsay's function of preparing and achieving momentary communions.

¹³Graham, op. cit., p. 191.

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These two awarenesses combine into a new and symbolic third which is indicated by the completion of her painting.

The unity Lily achieves in aesthetic terms by painting the scene in front of her, which incorporates sea and lighthouse signifies the final resolution of the impermanent vision of Mrs. Ramsay. It is represented in the first section by the window (which suggests the osmotic process between reality and consciousness while maintaining the barrier of personality) into a permanent vision wherein the lighthouse plays a central role. It is symbolic of the permanence Mrs. Ramsay's life achieves in the minds of the characters. She is as the lighthouse is, impersonal, spreading light and order over the sea, attracting and remaining central and constant.

Lily's vision is that Mrs. Ramsay's power of assembling is never lost, for its repeated manifestation through chronological time leads to the achieving of an intensity such as the one she has just experienced, wherein consciousness makes the distinctions between inner and outer invalid by merging the outer and inner into the eternal. Mrs. Ramsay, in her life, assumed within herself the world around her. With her death, the world assumes Mrs. Ramsay's vision, which, though depersonalized, retains its value. The window then, through chronological time, becomes the lighthouse.

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In the same manner, Lily's painting becomes symbolic of this change. It takes Lily ten years to complete it; when it is completed, it crystallizes and renders permanent what it represents, though the things represented decay and change. Drawing a line in the middle of the picture, she unites the disparate parts. Likewise, Mrs. Ramsay, the bearer of the vision, dies but the vision remains. Since the vision remains, the achieving of the vision necessarily then recreates in part what Mrs. Ramsay was, much as Lily's painting, viewed, would give an insight into what were the objects she eternalized. Death serves then to explain the meaning of life; change explains permanence. "Lily's striving for an understanding of the Ramsays is equated with a struggle for self-definition. A reconciliation of opposites in life is equated with a reconciliation of opposites in art."¹⁴ Consciousness and reality, past and present, death and life, time and eternity, are transfixed into an integral vision of the whole.

The chronological order of Orlando--the procedure from period to period of English history in perfect logical order--is completely nullified by the last fifteen pages, in which the action proper of the novel may be said to begin and in which the past is recapitulated temporarily rather than spatially, so that the past becomes the present, the present past, and, as Virginia Woolf had noted in her diary, "the actual event practically does not exist."¹⁵

¹⁴Freedman, op. cit., p. 237.

¹⁵Hafley, op. cit., p. 96.

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In Orlando chronological time is used as if it were mind-time by the identification of all the evolution of history from the Elizabethans to the twentieth century as being one in Orlando's consciousness. When the concept of spiritual androgyny represented by the physical change from male to female is added to this, the particular character of the "moment" in this fanciful novel becomes apparent. Orlando's life through the centuries serves as a symbol of the simultaneous ontogenetic and phylogenetic character of consciousness when it is in osmotic relation with life. It is a new rendering of what Lily Briscoe had grasped as her vision.

Consciousness may be viewed then in two ways. Consciousness expands and develops itself in contact with reality by absorbing and reacting to it, and by reviewing and re-evaluating reality within itself through voluntary and involuntary memory, through association. Such a consciousness might be termed ontogenetic. An understanding of the nature of life may be achieved in this way. The "moment" of Mrs Dalloway was achieved in such a manner. The achievement of such a "moment" usually implies, however, a stasis in chronological time. Mind-time is concentrated upon.

The phylogenetic character of consciousness implies the ontogenetic, of course, but adds the dimension of

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chronological time to mind-time. The phylogenetic consciousness is then the ontogenetic consciousness to which has been added the perspective of history. The "moment" achieved in Jacob's Room was chiefly phylogenetic. Mrs. Woolf carefully avoided any elaboration of Jacob's consciousness. What it is concentrated upon is the impact of Jacob's life upon those around him, that is, the impact of history upon the living. The "moment" in Jacob's Room coincides with the realizing by ontogenetic consciousness of a phylogenetic addition to their awareness making for a sudden intensity of awareness. This also helps to explain more fully the nature of the "moment" in Mrs Dalloway.

