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VARIATION ON MOTHERHOOD IN WOOLF, LAWRENCE, AND JOYCE

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A thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies
of the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

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in English Literature

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Abstract

Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce all have a deep interest in the problem of the mother, and especially in the problem of the mother figured as a problem of the self. The main focus of their work is the identity of the self and how problematic it is to find or preserve that identity. In this quest, they raise some of the general concerns of modernism about origins. Since origins are a major aspect of self-definition, here is where the problem of motherhood begins. This thesis explores the mother figure as seen through the psychoanalytical lens of Freud. By using such Freudian concepts as narcissism, melancholy, and the death instinct, it focuses on the mother figure as she relates to the child or child figures, to the world, and to her own function as a mother and shows how Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce cooperate with Freud in defining for mothers a central role in the modern self's investigations of its origins.

For Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, the mother figure is something other than a specific person. Although the actual mother in the novels I study is physically out of reach, she is still present as a psychological projection of the self, so that even though the self can grow out of its biological need for the mother, it is impossible to grow out of the epistemological need for her. Thus, my analyses of the mother figure are concerned with what the mother is not, or should not be--since inheritance, history, and identity can emerge only if there is something beyond the mother as a specific person, some continuity leading from the mother outward to what is beyond her. And it is precisely this function of continuity, rather than the individual physical experience of having a child, that I define as motherhood proper. All three authors

investigate the relationship of a specific female human being to motherhood, and the degree to which the mother as a concrete human being is more, less, or other than motherhood, as well as the ways in which motherhood is something more than the individual. The mother figure is ontologically dead/unavailable as origin for Woolf, physically dead/sexually unavailable for Lawrence, and historically dead/unavailable as inheritance for Joyce. For Woolf, there are doubts that the mother ever existed in the past (lack of continuity); for Lawrence, that she exists in the present (lack of contemporaneity); and for Joyce, that she will be reincarnated in the future (lack of chronology). But in all three of them, motherhood emerges as problematic and ambivalent, and, if its status and authority are restored, it is only through the struggle and growth of the individual self.

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This thesis is in memory of my father, who helped me be a stronger person, and in memory of Prof. Don Wilson, whose love for literature and passion for poetry I will always carry with me.

Finally, this thesis is for my son, Daniel, who has been listening to passages from Joyce, Woolf, and Lawrence since his birth and who, I hope, will enjoy reading and writing as much as I do.

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INTRODUCTION

"[N]o one possesses more than one mother, and the relation to her is based on an event that is not open to any doubt and cannot be repeated" (Freud, SE II:169).

In "Enigmatic Clarity: Death, Life, and Modernism," Sandra Kemp observes that, for modernism, "the key metaphor for writing is not making but mourning. Mourning, like writing, is an attempt to grasp someone who isn't there, to turn the time of a person into space, a shape, to translate an absence (a past) into a presence, something solid and permanent, a portrait, a bust, a memorial. To grieve is not to miss what has already gone (memories have the same weight whether they are of the living or the dead); to grieve is to miss what could have been" (3).[1] And there is no mourning stronger than that for the mother figure because the mother, as Freud points out (*SE* II:169), has a privileged and eternal connection to the biological fact of the self. While the death of another person can deprive the self of an emotional attachment that "could have been," or a love relationship that was never realized and is therefore mourned, we can say that the death of the mother is a fundamentally different event, since it has immediate implications for the existence of the self. "The tie to the mother," Robert Kiely tells us, "reflects on the character's physical, especially sexual, self: the capacity for growth, mating, and procreation, and bodily strength, beauty, and health" (49). With the disappearance of any other person, the grief over "what could have been" concerns that person alone; with the death of the mother, the grief is directed not at the mother, who is "gone," but at the self who has experienced the loss, since the mother is nothing less than the sum of all the unrealized possibilities of the *self*. As

Carolyn Dever points out, "[t]he mother is the actual and symbolic site of generation" (xii). Losing this site of generation can be a threat to the self's own identity. As Dever observes, "[i]dentity . . . is not natural or grounded; it is a mimetic process constructed in the breach, in an attempt to compensate for loss by becoming--through performance motivated by nostalgia--a caricature of the lost object" (5-6). Thus the identity of the ego is closely related to the disappearance of the mother figure, or to the rupture in the initial physical connection between the mother and the child, a rupture which forces the child to devise an image / ghost of the mother as a substitute for physical contact. But the artifice of mourning, the image which stands in for the mother at the lost site of generation, cannot recover the truth about the self's origins. The self *is* because it has a mother. The disappearance of that mother initiates the questioning of the self. That is why the absence of the mother figure attacks the very foundation of the self and after the death of the mother the self mourns not her but itself.

Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce[2] all have a deep interest in the problem of the mother[3], and especially in the problem of the mother figured as a problem of the self.[4] The main focus of their work is the identity of the self and how problematic it is to find or preserve that identity. As Daniel Schwarz observes, "[a] major subject of much modern literature is the author's quest for self-definition. In particular, the search for moral and aesthetic values is central in the novels of Joyce, Proust, Woolf, Conrad, and Lawrence" ("Lawrence's" 242). In this quest, Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce raise some of the general concerns of modernism about origins. Since origins are a major aspect of self-definition, here is where the problem of motherhood begins.

This thesis explores the mother figure as seen through the psychoanalytical lens of

Freud. Freudian theory can provide an invaluable foundation for a discussion of the problem of origins and identity that haunts all the protagonists, a problem that is closely related to the loss of the mother. As Dever points out, "Freud presents the metaphor of maternal loss as the prerequisite for adult subjectivity and 'normative' sexuality, reading all relationships of desire as repetitions of the original trauma of lost love, separation from the mother" (xii). In this sense, we can say that all normal cathexes formed by the self are evidence of a successfully completed mourning process whereby the loss of the mother figure has been accepted, and the mother has been replaced by another object, that of the erotic love interest.

Choosing the aspect of Freud which is most productive for this task is also important. Traditionally, any reference to the mother figure in psychoanalysis is bound to involve a reference to the oedipal conflicts associated with the mother-son bond. This thesis, however, will not explore the oedipal consequences of the maternal problem, but will focus instead on the mother figure herself, as she relates to the child or child figures, to the world, and to her own function as a mother. For the analysis of these questions, the oedipal theory does not seem sufficient. Furthermore, the oedipal theory would not be able to provide insight into the problem of the self and its origins, a problem which, as James Cowan points out, paraphrasing Judith Ruderman, "does not derive from triadic oedipal conflicts but from the dyadic relationship of mother and child" (154). Shernaz Mollinger similarly points out that the main issue in Lawrence's fiction is not "a question of the eternal Oedipal triangle, but instead a question of a split ego, a divided self, a question of identity" (84)[5]. And in "Joyce and Psychoanalysis: Two Additional Perspectives," Mark Schechner observes that Stephen Dedalus "is haunted by his mother and is in such terror that an ordinary Oedipus complex

would come as a welcome relief' (416). In addition, Freud's oedipal problems and solutions do not seem to be concerned specifically with the mother figure, and in fact he does not pay much attention to the mother in his theory. Madelon Sprengnether notes Freud's exclusive concern with the mother only as she appears in oedipal relationships: "The preoedipal mother [or, we could add, the non-oedipal mother in general] . . . emerges as a figure of subversion, a threat to masculine identity as well as to patriarchal culture" (5). The mother in Freud is much like the mother in modernism. As Sprengnether points out "[n]ever a major figure in Freud's theory, which revolves around the [oedipal] drama of the father-son relationship, she has a ghostlike function, creating a presence out of absence (5). Since an oedipal approach would not be productive in the analysis of the non-oedipal problems of identity, this thesis will use some of Freud's other theories as analytical tools. Freud's definitions of narcissism, melancholia, and the death instinct seem particularly useful, as they all raise the problem of identity and the self's relation to everything outside the self. Applying these concepts to the relation of the self to the mother figure will give us valuable insights into the ambivalent relation of the self to its origins. Motherhood, after all, can be defined as the tension between oneself and one's origins.

Furthermore, this thesis will not be exclusively concerned with the mother figure as a specific person. It seems that for modernism, the loss of motherhood is no longer equivalent to the loss of the mother, and the mother figure is abstracted from the locus of an individual person to, more generally, linguistic or temporal constructs which can fail even the person who has been designated to play the role of "mother" and with whom motherhood is no longer identical. The problem for Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce is precisely that the mother

figure is something other than a specific person, even though the protagonist will usually wish them to be the same. But if the mother were a single, physical entity, the self would have been incapable of any relation to her whatsoever; the actual mother, in the novels I study, is physically out of reach. What makes her problematic is that she is still present as a psychological projection of the self, so that even though the self can grow out of its biological need for the mother, it is impossible to grow out of the epistemological need for her–she is still needed to make sense of the origins of the self. As Carolyn Dever points out, "'mother' is a synecdoche for physical and psychological origin" (7). In many ways, the following analyses of the mother figure as it appears in Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce are concerned with what the mother is not, or should not be--since inheritance, history, and identity can emerge only if there is something *beyond* the mother as a specific person, some continuity leading from the mother outward to what is beyond her. And it is precisely this function of continuity, rather than the individual physical experience of having a child, that emerges as *motherhood* proper. Thus all three authors investigate the relationship of a specific female human being (often the mother herself) to motherhood, and the degree to which the mother as a concrete human being is more / less / or other than motherhood, as well as the ways in which motherhood is something more than the individual.

Although psychological aspects of the works of Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce have been widely explored, no analysis has quite approached the complexities of the notion of motherhood in these three authors, few critics have drawn parallels between Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce in this respect, and no study so far has grouped together their major works in order to explore the different treatments the notion of motherhood itself receives in

the works of each individual author. The need for such an analysis becomes obvious when we observe that all three of these modernist authors essentially problematize some key Freudian ideas, most notably those related to narcissism, the death drive, and melancholic identification, and, in the process, open a Pandora's box of rich interpretations of the original Freudian formulations. Shaped by a similar conceptual climate, these three authors come independently to conclusions similar to Freud's, creatively expand his ideas and concepts, and go beyond his thinking. Thus, for example, Freud's idea of narcissism places it in the camp of the life-affirming instincts (Eros), and against the Thanatos of self-destruction (see "On Narcissism: An Introduction" and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). However, in the works of the three modernists, especially in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Sons and Lovers*, and *Ulysses*, but most clearly in *To the Lighthouse*, narcissism is crucially positioned in a non-productive, self-absorbed, and self-identical part of the personality which emerges as incapable of cumulative development. Thus the inability of the narcissistic self to disengage itself from its own reflection in the created offspring clearly aligns with Freud's definition of the death-instinct, for which repetition (identity of reflection), and not departure from the circular self-enactment, is the characteristic giveaway.

This study uses Freud's psychoanalytical concepts as a valid paradigm for the understanding of the human psyche generally and the interpretation of literature in particular. I do not intend, however, to trace the direct and/or indirect influence of Freud upon the three writers, although such an influence has been demonstrated.[6] Instead, by means of Freudian concepts, I interpret the implicit contribution to his project of describing the nature of the psyche and the search for identity made by the novels of the three writers.

In chapter one of my thesis, "The Voyage Out: Motherhood out of joint," I note that Ellen Rosenman perhaps gets closest to an appreciation of the questions concerning motherhood that animate Woolf in her study *The Invisible Presence: Virginia Woolf and the Mother-Daughter Relationship*, in which she focuses on the formation of the sense of self in its ambivalent relationship with the "reciprocity, mutuality, and reflection" (12) it finds in the mother. The "hunger for confirmation from the environment" (23) which the self experiences in its formative stages has direct bearing on the theme of mirroring, as well as on the Freudian notion of narcissism. I suggest, however, a closer look at Woolf's main novels and key Freudian ideas developed in them convincingly shows that the concept of motherhood not only dominates Woolf's imagination but also becomes more complex and ambivalent in her later works.

In Virginia Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, the treatment of the mother figure focuses on the failure of the main character, Rachel Vinrace, to form any meaningful relation with motherhood. This failure stems from her more general inability and unwillingness to acknowledge the possibility of continuity in the world, a continuity which is essential to the notion of motherhood. Having once observed motherhood fail, with the death of her own mother, Rachel is no longer prepared to believe that existence and non-existence are related, that individual life and death form a larger bond which ensures continuity. Instead, Rachel chooses to treat motherhood as an optional and secondary state of mind which has no actual validity in the world because the world is fragmentary and meaningless. Thus she accepts the existence of each moment as a discrete unit in its own right, inexplicable and mysterious in its existence and without any relation to the past it came from or to the future it could

engender. The continuity between past and present is compromised, leaving Rachel unable to understand or approach motherhood. Rachel allows herself to be confined to a single body, rather than the multiple ones of the maternal function, and so she has to die with her body, incapable of mothering another. The visions of the future in the novel are destroyed, but so are the visions of the past, with the characters' constant and unsuccessful search for origins (such as reading Plato in the original), which remain inaccessible.

The essential characteristic of motherhood, the moment of birth, can be characterized as a moment of beginning which gives rise to the future and yet obliterates itself with the passage of time, thus defining the role of the mother as a bridge between existence and non-existence. Rachel's view of life, which does not allow one moment to imply all the others that follow it, does not allow for such a bridge to be constructed; it leads her to relinquish the possibility of her own continuity and foreshadows her death. Ultimately, she considers the maternal function only at the individual level, where it is explicitly interrupted by physical death, and she distrusts the possibility of a super-personal, undifferentiated, anonymous, and all-inclusive realm where the mother figure sustains a deeper and expansive identity with nature which perpetuates itself through time. Even though Rachel has been, physically, a child and can become, physically, a mother, she cannot be regarded either as a child or as a mother at the moment we encounter her. By the defensive action of keeping herself aloof from the imperfections of continuity in the real world, Rachel fails at life and motherhood alike.

In chapter two, "*Mrs. Dalloway*: The piracy of motherhood," the questions of motherhood in *Mrs. Dalloway* restate, in a different form, Rachel's problem of continuity. If

in *The Voyage Out* there is a need for connection, for a common thread stretching out between the moments of Rachel's existence, in the life of Clarissa Dalloway this continuity is established from the start, and the real problem revolves around the need for an adaptation of this abstract, overarching unity to ordinary human relationships on the individual level. In both novels, the need of the protagonist remains circumscribed by its own impossibility of realization: just as Rachel fails to form a conception of life in its wholeness, in which every moment implies and maternally engenders the rest, Mrs. Dalloway in effect makes a sacrifice of her intimately personal and physically immediate incarnations in the world in order to relinquish them to the impersonal sphere of self-perpetuating social interaction. Paradoxically, in *Mrs. Dalloway* the mother figure receives both a fuller and a more deficient status. On the one hand, it is elevated to the mythic, procreative, sustaining power of a Goddess, as the goddess imagery is emphasized throughout the novel, while the real motherhood of Clarissa, her relationship to Elizabeth, is continuously de-emphasized. The mother as a goddess can uphold motherhood as an abstraction, an all-embracing, inclusive, absolute value unsusceptible to negation by death. On the other hand, motherhood becomes too abstract to be relevant in the individual incidents of one's life. Thus the experience of the individual moment is sacrificed for the sake of impersonal continuity, and the maternal instinct degenerates into an abstract life force independent of life itself. While this continuity ensures that death cannot destroy Clarissa, it also alienates her from life, as it is expressed through the mortality of the body. Since she divorces motherhood from the contingencies of the body, we see that both death *and* life are excluded from Mrs. Dalloway's vision.

Clarissa finds herself unable to reconcile the abstract and the concrete commitment to

life. For her, they remain two distinct and contradictory functions of the woman, so that her search in the novel is not the search for a compromise between the two or acceptance of the inherently ambivalent nature of the maternal. What Clarissa is looking for, in fact, is a way to justify her own choice of the removed, cold, Goddess-like role at the expense of the rest of her life, including her early, happy memories of a promising future which never came to pass. Driven further and further away from life by the contingencies of its possible termination, Clarissa ultimately hurts not only the people around her but herself, to the point where her illness becomes a metaphor for her failure to engage with life on its own terms. In this sense, she has robbed her self of its active and humanly vulnerable capacity for investing itself fully in the world, for participating in relationships rather than preserving them in a herbarium of memory. Clarissa's denial of self is parallel to her denial of the moment, and both the individual moment and the self stand for something larger than themselves. The immediate experience of an event is for her a secondary one, and the value of life is found in the cumulative achievement of many moments which form an abstract whole. The ultimate expression of her failure, as well as of the only certainty in her life, is Clarissa's parties, defined as her exquisite moments of non-being, of social diffusion of her self and rejection of any personal contact, which remain displaced and postponed until and beyond the end of the novel.

I observe in chapter three, "*To the Lighthouse*: The artistic dimension of motherhood," that the function of the mother figure in *To the Lighthouse* becomes more complex and ambivalent. The mother, in addition to giving birth in the physical sense, which is her primary connection with nature, seeks to introduce a difference in her own

reproduction, so as to make it life-affirming and anti-narcissistic. In other words, the mother's essence, to the extent to which she is opposed to exact narcissistic reproduction, is specifically located in the inaccuracy, the distortion of her own perpetuation in the world. Thus, even though Mrs. Ramsay is associated with images of reflection of herself in the outside world, in her children, or in other people, all of these images carry some displacement, some twist in the reflected image. The children are never an exact copy of the mother, and the differentiation of the children from the original source of life is in fact their true inheritance. This distortion in the mirror image also emerges as the mark of the artistic process through which Mrs. Ramsay interprets the world. It is the one thing that, in a paradoxical way, alienates her from nature and from the blind reproduction of the natural cycles (this reproduction, in its regressive repetition and resemblance to sleep, is associated with a state of extreme narcissism in Part 2), from which she wants to differentiate her life and the lives of her children. The artistic alienation from the real, given world creates the Moment, which, in its stillness and perfection, embodies the human claim on the uniqueness of experience, the desire to distinguish a specific instant from the meaningless uniformity of time. This paradoxical function of motherhood, which can be defined, at one level, as the rejection of the omnipotence of nature, as a struggle against life itself, is exemplified by the creative, imaginative side of Mrs. Ramsay, by her tendency to exaggerate and transform the reality around her regardless of the rigidity of facts. Unlike Lily, the designated artist who is committed to exact definition and a single perspective, rather than movement and plurality, Mrs. Ramsay abhors accuracy and fact, and revels in the made-up art of imperfection and improvisation. In doing this, she is engaged in cheating life through an artistic distortion of

the natural processes. Pretending that even decay is man-made, or that death is willed by humans, gives Mrs. Ramsay the artistic license to play at both life and death, rendering both as objects of art.

This transformation of the world by the mother is clearly made up, and can also be defined as play, since in effect she plays at both life and death, looking for some imaginative control over them. The fact that this control is a pretense, an attempt to cheat life itself, does not diminish but enhances the importance of the mother, who appears to be the only person capable of creating some delay in the inevitably approaching ruin and death. This delay, this displacement does not occur in the real world, but only in the virtual universe of maternal influence. In that sense, it can be regarded as an improvement, a secondary molding of time into something artistically valuable and humanly meaningful. This secondary, progressive transformation of the world has, in the eyes of the mother, the same importance as the primary, regressive processes in nature.

While the mother figures in Woolf's other novels are undeniably human and have the limitations of the mortal self to which the universal power of motherhood necessarily has to appear transcendental, therefore mythological and inaccessible, in *Orlando* Woolf creates an alternative image of the mother, one envisioned without these limitations, one for which the transcendental and the spiritual have become ordinary and physically possible. I argue in chapter four, "*Orlando*: The smuggled motherhood," that in the character of Orlando, we see the rejection of all symbolic representations of the mother (which sometimes assume divine characteristics) in favor of a more immediate experience of motherhood. Thus the interchange between birth and death, together with the erasure of the self which accompanies

it, here is omitted from Orlando's experience. Instead, Orlando seeks to participate more fully in what, for an ordinary mother, would be only an indirect, metaphorical, and delayed experience of the future through her children. Orlando's unique personality allows him/her to partake in many lives spread across gender, time, and space, without relinquishing his/her own self in the process. This unparalleled position at variance with the specifics of the real world endows Orlando with a universality of mind and body which other characters can experience only vicariously, through imagination, poetry, or their unconscious perpetuation in their children. This universality allows Orlando to view the world from the impossible point of view of metaphorical motherhood as such, a perspective so far unexplored in Woolf's writing.

Orlando's personality is, literally, all-inclusive, which threatens him/her with narcissism. In addition to putting on vastly different selves, it easily spans geographical and temporal boundaries; furthermore, it does not discriminate between the otherwise mutually exclusive states of life and death, which here can co-exist in the mind and body of Orlando. As Orlando is never completely dead, he/she is never completely alive either--both states take on the porous insubstantiality of open spaces through which Orlando can freely pass. Since nothing, even negation by death, seems to be stable enough, the only reliable point of reference for Orlando becomes her own self, which is narcissistically engrossed in its own importance and self-preservation. Thus Orlando's values emphasize singularity rather than plurality. We see that Orlando is very far from a normal psychological investment or cathexis into another person or object, as she cannot own anything. The narcissistic closure at the end, as Orlando arrives at her "key" self, shows that Orlando's initially multiple selves

have shrunk over time. The emphasis on Orlando's own complete, "key self" reveals a self-sufficient personality which has no need for human interaction, no need to enter into any kind of plurality of relationships. Thus Orlando is unwilling to be represented by another (such as a child), preferring a purification of self. Unlike the mother figure, Orlando wants to contain and include everything and is hostile to any kind of displacement through time or even through art. Art emerges as alien to narcissism; like motherhood, art is opposed to "the thing itself" and requires transformations deeper than Orlando's singularity of self and emphasis on nakedness and identity. But Orlando and art take different paths, as she chooses the reality of nature over symbolism, art, or motherhood. As in the case of Clarissa Dalloway, the physical act of maternity is downplayed, and Orlando's concern is how to preserve herself, not how to multiply. She does not acknowledge self-sacrifice. In this sense, we can say that *Orlando* is about motherhood to the exclusion of the mother. Like Rachel, Orlando fails to recognize that motherhood requires continuity through physical life, not apart from it or despite it. Orlando is ready to give up words and art, but not her body. Thus, while she relinquishes her poem to historical ages, she fails to do the same with her body; she does not die. A significant part of Orlando's project is getting rid of the necessity of ancestors. As Susan Gorsky points out, Orlando is a character "who *is* his ancestors" (82). Instead of the natural exchange between mother and child, the novel offers us a narcissistic exchange between Orlando and Orlando. She cannot see the process of creation as something unfinished and ongoing from generation to generation, but has a notion of creation as something complete, just as she is herself self-sufficient. At the end, there is a regressive return back to the first scene of the novel, and the confirmation of a self that seeks to retain

the singularity of its own closed world, the immutability of its essence, an essence which can synthesize the experiences of the different selves into one.

In chapter five, "*Sons and Lovers*: The anachronistic motherhood," I focus on D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, in which motherhood is defined in terms of a conflict between the desire to approach the mother as a concrete human being and the need to depart from her, physically, in time and space. This natural distance which is introduced at the moment of birth, when the child is physically detached from the mother, continues to grow over time. In the novel, Paul Morel's refusal to acknowledge this distance makes him insist on a motherhood which is contemporaneous with him, which will continue to accompany him through life. Thus, he is cut off from his contemporary environment. His deepest impulse, then, is regressive: to co-exist with the mother, not to succeed her. Therefore, he rejects his own role as a son, in favor of a more chronologically immediate relationship with Mrs. Morel. At the same time, all of his other ties with the world around him take on the characteristic distance normally reserved for the mother, as well as her abstract, mythological, archetypal immutability. A love relationship, for him, becomes successful only if it re-enacts the past, rather than aiming at the future, only if the girl imitates and leads back to the mother. When Paul ascribes maternal qualities to the women in his life, he also seeks to find in them a deeper realm of some unconscious stream of life, and associates their efforts to involve him in the specifics of life with death.

On the contrary, he is looking precisely for such specific experience in his affection for his mother, and has denied her the maternal prerogative of general, mythological existence in order to relate to her as a specific person. Thus he attempts to force the presence

of the mother, which rightfully belongs to the past, onto the present moment. His intention is to find a way to fuse past and future in a circular unity, unruptured by the event of his own birth--throughout the novel he acts as if the separation of being born has not occurred. That is why for him motherhood becomes anachronistic--it does not fit in, and is at odds not only with the concept of "son," but even with motherhood's own project of procreation and succession, its need to be expanded and realized in the world through the lives of the children. Paul's attempt to co-exist with the mother is bound to fail, but it is only at the end of the novel, after his mother's death, which retraces the process of birth in reverse, that the rupture of the circle finally occurs. Paul is, for the first time, able to relinquish the vision of his mother as contemporaneous with him and embrace her in her proper function as a mother, as she exists immeasurably distant from the future transformations of her children, which must remain unknown to her. Thus the novel shows that mother and son have different expectations of motherhood. While Paul demands from the mother permanence, including the impossible permanence of the mother's body which is the one thing that fails to coexist with him in time, Mrs. Morel desires change. She is associated with the themes of poverty and waiting, both of which presuppose lack and desire and are therefore aiming at the future. Mrs. Morel wants her children to go into the world, to change and exist in the future. She is indeed waiting for them to grow up, but not selfishly. Her desire is for them to grow beyond her, and in this sense she is ready to exchange the present for the future, to sacrifice herself for her children. Paul, however, does not understand the idea of sacrifice, and that is why he sees the mother figure as an end, not as a means. He resents any change, and to him the mother figure appears to be perfect, leaving no place for desire or for the future.

In chapter six, "*The Rainbow*: Motherhood and the limit," I argue that in *The Rainbow* Lawrence approaches another aspect of motherhood, through the biblical parallel with the story of Noah, the flood, and the covenant. While motherhood is usually seen as something internal and intrinsic, free of outside intervention and indifferent to social conditions, here it assumes different characteristics, those of the biblical rainbow. The importance of the symbolical rainbow, which God endows with secondary meaning for Noah to recognize, lies in the introduction of an artificial, contractual order in the world through the covenant itself. The need to surpass the purely and unconsciously natural existence of humanity is the need to engage with the external world in an active, progressive way. The only way humans can be held morally responsible for their choices is if they make their own laws. And these laws are exactly what is symbolized by the rainbow, which is itself a secondary contract between God and the human species which goes far beyond the natural existence of man. This contract is then significant for human morality, not just human nature. The novel emphasizes articulation rather than creation. Human inheritance, then, becomes more than the physical existence of man; it is also that contract which pushes man further into language and moral responsibility. The opposite, the relaxation into contentedness with what is given and safely unexplored, is a regressive impulse, natural but hostile to civilization. In the novel, the regressive movement of infinite repetition of the natural cycle is expressed by the image of the circle, while the departure from this whole towards an open, progressive trajectory of development finds its parallel in the arch / rainbow, which also comes to symbolize the self as an individual, separate from the anonymity of the natural species.

Similarly, the process of birth becomes a naturally built-in way to transcend the undifferentiated nature itself by placing the newborn in an environment demanding individuation and specific responses, which ensure the centrifugal movement from the circle to the arc, from the archetypal realm of general, fused humanity to the concrete world of personalized events. Thus birth leads toward history and away from nature, showing that man needs to grow, but to grow socially and beyond nature. Since sending the child, through birth, away from the body of the mother and into language and morality introduces the child to choice, imperfection, and morality, motherhood itself can be defined as distance from the body. In entering the world, the self becomes both more and less than itself, and that insufficiency allows it to interact with other human beings, to form cathexes and grow. If the rainbow can be seen as the visible half of the circle, which exists in the imperfect, physical world, then motherhood is the physical mechanism of involvement with this world on its own terms. As the quintessential moment of transition between two worlds, motherhood enforces limitations on the metaphysical wholeness, which cannot be realized in the real world except through the mediation of symbols. On the other hand, like the rainbow itself, motherhood ensures the impossibility of absolute death by translating death into birth, and thus, again, substituting the worldly, secondary phenomenon for its metaphysical, absolute counterpart. Both rainbow and motherhood require worldly death in order to prevent absolute oneness. Since people are by nature striving towards the absolute and unwilling to settle for the material and secondary, motherhood emerges as one of the key processes which can counteract the inertia of humanity and give it a new impetus of change and progress.

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence positions motherhood at a crucial juncture

between nature and civilization. Here what is emphasized are the dangers of civilization, which seeks to control the future. In chapter seven, "*Lady Chatterley's Lover*: Motherhood vs. the exhausted world," accordingly, the main mother figure is not the mother (associated with the past in *Sons and Lovers*), but the wife (associated with the future which is to be shaped and controlled). The decadent civilized mind, unlike its previous, progressive incarnation in *The Rainbow*, cannot tolerate an open-ended future but seeks the establishment of a closed gambit of possibilities for the future, all of which converge towards the mythology of "the end of the world"--the ultimate proof that man is in control enough to bring about destruction. The "natural," on the contrary, emerges as that which is unforeseen, un-envisioned, ungrasped by the mind in its future forms, as that which is incomplete and therefore allowed to develop, to breathe, to interact, to build up, and to keep unrevealed the mystery of what it would become. The natural is that which is incomplete, and the body is always unfinished, naked, free from plans and conventions--the social expectations that threaten to make the body obsolete. Furthermore, the natural is that which, being beyond conscious control, does not need to be understood in order to exist--it interacts with people on the level of their physical bodies. Thus Connie, for example, does not understand her pregnancy, but is nevertheless prepared to accept it and abandon herself to it. The natural, then, is that which has no understanding of or plan for itself and which cannot put itself in front of its own gaze to contemplate its possibilities for the future and calculate the odds. In this sense, the whole project of civilization can be said to be fundamentally narcissistic, since civilization seeks to predict and exhaust the future, to create a "full" world with no more place for anything unpredictable, un-planned. The exhausted world has no room for the

contingencies of the body, and therefore no room for change and growth. Hence the imagery of the "end of the world" in this novel, where the ego sees itself as a narcissistically complete object, rather than an incomplete person open to contact with others and vulnerable to an unpredictable future. The images of defenseless and openly naked bodies confirm the importance of leaving the self open to contingencies and relinquishing total control over the future. The civilized self, unlike the open, natural body, cannot interact with the "other," since it envisions itself as already complete, having taken its own "other" half, the future half of itself, and added it to the present to form a deceptive, complete whole.

Accordingly, the novel makes a distinction between the notions of "use" and "function" (distorted use). The latter implies the task-oriented status of the individual in the larger scheme of industry/civilization (which mis-uses people and produces waste reminiscent of the underworld, of functioning without being alive), while the former puts an emphasis on the realization of the full potential of the individual where nothing is wasted, exhausted, underdeveloped, or misused, simply because the individual is not forced to fit into any pre-conceived scheme or model designed for the future of society at large; thus people seek their own "use" on their own terms. "Use" is also related to natural growth and organic development over time, while the project of civilization, and especially of money, proposes an absolute creation from nothing. At the same time, "nothing" is not possible in nature, since nature requires continuity which guarantees that things cannot emerge from nothing or disappear into nothing. At the same time, "use" requires the individual to die, while the unused and purely functional is that which is undead and unborn.

Motherhood itself is caught between the natural and the artificial, the oblivious and

the conscious, the useful and the functional. Connie is trapped between the healthy need to "use" her neglected female body to its full capacity, and the sterile, purely functional demands of society in the form of her nominal husband, Clifford. She remains uncertain as to the sufficiency of the purely natural relationship offered by the keeper, and she often disrupts it with her ingrained impulse towards respectability and reason, both of which mock the idea of sufficient physical love as "ridiculous," and replace it with "sufficient civilization" (77). Thus, Connie's desire to secure for her child the status of illegitimate offspring in fact speaks to her need to legitimize her relationship with Mellors, to play by the rules of society, to focus on the function, not merely the use, of the child, on its place in the world and not its inherent, natural existence. The tension between social inheritance (heir) and biological inheritance (son) is not entirely resolved, but Connie has made it clear that the natural one is more important.