In Jacob's Room, the reader was not presented with any central ontogenetic consciousness. This helps to explain the relative weakness of the "moment" in this novel. To be effective the surcharge that the phylogenetic addition brings must take place in a well-established and well-understood ontogenetic consciousness. This is the case in Mrs Dalloway. The ontogenetic consciousness of Clarissa is well established. The surcharge the phylogenetic addition brings, through the intermediary of Septimus' suicide, a realization of the meaning of death life. The "moment" can be expressive and full through this almost perfect coincidence. Clarissa's intuitive grasping of the wholeness

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and limitlessness of life is more profound and less diffuse than Bonamy's and Mrs. Flanders.

In To the Lighthouse both the ontogenetic and phylogenetic combine in the expression of the "moment". The first section presents the ontogenetic consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay while maintaining the corollary stasis in chronological time. The second section then presents the effects of chronological time on ontogenetic consciousness. The third section represents ontogenetic consciousness in the character of Lily Briscoe with the usual stasis in chronological time while introducing the phylogenetic surcharge in a double way. It is introduced symbolically in Mr. Ramsay's voyage to the lighthouse which is a voyage through time to an awareness of the significance of the past in giving meaning to the present, and it is introduced actually in Lily's meditation upon Mrs. Ramsay's power to assemble and in her realization of the continuance of Mrs. Ramsay's action on life into the present. Lily's completion of the painting becomes symbolic then of the union of ontogenetic and phylogenetic consciousness to come to a permanent vision of life. The aesthetic reproduction of landscape on canvas by formalization is symbolic of the merging of consciousness and reality, of past and present, into the integral objective vision, the "moment" the novel affords.

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The originality of Orlando, then, is in the development it gives to the concept of phylogenetic consciousness. Mrs. Woolf presents symbolically through Orlando, from the outside as it were, the phylogenetic surcharge merging into ontogenetic consciousness. The actual rendering of Orlando's consciousness occurs but infrequently until the final section. Orlando is viewed much as Jacob was by an omniscient intelligence adopting two methods of narration.

Like Jacob's Room, Orlando has two narrators; but here the device is used purely for its ironic value; there is never any doubt that the prim and coy man who is writing Orlando's biography is himself a comment upon himself--a comment made by the central intelligence who, through most of the novel, backs away from the biographer so that he becomes part of the total perspective.¹⁶

In the final section, the reader is introduced to the ontogenetic consciousness of Orlando, who reflects upon the multiplicity of selves and their organization into a more central self. Orlando then typifies any person's awareness of the impulsion of the past upon the present. Orlando is ecstatic over the discovery of the present given meaning by the past. She identifies with the river, with the flow of life itself:

. . . I can begin to live again. I am the Serpentine, she thought, the little boat is climbing through the white arch of a thousand deaths. I am about to understand...¹⁷

¹⁶Hafley, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁷Woolf, Orlando, p. 211.

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Orlando looks into herself as into a pool, and sees within herself the merging of ontogenetic and phylogenetic consciousness; past and present are one. This rather lengthy quotation demonstrates the resolving of past and present into an integral vision of life:

She now looked down into this pool or sea in which everything is reflected--and, indeed, some say that all our most violent passions, and art and religion are the reflections which we see in the dark hollow at the back of the head when the visible world is obscured for the time. She looked there now, long, deeply, profoundly, and immediately the ferny path up the hill along which she was walking became not entirely a path, but partly the Serpentine; the hawthorn bushes were partly ladies and gentlemen sitting with card cases and gold-mounted canes; the sheep were partly tall Mayfair houses; everything was partly something else, and each gained an odd moving power from this union of itself and something not itself so that with this mixture of truth and falsehood her mind became like a forest in which things moved; lights and shadows changed, and one thing became another.¹⁸

The clock strikes, demonstrating the unity achieved between mind-time and chronological time at last. Like Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay, Orlando now can maintain the delicate balance, the osmotic process between inner and outer, past and present, mind-time and chronological time.