I turn attention to James Joyce in chapter 8, "*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Motherhood in exile." In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, motherhood does not emerge as one of Joyce's main themes. On the contrary, compared to religion and literature, it seems quite insignificant and tangential. It does, however, occupy a place of some importance in Stephen's personal scale of guilt--motherhood, represented here more specifically as maternal love, is the last thing to fail the artist, who remains restless and compelled to wander around the world, forever unsatisfied with his destiny. In his search for a redemptive reality which could correspond to the multiple visions of redemption in his imagination, Stephen successively dismisses God's anger, divine love, maternal anger, and maternal love. The increasing indifference of his sated, philosophical mind culminates in the

rejection of the mother figure, which takes the form not so much of a willful, deliberate disobedience as of a puzzled, benign incomprehension. He cannot find it in him to believe either in the concept of love, or in the warmth and care for another human being, mother or a beloved. Stephen's skeptical intellect, while searching for a vision of the soul, continually reverts back to the mind, and the pervasive doubt, which comes to characterize his very being, is a doubt of reality, not of the imagination. Language is more real to Stephen than reality. In his inverted picture of the world, the imaginary is given more weight, the weight of conviction and understanding, than the actual events and people around him are. The figure of his mother appears only as a fleeting, incomprehensible, and infinitely foreign image, which remains stuck in the physical reality and is not processed by his imagination--it is never appropriated or understood by Stephen. Motherhood, and birth in particular, are threatening because they unequivocally insist on a separation between life and death. Just as the mother beckons Stephen toward unequivocal life (where he feels compelled to contemplate death as well), she wants him to remain within the confines of the "right," decent language, while he feels a need to know *all* of language, including the forbidden words.

The conflict between the unconvincing real world and its more credible and lively imaginative counterpart is also reflected in the figure of Christ, with its double allegiance to the mother (Mary) and to the father (God). One of these ties confers reality on Christ himself, but even at the end of the novel Stephen remains uncertain as to which one. Thus Stephen manages to transform even the apparently unambiguous moment of birth into the ambiguous economy of a dual origin, of one son coming from two parents. The duality of

Christ is only one example of Stephen's philosophy that every thing "is also" another. His early devotion to the invisible divine world is never completely erased, and the reality of the maternal function in the physical world remains unconvincing. In his indecision, he avoids any commitment to either answer, without renouncing any of them, since it is the nature of doubt itself not to reject but to question--rejection would involve decision. Stephen's repulsion for the very definitiveness of answers and allegiances makes him choose the course of elusive, infinite questioning. Thus his inability to communicate with his mother or participate in any kind of love bond with her (even she is unable to prevent him from leaving at the end) points to a parallel rejection of the defining act of creation motherhood stands for.

If there is anything definite and categorical in the world, it is the process of birth through which a being is given its primary physical definition. But an unequivocal gesture like that of birth seems threatening to Stephen, dangerous because of its intolerance of any questioning. And since he lives by questioning, he has no trust in anything which does not allow doubt. His escape from all ties--to his country, past, religion, friends, family, mother--is an escape from the unequivocal. In a sense, he embarks on a search for an imaginary reality different from the physical one where the moment of birth separates the two definite states of existence and non-existence, just as, in the ideological realm, religion demands a separation of saved from damned, and politics a clear line between ally and enemy. Thus Stephen is unable to gain any understanding of maternal love as long as he remains in the realm of ambiguous and non-committal morality. The act of division at birth is not recognized by the imagination, and in language the uncreated coexists with the created.

The mother becomes for Stephen a problem, since she refuses to multiply

symbolically and cannot be incorporated into the artistic imagination. Stephen's inability to detect the presence or absence of the mother is a result of the fact that he does not know how to speak of her. While fathers are always plural and associated with language and exchange, the mother is more alive in the real world and less alive in the symbolical one. Thus language violates the mother (as the one) in favor of the many. Stephen's attempts to double up the mother in language result in his inability to recognize the existence of the mother as a physical reality. He drifts further and further into the abstractions of language, a movement which is occasionally associated with sickness and other forms of inadequacy to the real world around him. The manipulations allowed by language are implied by Stephen's own name, which is a misspelled version of a legendary Greek name, probably made up in the first place. Having violated reality by substituting it with language, Stephen is unable to repent, since repentance and confession require correspondence between words and deeds.

In chapter nine, "*Ulysses*: Motherhood and the failed ghost," I argue that in *Ulysses* Joyce re-examines the mother-son relationship, paying particular attention to the burden of succession (part of the "history" from which Stephen wants to "wake up" (28)), and the impossibility of full inheritance. Stephen keeps seeing disturbing visions of his mother, in which her body is always "wasted," as if the process of creation from her body, instead of reinforcing the primal source of life by the replenishment of procreation, has exhausted and drained this source. The notion of waste has the wider implication that the created and the creator are not equal, that there is an imbalance, a diminishing which becomes apparent in the process of inheritance. In other words, the son can never fully inherit the mother, because he can never have an existence as full as hers. Thus, while Stephen feels an enormous

emptiness and futility in his life, his visions of his mother always keep her suspended in some unnatural physical animation, either before or after her death, as if her presence were more physically true than his own. The noticeable lessening of life in the further stages of creation (with its large-scale historical parallel in the anticlimactic heritage which trickles down from a heroic, ancient Irish race) finds one expression in Stephen's notion of "misbirth" (32). In a sense, all birth is misbirth because the son is never equal to the mother--he is always somehow less than her, and the part of her that fails to regenerate, to be re-born in him, is wasted. Bloom, too, sees his dead son only as pure potential, with a lot less realized than was possible. His visions of Rudy portray the son as he would have been had he lived, and this failure of possibility applies to Stephen as well. Thus for both Stephen and Rudy the possibility of full realization of what was transmitted to them through creation remains illusory--the son is always less than. This in turn means that the son is always compared to his ancestors, never judged on his own terms but always referred back to his creator (the mother or, in the case of Bloom, often an androgynous entity), and the creator's expectations--for Rudy, to be eleven years old; for Stephen, to kneel down in prayer. The created son is never complete because he is an inaccurate reflection of the creator, a reflection in a cracked mirror. As Bloom aptly phrases it, "My son. Me in his eyes" (73); the son strives to be a faithful replica of the parent.

In Freudian terms, the failure of complete mirroring becomes traumatic because, after losing the original source (after the death of Stephen's mother), the son remains incapable of mourning. Thus Stephen is melancholically obsessed with his mother, and this obsession refers back to his own ego--his mother no longer alive, he internalizes her reproachful image,

so that the authority and superiority of the mother become parts of him. Being an inaccurate reflection, he contains in himself the higher standard which he fails to achieve. The internalized conflict thus excludes the mother as an actual person and re-erects her image within Stephen's melancholic imagination, so that his filial insufficiency is now measured against himself.

The only way for inheritance to remain undiminished is through the ghost, but the ghost is always a paternal one. Among the multiple ghosts of fathers Stephen is unable to find the voice of the mother, because she cannot become a ghost. As in *Portrait*, Stephen cannot deal with the mother using the imagination. He tries, unsuccessfully, to turn the maternal absence into ghostly presence. The ghost is another symptom of Stephen's sickness, since it signifies a disembodied continuity; the ghost is healthy if absent, and unhealthy if present, since that presence would mean an affirmation of narcissistic contemporaneity of son and mother and rejection of historical continuity. There is no continuity between mother and son: she cannot be a ghost for him, cannot speak to him, and he can recognize history only as speech, not physical regeneration. What he wants from the mother is for her to become a voice with no substance and therefore no loss over time. What he demands to receive from her is language, rather than his own physical existence, his life, which she has already given to him. But, as in *Portrait*, the inability of the mother to be counterfeit in language prevents her from speaking, and, since she is silent, the son must compose the message he wants to receive from the mother. Thus conversing with the mother is the opposite of communicating with her. For Stephen objects and people assume the characteristics of parts of speech, and that is why he cannot relate to the silent mother (he is a

"changeling"). Being unable to recognize biological necessity, Stephen chooses the only family that is a matter of choice, and the mother is not.

The silence of the mother is interpreted by Stephen in a way that denies her death. In language, the dead are not absent but hidden, not deceased but silent, not dead but inarticulate or secretive. Anything unavailable to language is threatening to Stephen, and so he is trying to recover the mother for language. This attempt to recover her is Stephen's real crime. Stephen is innocent of killing his mother but guilty of keeping her alive in language. And here we can speak of a "misdeath" of the unmourned mother. The body must be buried in order to be mourned, but Stephen, trying to turn the mother into a ghost, will not recognize her as a body. Stephen's history is melancholic, since it is the paternal ghost, the voice of heritage cleansed of the body of the mother. Thus we see a shift from the body of the other to the voice of the same, from mother to ghost, from mourning to melancholia. In this sense *Ulysses* is an elegy without the dead. Making the mother speak means that Stephen wants to pen his parentage, and instead of biological creation forward there is an artistic re-creation backward.

I conclude my study of Joyce in Chapter 10, "*Finnegans Wake*: Motherhood and its other." In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce does not place motherhood in the immediate spotlight, perhaps with the exception of the final pages. The main foreground project of the father and the internecine sons unfolds as a series of failures, quarrels, crimes, and imperfections--in short, the fall of man and the decadence of civilization. In this context, motherhood appears as the subversive force which qualifies all absolute claims of the human species, including victory and death. Thus, for example, the doomsday brought about by the sins of civilization,

the most absolute imaginable punishment, is transformed at the end into the uncertain "Deemsday," which confers a quality of doubt, of seemingness onto the notion of the "end." The ambiguity of this new and qualified death is the manifestation of the maternal, which distorts the most unambiguous event in history, the most unqualified death, and in the newly-opened uncertainty offers the possibility of salvation. The attendant ambiguity in all the actions and thoughts of HCE and his sons means that history cannot consist of absolute actions (either an absolute beginning or an absolute end), but has to be recycled, renewed. In the process of renewal generated by the creative maternal power which is impervious to male history (the history symbolized by the town on the river), the most important message is that each action, thought, and concept must encounter the possibility for its own negation and relativity.

Thus, throughout the novel the instability of human morality and victory is shown through an emphasis on the evolutionary transformations of man, all of which lead back to the theme of the subversive motherhood. For example, the ape imagery suggests evolution but also transformation through imitation; similarly, phrases like "my darwing" and "the assent of man" have the double significance of love in its debased form of temptation (which is the occasion of the whole dream/book and is itself related to vanity, to auto-erotic self, and therefore to mirror imagery and narcissism) and evolution.

But the imagery of femininity not only distorts the self-identity and solidity of all human subjects and their actions; it also subverts its own concept and introduces ambiguity and relativity through a foreign element in the very center of its meaning. Words like "amother" and "mother-in-lieu" question any absolute notion of motherhood itself and insist

on a certain alienation and displacement--the things which motherhood introduces in the otherwise self-absorbed human species which keeps looking for absolute values. Ultimately, the maternal quality is one of displacement through inheritance and denial of self-identity, one of fluid and free transformation of one entity into another. Thus the female element has the ultimate power of temptation which can draw people out of themselves and which implies "the linguo to melt," to transform/make relative everything in its way.

This qualification emphasizes the importance of the Other for the Fall, and, after the Fall, for mourning and renewal. In *Finnegans Wake*, motherhood is aligned with the Other and with the impossibility of a complete self. In motherhood the death of one is the birth of another, and the two are connected by the transition of mourning, which also requires the Other to perform the mourning ritual. The male figure which resists the Other in the novel is Finnegan, and also HCE, who wants to be single-handedly responsible for the fall of everyone. Just as in the Irish ballad Finnegan interrupts the mourning ritual and refuses to be dead and mourned, thereby returning to melancholia, so in the case of HCE melancholia itself is on trial–the conviction that HCE is indeed Everyman and that his guilt is absolute. HCE's vision of himself as the quintessential criminal seeks confirmation in the trial; contrary to normal crime, his does not seek to be hidden but is characterized by voyeurism and exhibitionism; he wants to be discovered and commits a crime for the sake of being seen. But just as motherhood qualifies absolute death, it also qualifies absolute guilt. ALP is there to show that the fall is not universal and absolute but personal and partial, that the fall is not all, and that the possibility of mourning by an other is also the possibility of renewal. The female voice, which is supposed to give the most important testimony proving HCE's

absolutist claims, in fact has the opposite result, as ALP's letter serves to frustrate HCE's attempt to establish his guilt beyond doubt. The letter cannot prove anything and only confuses and misdirects the trial. In *Finnegans Wake*, the mother figure is associated with language and with the "errancy" and the heterogeneity of the mother tongue which requires the Other. The story is always "wrong." Motherhood is there to ensure that language is in a mourning, not a melancholic relationship to objects, that it can surpass them and prevent them from being absolute. Thus we cannot speak of the mother as a single person, but we can say that motherhood is the heterogeneity of everything else.

Another way to illustrate the importance of the Other is through the contrast between God's creation (creation by Father) and maternal creation: the divine one happens always for the first time and is absolute, while maternal creation is always re-creation, an old story made of sourceless rumors, of used / borrowed / stolen language which previously belonged to an other. That is why the real criminal is not the self-appointed HCE, but Shem the Penman, who steals language and who can be seen as the "other" to the mother figure, who, like everything else, cannot be a single, undivided unit. Thus *Finnegans Wake* is a tribute to the otherness which exists in motherhood and to the heterogeneous female voice which defeats melancholy, narcissism, and regression.

The complexity of the inevitably paradoxical nature of motherhood becomes clear in the works of Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce. Each of them invests the concept of motherhood with new meanings, with new permutations of life and death, and shows how problematic the mother's function can be. Whatever the biographical origin of their interest in motherhood, as Kiely observes, it becomes for each a primary focus of their art: "The death of a mother in

the novels of Joyce, Lawrence, and Woolf has strong autobiographical roots. The mother of each died when the writer was still young. But what is of particular interest to the critic is how the loss of the mother is transformed from personal trauma into a key element in the artist's signature" (48). In my efforts to trace these writers' engagements with and interpretations of their implicitly modern experience of motherhood, Freudian notions of narcissism, melancholy, regression, and others as well, help me to configure the project of each individual novel in its bearing on the non-linear and expanded definition that motherhood acquires in the works of these authors. Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce may or may not know certain works by Freud, they may or may not accept certain of his ideas, they may or may not agree with his psychological project in general, but they nonetheless cooperate with him in defining for mothers a central role in the modern self's investigations of its origins.

Notes

1. To compound the problem of mourning, for modernism, as we shall see, mourning is rarely successful. In most cases, in the works of Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, it becomes melancholia. Modernism in general seems unable to mourn. Thus in "Mourning and Modernism," John Mepham explains that successful mourning is not just an issue for an individual author, but for modernism as a whole: "Virginia Woolf's obsession with mourning reflected a general cultural malaise. Many people no longer felt at ease with traditional forms and ceremonies of mourning. Many people felt bereft of a traditional public language for the expression of grief" (143).

2. For more works which compare these three authors, see Robert Kiely, *Beyond Egotism: The Fiction of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1980), Maria DiBattista, "Joyce, Woolf and the Modern Mind" (*Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays*. Ed. Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundy. London and Totowa, NJ: Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1983. 96-114), Earl G. Ingersoll, "Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence: Exploring the Dark" (*English Studies* 71.2 (1990): 125-32), Barbara Shapiro, "Maternal Bonds and the Boundaries of Self: D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf" (*Soundings* 69.3 (Fall 1986): 347-65), H.M. Daleski, "Life as a Four-Letter Word: A Contemporary View of Lawrence and Joyce" (*D.H. Lawrence and the Modern World*. Ed. Peter Preston and Peter Hoare. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. 90-103), Christopher Ames, "The Modernist Canon Narrative: Woolf's Between the Acts and Joyce's 'Oxen of the Sun'" (*Twentieth Century Literature* 37.iv (Winter 1991): 390-404). For a comparison between *To the Lighthouse* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, see "Flesh and Blood and Love and Words: Lily Briscoe, Stephen Dedalus, and the Aesthetics of Emotional Quest" by Jane Lilienfeld (*New Alliances in Joyce Studies*. Ed. Bonnie Kime Scott. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1988. 165-78).

3. Thus Shirley Panken observes that "Woolf frequently wrote her novels to woo or achieve closeness to a revered mother-image" (13), and in "Maternal Bonds and the Boundaries of Self: D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf," Barbara Shapiro argues that "[t]he works of D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf are fueled by conflicts of infantile dependence and separation" (347); "*Sons and Lovers* and *To the Lighthouse* both revolve around powerful, ambivalently conceived mothers" (349). Joyce is also concerned with the problem of the mother. Harry Levin points out that "Joyce's heroes are sons and lovers at the same time; his heroines are always maternal" (95). But it is perhaps in Lawrence that the mother problem is most obvious for criticism: "In his non-fiction, particularly in *Fantasia*, Lawrence argues that mother and father are equally important in formation of the child. But in the fiction, particularly *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow*, his concern is primarily with the mother" (Blanchard 77). And Anthony Burgess observes that "Lawrence had nothing of the paternal in him" (117). Similarly, Sandra Gilbert points out that Lawrence's works "are haunted by female primacy, by the autonomous sexual energy of the goddess" (141).

For more on the mother figure in these authors, see Fiona Becket, "Being There: Nostalgia and the Masculine Maternal in D. H. Lawrence" [*DHLR* 27.2-3 (1998): 255-68],

Rosemary Reeves Davies, "The Mother as Destroyer: Psychic Division in the Writings of D. H. Lawrence" [*DHLR* 13.3 (Fall 1980): 220-38], Evelyn Haller, "The Anti-Madonna in the Work and Thought of Virginia Woolf" [*Virginia Woolf: Centennial Essays*. Ed. Elaine K. Ginsberg and Laura Moss Gottlieb. Troy, NY: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1983. 93-109], and Roberta Rubenstein, "Fixing the Past: Yearning and Nostalgia in Woolf and Lessing," especially the section "Mother," pp. 26-32 [*Woolf and Lessing: Breaking the Mold.* Ed. Ruth Saxton and Jean Tobin. New York: St. Martin's P, 1994. 15-38].

4. "The death of a mother in the novels of Joyce, Lawrence, and Woolf has strong autobiographical roots. The mother of each died when the writer was still young. But what is of particular interest to the critic is how the loss of the mother is transformed from personal trauma into a key element in the artist's signature" (Kiely 48).

5. In "A Womb of His Own: Lawrence's Passional / Parental View of Childhood," Carol Sklenicka and Mark Spilka explain that in 1920s Lawrence "seems to substitute for his classical Oedipal desires a kind of womb-envy" (179).

6. Admittedly, Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce were all familiar with Freud's work, even though none of them embraced it openly and unreservedly. It seems that, of the three authors, Lawrence is the one who consciously engages in an attack on Freud by developing his own theory of the unconscious. Mark Kinkead-Weekes explains that "[t]he essence of his [Lawrence's] attack on 'Freudian' psychoanalysis is that it starts at therapy but ends by seeing disease as the norm" (163). And Eugene Goodheart tells us that "Lawrence has tried to conceive the unconscious as it might be constituted in a condition in which repression no longer exists" (107). It is clear that Freud and Lawrence do not agree on many points. Philippa Tristram sums it up: "Where Freud sought to know, Lawrence sought to be" (139).

Similarly, Joyce apparently disagreed with Freud, a fact which does not rule out psychoanalysis as a valid approach to Joyce's work. As Jean Kimball points out in "Freud, Leonardo, and Joyce: The Dimensions of a Childhood Memory," "Joyce was deeply influenced by Freud, even though he denied it" (179). In "Joyce and Psychoanalysis: Two Additional Perspectives," Mark Schechner also expresses this view: "Recent scholarship and informed speculation make it seem more plausible than ever that both *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* are 'Freudian' books, consciously so, and that Joyce was aware of psychoanalysis in some of its early versions as early as 1911 or 1912. It is now obvious that Joyce's many dismissive pronouncements about psychoanalysis are to be taken with a grain of salt" (417-18). And again, in *Joyce in Nighttown: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry into Ulysses*: "We must assume that by 1914, when he began *Ulysses*, Joyce knew something of Freud's work, that he was aware of the possibilities that psychoanalysis had opened up for fiction and that he looked to it, at the very least, as scientific validation of his own artistic practices" (Schechner 18).

Woolf not only knew of Freud -- the Hogarth Press started publishing his works in 1924 -- but also met him several months before he died. Freud " was a refugee from Vienna and had taken a house in Maresfield Gardens, Hampstead, where the Woolfs had tea with him" (*Spirits*, 419n).

For Freudian influences in the works of Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, see the

following: Kimball, Jean. "Autobiography as Epic: Freud's Three-Time Scheme in *Ulysses*" and "Freud, Leonardo, and Joyce: The Dimensions of a Childhood Memory"; Broughton, Panthea Reid. "'Virginia is anal': Speculations on Virginia Woolf's Writing Roger Fry and Reading Sigmund Freud"; Dyrud, Marilyn. "Rendering the Veil: Dreams in Five Novels by Virginia Woolf"; and Seelow, David Donald. "Radical Modernism and Sexuality: A Study of Freud, Reich and D. H. Lawrence."

PART ONE: VIRGINIA WOOLF

CHAPTER 1:

THE VOYAGE OUT--MOTHERHOOD OUT OF JOINT

The question of motherhood in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* may at first appear bewildering, or, more precisely, non-existent, especially when the puzzled meanderings of unrealized or distorted maternal impulses[1] of the main characters in this novel are compared with the wealth of imagery of realized and complete family relationships in a novel such as *To the Lighthouse*, for instance. But, as Freud would be the first to point out, the surface of things may often indicate a powerful relation to its opposite[2], and the lack of a strong and complete, full-time mother figure in *The Voyage Out* in fact reveals a multitude of frustrated and chaotic maternal attempts[3] which never find their safe harbor of happiness but continue to search for something else. In showing that the contentment of creating and caring for a family is somehow insufficient for its main characters (Rachel, Hewet, Hirst, even Helen Ambrose), the novel seems to violate some unwritten but apparently sacred tradition and to trespass into a more ambiguous zone of doubt and unconvinced femininity.[4] This uncertainty in the search for what more life could offer, for what lies on the other side of the perpetual voyage, is always counterpoised against the contentment of an emotionally sedentary family life, in which the mother is occupied without remainder (Helen Ambrose, for instance, is never completely free of distressing premonitions regarding the safety of her children, even when she is physically embarking on the adventure). The view that anything can claim the

wholeness of a human being without remainder, an absolute commitment of attention, thought, and emotion, receives the most subtle and uncompromising criticism in the hands of Woolf.[5] At the same time, she launches her critical observations not as an attack, but rather as a tentative and sincerely puzzled inquiry into the nature of things. Her pen does not shrink from either traditional, submissive, timidly worshipful womanhood (Susan Warrington, for example), or an openly aggressive and assertive feminine perspective (in the case of Evelyn M. or Mrs. Flushing), but it finds itself unable to stop at either. Even more telling is the fact that the heroine chosen for the main story line, Rachel Vinrace, inexplicably dies before the end of the book[6], as if the one person whose qualities seemed promising enough to be worth developing was not able to sustain her role and acquire any conclusive meaning for her actions, as if she has not developed what Caramagno calls "a self strong enough to survive the loss of meaning" (184). What importance, then, can we legitimately claim for the role of motherhood in the lives of all these women who never actually have children or even get married (as in the case of Rachel)? Why would we single out this one attribute--being a mother--from among what seems to be an inexhaustible variety of ambitions and plans in the female characters of this book, and pronounce it one of the ruling passions of each and every one, regardless of their own explicitly stated intentions? Before we go on, it must be clear that even Woolf herself did not offer a definitive answer to this question, and lack of such an answer kept her search ever alive with energy, as well as freshly frustrated at the encounter with each new possible answer.[7]

The clues to the importance of motherhood must be sought in the fundamental distinction Freud makes between primary and secondary processes, or, in other words,

between natural/universal and acquired/particular characteristics. In his introduction to Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, James Strachey talks about "what is probably the most momentous of the discoveries given to the world in *The Interpretation of Dreams*--the distinction between the two different modes of mental functioning, the Primary and Secondary Processes" (xv-xvi). There, Freud also uses the terms "first" and "second" agency, the first being the primary, and the second the secondary, visible, conscious one. He observes: "If we were to restrict ourselves to considering what the second agency contributes to dreams [or the unconscious], we could never arrive at an understanding of them" (179). In his late work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud revises and clarifies some of his earlier theoretical propositions, and arrives at the possibility of the existence of a force equal to, if not stronger than the formerly ubiquitous wish-fulfillment impulse of the unconscious: "I described the type of process found in the unconscious as the 'primary' psychical process, in contradistinction to the 'secondary' process which is the one obtaining in our normal waking life" (*The Freud Reader* 611). Freud relates all primary processes to the unconscious and to the uncensored pleasure principle, whose function can continue unchecked only in so far as the secondary power of discipline has not intervened. "There seems to be no doubt whatever that the unbound or primary processes give rise to far more intense feelings . . . than the bound or secondary ones" (625). This distinction finds its place later in the definitions of "id" and "ego"; as Raymond Fancher puts it,

> the id is 'prior to' the ego, and . . . in the course of development a certain part of the id becomes structured and forms the ego. Thus, when the human infant is born his psyche is virtually all id. As a result his psychic functioning is

primitive and is dominated by the primary process. It is only through repeated interaction with the external world that the ego comes to be formed. (203)

Freud uses these formulations in a specific sense as the foundation of his theory of dreams and the model of the mind. In the discussion of Woolf's fiction, "primary" and "secondary" will be used with an awareness of Freud's more specific definitions of the terms, but also in a more general sense–"primary" to mean a determined, natural quality which is not subject to conscious influence or change, and "secondary" to mean anything which has been shaped by an encounter with the environment and susceptible to personal will or social convention, whether conscious or internalized. The question that arises in relation to the mother figure is, to what extent is motherhood a primary, and to what extent is it a secondary, voluntary function of the female protagonist in *The Voyage Out*? In other words, is it possible at all to escape the shadow of the loss of the mother, and if possible, is it the best way to go?

Few tenets of psychoanalysis have been so firmly lodged into the minds of Freud's readers as the various degrees of fixation on the mother figure. But the definition of the mother figure itself cannot be regarded as simple or transparent. More specifically, it seems difficult to trace the natural element of motherhood and to distinguish it from the mother's socially acquired, secondary role. The unconscious, or, later in Freud's work, the part of the unconscious occupied by the id, is completely selfish and lacks any filial respect or attachment to the mother or the father figure; its attachment, on the contrary, is positively sexual in nature and it occurs regardless of the incest factor[8]–it could be an attachment to anything that happens to be in its way at the moment of the formation of cathexis. While this fact would seem to give a special importance to the parents, who are the people immediately

accessible as cathectic objects to the id and therefore in a special position to assist the attachment formation, it also diminishes their role in some ways, in so far as the special part they play is completely a function of the contingency of time and place, and any other person who happens to occupy that physical site would occupy the psychological site as well–*anyone* could be the mother. Or anyone could play the role of the mother even if she is *not* a mother. The fact that the real relationship of motherhood or fatherhood is immaterial to the sexual aspirations of the id (and, by extension, to the formation of the unconscious) means that the actual relationship has no weight except accidentally through physical proximity. In other words, the repressed sexual wish for the mother which emerges later in life is directed to a woman not because she is the mother but because she happened to be the only female figure close enough to the id at the crucial formative stage of infancy. It is only later that the person learns to regard her as a mother and apply certain social taboos to check his/her egoistic and socially unsanctioned affection. In other words, even though Freud is hardly prepared to contend this, the function of motherhood is, in the formation of the unconscious, a socially conditioned and acquired function, and not an inherent property of a specific person. Motherhood is dispersed in society, rather than concentrated in a single human being; it comprises certain external physical attributes (such as time and place), rather than an essential identity.[9]

The same question arises in *The Voyage Out*. If motherhood is not exclusively the desired and complete state of happiness, and if people want above all freedom--the freedom to create their own lives, to choose their own goals, and to construct their own futures--can we state with any degree of certainty that motherhood, since it can be chosen, is equally a

matter of choice as the other occupations a woman could wish for herself? Is there evidence that the role of the mother does not stand in a category of its own, where a basic instinct is not to be silenced and where the primary maternal essence overrides all other goals in life? It seems indeed, contrary perhaps to their explicit claims of freedom, that all the characters in *The Voyage Out* are in fact looking for precisely this one thing which is not to be a matter of choice, looking for determination which they themselves have not imposed on the world, looking for meaning not shaped by the social context but somehow inherent in all life, or what Nancy Bazin calls "a purity to be found in the impersonal that cannot be found in the personal" (63). For any conscious achievement in life, there is the awareness of arbitrary choice that undermines it: if a person could have chosen any other path, then the authenticity of the one actually chosen is grounded above all in the credibility and authority of that very person, and there are no ulterior or higher factors underlying it. The self stands alone–and falls alone (incidentally, Rachel's death does not seem to have a great impact on the lives of the people around her). The basic sense of freedom experienced by human beings becomes suspect, under Woolf's lens, because it tells them that they may have mistakenly taken for a patch of solid ground something they themselves have constructed and wished into existence. In this context, motherhood seems to emerge, if not as the absolute solution to the problem, at least as the least shattered alternative which continues to stand after everything else has been either compromised or razed to the ground. But this is a negative affirmation of motherhood. As the strong mother figure in *The Voyage Out* is conspicuous by its absence, it wins the argument by default; the mother remains unspoiled and viable because motherhood remains an unrealized potential. We never actually see Rachel carry through with her

married life, and we have no way of knowing whether she will be happy or restless in her future family contentment. Everything remains a promise, a prospect, and therefore beautiful because unrealized.[10] Thus George Ella Lyon argues that the commitments of Rachel are to actualization of the potential, and these commitments, of course, remain hypothetical: "Rachel's engagement is not only with Hewet but with the world. She has promised to enter as well as to be entered, to quit looking through windows speculating about what love and life are like" (114). In other words, she has agreed "[t]o give up possibility for actuality" (114), which means that she has agreed to give up control of her fate and to eliminate all other choices by choosing one single course of action. What is significant is that Woolf prevents her from doing so, and that crucial moments like actualized, physical motherhood remain utopian potentialities rather than simple probabilities. Rachel's relationship with the world remains one of "voyeurism" (Lyon 113). Physical contact is never established or even seriously attempted. Thus, when Jean Alexander speaks of "the failure of Rachel's test of the world" (53), we can say that the defining feature of her personality is that she has never really "tested" the world. She has never demanded of it any unequivocal information but has seen it as a place of various and incompatible possibilities. Rachel does not get answers, because, in the words of Caramagno, "she never seems able to form a coherent set of questions about the meaning of her life" (157). And so the meaning of her life remains suspended even beyond this life itself. The only way Rachel can control her life is if it is a fiction, a repository of potential, rather than a linear, deterministic, causal sequence. As Mitchell Leaska points out, *The Voyage Out* allows us to see "no apparent element of cause and effect" (13). This absence of determinism is due entirely to Rachel's inability to cross over

from the potential to the actual, to relinquish control over the fiction of her life.