It was not necessary to faint now in order to look deep into the darkness where things shape themselves and to see in the pool of the mind now Shakespeare, now a girl in Russian trousers, now a toy boat on the

¹⁸Ibid., p. 211.

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Serpentine, and then the Atlantic itself, where it storms in great waves past Cape Horn. There was her husband's brig, rising to the top of the wave! Up, it went, and up and up. The white arch of a thousand deaths rose before it. Oh rash, oh ridiculous man, always sailing, so uselessly, round Cape Horn in the teeth of the gale! But the brig was through the arch and on out on the other side; it was safe at last!¹⁹

Life may be faced now in all its complexity. The past gives meaning to the present. The return of Orlando's husband from the Cape, sailing through "the white arch of a thousand deaths" is symbolic of man who, as a ship braves the storms on the sea, battles life. Though individual lives may be lost, the ship itself is not wrecked but passes through the arch. The theme of the effect of death on the living found in The Voyage Out, Jacob's Room, Mrs Dalloway, and To the Lighthouse broadens to combine with the effect of the past on the present time linking the personal past that is memory, with the collective past that is history. The unity between ontogenetic and phylogenetic consciousness has been delineated more clearly than in earlier novels.

Orlando then is a novel that deserves the lengthy consideration accorded it here for it is helpful in explaining both the direction Mrs. Woolf's later novels were to take as well as giving an insight into the nature of the "moment" in the novels that preceded it.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 214.

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The Waves, for example, presents ontogenetic consciousness while rendering phylogenetic consciousness symbolically. This novel represents, perhaps, Mrs. Woolf's greatest elaboration of ontogenetic consciousness for she has presented the various attitudes possible towards reality through diverse characters who merge into a central consciousness which, through an awareness and an understanding of Percival's death, combines ontogenetic and phylogenetic consciousness into life itself symbolically represented in the transmuted personality of Bernard who, yielding his body to the ravages of chronological time, to death, survives as the spirit of life itself defying death.

The "moment" of The Waves like the "moment" of the major novels is impersonal though it is evolved through the growing awareness, for the characters, of the nature of life. The "moment" is impersonal though it has, in the novels, a personal significance, because it transcends the conscious or pre-conscious vision of the characters to exist on the higher level of the omniscient narrator.

It follows that since the major symbolism in the novels is not operative at the level of the character's consciousnesses merely but also at the level of the central directive intelligence, the cumulative effect of this symbolism has a greater impact for the reader for the protagonists of the novels. For example, Septimus in

Mrs Dalloway exists as a double and a symbol only for the reader and not for Clarissa. Likewise in To the Lighthouse, the identification of Mrs. Ramsay with the lighthouse through time is effected on the level of the reader rather than on the level of the consciousness of the characters. That is why Lily's vision is to herself inexpressible though it is clearly understood by the reader.

The Years, it has been suggested, could be viewed as the counterpart of The Waves. It is the counterpart of The Waves in that rather than concentrating upon ontogenetic consciousness with the usual stasis in chronological time, it shows the gradual creation of phylogenetic consciousness to end up with its merging with ontogenetic consciousness in the character of Eleanor, in order to establish a sense of the proper osmotic relation of consciousness with life, of mind-time with chronological time.

The "moment" of The Years is impersonal also, for to the sense of history that brings the character to a perception of life, is added the reader's perception of details on the level of the omniscient narrator, which make the protagonist's vision more significant.