The tension between control and freedom that the characters in *The Voyage Out* restlessly seek to resolve sometimes appears to stop, startled, at the barrier of motherhood, as much as motherhood signifies that which cannot be chosen but has already been given or taken from the person before the formation of consciousness or the emergence of free will. Whether as a fulfillment or a lack, motherhood demands attention and commitment by its claim to *define* the person at all costs.[11]

Paradoxically, the strongest parental influence in *The Voyage Out* is exercised through distance. The images of distance between mothers and children in the novel include such things as the indirect stories we hear about the accomplishments or death of young people; Helen receiving news about her children through correspondence (269); the fact that Rachel leaves her father, and he is too late to see her before she dies; and the most conspicuous episode of all, in which Helen Ambrose's sense of loss magnifies the distance she has traveled from her children. In this scene, Helen's sense of loss distorts the actual geographical dimensions of the otherwise insignificant distance and dissolves the children's location into a mysteriously vague and unknown realm, beyond all the definite landmarks visible from where Helen is standing: "Somewhere up there above the pinnacles where the smoke rose in a pointed hill, her children were now asking for her, and getting a soothing reply" (4). In general, the beginning of *The Voyage Out*, as Howard Harper remarks, is dominated by imagery which suggests "the refusal to see or be seen" (13-14). This inability to see is another manifestation of exaggerated distance–the distance of separation from the maternal, which takes on almost mystical qualities as the loved object–the child–vanishes

beyond the mother's physical ability for contact with it, and remains irretrievable to the senses. The distance becomes more than physical and while the mother remains confined to the limited physical properties of her senses, the gap between her and the child acquires metaphysical proportions. It appears logical, then, for the mother to look for the agency which controls the separation elsewhere, beyond herself: thus Helen Ambrose irrationally directs her pain of separation to the old man who takes her and Mr. Ambrose to their ship: "Mournfully Helen regarded him, who was putting water between her and her children" (7). As the water imagery suggests, these images of unresolved and magnified distance are the images of separation at birth, which is indeed separation by water, as well as the beginning of a process of constantly increasing distance from birth throughout the individual's life, to the point where the logistics of birth become hazy and supplanted by a mythological account of it, rather than memory.

But the sense of distance becomes even more complicated as it grows into a feeling of physical deprivation engendered by the distance, as if the body itself cannot be supported once it is removed from the nurturing environment of the mother's body. Thus, we encounter multiple images of poverty associated with motherless children or otherwise colored by the absence of parental care. When Helen Ambrose is separated from her children, who probably view this separation in terms less tragic than egoistically indifferent (although no evidence is given either way), she projects onto their emotions her own sense of bereavement, and in her mind associates them with the poor: "What with misery for her children, the poor, and the rain, her mind was like a wound exposed to dry in the air" (5-6). As an emblem of a primal and irreparable deprivation, poverty seems to diminish and

obliterate the possibility for any positive characteristics of the English population at large, until this deprivation becomes the main attribute of all people, who exist in Helen's mind and partake of the more generally gloomy image of London only insofar as they are poor: "Mrs Ambrose understood that after all it is the ordinary thing to be poor, and that London is the city of innumerable poor people" (5).

Similarly, poverty, in its metaphoric capacity of a need for motherhood, stands in marked contrast to the artistic isolation of creative, counter-maternal egoism, since the career of the artist and the commitment to raising a family seem to be always in opposition. Many critics have pointed out Woolf's uneasiness with a fusion of the artistic and the maternal.[12] Rachel Bowlby, for example, articulates this point especially forcefully: "Throughout Woolf's writing, artistic creation by women is figured as both a symbolic equivalent for mothering and something which is incompatible with actual mothering" (60). The artist, she continues, is consequently "being placed [either] in a masculine position" (60) or in "the not-yet-adult position of the child" (61). The latter seems to approximate the case of Rachel more closely.[13] Ruth Saxton also speaks of "the competing plots of women as body versus women as mind" (102), and it seems that Rachel, even though she is not an articulated artist figure (after all, a successful artistic career would involve some physical commitment to the world), still occupies a position of contemplation and "voyeurism" associated with the artistic sensibility. Thus Saxton asks: "does she [Rachel] die because she tries to be both sexual and artist?" (105).[14] But there does not seem to be any place for doubt: the answer seems to lie in the discrepancy between the passivity of a bystander with which Rachel regards the world and which is all contemplative potentiality, and the necessary physicality of

a more active relationship with the world, for whose actuality and immediacy (the lack of distance) Rachel is not prepared.

The conflict between the artistic and the domestic (the latter with definite connotations of physicality) is one of Woolf's more explicit topics in the novel and finds expression in the personal philosophies of other characters as well. Thus, Clarissa Dalloway jumps into the art/life argument with passion: "When I'm with artists I feel so intensely the delights of shutting oneself up in a little world of one's own, with pictures and music and everything beautiful, and then I go out into the streets and the first child I meet with its poor, hungry, dirty little face makes me turn round and say, 'No, I can't shut myself up--I won't live in a world of my own'" (45). Significantly, it is the poor child who prompts the rejection of the pursuit of artistic vocation, which leads back to the parallel between lack and childhood (the explicit version of the implicit lack of the mother figure in the novel). The artistic solipsism is to be replaced by outward bound acts of nurturing, or, in the case of Richard, their politically enacted equivalent. Other clues to the association of essential deprivation with childhood (always given to the reader from the adult's point of view) are found in Richard Dalloway's insistence that children are, as a rule, unhappy, a train of thought immediately followed by his confession that the only "revelations" in his life were the misery of the poor and love (74), where the latter would be the cure for the former. As Richard Dalloway's attitude toward Rachel is a mixture of paternal (70) and sexual attraction, parenthood again becomes associated with an unfulfilled need, which here takes the form of temptation (85). Interestingly enough, this need is always articulated by the adult or the parent (as in the case of Helen), even though it is projected onto the children. For

example, Richard Dalloway gives Rachel a kiss which is hardly mutual, as if *she* needs it, while at the same time he is the one feeling the temptation, the need, the emptiness. The intertwined imagery of children and poverty, which plays a part in the beginning of the novel, also concludes the narrative, when, on the morning after Rachel's death, we get the following description: "The first sounds that were heard were little inarticulate cries, the cries, it seemed, of children or of the very poor, of people who were very weak or in pain" (433). Even more telling is the contrast here between life and death--the life of the poor and the children being always egoistically hungry, pressing on regardless of someone's death, stirring first in the morning and disturbing the sleep of the people who have been stunned by a grand interruption of life. Thus the cries become an epitome of the incessant, trivial needs which have to be faced and managed, and which build up to form an involuntary continuity called life.

In this context, it is remarkable that Rachel herself, who has literally lost her mother, and not merely been temporarily separated from her as Helen is from her children, should be dissociated from the impact of this ongoing metaphor of poverty: we learn that Rachel "had scarcely walked through a poor street, and always under the escort of father, maid, or aunts" (70), a statement which eclipses the acuteness of her deprivation, and makes her loss more interestingly ambivalent. For the most part, the association of poverty with the lack of motherhood sets up a pattern of essential, natural, immanent--primary, in Freud's terms--lack which cannot be questioned but which, in the case of Rachel, seems curiously qualified.

The first intimations of this qualification make themselves manifest in the abundant descriptions of Rachel as calm, indifferent, and self-sufficient, rather than restlessly in need

of something, as well as impervious to the experience of others and their attempts to communicate.[15] Helen thinks about Rachel: "Yes! how clear it was that she would be vacillating, emotional, and when you said something to her it would make no more lasting impression than the stroke of a stick upon water. There was nothing to take hold of in girls--nothing hard, permanent, satisfactory" (15). We see "the smooth unmarked outline of the girl's face" (20), a face which is "weak rather than decided" (14), and her "lack of colour and definite outline" (14), and it is clear that she is not so much foolish, "unformed" (244), and "incompetent" (15), as she is indifferent to what the world could offer her. Hesitation streams from all her speech--Helen observes "a hesitation in speaking" (14), and it is also significant that Rachel stammers at exactly the most important words and phrases: "f-f-fond" (34), "t-t-triumph in the wind" (18), "I-I want to ask questions" (63), "I can be m-m-myself" (95). This hesitation could be partly induced by the atmosphere of "censorship" (32) in her upbringing, which leads to ignorance, although this seems highly improbable--after all, no amount of censorship could extinguish all kinds of doubts and questions about the world and smooth over all inconsistencies and incompleteness of the version of existence offered to the benevolently confined Rachel. Consequently, she seems less shy of knowledge than willfully indifferent, and this is very far from the aspiring, curious, keenly observant spirit of a young person. While we found earlier that she is a child rather than a woman, now even the proposition that she is a child becomes suspect. Children are often associated with natural purity and innocence, but Rachel's state of mind is contrasted with the vivid landscape of primal, "natural" needs in Santa Marina, where "a poor girl cried her passionate song in the gutter" (113)–and we know that Rachel has no contact with poverty. In fact, Rachel's

indifference can be said to be unnatural, to the extent to which it is the opposite of the egoistic hunger typical, virtually inevitable, in the case of children, especially in the early stages when the infant demands and receives all without remainder from the "mother's apparently automatic responses to its needs" (Rosenman 12). Unlike an infant or a child, Rachel does not seem to want or hunger for anything at all, and even though she has been deprived, through the death of her mother, of the most essential existential support of her being, she seems willfully bent on some superficial state of self-sufficiency and autonomy, both from the world and from the people in it.

It is only natural that Rachel "would believe practically anything she was told" (31), because she does not bother to consider the validity of the statements and world views which confront her and demand an effort of thought she is not prepared to expend (this is evident in the ease with which she rejects religion the first time she actually thinks about it [279]). Her forced laugh (24) and her ability to do "absolutely nothing" (30) betray a certain inability to engage with the world in any way, a characteristic completely absent in children, whose contact with the world is manifestly and almost exclusively physical. Rachel, contrary to Rosenman's insistence that she "exists only as a reflection" (24), does not even strive, like children, to imitate or reflect adult emotions: "Much as Willoughby would doubtless have liked his daughter to praise him she did not; her eyes were *unreflecting* as water" (16) [italics mine]. Rachel's involvement with reality, when it happens (and "happens" is the right word, since this contact with the external environment[16] strikes almost like a natural disaster), is an awkward and deliberate reaction on her part to an intrusion which has been imposed on her, while she, as Joanne S. Frye remarks, "is essentially static" (24). Thus, the far from thrilling

anticipation of her aunt and uncle makes her nervous (7), and she has to react to it as to a provocation.

The arrival of the Dalloways is variously described as an "interruption" (40)--it calls for some "rearrangements" (40), one of which is Rachel's decision that she "must change her dress" because of the "strangers" (41). The notion of interruption emphasizes the fact that their enlightening and briefly invigorating presence is thrust upon an unwilling and apathetic audience in the form of Rachel. Both Mr. and Mrs. Dalloway initiate the action, unsought by Rachel, of revealing unsuspected aspects of life: Richard "had drawn apart one little chink and showed astonishing treasures" (60) and "Mrs. Dalloway stood in the room, leaving the door open, so that a strip of the white deck and of the blue sea appeared through the opening" (61). The interesting thing is that, after their departure, Rachel remains largely as unmoved by the world as before. In other words, although she can accept the "treasures" shown her by other people, she cannot or will not endeavor to appropriate or possess them, or to search for them herself--she does not see herself as an agent of change or a source of insight. The voyeuristic passivity with which she merely accepts but does not re-enact or imitate the acts of enlightenment she witnesses, is contained in the images of intrusion associated with the Dalloways. For example, we see them both enter her room, her private space, and deliver, as it were, the inspiration or mystery they carry, instead of Rachel going out and asking the questions she claims interest her. The fact that the Dalloways manage to bring out in her a mild curiosity, if not exactly a zest for life, comes to show that her indifference is chosen and willful, not "natural" and inevitable.

Her choice of apathy means that Rachel is loath to look forward into the future, even

though her existence is more often than not described in terms of potential, and potential is usually associated with plans or dreams for the future. Thus Willoughby Vinrace says in relation to his daughter: "we expect great things of her" (16), which emphasizes the extent to which she exists in some unspecified distant moment rather than in the reality of the present. At one point Richard also remarks to Rachel: "You have an inestimable power--for good or for evil. What couldn't you do" (84). The apparently puzzling answer is that she is perfectly content to do "absolutely nothing," to let her powers remain powerless and abstract rather than engage with the world. Similarly, it is interesting that, as "South America was the country of the future" (158), Rachel is not able to "acclimatise" (440) to the foreign climate but dies instead, just as she fails to acclimatize to the future, with the same result. Her inability to believe in the future entails a deep distrust of the prospect of continuation of existence, or what Jean Alexander calls "the failure of human continuity" (11). However, she is equally unlikely to probe the past; as Susan Dick observes, "Rachel's mind is not filled with clearly differentiated memories" (177). Thus Rachel seems to live a life devoid of past and future alike, a life of eternal present.

As the Dalloways' interruption of her routine is not at all unwelcome, though hardly sustained after their departure, it becomes clear that, in a sense, Rachel would rather be interrupted than be the interruption. This state of mind becomes especially vivid in the memory of her walks: "I like walking in Richmond Park and singing to myself and knowing it doesn't matter a damn to anybody. I like seeing things go on" (261). That is, things going on by themselves, rather than made to go on by a human agent--the human agent Rachel is unwilling to be. Similarly, in Santa Marina, her chief source of entertainment seems to be

"seeing life" (112). Hewet agrees with her: "one doesn't want to be things; one wants merely to be allowed to see them" (262). It is not the case that Rachel does not want to be disturbed; on the contrary, she is afraid of herself disturbing the flow of life, as if inserting oneself in the middle of things would interrupt them, somehow upset the delicate order of the universe. But this unwillingness to interfere also points to another motive: Rachel wants to avoid being implicated in the continuity of the world, and this continuity involves the maternal aspect as well.

The balance of beginning/end and continuity is an old theme, which assumes special importance here for Rachel's attitude toward motherhood. Throughout the novel Rachel remains suspicious of the notion of continuity. In fact, the enchanting quality of the world which she occasionally contemplates is the quality of uniqueness and discontinuity[17]: "She bent a blade of grass, and set an insect on the utmost tassel of it, and wondered if the insect realized his strange adventure, and thought how strange it was that she should have bent that tassel rather than any other of the million tassels" (164). Rachel is looking for the exclusive, the particular, the uniquely unrepeatable experience, and in the rare moments when such an experience seems to include herself (giving rise to the paradoxical state of being included in an exclusive experience), she feels happy: "The vision of her own personality, of herself as a real everlasting thing, different from anything else, *unmergeable*, like the sea or the wind, flashed into Rachel's mind, and she became profoundly excited at the thought of living" (95) (italics mine). Lucio Ruotolo also observes that she is "receptive to . . . intervals of broken sequence" (19). Unable to assemble the facets of life into one thing properly called "life" (a talent that will later appear with doubled force in the character of Mrs. Dalloway), Rachel

feels divorced from any meaning, in so far as meaning is continuity. "If Rachel learns anything," Ruotolo points out, "it is the art of disengagement" (21). Her desire to find an "I" for herself is constantly frustrated by her refusal to admit any attachment to the rest of the world; since she does not allow any contact between herself and the objective world, she, as Caramagno points out, "cannot believe in her own subjective reality" (164) either. Unable to ground her self in any external, solid physicality, even in her own body, Rachel remains an abstraction to herself. The possibility of motherhood, which is a possibility for the physical presence of the mother's body, would mean for Rachel to accept the physical presence of her own body and to treat herself as a given actuality, rather than a hypothetical potentiality. The inability to reconcile these two states of existence leaves Rachel in a position not simply of disconnectedness, but of impossibility. And it is the lack of the maternal presence that has led Rachel to this dilemma. As Madeline Moore points out, "Because of her mother's conflicting legacy, Rachel will be riddled by the dualism of her own nature" (41). The "legacy" in question seems to be mainly a legacy of absence, combined with the impossible immediacy of Rachel's own existence[18], which seems apparently underived from any available source whatsoever. As a result, Rachel is forced to question either the mother or herself, and she chooses to question herself. If the source of her life is in doubt, then her life is in doubt–Rachel does not believe in her own existence.

If she considers the role of the mother for herself, Rachel wants to know how she is going to fit in, how an exclusive, private being can give complete, inclusive warmth and share life without interrupting it and being interrupted the way Theresa's presence was. Thus Rachel seems to take life (and motherhood) more personally, and she is acutely aware of the

conflict between her own view that the mother is a unique, unreplaceable presence (she cannot replace it), and the apparent anonymity and selflessness of a universal mother figure. A possible solution, and one which many critics seem to favor, is the erasure of the self. Thus Nancy Bazin argues that "she [Rachel] returns to the peaceful silence of the womb" (86), and Elizabeth Goodenough sees a resolution of this conflict in Rachel's one-directional, unqualified rejection of the exclusive self and surrender to the inclusive nature, where Rachel seeks "to return to the anonymity of a common beginning, to exorcize the civilization of the species as well as the individual" (186). But Rachel does not seem to look back to the past[19] any more than she is anxious to plunge herself into the future.

One of the ongoing motifs in *The Voyage Out*, as in virtually any other work by Virginia Woolf, is that of communication and understanding.[20] Communication can be loosely defined as the degree of inclusiveness which two exclusive beings can achieve. In that sense, understanding a person means making that person distinguishable from his or her surroundings and alternatives. The difficulty which Rachel experiences in communicating her thoughts and emotions does not seem to come from a view of life in which people share things in common (hence "Rachel's limited sense of self" [96], observed by Love), but on the contrary, from her conviction that everybody is unique and unrepeatable, and possibly unrepresentable because of that. In other words, the difficulty comes from the "inclusive" side of the equation, not from the "exclusive" one.[21] Here, Rachel undoubtedly would agree with Hewet, whose puzzled question is an implicit attack on the inclusive: "can you imagine anything more ludicrous than one person's opinion of another person?" (265). Similarly, in Richard's conversation with Rachel, he exclaims: "How little, after all, one can tell anybody

about one's life! Here I sit; there you sit; both, I doubt not, chock-full of the most interesting experiences, ideas, emotions; yet how communicate? I've told you what every second person you meet might tell you" (74). The fear that the act of communication can be repeated by anyone else, the horrifying thought that sharing one's innermost feelings is repeatable, that the moment of confidence is not exclusive in time and place, throws a gloomy shadow on the prospect of motherhood, whose essence is repetition and propagation of what, to an individual temporarily taking part in the process, would seem a unique life, a disconnected "moment of being." In the generous dimensions of maternal space-time, being simply does not come in moments. The discrete units of life and death are only the feeble markers of the individual life, of the brief raid on existence in which the consciousness plunges, looking at the universe without being able to identify with it, and then fades away into fruitful forgetfulness, so that the next wave of consciousness can repeat this experience as unique.

In Rachel, there is a certain resistance to such forgetfulness. She is not prepared to leave things ungrasped by consciousness, just lying there in the world without relation to the "I" which can make sense of them. Her constant questioning of life is an implicit denial of its continuous physical matter-of-factness and a struggle to endow it with meanings, multiple, distinct, and unique, so that each moment can have an independent significance. While Rachel's questions are undoubtedly vague and unimaginative ("What is the truth? What's the truth of it all?" (142); "And life, what was that?" (145); "What is it to be in love?" (207)), they all have one thing in common--they are concerned with "what" the qualities of life are, and show no interest in the mere fact that life is. This emphasis on the special significance of existence, on the general made particular, renounces the kind of happiness Rachel sees in

Clarissa Dalloway and Helen Ambrose, for example. Clarissa exclaims: "I often wonder what I've done to be so happy!" (65), and Helen almost literally repeats this assertion with: "I don't know why I'm happy" (245). Happiness, then, emerges as another natural state, like the state of motherhood, which you do not have to deserve or explain; it simply is.

The argument for life as given, primary, general is also taken up by Hewet, and opposed by Evelyn, for whom people must be special and "splendid"; Hewet objects: "What d'you mean by splendid? . . . People are--nothing more" (227). This line of thought, which contrasts the splendor of individual achievement with the simple fact of the individual's existence continues in the observation that Rachel's aunts "were less splendid but more natural than her father was" (259). In the case of Rachel herself, it seems that she seeks the splendor of things, the "what," the way they are, and is not content with the undifferentiated, bleak fact *that* they are. That is why she is unable to accept Helen's advice: "you must take things as they are; and if you want friendship with men you must run risks" (91). On the contrary, Rachel objects by saying: "I shall think about it [Richard's kiss] all day and all night until I find out exactly what it does mean" (90). She will not be dissuaded by Helen's insistence that "It's the most natural thing in the world" (90). The omnipotence of nature is regarded with deep suspicion by Rachel, as she finds it difficult to realize exactly how the general, natural state of things is relevant to her own life. Thus the "I" represents an inevitable interruption of the life process by the emergence of consciousness, and it is only an interruption from the point of view of that consciousness, which demands to see not merely the continuity of the world but *its own* continuity in the world. The tragic overtones of this paradox are hinted at when we learn that the country to which Rachel cannot "acclimatise" is

at the same time the embodiment of the undifferentiated nature: "nothing was private in this country" (114). Thus Rachel, with her exclusiveness and detachment, is thrown into an environment of undifferentiated generality, in which she will not be able to survive as a person. The parallel of the jungle with the all-inclusive motherhood is expertly drawn by Rosenman, who describes this place as "a space both erotic and feminine. The jungle inscribes Rachel's desire for regression in her surroundings . . . The undifferentiated 'mass' of green, the communion of water with earth and branches, the freedom from rigid, articulated forms, mark nature as the symbol of primitive union to which the lovers aspire" (26). (The omnipotence of nature in this scene, however, does not seem absolute, and the narrator's observation that the path Rachel and Hewet take has an ambiguous status and that it is not clear "whether [it is] made by man, or for some reason preserved by nature" [330], seems to undercut Rosenman's argument.)

However, the fact that nature offers the feminine, undifferentiated, oblivious whole does not necessarily mean that this is what Rachel is looking for, either in her capacity as an incomplete child, or in her potential future as a mother. As she is very unlike a naturally inquisitive child hungry for a nurturing connection with the world, she is also very far from showing any maternal qualities. At one point she declares to Clarissa: "No. I shall never marry" (64), and she also explicitly denies any resemblance between herself and her mother (65). We learn that "Rachel was indignant with the prosperous matrons, who made her feel outside their world and motherless" (60), and that seems to imply a desire on the part of the matrons to instill in her the self-consciousness of one who is expected to have children. What Rachel resents is not the fact that she is not a mother but the fact that people expect her

to be. On another occasion, Helen observes how inept a hostess Rachel would make (98), and there is an unmistakable quality of forced determination (like her forced laughter) in Rachel's attempt to live up to her duties as a hostess in a proper way when she is nervously waiting to meet her aunt and uncle: "She was already unnaturally braced to receive them. . . . [S]he occupied herself in laying forks severely straight by the side of knives " (7).

Her musical gift is also repeatedly emphasized, and we see her talent clearly opposed to the realm of the maternal. First of all, music is described as her "one definite gift" (32), the only tangible thing with substance and outline, shape, definition: "an invisible line seemed to string the notes together, from which rose a shape" (61). Thus Helen's observation that there is "nothing to take hold of in girls--nothing hard, permanent, satisfactory" (15) acquires a new and radically different set of connotations. We now see that it is not necessarily meant as a criticism but more likely as an approving observation of maternal potential, of a spot of malleable vulnerability in the definition of the self, which can later serve as a gateway to the oblivious, nurturing, selfless embracing of motherhood. Young women, Helen seems to be saying, are promising as mothers in so far as they *are not* themselves. Rosenman also seems to share this conviction in interpreting Rachel's death as a return to the realm of the maternal, where there is an identification of the self with its environment, and the two merge in a "continuity of being" (12). A more practical version of this dissolving required by the maternal function if it is to be viable at all is seen in the character of Mrs. Thornbury, who appears to be less of a definite person and more of a symbol for motherhood: "This long life and all these children had left her very smooth; they seemed to have rubbed away the marks of individuality, and to have left only what was old

and maternal" (390).

But Rachel has identified her one unique gift, and she clings to it with all her power, to the point where she is described as "a fanatic about music" (32). She also seems to enjoy the status of music as an adversary of marriage, as she facetiously considers the consequences of playing: "The muscles of the forearm--and then one won't marry" (14). Playing the piano is also implicitly opposed to the function of a hostess, when these two activities become connected in Helen's thought: "it struck Helen that Rachel was perhaps too still for a hostess, and that she might have done something with her hands" (11). The ironic twist, the fact that Rachel *is* doing something with her hands, namely making music[22], remains unnoticed by Helen.

If motherhood, as critics seem to agree, is undifferentiated and inclusive, then it is also infinitely repeatable and continuous. Here, we can recall Mrs. Elliot's exclamation: "Surely maternity does not change" (133), which would sum up the view that motherhood is a constant, a given, immutable quality which exercises its influence regardless of how receptive the individual mind is. Accepting this view would be tantamount to sharing the theory of St. John Hirst, who sees people moving in always-already given circles, unable to escape from their prescribed trajectory or influence their path in life through their individual desires and actions: "they're all types. . . . You could draw circles round the whole lot of them, and they'd never stray outside. . . . You try to get out, but you can't. You only make a mess of things by trying" (123).

On the other hand, Rachel's view of life leaves open the possibility of change at the cost of relinquishing the comfort of continuity: "I believe there are things we don't know

about, and the world might change in a minute and anything appear" (168). Helen also confirms that Rachel "changes her view of life about every other day" (191). Even death does not appear to be an exception to this rule. Naturally, to Rachel her own death is more acceptable than to other people, because it fits in with the fantastic aura of dissociation surrounding everything else, the disjoined "moments of being." Thus the actual death does not have to follow logically from the fact that Rachel was alive and well only two weeks earlier because, according to Rachel, there is no continuity in the human being. That is why earlier in the novel Richard, for example, is desperately trying to explain to Rachel that "a human being is not a set of compartments, but an organism" (72).

In more ways than one, Rachel opts for the mystery of differentiated, unique moments, none of them implying the others, neither derived from its predecessors, moments without history or future. In this context, the metaphoric parallel between her and the ship embarking on the long voyage assumes a new, deeper dimension:

> she [the ship] was an inhabitant of the great world, which has so few inhabitants, travelling all day across an empty universe, with veils drawn before her and behind. She was more lonely than the caravan crossing the desert; she was infinitely more mysterious, moving by her own power and sustained by her own resources. 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 unknown of men. (29)

The remarkable image of the ship isolated from the rest of the world, "with veils drawn before her and behind," emphasizes her self-sufficiency and break from the general context

of existence. The disruption of continuity, the absence of an embracing whole of which the ship forms a part, is not seen here as an act of debilitating fragmentation, but as an act of freedom. The entity of the ship is contained in itself, nurtured not by the wealth of a larger (maternal) environment but by its own resources. Thus severed from the rest of creation, it is also divorced from the memory of former shores and from the future prospect of encountering land again. Such an existence, enclosed in itself and complete in the unique moment in which we encounter it, remains devoid of sequence, disconnected from its own logic, and therefore "mysterious."

Following the pattern of Rachel's life, her death[23], then, appears not as a belated ontological merger, but as a thing of definition and shape which looms up inexplicably into prominence at a certain time, just like any other event, taking up all conscious space and filling up the view: "It seemed as if they [the people in the villa] were at last brought together face to face with something definite" (429). Her whole illness, instead of being a process of incoherent dissipation, assumes the outline of a struggle which requires a more militarily active and definite approach than normal life. In fact, Rachel's illness is repeatedly compared to an expedition which calls for assertive and deliberate action (408, 409, 411). With the prospect of death looming up, the predicament becomes "a real illness that required a good deal of organisation" (407).

Death, then, cannot be regarded as an interruption, but not because it is a return to the universal, "archetypal" (Rosenman 7), unformed beginning. Death is not an interruption because, as far as Rachel is concerned, there has never been any continuity. Thus she is without future because she has relinquished the continuity of the past and thinks that she is

free and independent: "it's like being the wind or the sea" (261). The wind and the sea may seem to be generic metaphors for freedom, but on closer inspection they take on a special hostility toward continuity--you cannot trace the same wave or the same gust of wind because they appear as if out of nowhere and disappear suddenly; at the same time, only a separate wave or gust of wind can sustain movement and signify freedom--the sea and the wind as a whole are motionless. The freedom of movement, therefore, has to involve separate instances of change. When this movement becomes arrested, we get the oxymoron of a metaphor like "the same waves," as in the following description of the view when the ship has stopped in its voyage: "a stationary castle upon a stationary hill. They had dropped anchor in the mouth of the Tagus, and instead of cleaving new waves perpetually, the same waves kept returning and washing against the sides of the ship" (37).

As Rachel distrusts all sense of stability (evidently, even her mother, the most stable thing in the world, inexplicably disappeared), she does not seem to believe in motherhood either. When she thinks about her relationship with Terence and decides that she cannot confine herself to loving "only one human being" (370)[24], this statement has to include the mother figure as well, to the extent to which she is a definite human being, the one precise human being that is missing. Rachel feels that she, too, is too exclusive and unique to take part in an unstable "continuity" which may be interrupted at any time. That is why she prefers to take interruption for granted, with the result of a paradoxical world view in which discontinuity becomes the foundation of experience, because, according to Rachel, it precedes and negates continuity. The appeal to a fundamental and mysterious disconnectedness of things seeks to make sense of the profound failure of continuity from the

point of view of the individual consciousness. If the individual can appear and then disappear, then he or she cannot be derived from a previous state of things and cannot follow any logical line of connection in the instant of death. These ideas of fragmentary self-sufficiency are reflected in Rachel's decision that "she was independent of him [Terence]; she was independent of everything else" (386). The failure to account for her own existence in the absence of the conclusive evidence that the presence of her mother would have provided makes Rachel an unfulfilled mother herself. Motherhood becomes impossible for her as a woman, just as it seems impossible to her as a child because it is not in her power to ascertain how she came to be (Helen writes about Rachel: "until I explained it, [she] did not know how children were born" [110]); the connection of motherhood is missing.

It is sometimes pointed out that at the moment of her death Rachel re-enacts the complete dependency of the infant on the mother. Thus Rosenman, for example, talks about a "unified field of sense impressions like the mother's nurturant atmosphere" (8). In death, she claims, Rachel has retroactively achieved "the infant's sense of oneness with the environment" (12), an environment which satisfies the infant's needs as they arise, so that the identification of need and response from the mother is complete, and there is no delay or displacement of the affection the child receives. However, this explanation does not seem to account for Rachel's experiences and hallucinations during her illness and death. Unlike the earlier occasion of Rachel's dream, in which she is passively surrendering to non-being ("Still and cold as death she lay" [86]), at the moment of her actual death Rachel is anything but peacefully content. As she restlessly struggles, not to drive away her nightmares but to make sense of them, her struggle takes an unusual form: whatever the inexplicable

hallucination, "she was always being just *too late* to hear or see something which would explain it all" (416) (italics mine). Here is an unmistakable, pervasive, and escalating sense of delay, which implies an increasing disjunction of experience (the mother-child distance from the beginning of the novel), rather than a return to the simultaneity of motherly response. Ultimately, Rachel does not succeed at being alive because she finds it impossible to make the connection between past and future, to predict or visualize love and marriage, and this impossibility leads her to give up life altogether; she will not trust the possibility for continuity between the present and the future without proof, without "knowing" beforehand how this continuity will be ensured.