In Between the Acts Mrs. Woolf achieved a simultaneity between ontogenetic and phylogenetic consciousness. In the previous works, the novel either dwelt chiefly in the realm of ontogenetic consciousness and presented ultimately

the coming to an awareness of phylogenetic consciousness in order to achieve the "moment", or the novel presented an evolution through history and gradually introduced the reader more deeply into an ontogenetic consciousness as it became aware of the sense of the evolution presented through chronological time, that is to say, as the phylogenetic consciousness added itself to the ontogenetic.

In Between the Acts there is an interaction between history and ontogenetic consciousness so that the phylogenetic consciousness develops along with and within the novel and does not come as a surcharge. The characters grow gradually aware of the meaning of history to them until finally, as the pageant reaches the present day, they seize upon the significance of the whole; they understand the meaning of life, and its intimate connection with the past.

The "moment" here too is impersonal for the reasons already stated. The awareness the reader obtains as to the nature of life is greater than that of the characters because he has the advantage of viewing the scene as it has been organized by a central intelligence.

The stasis in chronological time has in this novel been maintained outwardly though the single day in which the pageant takes place enfolds the history of England from Chaucer to the present.

In all the novels in which there is a stasis in chronological time, the stasis is only an outward one. Indeed, though in Mrs Dalloway, in the first and last section of To the Lighthouse, in The Waves, and in Between the Acts, the chronological time of the novel is usually less than twenty-four hours, the mind, ranging from past to present is sufficient to prove that any day is a microcosmic rendering of the totality of life. The Waves illustrates this admirably by its symbolic use of the movement of the sun over the earth during one day to represent the life-span of the characters. The stasis in chronological time is necessary because of the obvious technical difficulties involved in presenting a stream of consciousness time-space montage that would cover years. Mrs. Woolf's solution to the problem is that of Between the Acts: a symbolic representation of chronological time by means of a pageant which takes place in one day.

Various definitions of the "moment" have been attempted. Guiguet writes:

If we consider the "here and now", the moment apprehended with the intensity and sharpness of Virginia Woolf's "vision"--whether we are concerned with Clarissa, Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, any of the characters in The Waves, or Eleanor Fargiter, we realise that it means a sense of peace and plenitude. It is thus because in it, life and the feeling of life attain a perfect harmony. Everything is included and understood. Totality, union, communion, possession, this moment satisfies

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the demands of the whole being, who has mastered his life, who lives it and contemplates it in a single act, which is existing, feeling and thinking at once.²⁰

This descriptive definition is an exact one as far as it goes. But it describes merely the nature of the "moment" as it occurs within the character. It does not express sufficiently perhaps, the necessary inter-relationship between consciousness and reality, between past and present.

Jean-Jacques Mayoux has presented a very subtle definition which takes these points into account:

Le moment s'étend, ou plutôt se concentre, autour d'une conscience, ou d'un groupe de consciences. Spatial et temporel, strié de successions et simultanités, il constitue une unité organique, vivante, au contour imprécis. Il englobe une réalité encore "extérieure" mais sans cesse en passe de devenir du conscient ou de l'inconscient, sans cesse mêlée en un tissu inextricable à la remontée des souvenirs, au fil capricieux des associations et des analogies. Le moment, dans sa figure symbolique et totale, n'est pas nécessairement intérieur aux personnages; il peut leur être juxtaposé, les encercler.²¹

Freedman writes that "Virginia Woolf conceived of the moment as a contraction of the manifold elements of life into significant images or scenes."²² This critic has

²⁰Guiguet, op. cit., p. 395.

²¹Jean-Jacques Mayoux, Vivants Filiers: Le roman anglo-saxon et les symboles (Paris: Julliard, 1960), p. 215.

²²Freedman, op. cit., p. 197.

further seized upon the importance of time in the formation of the "moment":

For her, time remained a symbol of the "moment," including both the external framework of consecutive time and the individual's internal journeys into past, present, and future. In her novels, inner time is always as deeply involved with the external world as is external or physical time.²³

Graham, in dealing with Bernard's role in the final section of The Waves struck upon the importance of phylogenetic consciousness:

. . . The experience of creating this single identity lasts only a moment; but the communion created in that moment is eternal. It joins the "innumerable congregations of past time" in a celebration of the larger body of Man, which exists in an everlasting Now.²⁴

This is perhaps also one of the best expressions of Mrs. Woolf's pananthropism.