We also know that Rachel's alter ego in the novel, Terence Hewet, shares these feelings about the impossibility of perceiving a pattern in the world, to the point where Hirst feels compelled to inform him: "It's the lack of continuity--that's what's so odd about you" (123). This statement is equally applicable to Rachel, especially if we keep in mind that Hewet's role in *The Voyage Out* does not appear to be that of an amorous complement to Rachel, but rather a reflection of her. It is remarkable, for example, that Rachel's otherwise placid and blank face should reflect the presence of Hewet when she sees him approach (320). Rosenman points out that Rachel mirrors his words (27), but it is true that he also mirrors Rachel in a number of ways. He is repeatedly attributed feminine characteristics: he does not mind being compared to an old spinster (130), he takes the role of the "host" of the expedition, while the others are "his guests" (153, 156), and he compares losing a book to murdering a child (166). Hewet also re-enacts Rachel's death (170), and, more explicitly, we see him "instinctively adopting the feminine point of view" (253). Evelyn observes:

"There's something of a woman in him" (302). At the two crucial moments of their lives--engagement and death--Hewet and Rachel merge into one. In the first case, they voice their love in a syntax devoid of the first person pronoun ("We love each other" [332]); in the second, Hewet "seemed to be Rachel as well as himself" (431). Among other things, they share the disjointed view of life and the mystery that accompanies it, making them wonder about the reality of things and surprise themselves with their own feelings.

This intense distrust of continuity also shapes Rachel's view of the world around her, where she looks for evidence of diachronic disruption. Such disruption colors her perception of other people, and she comes to see them as objects: "Let these odd men and women . . . be symbols,--featureless but dignified, symbols of age, of youth, of motherhood, of learning, and beautiful often as people upon the stage are beautiful" (35). The mention of the stage here implies that the character seen in a play does not have to refer back to the actor and his or her life before the play began, as it does not in any way determine the future of this person. In fact, the characters in a play are self-sufficient, inexplicably complete in the moment, and ready to disappear without a trace.

Just as the others resemble "people upon the stage," even Mrs. Dalloway is not spared the comparison with an artificial thing: Rachel thinks of her as "a fascinating spectacle. . . . an eighteenth-century masterpiece" (47). Similarly, Rachel resolves the mystery of her aunts' existence by an appeal to the inanimate and indifferent permanence of objects which do not require explanation: "the whole system in which they [her aunts] lived had appeared before her eyes as something quite unfamiliar and inexplicable, and themselves as chairs or umbrellas dropped about here and there without any reason" (34). Usually, the redeemable

quality of objects is that one does not wonder how they came into being, and they certainly do not disappear until there is a reason for it, and it is perfectly possible that they can outlive the more fragile human flesh. In this sense, objects can serve as a gyroscopic indicator of stability for the majority of people. When the storm which hits the ship, for example, is finally gone, it is the world of objects that the passengers can refer to for verification of what is "normal": "after their view of the strange under-world, inhabited by phantoms, people began to live among tea-pots and loaves of bread with greater zest than ever" (80); and: "The paper lay directly beneath the clock, the two together seeming to represent stability in a changing world" (135). Such stability appears to be definitely English in character, as we learn from the Dalloways when Clarissa brings up the subject of "what it really means to be English" (53), and Richard authoritatively declares: "It's the continuity" (53). On another occasion, Helen is "mocking the poor lady's [Mrs. Elliot's] timidity, who depended so implicitly upon one thing following another that the mere glimpse of a world where dinner could be disregarded, or the table moved one inch from its accustomed place, filled her with fears for her own stability" (150).

Rachel, on the other hand, has a different motive to regard people as objects--she sees objects as separate in time and space, and therefore discontinuous. Jean O. Love points out that the "fact that people are reified, made identical with objects, suggests the contingency of human existence" (97). Unlike people, objects are given and need not come from somewhere, or justify their own existence. In other words, objects are the only instance of experience in which it is possible to justify the fact "that" the world exists, and they appear immune to the question "what" kind of existence it is. Like people and their thoughts, words

also need to be redefined in order to become acceptable in a discontinuous universe: "Rachel read what she chose, reading with the curious literalness of one to whom written sentences are unfamiliar, and handling words as though they were made of wood, separately of great importance, and possessed of shapes like tables or chairs" (144). Similarly, when Rachel thinks back to her conversation with Richard Dalloway, she can only remember things in symbols, anonymous, capitalized, deprived of the meaning which was originally inspiring to her: "Unity," "Imagination" (93). The word "unity" itself belies its own denotation as it is disconnected from the context which gave it life in the conversation, severed from its associations and relations with other words. The reification of people and language is a defensive strategy on the part of Rachel which helps her cope with the necessity of justifying change; more precisely, this reification privileges the moment and dispenses with the explanation of past and future and their connection. Since objects do not have history, or at least it is not necessary to bring the past of an object to bear on its present condition, they can exist independently of their surroundings.

The wishful perception of people as inanimate objects or self-sufficient symbols again leads to the insistence on the uniqueness of the moment and the quality of splendor that life should have, as opposed to the naked fact of being. As the generalizations of "Unity" and "Imagination" serve to dwarf the actual, limited human experience, they are like the stories of heroism which require of their characters a super-human intensity and accomplishment; these accounts of splendid people and events are naturally in opposition to what the conceited men in *The Voyage Out* would regard as the lowest common denominator of femininity: "Wonderful masculine stories followed about Bright and Disraeli and

coalition governments, wonderful stories which made the people at the dinner-table seems featureless and small" (85). It is not accidental that a character like Evelyn Murgatroyd should display some quite "masculine" qualities, aim for a larger-than-life ideal, and argue against Hewet's insistence that people just "are." Apparently Evelyn subscribes to a self-effacing credo of inflated idealistic proportions: "All my life I've wanted somebody I could look up to, somebody great and big and splendid. Most men are so small" (227).

Unlike Evelyn, Rachel finds a different consolation in the self-sufficient symbolic power of words and people. She does not seek ideals because they are larger than her and she can partake in their unlimited power. On the contrary, symbols and objects are the only things which do not require her to form a relation with them, because they can exist independently of her, independently, in fact, of any human being. The reified units, the epitomes of existence are also synchronic and lack the uncomfortable and puzzling diachronic need to explain themselves in terms of their origin and to justify their deaths. They lack ontology, and that excuses them from the demands of constructing a continuity of any kind.

The criticism of continuity has another, and more psychologically subtle, dimension. Continuity involves change and, by implication, a series of losses over which it forms a bridge. According to Freud, there are two basic ways to react to a loss--mourning and melancholy. In mourning, which is the normal process of dealing with the loss, the ego is able to give up its attachment to the lost object together with the object; in melancholy, on the contrary, "the love for the object--a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up--takes refuge in narcissistic identification" (588). In other words, the ego

turns its affection, originally meant for the object, back toward itself, and in this act of regressive closure it begins to treat itself as an object (588).

A brief illustration of the threat of a melancholic attachment can be seen in one episode in *The Voyage Out*, where Ridley, Rachel, Helen, and all the others discover that they actually miss the presence of their accidental guests after the Dalloways disembark:

> A feeling of emptiness and *melancholy* came over them; they knew in their hearts that it was over, and that they had parted for ever, and the knowledge filled them with far greater depression than the length of their acquaintance seemed to justify. Even as the boat pulled away they could feel other sights and sounds beginning to take the place of the Dalloways, and the feeling was so unpleasant that they tried to resist it. (88) (italics mine)

In this brief flash of melancholy, which has no opportunity to settle down and take over the minds of the people on the ship, the main characteristics of this state of mind become transparent. If the person allows "other sights and sounds" to take the place of the missing object, the result would be a healthy period of mourning. After it runs its normal course, the individual will recover and, as it were, forget.

The experience of and the recovery from loss becomes more complicated in the case of Rachel. As the majority of contemporary interpretations of Rachel's development and death focus on her regressive features and the return to the primary, unconscious, absolute identification of her self with the environment in the final act of death, they would imply a view of Rachel's character in which she is bound to exist on the melancholic, pathological side of loss. At the same time, these interpretations seek to show that her return to and

merging with the maternal anonymity and all-inclusive non-existence is in fact a healthy decision, compared to the compromises that undoubtedly await Rachel in marriage and life in the future. However, the choice of melancholy would be a pathological choice and thus a failure in life. And, indeed, Rachel is far from committing herself to the pathology of loss. To emphasize this, it is necessary to point out that the melancholy response is the one which depends on the sense of continuity. More precisely, the self has to form a continuous attachment to the ghost of the lost object, as it were, which means that the person is unable to sever the connection with the object. In other words, the person cannot visualize or accept the non-existence of the object, or for that matter any moment in the future which is significantly different, and therefore not derivable from the present, and so the self desperately attempts to maintain the continuity of a relationship which has no objective basis. Thus the ego collapses back on itself, because its own memory is the only locus where the connection still exists.

It is easy to see that if Rachel distrusts all images of continuity, she would not fall prey to melancholy in relation to the loss of her mother. Seeing the world in separate and forever mysterious facets, which, like strangers, are without past and future, makes Rachel accept any loss with the contemplation of mourning, which leaves the loss inexplicable and disjunct and at the same time enables the self to go on living. However, the perception of distorted or absent continuity, although immune to the self-destructive drive of melancholy, is not healthy either. It implies that, since each moment is endowed with "the extreme strangeness" (89) of a new thing, wonderful and complete in itself, and since the person is "leaping from moment to moment as from world to world" (147), the individual moment

does not require the context or succession of other moments to make sense of itself and thus becomes unproductive; it cannot construct, anticipate, or take part in its own future. In this sense, Rachel's death, while it is not the actively sought, vaguely suicidal return to the origins, nevertheless fits in with the failure of her life to form a deliberate sequence, a coherent and progressive whole, part of which is motherhood. Thus discontinuity would provide a certain logic to account for the loss of the mother, while preserving the state of stalled self-sufficiency which is unable to contemplate its own perpetuation and thus does not move forward to ensure its own future in procreation. This discontinuity, or the absence of a melancholic identification, serves to contain each separate experience enclosed in its own tiny shell, and give each moment a sense of closure, which is fundamentally foreign to the idea of motherhood.

The continuity that fails Rachel here is the physical continuity implied in the acts of the maternal, as the body is physically re-created over time into another body–a proposition which does not seem at all plausible to Rachel. In fact, in many ways the knowledge and use of her own body are associated with her failure to access the realm of the maternal. Ruth Saxton, for example, points out that Rachel is "isolated from any maternal education concerning her body" (97), and it makes sense that such "education" would be about the reproductive powers of the body, powers which ensure continuity in the physical world.[25] Although some critics view positively Rachel's relationship to her body[26], we should not forget that, as Thomas Caramagno reminds us, this is ultimately an "infected body" (161). The illness, which is a specifically bodily deterioration, negates the body, but what it destroys is the body as a unit, not as a reproducible vehicle of continuity. In this sense, Rachel indeed

can be said to have willed her own death, since she fails to see her body as anything larger than an individual unit. Therefore, she also denies her own reproductive capacity and claims on motherhood. As Clare Hauson points out, "Rachel's illness and death are explicitly connected in the text with her repudiation of sexuality" (34), although Hauson does not make this very clear–Rachel's denial of her sexuality, defined as continuity of the body, is what makes her illness so fatal and sudden. Her renunciation of motherhood is, quite literally, a renunciation of herself.

The character who seems to occupy an opposite extreme in the novel is Evelyn, who shows the potential to be a more likely mother figure, as she shows an indiscriminate, inclusive affection toward everyone, as well as a desire to connect everything. Unable to settle for any one human being or relationship, she would rather indefinitely maintain all of them: "To come to a decision was very difficult to her, because she had a natural dislike of anything final and done with; she liked to go on and on--always on and on" (444). Paradoxically, the moments of beginning and end are elements of continuity rather than of interruption--they imply a whole stretched out between them. The emphasis which Evelyn puts on beginning, on starting over, is thus inevitably linked to her obsession with an ideal whole: "I'd love to start life from the very beginning as it ought to be" (158). Indeed, one can only use the word "beginning" in relation to a larger whole, proceeding, like motherhood, from one particular moment but nevertheless implying all other moments and erasing itself in the process of bringing them to life. The self-sacrifice of the moment of beginning, as it is superceded by its "descendants" and incorporated into the larger framework of the whole, is essentially the dissolving and life-giving power of motherhood.

The concern with the beginnings of things forms another undercurrent in *The Voyage Out*. The theme of the Greek language and reading Plato in the original (46), Ridley's insistence that there is no adequate translation (236), and the article in the newspaper about the archaeological discoveries in Crete (131) are some instances of an overall desire to decipher the texts of an invisible, inaccessible, and somehow lost origin which might contain the clues to the meaning of life. Of course, the origin is revealed to be a myth, as we see everyone on the ship somehow failing to learn Greek or read Plato in the original. Ridley himself, the authority on the subject, is conspicuously shut up in his room, maintaining the faith of the others in the origin of everything by not revealing it to them.

If we go back to the distinction between mourning and melancholy, it will become obvious that the notion of an "original" superior to any "translation" of experience essentially coincides with the notion of melancholy. The inability to "get over" a lost beginning is the source of the need to cling to a memory of an idealized, primary state of the world, a state where perfection cannot be recognized in, or invoked by, any subsequent and secondary "translation." On the other hand, undergoing the more healthy process of mourning is tantamount to translating the original affection and attachment to the object into the relationship with a new object.

One of the aspects of such a secondary process of replacing the original / natural / necessary has to do with the notion of "arrangement," which is prominent in *The Voyage Out*. "Arrangement" is a peculiar word, and it boards the narrative at the moment when the Dalloways set foot on the ship. The word receives its meaning here from the implied freedom from necessity (or, in fact, the freedom to convey necessity upon things) to which

the Dalloways subscribe: "'By special arrangement,' however, were words of high encouragement to them, for they came of a class where almost everything was specially arranged or could be if necessary" (39-40). It is not merely the case that arrangement is fundamentally opposed to the necessity of what is natural (including the necessity of the mother figure), but English aristocratic upbringing allegedly leads the Dalloways to believe that things, once arranged, duly take on the necessity of a natural process. Thus we encounter a more facetious interpretation of English "arrangement" in the words of Richard: "Are you aware, Miss Vinrace, how much can be done to induce fine weather by appropriate headdress? I have determined that it is a hot summer day; I warn you that nothing you can say will shake me" (66).

It is true that, in simple binary terms, the absence of the natural foundation of being is often covered up by secondary, arranged plans over which one can have control. Thus the loss or absence of the maternal is displaced in things that can be arranged, manipulated, controlled, things that are a matter of social convention--for example, Willoughby substitutes arrangement, the success of trade plans, for the natural presence of the mother figure: "the ships that crossed the ocean punctually, the schemes for combining this and that and building up a solid mass of industry, was all an offering to her [Theresa]" (96). But even more broadly, the organization of arrangement seems to serve as an alternative to melancholic identification with the loss, as another version of the desire to mitigate the impact of emptiness, as another attempt to mourn and not perish.

Again, Rachel's peculiar position in *The Voyage Out* does not allow her to take advantage of this more ingenious strategy of forgetting. She is saved from the melancholic

self-destruction by assuming the inherent absence of continuity in the world, but she is unable to sustain life for that same reason. The more artificial resort to "arrangement," which some of the other characters choose, is also made inaccessible to her by virtue of her inability to make long-term plans, or in fact to conceive of a viable future in which such plans would exist. (As "arrangement" is also the musical variation on a theme, it would be impossible without a recognizable, unifying theme.) The fact that she is exempt from the imagery of children as poor because she is self-sufficient in her existence also invokes her attempt to escape the maternal, even though this would mean to escape life itself. In a sense, when Rachel gives primacy to the discontinuity of life, she decides to treat both motherhood and life as secondary processes, because she thinks of them as individual processes. Just as the individual can physically separate from the mother at birth or from life at death, she chooses an emotional dissociation as well, not realizing that the separation from motherhood implies a separation from life itself. As she is unable to see the mechanism which propels the world from one moment to the next and amalgamates the pieces into a whole, Rachel is also incapable of seeing herself extended either over a period of time and into the future, or laterally into the space of motherhood.

Notes

1.Thomas C. Caramagno remarks that, "Like Virginia, Rachel lost her mother before she could develop an adult's independence; now she seeks nurturing fusions with Clarissa, Helen, and Terence" (158).

2. Freud's whole theory of the distortion taking place in dreams, where the latent content is transformed into manifest content, is based on the assumption that the visible parts of a dream are not a truthful reflection of the real, hidden meaning of the dream; thus, even anxiety dreams can be shown to be wish-fulfillment (see Chapter IV, "Distortion in Dreams" in *The Interpretation of Dreams*).

3. Caramagno selects the theme of motherhood as the first of several focal points in *The Voyage Out*, a novel where "Woolf explored the themes that pervade all her books: mothering, madness, and the universal human need for a meaningful therapeutic mirroring of self-continuity in a world that can, at any moment and for no reason, inflict pain, loss, and powerlessness" (156). Similarly, Madeline Moore emphasizes the importance of the theme of motherhood by stating that "it is her [Rachel's] mother's presence which hovers over the voyage" (38).

4. Nancy Grace Bazin, for example, remarks that Rachel "still rejects one aspect of womanhood" (82). Rachel, in a sense, is always lagging behind what "womanhood" means, and the way in which she is feminine is constantly thwarted by the way in which she is still a child. Howard Harper articulates a similar observation: "Hewet, having lost his father, does not quite know how to be a man; and when he learns that Rachel has lost her mother, he may realize that she does not know how to be a woman" (29).

5. Here we can include as examples not only Rachel's relationship with Hewet, but also Clarissa's rejection of Peter in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Mrs. Ramsay's private moments when she is alone in *To the Lighthouse*, and virtually any relationship of the protagonist in Orlando.

6. Many critics point out the apparent uselessness of Rachel's death: Caramagno, for example, argues that "the point is that Rachel's death is *gratuitous*" (182), and John Batchelor observes that she "dies for no obvious dramatic reason" (14).

7. It is easy to see that none of Woolf's characters is perfect, especially as mother figures; the need to reconcile the different elements of the mother's elusive, ambivalent and self-contradictory position keeps the narrative going with a certain degree of frustration--this is evident in the re-iteration (sometimes almost exact repetition) of the main questions to which Woolf returns in all of her novels, and which can be summarized by: "What did it all mean?"; this question, asked in different forms by Rachel, Clarissa Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay, and Orlando, is always kept open and deliberately unanswered.

8. See "The Ego and the Id" in *The Freud Reader*, 628-658.

9. This anonymity of the mother figure finds expression in a number of critical works, most notably in Ellen Rosenman's extensive study, *The Invisible Presence: Virginia Woolf and the Mother-Daughter Relationship.*

10. That is why I cannot agree with John Batchelor when he states that, before she dies, Rachel "becomes fully established as a human being" (13).

11. It is not accidental, then, that Lucio P. Ruotolo describes Rachel as "resisting definition" (22). Madeline Moore also indirectly supports this lack of specificity and definition in Rachel: "By nature, she is not possessable" (40), and so she remains unformed and "amphibian." Motherhood, being the defining factor in Rachel's life, can, by its absence, leave Rachel herself undefined and incomplete.

12. Notwithstanding some statements to the contrary, such as Christine Froula's observation of an unproblematic relationship between motherhood and art: "For Woolf, natural and symbolic creativity mirror each other" ("Out of" 80).

13. In fact, some critics, most notably Christine Froula, see Rachel as an authentic artist. Froula interprets *The Voyage Out* as the journey leading to the full and complete "initiation of a female artist-figure" ("Out of" 57).

14. Saxton does not see room for any compromise between these two modes of existence, and finds them mutually exclusive: "in Woolf, only a female character who resists reproductive sexuality can create a female text" (96); and: "Women can either procreate or create, but never simultaneously" (96).

15. Jean O. Love observes that one of the main characteristics of *The Voyage Out* is that "people seem unable to know one another" (101). Mark Hussey similarly agrees that communication is a central problem for Woolf: "All Woolf's work is concerned with . . . the impossibility of knowledge" (46).

16. Rachel seems to be at odds with her environment to the point that she and her environment become incompatible, and that leads to her death. James Hafley thus equates "Rachel's death and her inability to unite her own world with the world around her" (15). Which means that if, in the mind of Rachel, the world makes sense, then she herself does not. Consequently, I cannot agree here with Lucio Ruotolo, who states that Rachel "is motivated by the chaotic impact of things external to herself" (19), and therefore that her relationship with the world is somehow one of continuity.

17. This discontinuity, in the form of randomness, finds approval in Michael Rosenthal's account of the novel: "Rachel is absolutely right in her understanding of the essentially random quality of life in Woolf's universe" (60). It is difficult to agree, however, that it is Woolf's world that is random, and not Rachel's. This discontinuity also appears in some critics under the description of "the constant threat of the void" (Bazin 76).

18. The opposite view, one which advocates and embraces the full physical presence of the self in the world, is that of Evelyn M. The expansive generosity of presence and emotion which Evelyn displays--her presence seems virtually ubiquitous, and her love an exuberant, inextinguishable, inclusive glow--makes her a much more likely candidate for motherhood than Rachel would ever be.

19. For a more detailed analysis of the notion of the past in *The Voyage Out*, see Gillian Beer, especially the chapter "Virginia Woolf and Prehistory," pp. 6-28 in *The Common Ground*. Beer is interested in the primeval as the unconscious search for origins, and she analyzes some of the nature imagery in the novel to explore the themes of continuity and sexuality: "Her [Woolf's] fascination with the sea and with the primeval and prehistoric may be related to her search for a way out of sexual difference, or, equally, for a continuity with lost origins" (17). Another critic interested in the past is Manly Johnson, who interprets the voyage in the novel as "a journey away from the articulateness and differences between men, a journey into the past" (31)–or, again, as a womb-like equalizing of all difference.

20. Or what Jean O. Love calls the "incomplete, indirect, and provisional nature of knowledge" (3) and the "essential absurdity of human relationships" (99). Rachel's most characteristic question in the novel is: "But how does one know?" (94). The same concern about the impossibility of true communication between people (even between a husband and a wife), is present in Mrs. Ramsay's and Lily Briscoe's attempts to correlate their own internal vision with the external reality.

21. A limitation very much opposed to the "mother's way of seeing things whole" (Bazin 18).

22. Music in *The Voyage Out* has, of course, various other interpretations. Alice van Buren Kelley, for example, argues that "music is Rachel's tool for building truth " (13), meaning that music offers a vision more truthful than the factual life around her. And Christine Froula suggests that music is part of Rachel's attempt to remember "what has been repressed from language, history, and consciousness, and in particular, for lost origins: her dead mother, the 'birth of the world,' the sources of her own musical art" ("Out of" 64).

23. The significance of Rachel's death has been the subject of multiple critical accounts. Some critics see it as a willful, albeit unconscious decision on the part of Rachel herself: thus Mitchell A. Leaska argues that "her death is consciously unresisted, unconsciously sought: *it is a self-willed death*" (38), and Harvena Richter describes it as "unconscious suicide" (24); death as a return to a safe and unconscious space is analyzed by George Ella Lyon: "She leaves the land–wakefulness, sexuality, struggle, self-exposure, community, adulthood, life–to return to the sea–sleep, sexlessness, peace, hiddenness, singularity, infancy, death" (114)

Among the more positive accounts of Rachel's death are those of Lisa Tyler ("Rachel consummates her mother-daughter romance in death" [79]) and Alice van Buren Kelley, who sees death as a gateway to the actualization of a vision, previously thwarted by the

contingencies of life: Rachel must "escape the factual world in which the vision can exist only sporadically. . . . [Her] voyage to vision . . . [can be realized] only by dying" (31-32). Nancy Bazin also sees the event in positive terms, arguing that "the fact that Rachel dies a virgin is significant" (63), that it is some sort of "victory" (65). For Avron Fleishman,"[Rachel's] death is not a denial of her initiation but a confirmation of it. Her death is not to be seen merely as the entry of the absurd which cuts off the steady development of the heroine but as the last and highest stage of that development itself" (5).

Another group of critics finds death to be a failure rather than a self-realization. Jean Alexander phrases the problem in more abstract existential terms: "The knowledge of death is the awareness of the failure of human continuity" (11); T.E. Apter agrees that her death does not lead to a resolution, but is rather an expression of the problem: "The death of Rachel is not a Romanticist's solution in which perfect love is realised in death. Rather, it is a denial of the possibility, even the desire, to join one's deepest self to another" (*Study* 16-17); Pamela J. Transue also maintains that the death is a denial of possibility, in the sense that it allows nothing *but* possibility / potentiality and cuts off Rachel from any hope for realization: "Rachel's movement toward consummation becomes a movement toward death" (30); and finally, John Bayley defines Rachel's failure in life as a statement of impossible femininity, rather than as a more fundamental human problem: "Rachel dies as a kind of feminine gesture, to avoid having to take part in an art form shaped and dominated by the masculine principle" (73).

24. Susan Gorsky observes of Rachel and Terence: "Their inability to see that ironically each has the same need for something beyond the other" (55).

25. Mark Hussey similarly explains that "the problems encountered by Rachel arise . . . from her being forced to live her body in a way she is totally unprepared for" (5). (See his *The Singing of the Real World* for a more extensive analysis of the themes of "embodiment and unembodiment" (5) in Woolf.)

26. Jean Alexander, for example, argues that "Rachel's body has freed her" (48), and Clare Hauson interprets Rachel's journey as an "opening-up of her own body" (while, according to her, for Terence it is more passively and regressively "an Oedipal journey" back to "the maternal body"[31]).

CHAPTER 2:

MRS. DALLOWAY--THE PIRACY OF MOTHERHOOD

As in *The Voyage Out*, in *Mrs. Dalloway* the conflict persists between the confined, vulnerable individual element and the wider, more powerful realm of the maternal. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, however, this tension takes a different form and is expressed in a different way, although, again, as in *The Voyage Out*, it remains unresolved[1]; Clarissa Dalloway, just like Rachel, but for opposite reasons[2], fails "to strike a balance between loss of connection and loss of self" (Rosenman 46). Unlike Rachel Vinrace, Clarissa Dalloway is not living a young, anticipatory life but a life full of memories, a life irreversibly approaching its end and calling for a retrospective evaluation of its achievements. Her unspecified but undoubtedly serious illness of the heart has made Clarissa glimpse her own mortality[3], and she is compelled to look back to her past and to find out, in some inner conviction of hers, whether the fleeting moments of personal illumination and ethereal beauty will be wasted in death, or somehow redeemed by what remains, what can survive without and beyond her own fragile existence. Unlike Rachel, whose death is unconscious and simply the result of insufficient life, Clarissa Dalloway needs to die "consciously," with the knowledge that life has not been wasted. At the same time, paradoxically, she chooses a way to preserve her identity which will erase her individual consciousness and subsume it under a larger, undifferentiated, ongoing life.

The conclusion that Clarissa reaches, as the novel peacefully approaches its end, is that the individual moments of beauty should not be wasted, but incorporated in and sustained by a powerful and anonymous life force, to the point where they are no longer sustainable as individual moments. What makes Clarissa's life largely unhappy and apparently missing something is the fact that she regards these moments as the ones which must be subsumed under the sweeping life force, the ones which must be included into the pattern of the continuity of life and thus lost as specific experiences. These precious moments are consumed, annihilated, absorbed in the very process of living. As Nancy Bazin observes, Clarissa Dalloway "is too consciously trying to shut out the 'facts' of the masculine reality (such as, isolation, conflict, time, and death). Seeking a sense of oneness, she tries to create her own harmonious, unified worlds" (124). The problem with these "worlds," however, is that they are "her own" and have no contact with the real world.[4] Their meaning, however complete, cannot endow the real world with meaning. They are self-sufficient and eternal, but they are also a fictional construction of denial[5], since they appear to be exclusive of reality, solving its problems by denying the existence of the problems. These "worlds," in short, are not the therapy–they are the symptom. What T.E. Apter sees as "the vigorous, healthy world of Mrs. Dalloway" (68) seems to be a bit more complicated and ambiguous, and we certainly cannot speak, as Jean Alexander does, of "the final synthesis of Clarissa" (102). Clarissa carries, at a very fundamental level, a disjunction that is never overcome in the course of the novel. Clare Hauson, for example, points out that "Clarissa sees the self as crossed and split" (68). Clarissa's determination to overcome this split leads her to deny the self altogether. In her attempt to capture the life force itself, as a thing independent from life

and therefore immune to death, she seems to privilege a subtle symbolist agenda, in which the memorable moments are not merely experienced for themselves (just as she does not do things for themselves [10], and, in a very real sense, they are done *by herself*), but are being preserved, disembodied, represented through symbols not their own. They stand for something larger that themselves.

Clarissa's desire to transcend the "here and now" of life (because it implies the "no more here and now" of death) comes to show that she is not prepared to take life at face value, to accept it on its own terms. On the contrary, she treats the immediate experience of events as a secondary one, superimposed on the primary, lasting, valuable thing, the anonymity of species perpetuation. In a complete reversal of Freud's definitions (where the unconscious id, or the lack of control, is associated with the primary processes[6]), here it is the unrefined, immediate experience that emerges as secondary, while the process of making sense of it, of subsuming it under the larger social whole, appears, in the eyes of Clarissa, as the primary process, the most basic, inextinguishable thing in life, or at least in the abstraction Clarissa calls life.

It may seem that Clarissa is much more attuned, and indeed too much attuned, to the larger-than-herself continuity of life, a continuity through procreation or superceding of the person and not through individual survival. In this sense, an analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* would be particularly appropriate to follow *The Voyage Out*, because, if in her first novel Woolf shows us the dangers of rejecting continuity altogether and elevating the individual moment into a solitary, perishable, and therefore insufficient container of life, in the later novel we see motherhood taken exactly to the opposite extreme. The great force of life

underlying this continuity, if divorced from the ordinary parameters of individual life with its need for personal love and personal hatred, requires a basic element of cruelty. A vision of life which goes beyond and obviates life itself undermines the very fact of being alive. The vision simply persists; it has no regard for anything that is death, but neither with anything that is life.[7] In this sense, we can see in *Mrs. Dalloway* some of the egoistic features attributed to abstract motherhood, the indiscriminate and self-destructive life force which has no compromise to make with death. Or with life. Thus the ideal of the mother figure assumes, as an ideal and in a very paradoxical way, a negative human value, because the obsession with the simple, uncompromising perfection of merely carrying on, of perpetuation beyond the self and its here and now[8], becomes destructive to the personal relations between people. This drive towards perfection is found to be cruel and insensitive within the human context of ordinary life, because it disregards the simple everyday demands of life in human terms.

Clarissa Dalloway is a more complicated and multi-layered character than Rachel in *The Voyage Out*, and her claim on the maternal is deeper, wider, and more intricate. The novel reveals nuances of motherhood, which concentrate in two main points--motherhood on the individual level[9], as all-giving, tender, generous, and personally present, and motherhood on the level of the basic, immortal life force, as spread out, general, implied, egoistic, all-consuming, and impersonal. Clarissa herself strives to promote this latter level of her existence, sometimes at the expense of the former, the personal contact. For example, we learn that she is "desperately unhappy" (120), and she has apparently given up a passionate love, perhaps the only love of her life, her love for Peter. As Pamela Transue points out,

"Clarissa's great failure, in a sense, is her inability to love" (67). In general, her relationships with people seem cold and incomplete, from the lack of abstract, philanthropic caring for mankind ("She cared much more for her roses than for the Armenians" [120]), to the very physical deficiency of her own marriage, which is based on stability and not on love. Even though Peter perceives in Clarissa's attitude towards Richard a degree of personal commitment, "a sort of ease in her manner to him; something maternal; something gentle" (61), it seems evident that, in the person of Richard Dalloway, she has not married an individual man, but rather a social circle, an endless string of parties, an extended network of acquaintances and visits. Some critics, however, position Clarissa in a niche of individualistic independence in relation to the social and political web through which she moves; Blanche H. Gelfant, for example, argues that "she keeps herself apart from social institutions" (320). The only response to that would be to point out that Clarissa *is* a social institution, perhaps not politically invested in the government but nevertheless maintaining a network of arrangements and conventions similar to those of her husband. Consequently, she is not so much Clarissa, married to Richard, but "Mrs. Dalloway," the woman with an articulated and specific social standing (not imposed upon her by the status of her husband–her social existence is very much her own), behind which it becomes difficult to distinguish the individual features of the two separate individuals who form the social facade of this family. It is not the case that Clarissa and Richard participate in life only through their participation in society, through this façade which allows them to interact with others. Even more than that, the social sphere itself has taken over their lives to such an extent that Clarissa's relationship with her husband and daughter itself has become socially

articulated--both of them are seen, distorted, through the monochrome prism of the omnipresent party and not on their own terms. Thus the only actual interaction between Clarissa and Elizabeth we see is a short reminder about the party; it is not the case that the party is about them, Clarissa and Elizabeth–rather, the presence of Elizabeth is all about the party.