These definitions, however, seem to leave many aspects of the "moment" out of account. Chiefly, they do not mark sufficiently the impersonal quality of the "moment" as well as the causes of its occurrence.

Another definition might be attempted. The "moment" is a term that designates the coincidence of microcosm and macrocosm. It is formed by the succession and

²³Ibid., p. 269.

²⁴Graham, op. cit., p. 193.

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simultaneities of mind-time and chronological time reaching through a concatenation of events an intensity, which, given the presence of some catalyst such as the impulsion of love or death upon life, or of history upon the living, permits a transmutation to take place so that a whole, whose borders are undefined, is formed.

This "moment" affords a total vision, an instant and total grasping of the complexities of life through an intuitive perception of its unity.

The "moment" is not confined to the characters of the novel but exists at the level of the reader also. But the "moment" is more than the revelation to reader or character or both of a new aspect of themselves, for it is a crystallization of existence; it is a formal "vision" rendered permanent through art. By tracing a character's quest and achievement of an understanding of life, the reader, in experiencing the novel is meant to arrive at an understanding of the nature of life.

This chapter has sought to consider the methods of achieving the "moment" and to define its particular nature. It sought to understand of the importance of the concepts of phylogenetic and ontogenetic consciousness in establishing the relations between characters and reality, between

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microcosm and macrocosm in time. Sample definitions of the "moment" were examined, and afterwards a new definition was put forth.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented an analysis of Virginia Woolf's novels to show how they are organized in function of a "moment", a sense of the meaning and scope of life.

The two chief problems confronting Mrs. Woolf at the outset of her career were critical ones. What was the nature of consciousness, the microcosm, and what was its relationship to reality, the macrocosm. Mrs. Woolf, in considering the fact of consciousness explored the apparently unresolvable paradox involved in a person's need to retain his individuality while at the same time seeking some real communion with others. The macrocosm, the external world, is not merely the surface, the present, but its depth, the past which presses upon and gives impulsion to the present.

Time is for Virginia Woolf a comparison between the interior and the exterior. Their meeting is the "moment". It is the illuminating coincidence of microcosm and macrocosm. It is formed by the successions and simultaneities of mind-time and chronological time reaching through a concatenation of events an intensity which, given the presence of some catalyst such as the impulsion of love or death upon life, or of history upon the living, permits a transmutation to take place so that an organized whole whose

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borders are undefined is formed. This "moment" affords an instant and total grasping of the complexities of life through an intuitive perception of its unity.

This thesis traced the realizing of the "moment" in the novels through the catalysts of love, death, and a sense of history. The functions of time and space were studied in the light of their contribution to the formation of the "moment". A descriptive and generic definition of the "moment" as a resolution of microcosm and macrocosm was formulated.

The first chapter considered Mrs. Woolf's early novels: The Voyage Out, Night and Day, and Jacob's Room. While The Voyage Out affirmed the transitoriness of love, it was seen that this novel illustrated the possibility of death's having some value for the living. In Night and Day, the essential fragility of love as a solution was made manifest. It was concluded that the death of the hero in Jacob's Room served to mark a more intense perception of the sense of life. It was shown, furthermore, that in the three novels the narrative events and the symbols were organized in function of the expression of a "moment" wherein the meaning of life was grasped. It was further shown that love proved a less effective catalyst for the achieving of the "moment" than did death.