Thus Clarissa is conscious of a lack, an imperfection in her marriage. She knows that she has not given Richard everything she could have given him (Clarissa, Delia Donahue points out, "is not a giver" [103]): "[S]he had failed him. . . . She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty; it was not mind. It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman" (31). Where she finds herself insufficient is in her larger, all-encompassing maternal aura which can erase the difference between one person and another and unite them in one single consciousness--the "permeating" unity of all life. In a sense, Clarissa seeks to find a solution to the problem of life, of its inexplicable particularity and uniqueness (both of which are seen as problematic because perishable): "the supreme mystery . . . was simply this: here was one room; there another. Did religion solve that, or love?" (127). In a sense, Clarissa is looking for a way to bridge this gap between "one room" and "another," to place them in a mutual, social relationship, often at the cost of their individuality and uniqueness. What Clarissa wants to achieve is a state of existence Rosenman defines as "a sense of self formed in relationship, unlike our usual conception of an individual identity which defines itself by separating the 'me' from the 'not-me'" (12). Aware of the need to intensify the inclusive, all-embracing, maternal sphere of her life, to recreate this "unified field of sense impressions

like the mother's nurturant atmosphere" (Rosenman 8), Clarissa finds herself compelled to reject everything which may prove to be an obstacle in the course of her transformation into something more than a single self, something approximating a state where, as Jean O. Love describes it in her discussion of *Mrs. Dalloway*, "consciousness is less a property of the individual than of the universe" (149). The main obstacle, of course, is personality itself.[10] Or, in other words, the main obstacle for (the social) Mrs. Dalloway is (the private) Clarissa. That is why, in the process of striving for the ultimate unity with people, Clarissa somehow manages to diminish her actual relationship with them in favor of a superior, ideal one. As she renounces her own self, she is no longer available to others as "Clarissa"--she becomes an anonymous, vague presence which cannot engage with any one person in particular. In fact, she has not allowed her relationship with Richard[11] to become complete, personal, shared without any reservations by both of them. She thinks one should not give away everything in marriage, spend oneself without remainder on one single cause (she also condemns love and religion for the same reason).

In her own marriage, Clarissa consciously maintains a certain distance, "a solitude; even between husband and wife" (120). At first glance, her desire to participate in marriage "without losing one's independence, one's self-respect--something, after all, priceless" (120), seems to invoke the rights of an inextinguishable individuality, the shielding off of an inviolable space where the self can breathe, alone, differentiated, independent. However, we soon learn that this is not the case--in fact, the reason for Clarissa's rejection of complete commitment to her husband is not her desire to reserve some of her energy for her own independent existence, but, on the contrary, the opportunity to share her self with more than

one person. In a sense, she needs a wider geometry of space which would allow her to invest herself in multiple ties and not concentrate into a singular point of interaction, which would require undue emphasis on herself, because "you" and "I" is the type of relationship where it is impossible to dismiss the "I." In other words, Clarissa does not see her marriage as a personal relationship; it remains primarily a social activity. She is unable to focus all her being into one point, one relationship.

The paramount social aspect of her relationship with Dalloway, and the opportunities it offers for a renunciation of the self and its diffusion into the social sphere, is what Clarissa could not find in a hypothetical marriage with Peter Walsh. What Peter demands from her is a personal love, directed specifically to him and coming specifically from her, an exclusive attention to his life as opposed to everybody else's. Even though Pamela Transue describes Peter as "narcissistic" (74), and Thomas Caramagno explains that Mrs. Dalloway "will not serve as glorifying mirror to his [Peter's] illusions" (217), Peter's demands are directed towards *both* Clarissa and himself, and his envisioned love relationship requires both of them to be exclusively committed to a personality rather than a social stance. His view of love singles out in the spotlight the self with its unmistakable existential signature, and makes it stand alone and special, unrepeatable, distinct: "Only one person in the world could be as he was, in love "(48). The uniqueness of self that Peter demands from Clarissa is overtly countered by her attitude towards him. In interacting with her, he is forced to interact with a social formation rather than a person. T. E. Apter, in "Self-Defence and Self-Knowledge," describes the conflict between the personal and the public as reflected in Peter when he enters Mrs. Dalloway's house: "Now he must abandon individual creativeness to become

someone who is observed, and therefore someone who is re-defined, and therefore in need of new defences" (88). In other words, he is entering a public space, open to outside observation by Clarissa which makes all his gestures public even without any other person present in the room; he is being created rather than allowed to be creative, to exercise individual control, and to address through his conversation another unique individual. The feeling of possession, of command over one's self which Peter needs, the consciousness that the similar experience of love that other people go through is fundamentally different from and foreign to one's own, personal, self-centered love, is what makes the life Peter proposes radically incompatible with Clarissa's view of the world: "For himself, he was absurd. His demands upon Clarissa (he could see it now) were absurd. He asked impossible things. He made terrible scenes" (63). For his part, Peter can only be happy when Clarissa is entirely devoted to him (or at least to herself), which, except for the "twenty minutes of perfect happiness" (62) in their youth which he remembers, becomes increasingly impossible.

Thus Clarissa's overly generous presence in the social scene proves to be destructive to the people around her when they need her personal presence and attention concentrated on a smaller, human scale. Peter's case is, of course, the most telling: "His relationship with Clarissa had not been simple. It had spoilt his life" (192). But even apart from that, she displays some remarkably un-giving, un-maternal qualities, as if she withholds something from people, as well as from herself. Thus, when Sally talks about her life, her five boys, and her domestic duties, Peter compares her to Clarissa and finds that the two women have nothing in common: "Now all that Clarissa had escaped, unmaternal as she was" (190). Whereas Sally has developed "[t]he softness of motherhood; its egotism too" (187), it seems

that in Clarissa it is the maternal "softness" that is lacking, even though the egotism is there in the form of an uncompromising life force. It may seem like an unusual thing to say that Clarissa, who does have a family and a daughter, is not maternal[12], but Peter seems to have intuited the degree to which her motherhood has been displaced from all individual relationships and invested into a larger, impersonal framework at the expense of common human warmth. She is repeatedly described as "heartless, a prude" (8), "hard" (49), "cold" (8, 49). And she seems to demand from other people the same sacrifice of the personal experience she herself has made. Thus, her rigid, perfectionist impatience with individual imperfections and idiosyncracies, for example, finds expression in the fact that she wants other people to stand up straight; she cannot stand it when she sees people, like Ellie Henderson, who are "not even caring to hold themselves upright" (168). Peter sums it up in his mind: "Clarissa was hard on people" (191), and: "Clarissa did frighten people" (59). And even the people who are closest to her do not make an exception. Thus Lisa Tylor's view of Clarissa's care and concern for her closest friend and her daughter has to be qualified: "[Clarissa] spends most of her day contemplating her connection to two women--mourning the loss of her intensely intimate relationship with Sally Seton, and longing to repair her troubled relationship with her daughter Elizabeth" (82). It is easy to see that there is no real effort on the part of Clarissa either to maintain a relationship with Sally, or to get much closer to Elizabeth. Significantly, the first thing to fail Clarissa is her heart (50), precisely because she has neglected an important part of being human.

In hurting the feelings of other people, Clarissa also hurts herself, to the extent that she also needs human contact and personal attention. The fact that she has indeed made a

sacrifice in relinquishing the possibility for such contact becomes apparent when she has doubts about her decision not to marry Peter, and when she feels an occasional impulsive need to undo this decision: "Take me with you, Clarissa thought impulsively, as if he [Peter] were starting directly upon some great voyage" (47). The affliction of the "I," the unfulfilled potential of the self to take life personally, at times interrupts even her socially serene marriage: even though she prefers not to know where Richard is, commending herself on her own superior sense of the independence which underlies their relationship and which has to be preserved at all costs, she still feels his absence: "He has left me; I am alone for ever" (47).

Clarissa also envies the "abandonment" (33) which she remembers as the most remarkable, extraordinary quality of Sally Seton from the years at Bourton. And, in a sense, what Peter demands of Clarissa, what all her friends want from her, is exactly such an abandonment, a devotion to things and people where nothing is held back--in short, the reckless act of throwing oneself into life with no thought of danger or death. But Clarissa has always associated this freedom with danger: "it was bound," she thinks of Sally's mesmerizing ability to take as much from life as possible, "to end in some awful tragedy; her death; her martyrdom; instead of which she had married" (182). Similarly, Clarissa thinks that a marriage with Peter would have required the same abandonment and ended in the same hypothetical destruction: "But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. . . . [T]hey would have been destroyed, both of them ruined" (8). There is in Clarissa a prudent, timid fear of gorging herself on life, of taking too much. In fact, she accuses Peter of always taking and never giving: "Why always take, never give? Why not risk one's little

point of view? . . . Life was that--humiliation, renunciation" (168).

Peter is the one who does not recognize this economy of life--the exchange, the sacrifice, the forced choice, the renunciation. For him, life has no limits: "he was an adventurer, reckless, he thought, swift, daring . . . a romantic buccaneer, careless of all these damned proprieties. . . . He was a buccaneer" (53). The metaphor of the pirate becomes especially powerful, with its connotations of uncompromising energy, of the act of ravishing life itself. This state of mind is also associated with Elizabeth, who does not seem to resemble her mother in this respect. We see Elizabeth venturing farther and farther away on the omnibus, exploring the city, making discoveries: "she was a pioneer, a stray, venturing, trusting" (137). The explicit reference to piracy, which connects her to the abandonment of taking in life without remainder, comes in the description of the omnibus which Elizabeth boards: "The impetuous creature--a pirate--started forward, sprang away; she had to hold the rail to steady herself, for a pirate it was, reckless, unscrupulous, bearing down ruthlessly, circumventing dangerously, boldly snatching a passenger, or ignoring a passenger, squeezing eel-like and arrogant in between" (135).

Piracy itself stands in happy opposition to the rigid economy of life, to the notion that one must deserve, give, sacrifice, save for later, build up, accumulate a whole life, achieve something. For Peter, for example, there is nothing to contain or limit his sensibility, the abandon with which he attacks life: "Life itself, every moment of it, every drop of it, here, this instant, now, in the sun, in Regent's Park, was enough. Too much indeed" (79). He can see that the cornucopia of experience is inexhaustible and tries to capture it as it passes, even though he is aware that only a single, insignificant particle of it can be absorbed by human

sensibility: "The cold stream of visual impressions failed him now as if the eye were a cup that overflowed and let the rest run down its china walls unrecorded" (164). In relation to this larger, overwhelmingly rich texture of reality, Peter sees himself as a pirate, but his piracy is largely harmless--his own egocentric forays into the abundance of life are so insignificant compared to the enormous scale of experience he preys on, that his innocuous overindulgence remains a personal act of excess to which the external world remains indifferent.

This adventurous spirit, egotistic in its own way, makes Peter, too, unable to perceive the complexity of the maternal, life-giving force in his life--he does not understand why Clarissa should be so devoted to her social duties--what he demands from her is total immersion into personal happiness. He thinks she must make the other sacrifice, and do without the impersonal, the social network, the larger frame. In a sense, Peter is doing violence to anything that crosses his way, and he sees Clarissa's social presence as a waste of time, as an obstacle to his and her own full appreciation of what life has to offer. Since he lives for the moment, living through it and abandoning it for the next one, he himself is left with nothing, hence the ongoing theme of his complete and unredeemable "failure" (43). In fact, he claims that his openness to impressions and emotions, his ability to dive into each moment, has had a destructive effect on him: "This susceptibility to impressions had been his undoing no doubt" (71). The negativity implied by the word "undoing" is the negativity of breaking down a given whole into its parts, of losing a sense of self preserved over time as the connecting, cumulative thread of all moments and their accrued significance. Taking everything on its own terms prevents Peter from building up a continuity, from organizing

the disparate occasions of his life into a coherent whole which will remain after the moments have passed. Thus the extreme of buccaneering, of ransacking experience, means consuming the moment fully and being left with nothing.

The opposite extreme of Clarissa's own behavior, however, carries no lesser dangers. And that is the extreme of the immediacy of life exchanged for a more lasting, grander vision. As Rosenman puts it, it becomes a question of "the symbolic versions of motherhood, . . . not the thing itself" (76). In a sense, the way Clarissa "spreads herself" further and further away from the center[13] of her being becomes a form of pillaging the personal, the fragile, the uncertain. Her piracy is the reverse of Peter's. She sacrifices the present to propitiate some unseen future or a distant past, and invests her self without remainder in the all-important thread of continuity, a socially actualized procreation (Rosenman calls her a "social mother" [75])--a displaced procreation immune to the mortality she has seen approaching, a procreation which is safe to invest life in because it is devoid of life. As the plunder of the uniqueness of the individual existence, with its human emotions and imperfect love, is no less dangerous or violent than are Peter's attacks on life in general, we can say that Clarissa, unlike Rachel in *The Voyage Out*, falls prey to a uni-dimensional view of continuity / procreation, a view which excludes the actual and privileges the abstract (for example, her "actual meetings" (153) with Peter are assigned diminishing importance in her mind, in comparison with her memories of him, which become the expression of an implicit, potential, unrealized friendship). As the abstract takes over the actual[14], and "the actual relationships are translated into more distant or disembodied forms" (Rosenman 76), the whole notion of motherhood becomes impaired, distorted,

displaced in the unspecified future or a fantastic abstract space with no solid, realistic reference points. From complete, fully realized, and whole, the life-affirming power of the mother figure degenerates into what can only be called a "piracy" of motherhood, where the maternal is misconceived as the rejection of the personal element in love and of the three human, feminine qualities which Peter Walsh idealizes: "compassion, comprehension, absolution" (57). Thus the piracy of motherhood in Clarissa's case becomes indeed dangerous, because it plunders not an infinity of ontological possibilities, but the limited, vulnerable sphere of the self, which is private, exclusive, and mortal.

Even Clarissa considers, at one point, her own, abstractly social life as an act of violence (albeit a minor one), an act of stealing from real experience; the thought strikes her when she thinks of the death of Septimus: "Somehow it was her disaster--her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress. She had schemed; she had pilfered" (185). The pirate allusions here are suggestive of the tension existing between her and life itself.[15] As A.D. Moody remarks, "Clarissa Dalloway's actual life . . . is virtually a non-life. . . . [S]he is a living image of the surface of the society" (20). In a paradoxical way, Clarissa's belief in some immortal, indeed maternal, foundation of life leads her to save, as it were, her strength and emotions, to withdraw them, "like a nun withdrawing" (31)[16], from the wild, fast, and fleeting experience, so that she would be able to construct from them something more lasting and valuable. It is this refusal of the self and its desires that prevents her from recognizing that the maternal, the source of all life, in fact exists on two levels and cannot be denied the ordinary in order to attain the supreme.

The main reason why Clarissa is so eager to renounce the advantages of a more adventurous, more *carpe diem* attitude towards life seems to be her early and intense "horror of death" (153). This horror is visible in her even as a young woman, and it runs unmitigated throughout her life: "she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day. Not that she thought herself clever, or much out of the ordinary" (8). It seems that Clarissa cannot see anything remarkable enough in her life, anything valuable enough in herself as an individual, to be spared the extinction awaiting all other life. It is true that there are those moments when she feels her personal death redeemed in the simple continuation of everything else around her: "what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her; the fat lady in the cab. Did it matter then, she asked herself . . . did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her" (9). Her answer is an implicit "yes, it does matter." To concede to her own absence in the world does not seem to be a satisfactory resolution of the problem of death, and that is why she cannot abandon herself to the moment, to the here and now, to the enormous concentration of emotion into one self, without thinking of the future:

> she feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton's face, as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone, the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years, the colours, salts, tones of existence. (30)

The fullness of each moment is not enough, never enough, to redeem the subsequent oblivion. On the contrary, everything has value only as long as it can be prolonged,

stretched, carried over into something else, into the next moment, the future. Nothing is worth the effort unless it can achieve a wholeness, unless it can be complemented by something else. At one point Peter remembers, for example, Clarissa's philosophy of life and love: "to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places" (153). The need for an other, or rather for the social plural of "others," becomes enormously exaggerated in Clarissa's case, as she seeks a way to transfer the self onto its external environment, where its essence can be preserved, contained, epitomized, desiccated into an impersonal symbol.[17]

Clarissa's plan for survival involves a process of symbolizing herself, extracting her own essence and injecting it into something else, something which could stand for her, as she would not be able to stand for herself. Although she does not believe in God, Clarissa has some half-hidden faith in a metaphysical continuation of life. Somehow, irrationally, she thinks that "the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive" (153). Consequently, she endeavors to cultivate that "unseen" part, at the expense of the visible, the immediate, the interactive. Transferring her life to the potential realm of the unarticulated involves departing from oneself, launching, as it were, one's innermost sensibility as far away from oneself as possible:

> 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. (9)

Again, the impulse to embark on an ontological mission of such a scope, to take over all this as yet unclaimed life, a life which was denied her as an individual but which exists outside of her, is not grounded in the generosity, but in the egotism of this abstract maternal function which seeks continuation at all costs: "But the indomitable egotism which for ever rides down the hosts opposed to it, the river which says on, on, on; even though, it admits, there may be no goal for us whatever, still on, on; this indomitable egotism charged her cheeks with colour" (45). This egotism is again what Clarissa occasionally glimpses in her contentment with life; it is the thing which threatens to shatter the smooth philanthropic exterior of her social presence:

> never to be content quite, or quite secure, for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred, which, especially since her illness . . . made all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend . . . as if the whole panoply of content were nothing but self love! (12)

In the mind of Clarissa, the "organic panoply" (Rosenman 9; Woolf's own term "panoply of life" from *Moments of Being* 83) and the "indomitable egotism" stand in clear-cut opposition--she does not realize that the one implies the other, that the identification with the world is the egotistic, even though self-destructive, impulse of the self, that the whole is the aspiration of the particular. Even the words "social instinct" (62), describing Clarissa's peculiar talent, imply the ferocity of survival, and the word "instinct" invokes the primeval, blind, unconscious need for self-preservation and continuation at all costs. Indeed, when

Clarissa feels the pulse of the city itself, she relates it to the unconscious, underground rumble of a basic, fundamental life: "She liked the geniality, sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood of this uproar. . . . It was not conscious. There was no recognition in it of one's fortune, or fate" (138). To merge with the flow of this "uproar," to become part of it necessarily means to give up the peculiarities, the intricacies, the individual signature of life. We see that Clarissa has one remarkable gift, and it is the gift of merely going on, the gift "to be; to exist; to sum it all up in the moment as she passed" (174). Paradoxically, it is precisely this ability to hang on to life as a whole that diminishes life as a particular experience. In fact, we see that Peter's notion of the basic "to be" of the kind practiced by Clarissa is associated with a cold barrenness (which is also present in Clarissa's non-social attitude to people) in the description of Peter's hotel: "it wasn't cleanliness, so much as bareness, frigidity; a thing that had to be" (155). It is the same with Clarissa's motherhood--the very continuation, procreation, requires certain paradoxical frigidity if it is to be undefeatable, uncompromising, oblivious to the vicissitudes of each individual take on life.

The basic necessity of survival does not leave room for anything gratuitous. Therefore, despite their general appearance of whimsical, decorative extravagance, Clarissa's parties[18] are in fact rooted in a fundamental, indiscriminate, basic need; instead of being the dispensable last touch of social vanity, the party becomes an indispensable, essential, impersonal force, which holds all other events in its centripetal grip. All the individual events and people are put under pressure, mercilessly crushed into a uniform mass as they are drawn closer and closer to the unconscious and equalizing common denominator--the blind life force which has found, in the party, a gateway to enter in the midst of life's unique,

multiple, particular experiences. Peter observes, with disappointment, how the parties have become a necessity to Clarissa: "[people] must do something, be something; and these great swells, these Duchesses, these hoary old Countesses one met in her drawing-room, unspeakably remote as he felt them to be from anything that mattered a straw, stood for something real to her" (76) (italics mine). And the parties are not only a serious, "real" thing to her--they become a "must" of the kind which Dr. Bradshaw emphasizes in his conversation with Septimus. "Must" is a word of uncompromising control (147) which does not give any reasons but merely declares itself. Such is the cruel life force which Clarissa aspires to; such is the essence of her parties.

Her role as "the perfect hostess" (7) allows Clarissa to lose herself in the network of people, things, and arrangements surrounding her parties. For her, the addiction of the party comes from the fact that she can legitimately cease to exist as a definite person or, in the words of Clare Hauson, "Clarissa must 'unself' herself for this social occasion" (68).[19] In a way, she therefore symbolically re-enacts the dissolution of the self which occurs in the event of death, and yet she must continue to exist as what Rosenman calls "diffuse consciousness" (81). It is the experience of this anonymity that Clarissa relishes the most: "It was too much like being--just anybody, standing there; anybody could do it . . . she had, anyhow, made this happen. . . . Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being somebody not herself" (170-71). In effect, her aspiration towards the eternal, the constant resuscitating of life, is grounded in the loss of definition of the individual self: "to her it was absolutely absorbing; all this; the cabs passing; and she would not say of Peter, she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that" (8-9). It is doubtful, therefore, whether we can say that "her return to her

party constitutes a rebirth" (Tyler 83), because coming into contact with everything that is "not-me" is virtually a process which can be described as birth in reverse (since birth itself marks the formation of the "me" by differentiation from the "not-me"), and it can lead to the dangerous consequence of approaching, instead of avoiding, non-being. Clarissa's parties are the moments when she is exempt from being herself; they are her cherished instants of non-being. At the same time, they are a way to imitate perpetuation (if not procreation) in time[20] and thus convince her that this displacement of the self can in fact get around the moment of death.

At other times, however, she feels compelled (and irritated) by the people and realities around her to gather her self into one vulnerable being, to which death is applicable:

> That was her self--pointed; dart-like; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting point. (37)

It does seem painful to her to make the effort of "assembling that diamond shape, that single person" (38), and thus incurring the threat of individual death, of personal annihilation. Her parties provide her with a temporary release from the pain and fear of the biologically expendable self. Thus Clarissa experiences what Rosenman calls "a need to reconstitute femininity to exclude its dangerous emotional and biological contingencies" (76). In other words, for her the physical parameters of experience become re-cast in symbolic terms. And the means to achieve this trans-personal existence is the party: as Jean Alexander puts it,

"[t]he tendency of society . . . is to make life abstract, to reduce persons to images or symbols" (89). Clarissa's parties are only the last and the most consummate incarnation of an early desire on the part of Clarissa to force her consciousness to dodge reality, to employ evasive maneuvers, to race swiftly from one place to another so as to confound the act of death. We get an indication of this attitude when Clarissa, sitting on the bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, "felt herself everywhere; not 'here, here, here'; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere" (152).

This method of avoiding death is based on the premise that death must be associated with a specific location in space, that it involves a point-like shrinkage of the self to the point where the self no longer occupies any space–it ceases to exist. The fear of being trapped in space is the fear of being made available to death. And of all the ways in which a persona can be trapped in space, the existence of the body[21] is the most unambiguous. That is why Clarissa experiences what Makiko Minow-Pinkney calls a denial of "her own body" (70). And throughout the novel there is the underlying motif of the insufficiency or absence of the body; as Avron Fleishman points out, "[a]ll are ill" (75) in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In addition to illness[22], there is simply the absence of physicality, healthy or infected, and this absence is the result of Clarissa's conscious choice. Thus Maria DiBattista outlines the opposition between the private, local body and the public, dispersed self: "The latent schizophrenia in Clarissa's divorce of body and spirit surfaces in the self-perception that she has become a public personage . . . that coexists but is not identical with the private person, Clarissa" (36). In regarding herself as a stable, symbolic social phenomenon, Clarissa demands the same of others; she needs, for example, for Peter to see her as an abstract figure, rather than as an

embodied person. And she appears to be successful: as Howard Harper points out, "Peter never thinks of Clarissa's body" (123). What Clarissa wants to believe is that she can divorce her self from her body, time, and place, and still be healthily alive. Jean O. Love seems to agree with Clarissa that this is indeed possible: "The body is in no way essential to consciousness itself" (149). The evidence of the novel, however, suggests that this is not the case and points to an unresolved conflict between Clarissa and life itself.

Just as this need not to occupy any particular place makes space indiscriminate and uniform, it also equalizes time and diminishes the importance of what seems to be the most precious experience--that of the quintessential moment. In the life of Clarissa we see a peculiar sacrifice of the moment--none of the moments in her life is self-sufficient. For example, prompted by an unforgettable experience or scene, she contemplates "how moments like this are buds on the tree of life" (29). There is no doubt that she enjoys and appreciates those moments; however, their value lies in their cumulative effect, the possibility that they might add up as life--otherwise they will remain "buds," undeveloped, incomplete, potential. In other words, the moments cannot be considered and experienced on their own terms, and that is why Clarissa cannot fully "abandon" herself to them. On another occasion, she thinks about the present as the result of the past, the fruit of a long building up of sensations: "[Clarissa] plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there--the moment of this June morning on which was the pressure of all the other mornings" (37). This "pressure" is the demand to use the individual moments to construct a whole out of life, which would be more than the mere sum of its parts. And the whole is what ensures continuity and conveys meaning. In one famous passage, the wholeness of life has direct

bearing upon the act of passing life from the parents to the child:

> For she was a child, throwing bread to the ducks, between her parents, and at the same time a grown woman coming to her parents who stood by the lake, holding her life in her arms which, as she neared them, grew larger and larger in her arms, until it became a whole life, a complete life, which she put down by them and said, "This is what I have made of it! This!" And what had she made of it? What, indeed? (43)

The need to unify all incidents into something complete puts an invisible pressure on Clarissa and seems to be the source of her unhappiness, because it makes impossible demands on her: "the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end" (185). From the beginning to the end, life has to form a wholeness, to contain and represent the person, to mean something. The ending (and Susan Gorsky points out that "*Mrs. Dalloway* is about endings" [75]) marks the completion, the construction of a whole; without the ending, the beginning is meaningless.

But on closer inspection, it seems that what Clarissa has ultimately built for herself is not so much a wholeness but a uniformity, emphasized by confessions such as: "if Richard had not been there reading the Times . . . she must have perished" (185). Similarly, Peter's observations on her life center around the same criticism: "here she's been sitting all the time I've been in India; mending her dress; playing about; going to parties. . . . And this has been going on all the time! he thought; week after week; Clarissa's life" (41-44). If a moment stands out from this uniformity, its importance will be measured by how much it contributes to the whole, to the larger reality which does not really care for the individual flavor or color

of one instant as opposed to another. In other words, the moments are not experienced fully for themselves but are used as the building blocks for something beyond and above them; they have been subsumed under the conglomeration of the things which Clarissa "must assemble" (186). Thus, when she thinks that "never would she have a moment any more" (39), this statement becomes a subtle admission of her destructive power over the Moment with all its connotations of immediacy and abandonment, which have been submerged under a larger, metaphysical whole, plundered by the "unseen" part of her which is eternal and therefore immune to the specific signature of any individual instant of her existence.

Similarly, Clarissa finds herself unable to do things "for themselves": "it was silly to have other reasons for doing things. Much rather would she have been one of those people like Richard who did things for themselves, whereas, she thought, waiting to cross, half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make people think this or that" (10). In moments of crisis, Clarissa cannot rely on solid, individual, exclusive essences, such as the Moment, the Self, or the "I"; the mere existence of these units of experience is not enough. Confronted by Peter's skepticism, for example, she "summoned to her help the things she did" (44), feeling that the fact of her existence, of her just standing there, would not be self-evident, would not be enough to justify her way of life. For her, it is not life itself that redeems the specific choice of somebody's way of life; it is the other way round--the activities, the externalized relations to other people, all the opportunities for getting rid of the self are the justification of the bare fact of life. The external, minor trappings appended, as if accidentally, to her glamorous social life have become its essence.

At the same time, she has reduced her real-life relationships with people to their

social manifestations--in the process of escaping death, she has managed to escape life too. Thus when she meets Peter and she asks herself: "did absence matter? did distance matter?" (189), she explicitly admits that the actual presence of her friends and loved ones may not be as important as her *idea* of them; she is satisfied to participate in her own relationships vicariously, through secondary replacements of the actual encounter, of the immediate connection. Thus Clarissa is unable to communicate[23] authentically with people as they are–she needs them to become something else, susceptible to her social influence. As J. Hillis Miller points out, "Clarissa's party transforms each guest from his usual self into a new social self" (400). It is only then that Clarissa can enter into any kind of relationship with her guests, or, as Tori Haring-Smith puts it, "[a]t Clarissa's parties, people communicate only the contents of their public consciousness" (155).

Even Clarissa can feel the discrepancy and tension between these two approaches to life: "how odd it was to know him [Peter] and yet not know a single thing that had happened to him" (190). It is this lack of consideration for the people around her that makes her seem cruel and insensitive, and makes Peter think about "the death of her soul" (59). It is telling that Clarissa's illness makes her heart fail, even though her life continues. She can carry on, but her life will be the bare effort of survival, the egotistic urge to persevere, from which the heart has been amputated. Devoid of all emotion, the survival itself requires the cruelty, the egotism, the piracy to which Clarissa would never admit, and yet the subtle egotistically destructive element in her life becomes obvious in the occasional connotations of violence in her descriptions: "She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything" (8).

Clarissa's desire to do everything possible to achieve the solemnity, the power of life *in general*, a desire which stems from the imminent reminders of her mortality, grows into a determination to invest all her energy into "spreading herself" further and further away from people (and from herself) and into everything that is not herself, into all life in the universe[24], so that she might claim all this life and feel that her own has not been a waste. For her, an individual life disconnected from this larger stream of experience is a waste; on the other hand, for the people who want to claim her as the mother figure--Peter, Elizabeth, even Miss Kilman, who evidently expects her gratitude or pity; or even Septimus, who is denied, retrospectively and from a distance, her pity--Clarissa's own life is a waste. Peter observes: "she frittered her time away, lunching, dining, giving these incessant parties of hers, talking nonsense, saying things she didn't mean, blunting the edge of her mind, losing her discrimination" (78). Miss Kilman, who also has demands to make upon Clarissa ("She considered that she had a perfect right to anything that the Dalloways did for her" [123]) thinks of her aristocratic social life as a waste: "You who have known neither sorrow nor pleasure; who have trifled your life away!" (125). From the point of view of everybody around Clarissa who needs her personal presence, her life is a waste because she has no time for anybody in particular. As Peter, for example, wants her for himself, he considers her investing in the larger, metaphysical frame at the expense of individual love, feelings, and personal presence to be an essentially heartless, un-maternal act. Demanding her undivided attention, Peter is ultimately jealous of life itself, because it is the commitment to that non-life that has taken her away from him. Clarissa herself is also egotistic in her desire to preserve herself, her life, to scatter it in millions of pieces all over and guarantee their

immortality. Devoting all her energy to this project makes her sacrifice her friendship (she never visits Sally) and her love for Peter.