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The second chapter showed the importance of death and the impulsion of history upon the living in the achieving of the "moment". It was seen that it was through the suicide of her double that Clarissa, the central character of Mrs Dalloway, came to an understanding of life. To the Lighthouse, it was argued, showed Mrs. Woolf's concern with the relationship of personality to time, change and death. Orlando, it was seen, dealt imaginatively with the bearing of the past upon the present in order to plumb the depth of human existence and the complexity of the individual's relation with his age and culture. The Waves traced symbolically the growth of an awareness of the meaning of life. The Years established through a chronicle of lives, it was suggested, the nature of the impulsion of death upon life and of history upon the living. Between the Acts showed that the collective experience of culture led the protagonists to an awareness of life and history. The analysis of each of these novels then, served to prove that the narrative incidents of each are organized cumulatively in function of a "moment" wherein the sense of life is grasped in its totality and richness.

The last chapter explains the nature of the "moment" in terms of phylogenetic and ontogenetic consciousness. Ontogenetic consciousness, it was seen, is a consciousness

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which expands and develops itself in contact with reality by absorbing and reacting to it, and by reviewing and re-evaluating reality within itself through voluntary and involuntary memory, through association. Phylogenetic consciousness, it was suggested, implied ontogenetic consciousness but added to mind-time the dimension of chronological time. An awareness of both phylogenetic and ontogenetic consciousness is essential to the establishing of the proper relationship between characters and reality, between microcosm and macrocosm, in time. External and internal assume one another to form a whole, a "luminous halo".

This examination permits then, a new formulation of the nature of the "moment". It is, one must conclude, the succession and the simultaneities of mind-time and chronological time reaching through a concatenation of events an intensity, which, given the presence of some catalyst such as the impulsion of love or death upon life, or of history upon the living, permits a transmutation to take place so that a whole whose borders are undefined is formed. It may further be concluded that this "moment" affords an instant and total grasping of the complexities of life through an intuitive perception of its unity, and that it is not confined to the characters of the novels but exists

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on the level of the reader also, as a formal "vision", as
a crystallization of existence through art.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an analysis of Virginia Woolf's novels to show how they are organized in terms of a "moment", a sense of the meaning and scope of life.

The two chief problems confronting Mrs. Woolf at the outset of her career were critical ones: what was the nature of consciousness, the microcosm, and what was its relationship to reality, the macrocosm? The "moment" was the illuminating coincidence of microcosm and macrocosm.

This thesis traces the realizing of the "moment" in the novels through the catalysts of love, death, and a sense of history. Time and space are studied in the light of their contribution to the formation of the "moment". A descriptive and generic definition of the "moment" as a resolution of microcosm and macrocosm is formulated.

The first chapter considers Mrs. Woolf's first three novels, The Voyage Out, Night and Day, and Jacob's Room as they affirm the transitoriness of love and the possibility of death's having some value for the living in bringing about an awareness of the meaning of life. The narrative events and the symbols in each novel are seen to be organized in terms of the expression of a "moment" wherein the meaning of life is grasped. Love proves a less effective catalyst than death in the achieving of the "moment".

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The second chapter discusses the importance of death and a sense of history upon the living in the achieving of the "moment" in Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, Orlando, The Waves, The Years, and Between the Acts.

The last chapter explains the nature of the "moment" in terms of phylogenetic and ontogenetic consciousness. Ontogenetic consciousness is a consciousness which expands and develops itself in contact with reality by absorbing and reacting to it, and by reviewing and re-evaluating reality within itself through voluntary and involuntary memory, through association. Phylogenetic consciousness implies ontogenetic consciousness but adds to mind-time the dimension of chronological time. An awareness of both is essential to the establishing of the proper relationship between characters and reality, between microcosm and macrocosm in time.

The "moment" then is the succession and the simultaneities of mind-time and chronological time reaching to an intensity through a concatenation of events which, given the presence of some catalyst such as the impulsion of love or death upon life, or of history upon the living, permits a transmutation to take place so that a whole whose borders are undefined is formed. The "moment" affords, for the characters and the reader, an instant and total

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grasping of the complexities of life through an intuitive perception of its unity.

This thesis contains one hundred and twenty-one pages.