The most remarkable instance of this obliviousness to the demands of individual relationships is, of course, the party itself. During the party, Clarissa is not any particular person[25]; she is not anybody's friend in particular, and she does not spend any time with her closest friends, Peter and Sally--her conversation with them is conveniently displaced into the future ("I shall come back" [181]), and the novel ends with her finally approaching but never actually talking to them. Thus the hypothetical meeting point between the party itself, going on in present tense, and Clarissa's ties with the past, or between the social and the personal, remains unrealized, impossible, beyond the capacity of the text. The gap remains open and synthesis, or what Alice van Buren Kelley calls "a world that combines finite and infinite truth" (114), is never realized.

During the party, even a deeply felt connection with a particular person is not strong enough and does not allow Clarissa to spend more time with these people than with anybody else or get out of her social mode to carry out a real conversation. Thus, after Mrs. Hilbery's remark about her mother[26], Clarissa is obviously affected but unable to sustain this deep personal emotion; she smooths it over with insubstantial social remarks and dismisses it politely: "And really Clarissa's eyes filled with tears. Her mother, walking in a garden! But alas, she must go" (176). The impoverishment of her personal emotions is summed up in her realization: "She was for the party" (175). In a sense, Clarissa's social function is an illustration of an extreme alienation from herself, a pathological version of the cure Dr. Holmes suggests to Septimus, who is told to "take an interest in things outside himself" (21).

In a sense, Clarissa not only "takes an interest in" but becomes the things outside herself. (At the opposite extreme is Miss Kilman, who annihilates experience in total internalization, consumption: "her food was all that she lived for" [129]). This involvement with the world at large is reminiscent of Woolf's own vision of her mother in Moments of Being as "generalised; dispersed, omnipresent" (84). Although undoubtedly grandiose and goddess-like at some level, this diffused presence takes away from any actual engagement with reality.

The party itself becomes, in effect, the incarnation of Clarissa as everybody else[27], at the expense of any faith in her own maternal power of continuity. Thus, in the act of enriching her social self, she has condemned her intimately personal self to frigidity, to an inability to interact with people on an individual level. As this metaphorical frigidity represents an abnormal state for a maternal figure, it is also related to the ongoing theme of health/illness in Mrs. Dalloway. From the reference to Hugh Whitbread's visits to London "to see doctors" (6), to Elizabeth's determination to become a doctor (136), the motif of health underlies the larger themes of motherhood in the novel. Life itself is associated with the impetuous, healthy force which animates the brilliant June morning: "It was a splendid morning too. Like the pulse of a perfect heart, life struck straight through the streets. There was no fumbling--no hesitation. Sweeping and swerving, accurately, punctually, noiselessly, there, precisely at the right instant, the motor-car stopped at the door" (54-55). The "perfect heart" here invokes and stands in opposition to the "perfect hostess" who, significantly, has failed in the work of the heart. There are further indications that Clarissa's choices in life have had a negative impact on her health. More specifically, her social life, again, is seen as

the main obstacle to her health[28], the wholeness of her life: "If only for Clarissa's health it would have been better to live in the country. But Clarissa had always been fond of society" (179). To the extent to which Clarissa's devotion to the social incarnation of her self appears to be at odds with her human emotions, she becomes Septimus's counterpart[29] in her pathological inability to feel, which for Septimus becomes a crime against humanity itself, an omen of death: "the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death; that he did not feel" (91). Thus Clarissa's withdrawal from emotion at the personal level and its replacement with social politeness is, in effect, a negation of life itself, an act leading to non-being.

Clarissa's power of symbolization is reminiscent of the airplane, whose incredibly distanced and abstract flight is trying to write a simple, mundane phrase, to perform the impossible act of inscribing itself into everyday life. Instead of symbolizing the finding of a connection with the actual, denotative meaning of the words in the air, the airplane becomes a symbol of what it cannot physically relate to: "Away and away the aeroplane shot, till it was nothing but a bright spark; an aspiration; a concentration; a symbol (so it seemed to Mr. Bentley . . .) of man's soul; of his determination . . . to get outside his body, beyond his house, by means of thought, Einstein, speculation, mathematics, the Mendelian theory--away the aeroplane shot" (28). As much as this flight allows a beautiful escape into the intangible, it is also symptomatically related to the motto of Septimus: "one must be scientific above all things" (68, also 69), which continues the theme of the pathology of insensitiveness.

Clarissa's giving up, metaphorically, her health, her human nature, and her fertility (with her "virginity preserved through childbirth" [31]), is only one aspect of a larger

sacrifice, which also includes the exhilarating immediacy of the moment and her personal need for human relationship. As she is acutely aware of the limited quantity of life and the threat of death, it seems to her wrong always to take and never to give anything away, which is essentially Peter's philosophy. Clarissa herself is convinced that "renunciation" (168) is part of life. This view implies that there is more to life than is visible, that even if you grab from the visible you will still remain deprived of the "unseen" part of life, which is not easily accessible. Clarissa believes that she has to sacrifice part of the visible, the immediately obvious, the given and self-evident existence, in order to reach a deeper, more important and durable level of being. Her notion of symbolic procreation compels her to ensure her participation in the social sphere; at the same time, she feels that she must deserve and constantly prove her place in the "network of visiting, leaving cards, being kind to people" (77), and exchange something for it: "not for a moment did she believe in God; but all the more . . . must one repay in daily life to servants, yes, to dogs and canaries, above all to Richard her husband, who was the foundation of it . . . one must pay back from this secret deposit of exquisite moments" (29). As her social self is infinitely more important than her individual self (as Tori Haring-Smith puts it,"[t]he public consciousness dominates in *Mrs Dalloway*" [144]), Clarissa sees greater value in maintaining the social "network" around her from which she derives nourishment than in her own personal, impoverished health: "thank you, thank you, she went on saying in gratitude to her servants generally for helping her to be like this, to be what she wanted, gentle, generous-hearted' (39). The fact that she offers to pay (through the "offering" of her parties [121]) for the existence of this protective sphere around her from her personal resources, "the secret deposit of exquisite moments" (29),

makes the exchange ever more burdensome for the self and its irreplaceable, unique experiences, which have to be saved, accumulated, transformed into symbols, and finally sacrificed at the alter of everything they are not.

In a sense, the act of "offering," of exchange summarizes Clarissa's whole life. The need to make something else of life signifies the deficiency of her existence as a personal experience--the individual becomes secondary and expendable:

> what did it mean to her, this thing she called life? Oh, it was very queer. Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously 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? An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. Anyhow, it was her gift. Nothing else had she of the slightest importance. (122)

It is remarkable how little importance Clarissa gives to the individual, socially unrelated existence of human beings, and how much weight she puts on the pawn-like combinations of people, who seem to acquire meaning only in the social configuration of Clarissa's parties, in the same way she finds meaning for herself. To combine and transform the differentiated elements of life into a symbolically coherent whole appears to be Clarissa's agenda, her "gift" as a hostess. This gift seems to have a curious correlation with the process of symbolization, of displacement of life, which also has pathological connotations in the novel. For example, Sir William Bradshaw observes a similar symptomatic displacement in the

behavior of Septimus: "He was attaching meaning to words of a symbolical kind. A serious symptom, to be noted on the card" (96). In the course of symbolizing people and events, Clarissa's immediate experience is diminished, sacrificed; it ceases to be evaluated on its own terms and is organized, instead, to form a part in the whole.

The motif of the sacrifice is intensified by the representation of Clarissa's mother figure as goddess, rather than as a natural mother in the physical sense, an aspect of her life which is continuously de-emphasized. As Rosenman points out, "Clarissa's more metaphorical femininity, her 'woman's gift' and diffuse consciousness, overshadows her actual motherhood" (81). Making an offering, through her parties, entitles Clarissa to partake of the mythic[30], the symbolic, the eternal, and assume the inscrutable power of a deity. The characteristics of a goddess are emphasized, for example, in Clarissa's interaction with Lucy, who, "taking Mrs. Dalloway's parasol, handled it like a sacred weapon which a Goddess, having acquitted herself honourably in the field of battle, sheds, and placed it in the umbrella stand" (30). Similarly, in his conversation with Clarissa, Peter regards her as a god-like figure in whose presence he is called to present his achievements and submit his life to scrutiny: "There they are! he thought [of Daisy and her two children]. Do what you like with them, Clarissa! There they are!" (45). His initial fear that "Daisy would look ordinary beside Clarissa" (43) is dispelled as he has a sense of womanly, even though still abstract, "compassion, comprehension, absolution" (57): "[Daisy] and her two small children became more and more lovely as Clarissa looked at them" (46).

Peter's demonstrative "There they are!" is reminiscent of Clarissa's own invocation of her parents and her need to show them that she has retrospectively deserved their gift of

life: "This is what I have made of it! This!" (43). In a sense, she feels compelled to place at her parents' altar and at their mercy a single, small, individual life which seems so insufficient and incommensurate with the life span of unnamed generations against which it is going to be judged. An ongoing analogy in *Mrs. Dalloway* shows us that Clarissa indeed believes in a higher, absolute standard invulnerable and oblivious to the untidy imperfections of individual success or failure--and this is the symbol of Big Ben. As much as it is a symbol of "irrevocable" time (4), "sensible" time (150), "time ratified by Greenwich" (102), it is also the only reliable, stable thing. It is precisely because it is "irrevocable" that Clarissa comes to rely on it as on the absolute standard of divine justice and absolution. She needs to evade the uncertainty of the vulnerable self, and, since the self is exposed to the passage of time, she finds this stability in the passage of time itself. Whatever can be carried over beyond her physical death will be carried on by the constant, immutable time; instead of a threat, time becomes an ally. It is as uncompromising and permanent as life itself. The certainty, "the direct downright sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour" (48), however, is inimical to the continuity of the individual life, announcing its closure and irrelevance. At the same time, the uniform pace of the clock coincides with the impersonal continuity Clarissa is looking for. Its disregard of the details of mortality is what must seem to Clarissa, in her failing health, the overriding principle of survival, the redeeming quality of experience.

Rosenman maintains (80) that the two clocks, Big Ben and St. Margaret's, stand, respectively, for masculine authority and law, and feminine, hostess-like attention to the small things, the desire to "accommodate" the things which do not fit in, the "odds and ends" of experience: "the other clock, the clock which always struck two minutes after Big Ben,

came shuffling in with its lap full of odds and ends, which it dumped down as if Big Ben were all very well with his majesty laying down the law, so solemn, so just, but she must remember all sorts of little things besides" (128). Even if such a distinction can be made, it is clear that both clocks prompt Clarissa to remember the immutability of time and the fragility of everything else.

On the one hand, Clarissa is associated with the orderly and "irrevocable" sound, which does not tolerate accidental imperfections: "Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion" (102). It is this authoritative sound that keeps her going, that propels life on and on: "Gigantic as it was, it [Big Ben] had something to do with her. Down, down, into the midst of ordinary things the finger fell making the moment solemn. She [the old lady] was forced, so Clarissa imagined, by that sound, to move, to go--but where?" (127). The irrevocable, uncompromising, egotistic drive oblivious to everything else does not have to explain itself, to give reasons for its own existence--it is like the blind life force which cannot wait for the late "odds and ends," cannot accommodate or make a compromise with anything that is not vigorously alive, because that would mean death. In this sense, Clarissa's affiliation with the sound of Big Ben is also a symbol of her alienation from the real, imperfect people around her. The sound of the clock beckons her to return to the party, to the uninterrupted flow of social survival, and to do this, she has to renounce or postpone her connection with individual human beings. Thus, when she hears the clock, she refuses to contemplate any one individual destiny, which becomes irrelevant in the larger framework: "The clock began

striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on" (186).

On the other hand, the sound of St. Margaret's is also associated with the party itself and, implicitly, with its egotistic withholding of the self from the others: "Ah, said St. Margaret's, like a hostess who comes into her drawing-room on the very stroke of the hour and finds her guests there already. I am not late. No, it is precisely half-past eleven, she says. Yet, though she is perfectly right, her voice, being the voice of the hostess, is reluctant to inflict its individuality" (49). In a way, this clock, too, requires of the hostess the punctual, uncompromising social presence, for which individual presence has been exchanged. Thus, even though Clarissa can make multiple compromises in her personal interaction with people, her social self no longer relates to "people" but to "guests," and it has no intention of delaying or compromising its rigid social function. Thus the statement of "the embracing of odds and ends as St. Margaret's feminine time" (Rosenman 92) must be qualified to make a distinction between Clarissa's indeed flexible, because careless, attitude toward actual people and the "odds and ends" of their human presence, and her much more stern and punctual "networking" of those people into accessories for the Party. It seems evident that the party is not, as Jeremy Hawthorn claims, an occasion for "genuine contact with other people" (85); on the contrary, it is the setting in which other people have the least importance as people. Thus the metaphorical agenda of both clocks only serves to confirm the motto of Clarissa's life: "All was for the party" (38).

Ultimately, Clarissa Dalloway is unable to reconcile the party to herself, her social diffusion to her exclusively personal need for the immediacy of experience. Thus the two

major impulses in her life remain incompatible--the one of warm, shared, lived life and love, and the one of cold, inhuman (because ignoring everything personal) life of and through the unconscious stream of pure, egotistic existence. In the same way, her function as a mother figure remains incomplete and ambivalent. On the one hand, it achieves the heights of near perfection on the level of a metaphysical, mythical, symbolic motherhood, which was absent in *The Voyage Out*, for example. (This abstract and "diffuse" motherhood will be preserved in *To the Lighthouse* as well.) On the other hand, in *Mrs. Dalloway* this goddess-like perfection remains unfortunately divorced from its real-life counterpart, from the actual engagement with specific human beings in physical or emotional relationships. It is only in *To the Lighthouse* that the combination of both the idea and the activity of motherhood is realized. Therefore, we cannot make the unqualified assertion of Jeremy Hawthorn that "Clarissa retains her humanity" (41)--the fact of her own unhappiness suggests that she is aware of a partial loss of her own human sensibility and a certain unhealthy reserve in her interaction with other people. In Clarissa's mistaken and unhappy view of life, she thinks it necessary to sacrifice the personal element of her life in order to transform it into a more lasting and invulnerable symbol of itself.

The act of symbolization plays a part in the more general dynamics of participating fully in life versus robbing it (piracy); of giving or accepting a gift, such as the unquestioning gift of birth, versus seeking compensation or redemption beyond the gift of life itself; of health versus illness. In these binary pairs, one of the terms is always given and primary, and the other secondary, to use Freud's terms. The secondary states of mind are always the ones preferred by Clarissa herself--they are displaced symbols, compensations, circuitous routes

chosen instead of the unavailable primary object, the real thing. The danger Clarissa associates with taking part in an actual relationship of motherhood or love is invariably the threat of death. Her fear that the real-life event will cease to be leads her to seek ways of representing the moment so that its representation could circumvent, through its symbolical expression, the experience of death. In the process, this treatment of experience manages to circumvent, paradoxically, life itself. Thus the primacy of the immediate experience, of the moment, is sacrificed when it is articulated, because this articulation forces it to participate in a secondary relation to itself, to form a symbolic, socially sanctioned substitute for the immediacy of life.

Notes

1. That is why I cannot agree with Jean Alexander in her analysis of the novel as a depiction of a successful healing of the self from the pain of isolation through a compromise between the part (self) and the whole (society): "it is essentially the problem of Rachel caught between the sterile forms and symbols of society and the unfixed and alienated self, but in *Mrs. Dalloway* Woolf arrives at thematic resolution which is a celebration of the mystery of the inviolate self as well as of civilization" (87-88).

2. Not all critics agree; Clare Hauson, for example, offers a diagnosis of Clarissa's condition which completely equates it with Rachel's condition in *The Voyage Out*: "Clarissa is able 'to be' only because she is willing also continually to let go, living from discontinuous moment to moment, without attempting to fix identity" (69)–a description which fits Rachel perfectly. But, as will become clear in the following analysis, Clarissa's problem is in many ways exactly the opposite to that of Rachel. *Mrs. Dalloway* is very much about the attempt to "fix" things (a continuation of the notion of "arranging" things in *The Voyage Out*), in an effort to overcome and assimilate, rather than embrace and single out, the "discontinuous moment."

3. It is not merely illness that suggests Clarissa's approach towards the end of life; in her thoughts, if not physically, she lives an unhealthy life grounded in and limited to the distant past, which, as Susan Dick points out, brings her closer to death than to life: "To remember is to confirm one's mortality" (187).

4. Howard Harper subscribes to the opposite view: "Clarissa's identity depends upon her differentiation from the world around her, but her extraordinary sensitivity to that world tends to dissolve that differentiation" (116). In other words, he maintains that she is in such a close contact with the world through her "commitment to life, rather than the commitment to absolutes" (128), that this can be harmful to her formation of identity. The current analysis seeks to show that Clarissa, on the contrary, prefers a commitment to absolutes.

5. Some critics would disagree; E. F. Shields sees no denial of any kind in Clarissa's behavior and offers the opposite interpretation: "Instead of escaping from reality, Clarissa confronts it directly" (79-80).

6. Freud elaborates this point in his definition of "instincts" in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: "I described the type of process found in the unconscious as the 'primary' psychical process, in contradistinction to the 'secondary' process which is the one obtaining in our normal waking life. Since all instinctual impulses have the unconscious systems as their point of impact, it is hardly an innovation to say that they obey the primary process" (*The Freud Reader* 611). On the contrary, Clarissa's instincts will be seen as re-shaped by the social sphere she exists in; Woolf's reference to Clarissa's "social instinct" (62) cannot fail to invoke Freud's definition of "social instinct" as a clearly secondary phenomenon which emerges "[when] once natural continuity [between the person and his family] has been

severed . . . if a breach is thus made between things which are by nature interconnected" (*The Freud Reader* 628). Thus what Clarissa perceives as "primary" is in fact the social, and her "instincts" have become, from individual and primary, social and secondary.

7. As Deborah Guth remarks, "the living of life is not what she [Clarissa] wants" (441).

8. As Nancy Bazin remarks, Clarissa "must remain impersonal" (127), and that includes a disregard for the present moment–a temporal impersonality, as well as the spacial one in which the self makes no contact with the others.

9. While the emphasis in the novel seems to be almost exclusively on the impersonal characteristics of Clarissa, including her impersonal claim on motherhood, her individual role as a mother is also put into question (despite Lisa Tyler's insistence that in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "Woolf is able to envision a daughter's successful reconciliation with a *living* mother" [81]). Pamela J. Transue's observation that Clarissa "is less than triumphant as a mother" (67) seems much more plausible.

10. This is a point on which I cannot agree with Avron Fleishman's passionate defense of Clarissa's definitive self: "Clarissa is an apostle of individuality, has a strong instinct of withdrawal from others, and . . . [is] vigorously preserving her sense of identity" (78-79).

11. Michael Rosenthal explains: "Her [Clarissa's] choice of Richard over Peter, of course, symbolizes her commitment to emotional and sexual virginity" (98). Therefore it seems that her choice of the social, the public is explicitly related to her hostility toward perpetuation of the personal, and reflects the tension between her and motherhood.

12. Makiko Minow-Pinkney similarly observes that Mrs. Dalloway, apart from being a nominal mother, has problems with motherhood: "She [Clarissa] cannot move from girlhood to full womanhood, and is constantly defensive about her own maternity" (72).

13. And here I cannot agree with the view expressed by Maria DiBattista:"Thus Clarissa can, through Septimus's suicide, reach the mystical center" (28). Whatever the definition of "center" is, it has to be related to a unilateral, concentrated personality or locality, and all of Clarissa's actions are directed away from that and towards dispersal of the self. Similarly, the claim of Lucio Ruotolo that Clarissa's failure "involves the inability to move out of herself into the existence of others" (111), is bound to seem suspect.

14. The abstract can be valuable in the sense that it is visionary and idealistically pure. Alice van Buren Kelley, for example, discusses the themes of "vision" and "fact" in Woolf's major works. She concludes that Clarissa Dalloway "comes as close as possible . . . to achieving a life in which fact and vision are delicately harmonized" (101). The present analysis, however, seems to show that "vision" prevails and dominates the "facts" of Clarissa's life, to the point where the visionary ignores and negates the actual–the vision becomes negative. As Kelley points out, "vision without fact, like fact without vision, marks an incomplete existence" (100).

15. Thus Emily Jensen observes that "Clarissa's approval of Septimus's literal suicide reveals the extent to which she understands the self-destruction involved in her own life. She recognizes that she has committed her own kind of suicide: . . . that respectable destruction of the self in the interests of the other" (178).

16. For a more detailed analysis of the nun imagery, see Jane Marcus, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*. Marcus sees the emphasis on Clarissa's virginal, unused physicality as a positive escape from patriarchal modes of existence: Clarissa Dalloway's honor "seems to have derived from her failure to be Richard's sexual partner. As virgin mother, Clarissa lives the life of a nun in her attic room, her narrow white bed" (117).

17. Jean Alexander points out that, from the point of view of the other characters, "Clarissa is a restrictive or public symbol" (89). As a symbol, of course, she is more likely to avoid death, not by confronting or defeating it, but by sliding into the realm of the social where neither life nor death have any physical meaning.

18. The subject of the party in *Mrs. Dalloway* has received extensive critical treatment. Most views expressed seem to converge towards a general consensus that the party is a special phenomenon which stands for "unity"; some of those views are mentioned here. Nancy Grace Bazin, in *The Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*, for example, talks about a "mystical sense of oneness offered by the party" (126); Nancy Topping Bazin, in *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision*, argues that the party is "a symbol of unity" (126); J. Hillis Miller describes the party as a "moment of completion" (404); similarly, for Morris Philipson Clarissa's parties are "moments of integration" (128); Jean O. Love sees in the party a "supernatural event by which she [Clarissa], as the hostess, is disclosed as an agent of unity" (157), so that the party becomes "the occasion of synthesis" (160); and for Alice van Buren Kelley the party "provides the uniting force, provides the vision" (109).

Even when the word "unity" is absent from the critical analyses, most of them regard the phenomenon of the party as an unambiguously positive event. Thus Michael Rosenthal explains that "for Clarissa the party is a kind of ritual celebration of life" (100); Jean M. Wyatt equates the party with "rebirth" (357); and Manly Johnson associates it, in addition, with health: "What is certain is that Clarissa has come through her own struggle against self-isolation and confirmed her rebirth into the health of shared existence" (63).

Another vein of interpretations is concerned with the party as a work of art: Nancy Grace Bazin observes that "the party must be composed with the same care as a work of art" (126); for Blanche H. Gelfant parties are "purposeful only in their purposelessness" (320) because they represent "her [Clarissa's] gestures towards art" (320); and T.E. Apter, in *Virginia Woolf: A Study of her Novels*, interprets these social occasions as events of transcendence: "Mrs Dalloway craves the challenge of a party because she has a distinctive power to integrate with her individual vision that which is normally opposed to such a vision. She is a perfect social being in that she can express and expand her self amid the anxiety and shallowness that are generally constricting" (60).

Then there is the noncommittal critic, like Francis Gillen, for whom the party is both superficial and deep, signifying both isolation and merging. And, lastly, a minority of critics

see Clarissa's parties as either harmless but superficial (Beverly Ann Schlack: "Through parties this woman incapable of intimacy can approximate involvement" [51]), or vaguely embodying some sort of threat (Pamela J. Transue: "the rituals she [Mrs. Dalloway] creates and carries out [including the party] are death rituals" (81). The present analysis will situate the phenomenon of the party at the latter end of the continuum and show how Clarissa's most unhealthy tendencies to substitute the social for the personal find expression in the party.

19. Julia Carlson expresses the opposite view, according to which "Clarissa can never completely escape into her social role" (61).

20. As Nancy Topping Bazin puts it, "her [Clarissa's] role is to keep the party going" (106).

21. For a more detailed discussion of the themes of embodiment and "unembodiment" in *Mrs. Dalloway*, see Mark Hussey, *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction*. He describes how Septimus resolves the conflict between his spacially limited physical existence and his psychological dispersal of self: "the only possibility for his embodied self is suicide, for it is the only way he can preserve his autonomy as embodied" (16). In the case of Clarissa, the escape is still away from the "embodied" self and into the social one, which is a form of suicide (see Emily Jensen, "Clarissa Dalloway's Respectable Suicide"). For more on Septimus's conflict with the body, see John Batchelor, *Virginia Woolf: The Major Novels*, where he argues that Septimus hates the body and sexuality (88). See also Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*, especially "The Body of the People: *Mrs. Dalloway* to *The Waves*," pp. 48-73. Beer argues that "Septimus haunts an absolute world, bare of locality" (53).

22. Some critics see the theme of illness in the novel undergo a positive development: thus Maria DiBattista argues that Clarissa "realizes and recovers from the 'illness' afflicting her heart" (25), and Lucio Ruotolo proposes that illness "offers . . . a means of renewal" (102).

23. E.F. Shields would disagree: "Clarissa's success as a hostess, however, does not actually stem from an ability to be more effusive and more insincere than anyone else. Her parties succeed because of a warmth she has which permeates her gatherings and because of her ability to bring people together and make them *actually communicate* with each other" (82). [italics mine] Shields, however, does not explain how they "actually communicate."

24. Michael Rosenthal observes that one of Clarissa's characteristics is "identification with the universe" (92).

25. As James Hafley puts it, it is "not so much Mrs. Dalloway the individual person as . . . Mrs. Dalloway's ability to mirror 'life itself'" that we see at the party. (62)

26. Clare Hauson emphasizes the fact that "[i]t is at the party, too, that Clarissa's mother is mentioned, for the first and only time" (69).

27. Many critics, conversely, see Clarissa as a champion of identity: Blanche H. Gelfant argues that Clarissa "never experiences . . . loss of identity . . . [and] she remains certain of a fundamental identity beneath all her masks" (318), and Mark Hussey maintains that "Clarissa is engaged in . . . a search for her ownmost identity" (25). And Morris Philipson does not see any contradiction between the internal, private identity and the public, visible one, arguing that "*the self is a group* and *the image for individuation is a successful party*. The self is a party of one. The subjective group consists of the functional disparities within a self" (130). But I have to agree with Deborah Guth when she observes that the subjective and the objective are at odds, and that "this 'real' inner world is itself a robe, a form of self-dramatization created for herself and duplicating rather than contradicting the somewhat artificial external life she leads" (439).

28. Even though Pamela Transue argues that "Clarissa's acceptance of convention is in some sense her salvation" (100), it seems that we can perhaps speak of "salvation," but not of "her" salvation, since she is no longer her*self*.

29. For more on the parallels between Clarissa and Septimus, see Ralph Samuelson, "The Theme of *Mrs. Dalloway*." *Virginia Woolf: Critical Assessments*. Vol. III. Ed. Eleanor McNees. Mountfield, GB: Helm Information, 1994. 291-305. [From *Chicago Review* 11.4 (Winter 1958): 57-76.] and Alex Page, "A Dangerous Day: Mrs. Dalloway Discovers Her Double." *Modern Fiction Studies* 7.2 (Summer 1961): 115-24.

30. For more on myth, see Jean O. Love, *Worlds in Consciousness: Mythopoetic Thought in the Novels of Virginia Woolf*. Berkely: U of California P, 1970.

CHAPTER 3:

TO THE LIGHTHOUSE--THE ARTISTIC DIMENSION OF MOTHERHOOD

If the experience of writing *To the Lighthouse* meant, to Virginia Woolf, the extracting of a quintessential symbol of motherhood which could coalesce all previous disparate experiences into one coherent, identifiable instance of coming to terms with the terrible inheritance of the maternal absence[1], this novel also represents an interesting meeting point of the two routes exemplified by *The Voyage Out* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. If the main issue in Woolf's first novel was the problem of continuity, and if the fierce assertion of an artificial continuity at the expense of the small and insignificant matter of human emotions was the thread woven through Clarissa Dalloway's unhappy life, in *To the Lighthouse* the rewarding balance between synthesis and differentiation[2] in the maternal experience is finally achieved. It is also the precarious equilibrium between the purity and impunity of the moment, and the loose, unpromising, blind forces of life against which we see Mrs. Ramsay struggle to the death. The degree to which she remains alive to the ones who succeed her as her children, biological or not[3], must be sought in their ability to differentiate themselves from her death and, by implication, her life, as well as in the role she plays in their most intimate self-definition.

It is a textbook truth that Mrs. Ramsay's main function in life is to give[4], to give away her love, her privileged moments of solitude, the wholeness and invulnerability of her ego, to

spread herself to everybody else: "So boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent" (38). This spending and giving is intensified to the point, some critics claim, that it becomes a sacrifice more than anything else: Rosenman, for example, observes a disproportionate relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay: "It is not a mutual giving but the appropriation of the female by the male. . . . Female power spends itself--willingly--in the service of another, not in self-preservation, as it invites ravishment and ends in exhaustion. Mrs. Ramsay's power is ultimately self-devouring" (96).

The uneven distribution of affection and admiration postulated by Rosenman is reminiscent of Freud's fundamental distinction between the ego and everybody else in his essay "On Narcissism: An Introduction," to the point where there emerges

> an antithesis between ego-libido and object-libido. The more one is employed, the more the other becomes depleted. The highest phase of development of which object-libido is capable is seen in the state of being in love, when the subject seems to give up his own personality in favour of an object-cathexis; while we have the opposite condition in the paranoic's phantasy (or self-perception) of the "end of the world." (*The Freud Reader* 547)

Mrs. Ramsay exerts that anti-narcissistic influence in the novel which erects a barrier against chaos[5] and death, and which is the only thing capable of embracing and containing the family, the house, even possibly the oblivious stretches of time which intervene in the middle of the novel. Giving up the power of the ego is defined by Freud as the opposite of

narcissism; it is also what gives Mrs. Ramsay her power to endure beyond the death of her own self.

Freud's definition of narcissism emphasizes, first of all, the fact that narcissism is egoistic and introverted: "The libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism" (*The Freud Reader* 564). In other words, a movement contrary to a centrifugal spreading of energies to the outside occurs; in the process, the ego seeks to find within itself what it would otherwise locate in the object of its desire. Since the subject directs its energies meant for external objects towards itself, the result is an objectification of the subject, and so narcissism can be alternatively defined as "a state in which the subject's libido filled its own ego and had that for its object. This state could be called narcissism or self-love. A moment's reflection shows that this state never completely ceases" (*FR* 35). None of these states is absolute, and the "narcissistic libido is constantly being transformed into object-libido, and vice versa" (*FR* 35).

Another important characteristic of the state of narcissism is that it is primary; it constitutes the initial condition of the ego, the starting point to which any later developments in the distribution of affection can be traced back. Therefore, the question is of "a primary narcissism that is obscured by a number of different influences" (*FR* 547). Freud repeatedly insists on this aspect of narcissism in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*: "it is probable that this narcissism is the universal and original state of things, from which object-love is only later developed, without the narcissism necessarily disappearing on that account" (416). In his essay on narcissism, this conviction emerges even stronger: "we are

postulating a primary narcissism in everyone" (*FR* 554).

The importance of this point for a work like *To the Lighthouse* becomes clear when the allegedly fundamental and primary role of the mother is conceived as the anti-narcissistic one of giving, which, according to the preceding definitions, would seem to be a clearly secondary development. The mother figure in the novel thus seems to undermine the importance of something whose crucial primacy is impossible to be questioned. Narcissism is so deeply embedded in the processes of the psyche that even the mother's love for her children, in Freudian terms, has some ulterior motive behind it: "At the most touchy point in the narcissistic system, the immortality of the ego, which is so hard pressed by reality, security is achieved by taking refuge in the child. Parental love . . . is nothing but the parents' narcissism born again, which, transformed into object-love, unmistakably reveals its former nature" (*FR* 556). To show that Mrs. Ramsay is in fact the embodiment of the resistance to narcissism in the novel, we need to bring forth another feature of narcissism--its regressive nature.

Broadly speaking, narcissism means death, not only because it consists in withdrawal from the outside world and back into a former, egocentrically closed state of mind, but also because it puts some limitations on the self's ability to procreate. Although the original impulse of narcissism may be defined as the exact reproduction of the ego, it would be impossible for the ego to come to terms with the fact that its method of perpetuation in the world involves alienation from the original self--that the children are never an exact copy of the mother, and that the extent to which they depart from her marks the failure of narcissism. As Rosenman observes, "all true inheritance, as opposed to mere mimicry, involves some

departure. Ideally, it is a process of renewal rather than imitation" (45). And indeed, in the case of Mrs. Ramsay, we see that the continuation of her existence and sensibility in her children shows an imperfection, a departure, an inaccuracy of reproduction, most often expressed as an improvement, a progressive change over time: "For one's children," says Mrs. Ramsay, "so often gave one's own perceptions a little thrust forwards" (80).

Any change, however, especially a progressive one, goes against the fundamental concern of the narcissistic ego with itself. In a way, Mrs. Ramsay's emphasis on unity has been overstated in criticism, while her talent for differentiation has been underestimated.[6] It is significant that Lily's fundamental question about Mrs. Ramsay is: "How did she *differ*? What was the spirit in her, the essential thing, by which, had you found a crumpled glove in the corner of a sofa, you would have known it, from its *twisted* finger, hers indisputably?" (49) [italics mine]. In terms of narcissism, the specific, indispensable function of the mother as an expansively giving and not narcissistically taking figure[7] occurs in the extent to which she can allow imperfections in her own reproduction--she is a mother in so far as her children differ from her, in so far as they do not duplicate but complement her existence. For example, Mrs. Ramsay can have knowledge of a mathematical concept like the square root vicariously, through her children: "Her sons knew. She leant on them" (105). In other words, their knowledge implies her lack of knowledge--they know so she does not have to. Such minor defeats of the mother's ego, her power to admit that there will be no narcissistically perfect copy of herself to succeed her after her death, mark the mother's role as a life-giver. Exact copying of the ancestors into the descendants would mean death in terms of the progressive evolutionary requirements of civilization as well. Even though

Freud himself relates narcissism to an instinct for self-preservation, it is easy to see that the flip side of it leads to death, perhaps not for the particular self, but on the higher level of defending the life principle against the persistent flow of time, which is what Mrs. Ramsay endeavors to achieve.

In Freud's theory, death is signaled by repetition. Repetition then becomes the symptom of the death instinct. In Freud's own words in his *An Autobiographical Study*,

> Instinct in general is regarded as a kind of elasticity of living things, an impulsion towards the restoration of a situation which once existed but was brought to an end by some external disturbance. This essentially conservative character of instincts is exemplified by the phenomena of the compulsion to repeat. The picture which life presents to us is the result of the concurrent and mutually opposing action of Eros and the death instinct. (*FR* 36)

The significance of repetition, and by implication of the death instinct, for narcissism is twofold--first, narcissism clearly involves repetition in affection, based on the reproduction of the image of the self, the self being the primary object of love. When other, secondary manifestations of the self are endowed with similar importance and given the same affection, this is because they duplicate or imitate the self; this reflection of the ego in other objects can be defined as repetition of affection. Freud classifies the basic kinds of such affection in the following way:

> A person may love:--
>
> (1) According to the narcissistic type:
>
> (a) what he himself is (i.e. himself),

(b) what he himself was,

(c) what he himself would like to be,

(d) someone who was part of himself. (*FR* 555)

According to this classification, the mother's seeking of an exact image in her child ("someone who was part of herself") would fall into the category of narcissism. So would any kind of mimesis in human interaction, as long as it strives towards the accurate reflection of the person in other people or in the outside world. An example of narcissistic behavior of this kind would be Charles Tansley's way of conducting a conversation--steering it away from the subject at hand and towards himself: "until he had turned the whole thing round and made it somehow reflect himself and disparage them--he was not satisfied" (8).

The other death-related feature of the narcissistic state is the objectification of the subject. The death instinct itself, as originally defined by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, is a drive toward an inanimate state of things: "besides the instinct to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units, there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primeval, inorganic state. That is to say, as well as Eros there was an instinct of death" (*FR* 754). Similarly, the urge of the subject to become an object (inanimate) is also regressive and narcissistic. In a pathological narcissistic condition, the ego begins to treat itself as an object, the object of its own affection--a process like that of melancholy: "the melancholic has, it is true, withdrawn his libido from the object, but . . . by a process which we must call 'narcissistic identification', the object has been set up in the ego itself, has been, as it were, projected on to the ego. . . . The subject's own ego is then treated like the object that has been abandoned"

(*ILP* 427). In other words, the subject surrenders itself to the object.

It becomes clear, then, that Part II[8] of *To the Lighthouse*, the section in which the maternal influence is minimized if not completely erased, and in which the mother figure undergoes physical death, is the part of the novel associated not merely with death but with a narcissistic suppression of the subject and its creative and procreative powers. Part II, "Time Passes," conspicuously parenthesizes the subjects in the form of the people who are absent, dead, or asleep, and emphasizes the vacancy of the abandoned objects--the house itself, the unresponsive sea, the meaningless lighthouse. Both subject and object are threatened by this state of uninhabitable void. As Joan Lidoff points out, "[b]oth object and beholder are erased; not only is there nothing to be seen, there are no eyes to see" (690). Similarly, Makiko Minow-Pinkney describes "Time Passes" as "redeemed Nature without a perceiving subject" (99). The absence of human senses which can apprehend and comprehend the anonymous environment suggests not only death but sleep. Indeed, the evidence shows that sleep is the more important characteristic of this section of the novel. Sleep and regression reign--Part II begins with all the characters simply going to bed and ends with the word: "Awake" (143).

It is hardly surprising to find that sleep, according to Freud, is a state of mind heavily imbued with narcissism: "sleep is a state in which all object-cathexes, libidinal as well as egoistic, are given up and withdrawn into the ego" (*ILP* 417). If death is a state of extreme narcissism, then sleep, with its contracted and shrunk horizon of the ego, is the egoistic state closest to non-existence. In "Time Passes" sleep, death, and illness merge into one, in the absence of the maternal impulse. "The condition of sleep," says Freud, "resembles illness in

implying a narcissistic withdrawal of the positions of the libido on to the subject's own self, or, more precisely, on to the single wish to sleep. The egoism of dreams fits very well into this context" (*FR* 551). The fact that Mrs. Ramsay's death occurs in Part II, during the time of death and illness, rather than diminishing her power (Rosenman claims that her death "calls into question the mother's power. Death reveals Mrs. Ramsay's art for the illusion it was. . . . nature overcomes her, breaking its [the Madonna's] vessel and becoming inhuman" [105]), actually serves to emphasize the degree to which Mrs. Ramsay's presence is an essential condition of life, health, wakefulness, and thus inseparable from the life processes in the other two parts of the novel.

If life can be defined as the animation of the object by the subject, this animation is realized by the subject's seeing its reflection[9] in the world around it, so that the world comes to mean something. The meaningful reflection has to be distinguished from the narcissistic reflection--the meaningful reflection is the inaccurate one, the reproduction of the subject (like the reproduction of the mother in the child) which leaves a blank, unreflected space (the "glaring, hideously difficult white space" [159] which Lily is so afraid of), or gives a distorted shape in the mirror. Consequently, characters like Charles Tansley and Mr. Ramsay (or even William Bankes, who is disturbed by the lack of resemblance in Lily's picture--"She remembered how William Bankes had been shocked by her neglect of the significance of mother and son" [176]), emerge as narcissistic figures, figures of melancholy. And Mr. Ramsay is specifically associated with melancholy: "He said the most melancholy things" (69); there is a "melancholy in his voice" (110); and: "He never looked at things. If he did, all he would say would be, Poor little world, with one of his sighs" (71). These characters

are not only narcissistic in the simple sense of being concerned with themselves ("That man [Mr. Ramsay]. . . never gave; that man took" [149]), and with the person they want to become, measuring their own achievements constantly against the high standard of their narcissistic ideal (professorship for Tansley; the symbolic letter Z for Mr. Ramsay), but they are also brought into explicit relation with facts, accuracy, and the exactness of their reflections in the world. Mr. Ramsay[10], in particular, "was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact" (4). He is also narcissistic in his life of professional and domestic repetition. Professionally, we know that after publishing one significant book, he has withdrawn into mere "amplification, repetition" (23) of his ideas. Similarly, the uniformity and routine of his family life, which becomes the background of his friendship with William Bankes, strikes Bankes as equally unproductive: "repetition had taken the place of newness. It was to repeat that they met" (21). All these forms of repetition in Mr. Ramsay's life suggest that he ultimately exemplifies regression and narcissism.

It is not accidental, therefore, that Mr. Ramsay, in contrast to Mrs. Ramsay, should survive during Part II of the novel and indeed thrive on it--he emerges an adventurer, a real-life one, and not just an imagined leader of an expedition in Part III. His life is compatible with narcissism, with repetition, while Mrs. Ramsay's is the complete opposite. Mr. Ramsay is concerned with the limit of the human sensibility, with the "end of the world," which Freud defines as the opposite of being in love: "to stand on his little ledge facing the dark of human ignorance, how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on--that was his fate, his gift" (44). Even though his books are about "Subject and object and the nature of reality" (23), it is difficult to find a place for the subject in his thought. The

subject, for him, would be a completely accurate reflection of the object, and imagination would be unable to diverge from reality, just as the lighthouse in Mr. Ramsay's mind accurately corresponds to the real lighthouse. And since "Time Passes" is significant because of its treatment of the demise or absence of the subject, Mr. Ramsay will naturally be able to function in it, during this vast stretch of anonymous time. In a sense, Mr. Ramsay makes his object of study the vast wilderness of Part II--just as his work can be described by Andrew's succinct explanation to Lily: "Think of a kitchen table . . . when you're not there" (23), the state of sleep and suspension of existence itself in "Time Passes" can be described as "a house when you're not there." In other words, Mr. Ramsay's work consists in an attempt to describe what happens in the world without the subject in it, which is also the tragedy of "Time Passes." With the absence of the subject and the imaginative control of Mrs. Ramsay, the world does not communicate[11]; the world does not mean. What is absent in Part II of the novel is the reflection, the inaccurate, creative, lively recreation of the subject into the objects around it, that imperfect, crumpled glove that belongs to Mrs. Ramsay alone and signifies the distortion of the world which is the only proof that it is being observed by a human being. The distortion is precisely the maternal influence, to the extent to which that influence does not allow the exactness of narcissistic reproduction. The mother interferes with, rather than facilitates, exact reproduction.[12]

Conversely, in the absence of maternal influence in Part II, we get images of broken or non-existent reflections--the erasure of all differentiation and its submerging into the narcissistic sameness of sleep and repetition: "there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say, 'This is he' or 'This is she'" (126). Nothing distinctive

survives, and nothing describes anything else; nothing belongs to anyone in this unpossessable world. In the whole world described in this section, although there remain the inanimate things, there is "no image . . . making the world reflect the compass of the soul" (128); there is no possibility any more for the "cliff, sea, cloud, and sky brought purposely together to assemble outwardly the scattered parts of the vision within" (132). As these natural "mirrors" (132) become dysfunctional, the reflection is lost. What remains is only the nostalgic memory of "how once the looking-glass had held a face" (129), of "how beauty outside mirrored beauty within" (134). With the immeasurable shrinking of perception, of human presence, what remains is the quintessential narcissistic core, the absolute withdrawal into the geometric point of egoistic self-identity. Even the elementary split of the self into two parts during its own contemplation in the mirror becomes impossible: "That dream, of sharing, completing, of finding in solitude on the beach an answer, was then but a *reflection* in a mirror. . . . to pace the beach was impossible; contemplation was unendurable; the mirror was broken" (134) [italics mine]. Here, the role of the mirror is to emphasize not the identity of subject and image but their differentiation--the ability of the subject to step aside, away from itself, to perceive a double[13] configuration, whereas the essence of the narcissistic mind is conspicuously single and self-centered, unwilling to insert even the minimal distance and the delay of a mirror image into its self-perception.

Further clues to the pathologically narcissistic nature of the devastated, inhuman environment (narcissism is ultimately inhuman in its reification of the ego into an object), are the images of a vaguely auto-erotic, uninhabited and uninhibited nature: "as if the universe were battling and tumbling, in brute confusion and wanton lust aimlessly *by itself*" (135)

[italics mine]. The regression, the collapsing back into nothingness, again, is the result of the lack of reflection, lack of response from a human subject: "But the stillness and the brightness of the day were as strange as the chaos and tumult of night, with the trees standing there, and the flowers standing there, looking before them, looking up, yet beholding nothing, eyeless, and so terrible" (135). The absence of a meaningful gaze, of the beholder, is the absence of what Joan Lidoff calls "the mirroring mother" (687), who creates meaning through reflection (687), and we must add, through the inaccuracies, delays, and imperfections of that reflection.[14]

The inhuman and wild proliferation of nature in Part II, although ostensibly fertile (all vegetation thrives), is at the same time sterile in its narcissistic and auto-erotic connotations, as well as in its associations with male infertility in the person of Mr. Ramsay. Later, in Part III, we get what may seem to be a puzzling description of Mr. Ramsay, given the barrenness of his purely theoretical thought: "he permeated, he prevailed, he imposed himself" (149). Mr. Ramsay's omnipresence, however, is his way of not proliferating but multiplying and repeating himself; it is a process of distribution of the same, of propagation rather than procreation.[15] He seems to be imposing himself on anyone who would be susceptible to his influence, swallowing everything that is not part of him and transforming it into something less alien and more narcissistically similar to what he is, in the same way as the invasion of nature in Part II is not a process of regeneration as much as of narcissistic assimilation.

The opposite process, the tentative and slow revival in "Time Passes," is associated with differentiation, as "Mrs. McNab, Mrs. Bast, stayed the corruption and the rot; rescued from the pool of Time that was fast closing over them now a basin, now a cupboard. . . .

some rusty laborious birth seemed to be taking place" (139). The birth which symbolically happens in this passage, as well as motherhood in general in *To the Lighthouse*, is, paradoxically, a process of differentiation from nature, and not an act of blind reproduction identical with the natural renewal. When the house can be distinguished from its natural, wild surroundings (which is parallel to the differentiation of the past from oblivion), then it has returned to the realm of humanity; it has been redeemed from time itself, born into the human world again. In this sense, the role of the mother, the function of Mrs. Ramsay, is to distinguish herself and the lives of her children from the senseless repetition of nature. As Maria DiBattista aptly phrases it, "[t]o resist nature's rhythms is necessary, but to impede the flow of social rhythms is barbarous" (88-89). Nature functions through repetition that is identical because unaware of itself: "What power could prevent the fertility, the insensibility of nature? Mrs. McNab's dream of a lady, of a child, of a plate of milk soup?"(138). The nightmare of nothingness only ends with the arrival of someone who can reflect nature[16] and reflect *on* nature, differentiating oneself from it. In the words of Jean Alexander, "there is a contrast between the order which is unconscious and natural and the order which is imposed by an effort of the will and the imagination" (122). And the latter is characterized by its flaws and distortions. It is significant, for example, that we see Mrs. McNab, who is the agent of renewal in Part II, "arms akimbo in front of the looking-glass" (135), the image carrying further the themes of both reflection and distortion. Without the interference of the human element, the element which means the introduction of difference into the sameness of nature[17], there are no meaningful events: "Nothing now withstood them [the elements of nature]; nothing said no to them" (138). In a way, the differentiation between subject and

object, which strives to prevent narcissistic identification, is only possible by saying "no" to nature[18], and Mrs. Ramsay's motherhood is expressed, paradoxically, in that negation of nature, where life can be rescued from both indiscriminate fertility and death.

That is why it makes sense for Mrs. Ramsay, unlike Clarissa Dalloway in Woolf's earlier novel, to define life itself as her antagonist[19]:

> There it was before her--life. Life, she thought--but she did not finish her thought. 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. (59)

On another occasion, she again emphasizes her desire to separate from, to fight with, this alien, incomprehensibly cruel and destructive entity: "And again she felt alone in the presence of her old antagonist, life" (79). Similarly, during the climactic dinner, when the Moment has to be artificially shaped, contained, frozen, the perfection of the "yellow and purple dish of fruit" (97), which looks like "a trophy fetched from the bottom of the sea, of Neptune's banquet. . . . possessed of great size and depth" (97), is essentially antagonistic to life. It can hang suspended only for a moment, before the movement of life disturbs this perfection: "she had been keeping guard over the dish of fruit (without realising it) jealously, hoping that nobody would touch it" (108). But the magic is over, the stillness is interrupted when "a hand reached out, took a pear, and spoilt the whole thing" (109).

Mrs. Ramsay's vision of the dish of fruit is characteristic of the process by which she

isolates and captures "the moment":

> there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again tonight she had the feeling that she had once today, already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures. (105)

The moment then becomes "the still space that lies about the heart of things" (105), and this is an impossible space, a non-existent stillness. Thus what Mrs. Ramsay strives to preserve as the full, essential epitome of experience is actually an artificial creation (as Maria DiBattista observes, Mrs. Ramsay uses "conscious artifices" [89]). As a secondary construction, it resists and transforms the primary narcissistic impulse. In other words, the power of motherhood seeks to present a secondary, artistic creation and establish it as a primary one, more basic than nature[20], in the place of the constant change and instability of life.

The alien environment in Part II, with its inability to reflect the human spirit or memory, prompts human beings to seek their reflection. This search can be described, in the words of Rosenman, as "a hunger for confirmation from the environment" (23), a regressive impulse towards the primary source of life[21], towards the state of absolute identity with the mother. As the need "to recreate the sense of pre-Oedipal wholeness" (Rosenman 20)[22] becomes paramount in some of the characters in *To the Lighthouse* (most notably Lily, but also Mr. Ramsay[23]), it shows that they long to participate in an essentially narcissistic relation

to what they once were. This "regressive urge" (Rosenman 102) back towards the origin can also be seen as the death instinct in Freudian theory, the instinct which can explain the instances of self-destructive human behavior. Paradoxically, the narcissistic desire for what the ego once was (a desire based on an extreme emphasis on the individuality of the ego), serves to erase the particular characteristics of that ego in its journey towards its less differentiated former state: "The obsessive desire to merge with the mother . . . makes any sense of individuality problematic" (Rosenman 104).

This problem becomes most obvious in the case of Lily and "her desire to become one with Mrs. Ramsay" (Rosenman 101). Lily herself mistakes this desire for love: "Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired" (51). The unity Lily wants can be seen, not as love, but as a narcissistic impulse on several different levels: she, as a daughter, seeks a return to the mother figure (and by implication to the child she herself was); she admires Mrs. Ramsay as a mother, and desires to be like her (what Lily herself wants to become); and she also keeps looking for some kind of intimate identification with Mrs. Ramsay as the object of her painting (in a sense, Lily wants to objectify her own self). All of these modes of identification emerge as narcissistic and can hardly qualify as "love" (even when Lily claims: "I'm in love with this all" [18]), since love is the emotion which can allow for difference between the subject and the object of its affection. As Jeremy Hawthorn points out: "To love someone is to recognise their distinctness, their separateness from us" (45). Therefore, Lily's question: "What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored?" (51), has to be answered--the device is narcissistic

identification of subject with object.

For Lily this merging is the absolute, perfect reflection, the indisputable identity of two objects. Consequently, she is unable to settle for an imperfect or creative reflection[24], and she is not willing to admit any distortion in her life, failing to see that in this narcissistic universe of shrinking and devastation distortion is the life-affirming, individualizing, artistic quality. She is unwilling to accept the freedom Mrs. Ramsay gives her of being different. Instead, she regards anything less than identity, with Mrs. Ramsay or with the object of her art, as incomplete and unsatisfactory. Thus her "longing for fusion" (Rosenman 102) makes her look at her life, in reality, as incomplete. As Bennett points out, "Lily may complete her picture, but she is hardly a complete human being. . . . She still longs for Mrs. Ramsay's love and approval" (129).

The theme of incompleteness is connected with the character of Lily from the start. When we are first introduced to Lily through Mrs. Ramsay's train of thought, there is the first dismissive suggestion of incompleteness: "*Only* Lily Briscoe, she was glad to find" (17) [italics mine]. After Lily is introduced as something partial, something insufficient, incomplete, we get references to how she is physically insignificant: "Everything about her was so small" (104). This emphasis on her limited physical dimensions acquires, through similar associations with Tansley's description, a connotation of spiritual and psychological insignificance as well. Just as Tansley is referred to as "the little atheist" (5), the small features and stature of Lily carry a reference to some limitation other than the obviously physical one. The feeling of constraint is carried over to her painting as well, which strives to limit the movement of its object: "the sight of the girl standing on the edge of the lawn

painting reminded her [Mrs. Ramsay]; she was supposed to be keeping her head as much in the same position as possible for Lily's picture" (17). In her capacity as an artist, this time, Lily needs the stability of a single perspective which would expose her to one angle, one aspect of the mother figure. The degree to which she cannot deal with the animated, "quivering thing" (29) in her painting can be seen in the way she focuses on her picture to the exclusion of all movement: "she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting" (158).

On the level of the painting itself, Lily sees the configuration of people and objects in front of her not as a single space but as a series of rigid, fixed perspectives, disparate units, shapes, and colors--fragments which do not add up to a painting: "she looked at the mass, at the line, at the colour, at Mrs. Ramsay sitting in the window with James" (17). Her vision of the picture is one of pronounced multiplicity, "The question being one of the relation of masses, of lights and shadows" (53), rather than unity. If such multiplicity is inevitable, in the absence of the complete and unified vision, Lily's tragedy is that she regards the imperfections as problematic, unsatisfactory parts which need to be assembled and their plurality corrected into a singleness of vision. It is not accidental that narcissism demands of things be single, stable, and identical rather than proliferating and fluctuating. Needless to say, Lily Briscoe remains single[25] to the end of the novel, fighting to get rid of the difference between her and "the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers--this *other* thing, this truth, this reality" (158) [italics mine].

Since narcissism is the given, primary, natural state of the ego, which the ego can never completely escape, even Mrs. Ramsay is not immune to the temptations to which Lily

surrenders. There are those moments when Mrs. Ramsay seems susceptible to what Freud calls "the rigidity of narcissism, which will not allow transference on to objects to increase beyond certain bounds" (*ILP* 455). In other words, even she is sometimes unable to differentiate herself from the objects around her, which makes Rosenman suggest that "Mrs. Ramsay's act of looking is one of empathy to the point of merging: Mrs. Ramsay 'became the thing she looked at'" (98). Indeed, there is evidence that when Mrs. Ramsay is alone, she falls prey to this regressive urge herself: "Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at--that light, for example. . . . She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes" (63). At other times, however, she sees this feeling as strange and unnatural: "It was odd, she thought, how *if one was alone*, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one" (63) [italics mine].

But when she is among people, Mrs. Ramsay uses her creative power to insert this crucial difference between oneself and the world. Broadly speaking, creation is ultimately a public act, not only in the sense that one creates something different and independent from oneself and is confronted by the alien essence of it, but also in the more ordinary sense in which art has to be publicly displayed, the painting looked at (another aspect of Lily's failure as an artist is her inability to disengage from her own art and share her picture with others--somebody looking at her picture, "that was what Lily Briscoe could not have endured" [17]). True art, like true love, has the qualities, for example, of William Bankes's affection for Mrs. Ramsay: "love that never attempted to clutch its object; but, like the love

which mathematicians bear their symbols, or poets their phrases, was meant to be spread over the world and become part of the human gain" (47). Unlike Mrs. Dalloway, who perceives two distinct levels of interaction with the world, private and public, and excludes the one from the other, Mrs. Ramsay's private feeling of love is so expansive that it extends beyond the individual person and enters, in effect, the public realm, where it adds to "the human gain," the mark that humanity wants to leave on the world in its differentiation from nature.

It is true that the state of reflection or imitation is associated with Mrs. Ramsay throughout the novel; in a sense, everybody reflects Mrs. Ramsay in one way or another: "virtually every character in the novel falls under her spell. . . . they long for her love. . . . the majority of them end up giving themselves, becoming what she wants them to be: the boys 'men,' the girls, 'women'" (Bennett 128). However, the characters' reflections in Mrs. Ramsay are always inaccurate, somehow enhanced or twisted--a distorted version of their real personality. In the process of reflecting her generosity of spirit, the other characters come to partake of her energy and faith in life, to the point where even Tansley feels a new power in the presence of Mrs. Ramsay. This power lasts only as long as her attention is fixed on him personally, as long as the light beam (like the third stroke of the lighthouse) rests on his personality and endows it with a glow he is not accustomed to: "A fellowship, a professorship, he felt capable of anything and saw himself--but what was she looking at?" (11). What he sees in the "mirror" of Mrs. Ramsay's conversation is not at all what he actually is, but a re-created, altered version of himself: "he was coming to see himself, and everything he had ever known gone crooked a little. It was awfully strange" (13). Similarly, Mrs. Ramsay's influence on Paul, when he sees his own image reflected in her, makes him

more manly, more perfect, unrealistically brave and daring: "She had made him think he could do anything" (78).

This "crooked,"creative, non-narcissistic reflection does not aim at identity of the subject with its reflection; accuracy is the last thing Mrs. Ramsay looks for in her life.[26] She is aware, for example, of the discrepancy between what she is and what other people see in her: "It was so inadequate, what one could give in return; and what Rose felt was quite out of proportion to anything she actually was" (81). Thus when Rosenman says that "Mrs. Ramsay's sense of herself is reflected back from the outside world"(98), we have to keep in mind that this reflection is always re-worked, transformed, and "crooked."[27] Mrs. Ramsay shows no respect for the factual truth of what she says or does, and this disregard for any kind of solid facts permeates the whole novel. For example, we get an image of Tansley which is built on his limited, dry, and self-centered personality, whereas in reality Tansley has to be considered, strictly speaking, the most adventurous of all. It is sometimes difficult to remember that Tansley has already experienced what Mr. Ramsay only dreams of in the first part of the novel--the storm, the expedition, the real-life danger: "They had to listen to him when he [Tansley] said that he had been with his uncle in a lighthouse in a storm" (92). However, in the broadly defined categories of sea-faring and land-stranded personalities in the novel, Tansley has no difficulty making it into the second group, with his dry and unimaginative mentality.

All this comes to show that the accuracy of facts does not play a part in the world inhabited and sustained by Mrs. Ramsay--if it did, the lighthouse would have no other significance except as a prison where people are "shut up for a whole month at a time" (5);

instead of inspiring and visionary it would seem dark and gloomy. This transformation of reality is characteristic of everything which Mrs. Ramsay has touched. Her famous "habit of exaggeration" (6) also confirms the creative twist she gives to her interpretation of the outside world.[28] Another significant feature of her behavior is the purposeful way in which she moves, "erect and walking as if she expected to meet some one round the corner" (14), or as if she reflects the presence of someone who is just about to turn around the corner, even though there is no one. In a sense, she can even create a reflection where there is none. Thus the mirror images she finds in the world are significantly different from identical, factual reflections, such as Tansley's parrot-like and empty imitation of her enthusiasm about the circus, "repeating her words . . . with a self-consciousness that made her wince" (11).

Thus, even though Mrs. Ramsay is associated with the imagery of reflection, it is a creative, exaggerated, non-narcissistic reflection, and she is aware of the extent to which it is made up: "Flashing her needles, confident, upright, she created drawing-room and kitchen, set them all aglow" (37). The world is not created by the "compelling presence" of nature (Alexander105), but rather by what Whitehead calls "the deliberate choices of the . . . artist" (404). Without the purposeful endeavor of creation, "There was no beauty anywhere. . . . Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (83). It is Mrs. Ramsay's project to approximate some kind of unity in the world, although her invention of unity itself is a differentiation from the facts. Unity diverges from life, but brings people closer to meaning. As T.E. Apter points out, "[d]espite Mrs. Ramsay's disregard for facts . . . she does not actually present people with falsehoods" (*Study* 81). According to him, "imagination is a

means not of constructing fantasy but of constructing truth" (*Study* 75). The distortion of life into meaning is most clearly seen in the moment when the dinner party assumes the importance of something complete:

> Now all the candles were lit up, and the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candlelight, and composed, as they had not been in the twilight, into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, waterily. (97)

The "reflection" Mrs. Ramsay presents here, which is "rippled" and "far from . . . accurate," shows how far she is from looking for a narcissistic confirmation of herself in this reflection. It is interesting that the faces of the guests are now, in the artificial light, "composed," meaning restful and tranquil, but also artificially ordered, artistically rendered. The extent to which the shaping of the moment involves will and effort shows that its significance is in a sense unnatural: "they were all *conscious* of making a party together in a hollow, on an island; had their common cause against that fluidity out there" (97) [italics mine]. It is this conscious choice of artistic tools that makes John Batchelor call Mrs. Ramsay "a female Prospero" (100). Mrs. Ramsay's purpose in life is to make this creation of hers *seem* natural--she is trying to pass it for the real thing, for the primary, the given. In a sense, she is constantly engaged in cheating life--"she flew in the face of facts . . . in effect, told lies" (31). This cheating is realized by her pure insistence that life should be preserved, stopped, somehow prevented from the ruin and entropy that await it: "Mrs. Ramsay bringing them

together; Mrs. Ramsay saying, 'Life stand still here'; Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent . . . In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing . . . was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay said" (161). The emphasis on her power of transformation means that she is deliberately trying to divert life aside from herself and her children, trying to fulfill her role as a mother by protecting her family from the natural process of deterioration: "She put a spell on them all, by wishing, so simply, so directly, and Lily contrasted that abundance with her own poverty of spirit" (101). Since this "spell" is the creation of the Moment, the extraction of its essence ("life . . . was sealed up there" [93]), it becomes frozen in time and counterpoised to life itself; it becomes "something alien to the processes of domestic life" (132). It is almost with some intense physical effort that Mrs. Ramsay tackles life in order to grab from it what matters: "She felt rather inclined just for a moment to stand still after all that chatter, and pick out one particular thing; the thing that mattered; to detach it; separate it off; clean it of all the emotions and odds and ends of things, and so hold it before her" (112). "The thing that mattered" is the part that becomes important precisely because it has been wrestled away from life, separated from it, poised in stubborn resistance to it. Mrs. Ramsay's behavior is clearly artistic in its departure from the physically given world with its constant flow and change and its logical limitations of possibility and impossibility. In her artificial, virtual world, "Everything seemed possible. Everything seemed right" (104).

The impunity with which Mrs. Ramsay insists on her artistic rendering of the world at large becomes clear in the puzzled incomprehension with which she refuses to admit the primacy of the real world. For example, she considers it logical that her memory of Carrie

Manning should be more "accurate" and valid than its real-life counterpart: "For it was extraordinary to think that they had been capable of going on living all these years when she had not thought of them more than once all that time" (88). In its extreme form, thinking about life creates it. The actual happening of events can be traced, retrospectively, back to Mrs. Ramsay's wishful thinking and depends on her presence for its realization in the real world. This reversal of cause and effect can be seen, for example, in Lily's contemplation of the marriage of Paul and Minta: "Mrs. Ramsay had planned it. Perhaps, had she lived, she would have compelled it" (175). This is a form of control which remains inaccessible to Lily, for example, who continues to look for a Truth that is not in the least compromised by imagination, "the thing itself before it has been made anything" (193), before it has been creatively tampered with. Lily sees an immeasurable gulf between what is true and valuable and what has been created by herself, and her philosophy postulates a fundamental distinction between vision and execution: "But there was all the difference in the world between this planning airily away from the canvas, and actually taking her brush and making the first mark" (157), and also: "Some notion was in both of them [Lily and Carmichael] about the ineffectiveness of action, the supremacy of thought" (196). According to Mrs. Ramsay, however, this distinction would be artistically wrong. Lily is looking to make a "mark" that will be objectively the right one, whereas the trace of the brush on the canvas can only be validated by the imagination--the "planning" and the painting itself are one.

Since Mrs. Ramsay embodies the anti-narcissistic impulse in the novel, her opposition to life, her attempt to cheat it into the immortality of the moment, also means the insistence on a kind of renewal different from the blind, cyclical repetition of nature. That is

why repetition (such as the "tendency to repeat" in the friendship of Mr. Ramsay and William Bankes) is considered a failure in the novel. While repetition in nature is a mechanism for renewal, for the human being who strives to make a mark each repetitive moment has to be slightly displaced, differentiated from itself, made unique and thus meaningful. The "moment" then is molded like a work of art; thus Lily remembers, in Part III, how Mrs. Ramsay's presence in effect created the unique and even unnatural moment of psychological intimacy between Lily and Tansley: "That woman [Mrs. Ramsay] sitting there writing under the rock resolved everything into simplicity . . . almost like a work of art" (160).

This artistic impulse is in fact Mrs. Ramsay's attempt to recreate the uniqueness of time which is so easy for her children to experience: "Then the door sprang open and in they came, fresh as roses, staring, wide awake, as if this coming into the dining-room after breakfast, which they did every day of their lives, was a positive event to them" (59). The significance of the moment, achieved simply by virtue of the fact that it cannot be reproduced, is what makes the children happy: "They were happier now than they would ever be again" (59). Similarly, Mrs. Ramsay has the need to consider each day, each moment as different and new. This becomes especially urgent in a series of repetitive events, a routine, such as the one Mrs. Ramsay describes: "For in the rough and tumble of daily life, with all those children about, all those visitors, one had constantly a sense of repetition" (199). To fight the uniformity of time, each moment has to be obstinately and imaginatively distinguished from the others, its special significance made up, so that even though it is perhaps repeatable in real life it remains singular in her memory. In a sense, each of these moments is treated as a beginning similar to the differentiation of birth in Part II, and in

being singled out, the moment serves to avoid the narcissistic identification of all moments, which is called time. Thus the only promising development in Lily's character is her new feeling, in Part II, of differentiation (appropriately, Part III itself is a parallel but distorted reflection of Part I, and the distortion is brought about by Mrs. Ramsay again–by her absence): "she could not shake herself free from the sense that everything this morning was happening *for the first time*" (194) [italics mine]. She is perhaps beginning to drift away from the narcissistic and self-destructive repetition, from her longing for identity and singleness.

In a sense, the mother figure in *To the Lighthouse* is the source of life to the extent to which she can change, create herself, surprise every moment with her own identity, with what she has never been before. Thus she controls not one, but both sides of the mirror--one side being herself, the other being what she has lied to herself to make. Since the two sides have to be made different and the reflection distorted, recreated, the mirror does not imply a narcissistic focus on the self. Consequently, seeking one's reflection in the mother does not increase but reduces self-consciousness. That is why when people see themselves through the eyes of Mrs. Ramsay, they feel themselves capable of anything, they forget their limitations, they forget, rather than emphasize, by looking in this mirror, who they are. This is also the kind of control Mrs. Ramsay wants to have over her children--by seeing herself inaccurately reflected in them, by giving them the freedom to grow, to be different, to develop, she gives them at the same time another birth, which is simultaneously a differentiation from and source of life, a past to remember, a tradition. This is why she cannot imagine the Mannings' existence through time if that existence is not imaginatively

grasped and transformed.

Imagination becomes indispensable to life and to motherhood--since reflection is the confirmation of life in something else, and since there is nothing else to confirm life, life has to differentiate itself from itself and make up its own reflection, to invent a difference and then unity, analysis and then synthesis, fission and then fusion. Enacting these, life itself avoids death by playing at death, and purifies itself by something that resembles a dramatic catharsis. The essential difference between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily is that the mother in Mrs. Ramsay can invent and play at both life and death in her imaginative control of both, whereas Lily is horrified even at the remote prospect of "playing at painting, playing at the one thing one did not play at" (149). Her insistence on the difference between what is real and what is imagined makes her equate order with a transcendental reality more solid than the artistic one: "A brush, the one dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, chaos--that one should not play with, knowingly even" (150). On the other hand, what Mrs. Ramsay is engaged in can be defined, to a large extent, as playing at and playing with life and death, in the process of creatively imitating both (we also see her both dead and alive in the novel, both present and absent). In other words, she downplays the importance of the primary, narcissistic state of self-preservation, and replaces it with a secondary, artful, clearly artificial creation, for which she wants to claim the purity, the solidity of a primary thing: "Yes, that was done then, accomplished; and as with all things done, became solemn. . . . it seemed always to have been, only was shown now and so being shown, struck everything into stability" (113). "Always to have been" is a description which confers on the moment the special status which is usually reserved for a primary, natural thing. On another occasion, Mrs. Ramsay makes it

clear that for her the act of artistic transformation assumes a weight and significance similar to that of natural procreation.[29] When she observes Lily painting, Mrs. Ramsay thinks how Lily "would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously" (17). In other words, in the eyes of Mrs. Ramsay, failure in marriage means failure in art too, because they stem from the same source. Thus marriage, as the embodiment of the primary connection to life, becomes associated with art, which is usually regarded as secondary, and the distinction between them is creatively undermined.

As the moment of birth resembles the completion of a work of art by its differentiation from the natural world, by the creator's setting it off in a unique, individually specific position in opposition to the interchangeable natural cycles, so the moment of death must be defined as a return to that repetition of nature. In a way, in death the ego would focus exclusively on itself to the point of complete and immutable self-identity. Thus death here would not be defined as the undifferentiated uniformity of sleep, but as the one-dimensional specificity of the self, a limitation imposed on its transformations, which, when freely re-invented, define life itself in its multiplicity and richness: "For always, he [Bankes] thought, there was something incongruous to be worked into the harmony of her [Mrs. Ramsay's] face. . . . So that if it was her beauty merely that one thought of, one must remember the quivering thing, the living thing [the thing which is different every time]. . . and work it into the picture; or if one thought of her simply as a woman, one must endow her with some freak of idiosyncrasy" (29).

Here, Freud's concept of "specific death" becomes especially appropriate. The death instinct in general, according to Freud, is a regressive force: "It seems, then, that an instinct is

an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life" (*FR* 612). However, "the death toward which the organisms are instinctually driven is not just any kind of death, but a particular death that satisfies the particular repetition needs of the organism. . . . The death instinct--or Thanatos as Freud came to refer to it--impels each organism toward a highly specific kind of death" (Fancher 190). To the extent to which death is a specific event, any dramatic recreation of the self into a new imaginative entity would be equivalent to avoiding this specificity and therefore avoiding death. It is significant that Mrs. Ramsay's death is conspicuously un-specific, since we know virtually nothing about it. Thus, in her role as the mother figure, she is able to exert some control over both life and death, or at least pretend that this is possible.

The fact that Mrs. Ramsay is never enamored by her own, narcissistically accurate image in other people is also related to her pretense of control--her knowledge of how fragile her beauty is in reality is replaced by some faith in the stability and endurance of an artificially created beauty which has been simply willed into existence. Mrs. Ramsay would like to believe that her beauty is made up, in a sense, by the admiration of the people who treat her "like a Queen" (7; also 14, 82). Similarly, her aura of ethereal, elusive origin, with her mythical Italian blood (9), makes her assume the status of a Goddess, "[s]tepping through fields of flowers and taking to her breast buds that had broken and lambs that had fallen; with the stars in her eyes and the wind in her hair" (14). It has often been emphasized that the position of a Goddess is a pedestal of something incredibly aloof and remote; on the other

hand, this impersonal status means that if her beauty is mythical and not private then it becomes a function of the people's attitude towards her, as opposed to an inherent, primary thing. Mrs. Ramsay herself thinks about her intention to enter the public social realm "in the hope that thus she would cease to be a private woman" (9). Lily, on the contrary, is looking for the meaning of Mrs. Ramsay in some deep, ineffable recesses of her being, where there lie hidden some "tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out, would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, *never made public*" (51) [italics mine]. However, the real power of Mrs. Ramsay is in her publicly, openly re-shaping her life and the lives of others. If her own beauty, which is otherwise the most intimate, egocentric thing, is exposed to everyone, and if it is regarded as a matter of impersonal, publicly constructed, rather than inherent and individual quality, this points to Mrs. Ramsay's desire to be free to create herself. As with other things, she can pretend that her beauty has been decided on, assumed, "composed" by sheer will power and imagination. If this illusion, this substitution of the artificially constructed for the naturally given, can be convincingly maintained, then perhaps other inevitable forces could also be presented as artificial, able to be controlled.

For example, in the descriptions of the passage of time itself we get an ambiguous reference to cause and effect: "With her foot on the threshold she waited a moment longer in a scene which was vanishing even *as she looked*, and then, as she moved and took Minta's arm and left the room, it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past" (111) [italics mine]. It is as if the whole scene shifts under the weight of her own glance, as if she introduces the past and

commands it to step in at the precise moment when it actually does arrive: "There was always something that had to be done at that precise moment, something that Mrs. Ramsay had decided for reasons of her own to do instantly" (112). Her role is in a sense to duplicate life, the passage of time, except with a little twist, as if she has decided that it is time to move on, and time only flows after its passage has been sanctioned by her.

Similarly, Mrs. Ramsay attempts to present the entropy which begins to take over the house as the result of carelessness, a matter of not paying attention, rather than a natural, inevitable process: "if every door in a house is left perpetually open . . . things must spoil" (27). To pretend that even decay is man-made, a thing of human artifice and cunning, is, of course, an exaggeration. The same is true for the whole theme of giving--the person will be spent anyway with the passage of time, but giving makes it look as if wasting one's energies and ultimately dying is done on purpose. At one point, Mrs. Ramsay explicitly suggests the improbableidea that growing old might be such a thing of personal choice: "But indeed she was not jealous, only, now and then, when she *made herself* look in her glass a little resentful that she had grown old, perhaps, by her own fault" (99) [italics mine]. Significantly, it is her reflection in the mirror that fails to coincide with the reality of things--the image is always a little out of focus in comparison with life. In her effort to exaggerate her own role in the primary processes of existence, Mrs. Ramsay seems to insist that if the credit for creation should go to the mother, so should the credit for destruction. In other words, she emerges as a figure who can convincingly pretend to control both, because her control over birth is indisputable.

Ultimately, the task of motherhood in *To the Lighthouse* has to be seen as a more

complex one than that in Woolf's other novels. Here, the mother figure indulges in playful teasing and twisting of reality, and at the same time grapples with the most serious questions of life and death. Her life-giving power at the primary level of physical creation is complemented by an imaginary power of artistic interpretation and control of life. The theme of imitation and reflection of the mother here assumes deeper dimensions, when it becomes clear that a straightforward imitation to the point of identity with the mother is regressive instead of life-affirming. Reflection, however, is necessary in order to displace life, to alienate it from itself just enough to assert one's individuality in the form of a blind natural necessity and repetition. The mother's role of procreation involves inserting, making up a difference for herself and her children in order to create, for a second time and this time psychologically, children with individual personalities and avoid identical replicas of herself. This act is the ultimate anti-narcissistic effort on the part of the mother. It takes enormous love and devotion, because in that purposeful distortion and dissimilarity in which she wants to perpetuate herself, there occurs a substitution of this unnatural, secondary difference, this twist in the reflected image she gets of herself from the world, for the primary self-identity, with the narcissistic exactness which is sought naturally by the ego. The mother's ability to overcome her egocentric impulse in this way becomes the central theme in *To the Lighthouse*.

Notes

1. In *Moments of Being*, Woolf says: "It is perfectly true that she [Julia Stephen] obsessed me, in spite of the fact that she died when I was thirteen, until I was forty-four. Then one day walking round Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my books, To the Lighthouse; in a great, apparently involuntary, rush. One thing burst into another. Blowing bubbles out of a pipe gives the feeling of a rapid crowd of ideas and scenes which blew out of my mind, so that my lips seemed syllabling of their own accord as I walked. What blew the bubbles? Why then? I have no notion. But I wrote the book very quickly; and when it was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her. I suppose that I did for myself what psycho-analysts do for their patients" (81).

2. It is the "differentiation" part of the equation that critics have not sufficiently accounted for; the common critical view proposes a superhuman synthesis of Mrs. Ramsay into a goddess. A few examples will suffice. Thomas Caramagno speaks of "the mother as a mythic deity" (247), who, as Avron Fleishman adds, "is enlarged by attributes of goddess and queen" (113). To Mitchell Leaska, Mrs. Ramsay appears as "that strange and aloof combination of woman, wife, mother–and Madonna" (131); for Carolyn Heilbrun she is "a mother goddess" (73), and for Herbert Marder she is "an ideal mother, who functions on the level of myth" (46). Jean O. Love explains that "[t]he myth concerns the death or at least the departure of an almost if not entirely supernatural mother whose magical beneficence had held the world in order" (162). Similarly, Jane Lilienfeld describes her as "the archetypal Great Mother" (625) and speaks of "[t]he anger at the Mother who denies her essence to her seekers . . . Mrs. Ramsay as the simultaneously Great and Terrible Mother" (619). See also Blotner, Joseph L., "Mythic Patterns in *To the Lighthouse*" [*PMLA* 71.4 (September 1956): 547-62].

3. As we will see, the non-biological inheritance, or even a deliberate distortion of all biological inheritance, gains primacy in the novel. Even though, as Howard Harper points out, "the parents are the most inescapably *given*" (137), Mrs. Ramsay's role in the novel is to question and modify all that is "given," including herself. Thus her relationship to her children seeks to escape the natural determinism of propagation and replace it with a creative, purposeful, made-up relation, like the one she has with Lily. Harper's observation that "the artist doesn't really belong in the family: she is not a daughter, only a guest" (161) is also significant here, not because it singles out Lily as special, but because Mrs. Ramsay seeks to make all of her relationships, even the already biological ones, into relationships that are, in the words of Gillian Beer, "chosen, not inherited" (32).

4. Clare Hauson remarks that Mrs. Ramsay is "the self-contained source of life and creativity" (75). Mrs. Ramsay, unlike Clarissa Dalloway, is a "giver," to the point where she can be said to give to the people around her reality itself; T.E. Apter also points out that she is a source of reality: "She [Mrs. Ramsay] grants to others a reality which . . . [is] achieved only in isolation" (*Study* 95).

5. Many critics suggest that the main conflict in *To the Lighthouse* is that between human existence and chaos. Susan Gorsky, for example, emphasizes the novel's concern with existence as it proceeds with and without human presence; she concludes: "the chaos of life can be tentatively organized by human intervention. Without people there is no need to order time and no way to measure it" (105). The majority of critics position Mrs. Ramsay as the main agent of coherence against the pressure of chaos–among them A.D. Moody, who remarks that "Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe triumph over the chaos of experience" (29). Others, like Jean Alexander, suggest that Mrs. Ramsay's victory over chaos is not complete: "Chaos is mastered, but sterility presents itself" (123).

6. Thus what Susan Gorsky calls the "recognition of multiplicity" (107) seems to have been denied the mother figure, and more often associated with the paternal influence; Thomas Caramagno observes: "Whereas mothers provide a reassuring sense of oneness . . . fathers supply a reassuring sense of individuality" (246). And Nancy Grace Bazin similarly defines "the masculine ('knowing in terms of apartness') and the feminine ('knowing in terms of togetherness')" (147). The mother is assigned to unity and crippled in multiplicity mainly because she is expected to be the agent of perfection, and perfection is a singular concept–there is only one of it. A.C. Hoffman's view is representative of the general critical attitude, as he remarks that "she [Mrs. Ramsay] seeks perfection and permanence" (696). Thus, unity and not multiplicity, sameness rather than difference is the main attribute traditionally associated with the mother in *To the Lighthouse*. Jean O.Love sums it up in the vision of Mrs. Ramsay as "effecting unity and order within her household, both magically and as the natural mother of the family" (171).

7. Glenn Pedersen would disagree; he sees Mrs. Ramsay as egotistical in "her usurpation of the lighthouse" (567). This means that as long as she is alive, she will not let the children go to the lighthouse: "the Ramsay weather is never fine as long as she lives, fundamentally because Mrs. Ramsay refuses to subordinate her individuality to community" (556). But there may be another, more plausible reason for it: while she is alive, the children do not visit the lighthouse because they do not need the real thing. Instead, they have the imaginary vision Mrs. Ramsay provides, the fantasy of going to the lighthouse. In Part III, however, she is gone and the real thing will have to suffice.

8. "Time Passes" is usually seen as an illustration of chaos; thus Nancy Topping Bazin describes it as "chaos not order, facts not visions" (137), and Jean O. Love argues that in this section "[t]here is dialectical opposition between the human action and the natural forces of destruction" (193). The destruction is the result of the death of the mother; as Jane Marcus explains, "'Time Passes' . . . is a lament for the dead mother" (6). Some critics, however, emphasize the necessity of the destructive nature, rather than its presence. Kathleen McCluskey, for example, remarks that "'Time Passes' is the line down the middle [of Lily's picture]" (97), which suggests that the chaos and death inhabiting Part II are indeed necessary for the completion of human experience, just as the line is needed for the completion of the picture. Norman Friedman seems to go even further in this direction in saying that Part II "dramatizes not the victory of natural chaos over human order but rather the reverse: the

forces of destruction are defeated by man's power and will to live" (544).

9. In this time of erasure of the subject, the process of reflection is reversed (as Makiko Minow-Pinkney puts it, "Evolution runs in reverse" [100]): rather than a subject seeing its reflection in the world, here we have the world seeing *its* reflection in the subject. As Mark Hussey points out,"[in 'Time Passes'] the minds of men are *mirrors* in which clouds and shadows form" (112), so that the subjective is only passively present, doing nothing more than reflecting the objects around it.

10. The attributes of accuracy (e.g. his statement that the weather will not be fine) and linearity (his alphabet analogy) accompany almost all critical accounts of Mr. Ramsay. Thus, for example, for Jean Alexander "[t]he sterility of Mr. Ramsay's vision is established as truth from the beginning"(110), and Alice van Buren Kelley argues that "[f]or him, truth is factual truth" (115). Ralph Freedman similarly observes that "for Mr. Ramsay, the lighthouse has an external reality" (587), and T.E. Apter agrees: "For Mr. Ramsay . . . the lighthouse stands for the stripping away of illusion and the revelation of veritable truth" (*Study* 100).

11. Cf. Clare Hauson: "It is the death of the mother which brings about this crisis of representation, destroying any sure sense of connection between word and world, or signifier and signified. So this 'matricidal' central section of the novel suggests that it is the problematic of access to a female voice" (81). Hauson goes on to suggest that, without the necessary differentiation between subject and object, "'Time Passes' moves toward the unstable discourse of madness" (81). It becomes clear, therefore, how the mother figure in *To the Lighthouse* stands for difference rather than unity.

12. As Maria DiBattista observes, in *To the Lighthouse* Woolf "is less interested in the mother as precursor than in the mother as Muse" (65).

13. See Norman Friedman for more on the role of "duality" and "double vision" (545) in *To the Lighthouse*.

14. The function of repetition is twofold. On the one hand, it is necessary to produce patterns: as Joan Lidoff points out, "[t]he process which first creates meaning in both love and language is repetition. In the repetitive process of mother-infant mirroring the infant's sense of self is formed" (687). On the other hand, we see that the aim of repetition is not accuracy of reproduction, and the function of the mother is to prevent the infant from complete identification with herself. The true growth of the child would be the one where it is weaned from such identity and established difference from the mother, which is the gift of the mother.

15. Even though most critics would see Mrs. Ramsay as the agent of propagation (Maria DiBattista, for example, argues that "her [Mrs. Ramsay's] solution–to perpetuate childhood–is, after all, a regressive form of desire" [80]), it seems clear that Mr. Ramsay, not Mrs. Ramsay, is associated with nature and its blind self-replication.

16. It is in this sense that Pamela Transue's view of Mrs. Ramsay as "accepting the role of a mirror of men" (88) seems logical.

17. As Jean Alexander tells us, Mrs. Ramsay "is fundamentally at enmity with nature" (106).

18. This negation points to yet another way in which the mother figure here is aligned with the secondary and artificial, rather than the primary and natural; Maria DiBattista reminds us: "As Freud observes, the word 'no' does not exist in dreams" (107). Dreams, which lack conscious control, are narcissistic and primary; Mrs. Ramsay's resistence to nature is therefore a matter of secondary, artistic transformation of nature. I cannot agree here with Maria DiBattista and her criticism of Mrs. Ramsay: "The presumption of Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts is in arrogating a power that properly resides in untransformed Nature–reproduction" (79).

19. Joan Lidoff also points out that "it is life who is her [Mrs. Ramsay's] adversary" (686); the present argument, however, will not go as far as suggesting that "Mrs. Ramsay's alliance is with death" (686), as Lidoff does.

20. Maria DiBattista–"The imperial feminine will deems itself superior to all laws of nature" (81).

21. Joan Lidoff speaks of a fusion rooted in "the early symbolic relation with the mother" (681), which the characters in *To the Lighthouse*, and especially Lily Briscoe, are trying to recover. Lidoff goes on to remark that "Woolf's elegy never entirely gives up on the original illusion of union, and therefore cannot quite transform it" (686). The need, as Nancy Grace Bazin, puts it "to create artistic substitutes for the secure childhood world" (127) is actually fulfilled according to some critics, such as Thomas Caramagno ("An infantile retreat into perfect mothering is not needed here" [253] and "The longing for mothering, for an idyllic past . . . is replaced by adult self-sufficiency" [245]), and Jean O. Love ("The prototypical mother is no longer needed" [194]), as well as Madeline Moore, who emphasizes the need to get over the "fantasy of a centering mother" (64).

22. For an Oedipal analysis of *To the Lighthouse*, see Maria DiBattista, *Virginia Woolf's Major Novels: The Fables of Anon*, pp. 69-74.

23. Thus Rachel Bowlby argues that "Mr. Ramsay's relation to his wife suggests the man's wish to return to the position of the child in relation to a woman like his mother" (68).

24. The tension between art and life seems to create certain critical disagreements, when superimposed on the tension between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe. Ruby Cohn's argument is especially interesting here: "Life is larger than art; thus, Mrs. Ramsay, and not Lily Briscoe, is the main character of the novel" (65). In other words, she equates Mrs. Ramsay with the natural life force, her involvement with art being "reduced to craft: knitting, cutting out pictures from magazines" (68), while Lily remains the sole bearer of the creative impulse, which is secondary and has been superceded by "the real thing"--"Art has led to life" (72).

Cohn's own evidence, however, seems to contradict her claim. She argues that, "[u]nlike the tourist painters who set their easels facing the bay, so as to paint the evanescent lighthouse, Lily turns her gaze on house and hedge, mother and child" (67); but if the lighthouse is conspicuously man-made (the only artificial part of the sea), and mother and child are conspicuously, easily a natural configuration, then Lily is looking toward life, while Mrs. Ramsay herself, looking at the lighthouse, is looking toward art. Thus, we can say that even though Mrs. Ramsay's absence is more important than Lily's presence, it is because art has superceded life, not vice versa.

Avron Fleishman remarks that "[t]he painter's vision is completed when it functions both optically and imaginatively, when it records both what is seen and what cannot be seen" (133). And it seems that Mrs. Ramsay's absence, the fact that she can be "unseen" and still function artistically, gives her an advantage over Lily's need to be present, in Part III, in order to paint.

25. Some critics would disagree–rather than single (and singular), they would describe Lily as noncommittal and androgynous. Shirley Panken, for example, sees Lily as "[s]exually undefined" (146). For more on androgyny in *To the Lighthouse*, see Nancy Topping Bazin, *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision*, pp. 45-46, and Herbert Marder, *Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf*, esp. "The Androgynous Mind," pp. 105-52. See also Carolyn Heilbrun, "The Androgynous Vision in To the Lighthouse" [*Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Criticism*. Ed. Thomas S. W. Lewis. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975. 73-78].

26. Many critics have emphasized Mrs. Ramsay's distortion of the facts. Delia Donahue tells us that "her respect for pure facts is vague" (115), and James Hafley speaks of "[h]er disregard of factual truth. . . . [S]he can distort or deny it [truth] without compunction" (83). Jean O. Love is also interested in how "Mrs. Ramsay uses her wish-magic to manipulate" (166). For Herbert Marder, Mrs. Ramsay's disregard for truth is a necessity: "To go on living, a certain amount of self-delusion is necessary, and to achieve this, a certain amount of tampering with the facts may be essential" (84), and Makiko Minow-Pinkney describes her "as an artist whose raw materials are emotions, [and she] distorts and exaggerates as necessary according to the human context of her discourse" (86). Finally, A.C. Hoffman describes her "as creative force manipulating 'fact'" (694), although he assigns the true creation to Lily: "As artist she can *create* 'fact'" (693). [italics mine]

27. So much so that it makes John Batchelor argue that Mrs. Ramsay "has no secure system of values" (99).

28. Critics have emphasized the fact that she does not perceive the world correctly, since, as Glenn Pedersen points out, "Mrs. Ramsay is repeatedly described as being short-sighted; she often sees in error, or not at all" (558). It is possible to see this fact as related to nature, as Michael Rosenthal does: "She is short-sighted in the way any natural force can be thought to be short-sighted" (105). Rather than identifying Mrs. Ramsay with nature, however, the evidence seems to show that her natural capacities (such as eyesight) are deficient, and that

she differentiates herself from nature. Here I have to agree with Ralph Freedman in his observation that Mrs. Ramsay is "the creative viewer, constantly straining in her near-sightedness to discern or reshape the forms she perceives" (591). Jean O. Love adds that both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are "capable of exceeding [their] body limits" (104), surpassing the natural given.

29. Unlike Karen Kaivola, who argues that "[Mrs. Ramsay's] reproductive capacity is translated into social significance" (31), we can say that her social acts are given the primacy of natural reproduction. The mother figure herself seeks to privilege and emphasize the human intervention in nature. Howard Harper, for example, points out that *To the Lighthouse* begins "with the mother's promise to her son" (137), which shows a verbal, rather than a physical contact between mother and son, and thus reverses many of the traditional assumptions about motherhood.

CHAPTER 4:

ORLANDO--THE SMUGGLED MOTHERHOOD

Critics agree that *Orlando* is unique[1] among the novels of Virginia Woolf in its tendency towards the fantastic instead of the realistic, its ironic[2] treatment of many topics (poetry, philosophy, history, biography), and its confessional value for Woolf herself, as she not only dedicates the novel to Vita Sackville-West, but also constructs the character of Orlando so that it is recognizably based on Vita's life. In terms of its treatment of motherhood, the novel also occupies a unique place among Woolf's works. It combines and expands on some of the earlier issues surrounding the mother figure in *The Voyage Out*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *To the Lighthouse*, but at the same time it adds something more to the role of the mother.

At first glance, motherhood does not appear to be very explicit in *Orlando*. In fact, it is easy to notice that even Orlando's own act of becoming a mother is narratively undermined,[3] surrounded by profuse metaphors, and then submerged and forgotten, as Orlando returns to contemplating the philosophical questions which concern her from the beginning of the novel. Orlando becomes a mother as if by chance, absent-mindedly, and motherhood appears to be merely one of her many incarnations, hardly the most important one, since it does not occupy any place in her thoughts at all. However, as Makiko Minow-Pinkney points out, Orlando's is "the only childbirth in all Woolf's novels" (142), which

alone is sufficient to give it some importance in the exploration of the mother figure. But in addition to that, *Orlando* offers a unique perspective on human subjectivity, which is also a new perspective on the possibilities of motherhood. On closer inspection we can see that, even though the whole book is uncharacteristically dedicated to describing the life of a single person, there is a powerful undercurrent to it, which opens a wide vista of transcendental possibilities.[4] This vista is the contribution of the novel to formulating the complex function of the unifying motherhood. As Orlando transcends space and time, the problems of ancestry, inheritance, birth, death, and nature become her central concerns, and these are all issues which are properly ascribed to the realm of the maternal. Here, however, the absence of an interchange between a mother figure and her descendants results from the fact that, for the first time, as Susan Gorsky points out, "here's a character who *is* his ancestors" (82). For the first time, it is not a question of a mother and a child, but of Orlando and . . . Orlando. All the inter-generational problems, including the problem of time[5], become Orlando's personal problems, and at the same time, motherhood does not seem to be associated with a specific person, to be personified in alternating female presences. Here, all of these timeless questions of nature, life, and death, which are beyond the grasp of consciousness for any other mother figure of Woolf's creation, even for Mrs. Ramsay herself, seem to converge upon Orlando's character, the person who, literally and therefore fantastically, impossibly, embodies all of these transcendental features of motherhood and makes them, for the first time, tangible and ordinary.

The impetus with which this transference of transcendental qualities to an ordinary, physically possible life is accomplished necessitates also the tone and style of the book,

which cannot pretend to offer a realistic treatment of the all-encompassing, invisible, universal side of motherhood which is not consciously accessible to anyone, not even to the individual mother figure of Woolf's earlier novels, without cheating a little. By definition, motherhood is something which involves more than the mother herself–she needs to be a mother *of* somebody or something. In this sense, the mother figure usually represents only the tip of the iceberg, as she can be conscious only of her own experience, but her relation to the rest of what constitutes motherhood is by necessity unconscious and trans-subjective. Orlando, therefore, emerges as the uniquely positioned mother figure who can have conscious access to all of the maternal function, including its procreative investment in the distant future.

Orlando is first associated with, or rather set in opposition to, the mother figure in the beginning of the novel in the form of the Queen of England. While both Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay have taken on and re-appropriated, in a favorable way, the mythology of a Goddess or a Queen, with all her magnificence and royal bearing, this mythology receives an ironic thrust and turns into a sort of parody of this aspect of the mother figure in Orlando. The status of the Queen is formally considered to have been originally conferred upon her, as much as she is simply an undistinguished mortal human being sitting on a throne, by the higher power of God. Thus, the connection between the royal attributes of this half-human, half-divine person and her claim to the immortality of a Goddess is easily established. In Orlando, however, the Queen loses all of her transcendental connections to the higher level of existence, the level which can be interchangeably conceived of either as a maternal, or as a divine influence. Instead, she becomes explicitly associated with the most easily imaginable

qualities that are antagonistic to both the divine and the maternal essence--with coldness, old age, death, mortality. We see her "sitting bolt upright in her stiff brocades by the fire which, however high they piled it, never kept her warm" (25). Her hand is "a nervous, crabbed, sickly hand . . . attached to an old body" (21-22), a description which considerably diminishes any prospects for that body to survive, immune to the passage of time. The emphasis on the posture of the Queen, whose body "held itself very upright" (22), only adds to her image of fragility by emphasizing her need to stand up and fight the antagonistic forces of nature on her own, without the help of any mythic, transcendental allies. Thus there is some discrepancy between the Queen's status as the divine representative on earth, and her descriptions which exclusively focus on the things she can call her "own"--body, hand, dress, all of them devoid of any ulterior significance.[6]

This discrepancy between the mythic and the physical, as well as the inordinate threat of mortality which is so untypical for a queen, are further driven home by the literal threat of death which lurks everywhere around the Queen. Time, out of her control, will be to blame if she falls short of fulfilling her sovereign mission on earth: "For she was growing old and worn and bent *before her time*. The sound of cannon was always in her ears. She saw always the glistening poison drop and the long stiletto. As she sat at table she listened; she heard the guns in the Channel; she dreaded--was that a curse, was that a whisper?" (23) [italics mine]. (Similarly, later in the novel we see Orlando making the timely decision to leave the gypsies, precisely when "the young men had plotted her death" (146), but, due to her extraordinary transcendental reserves which set her free from any society, she avoids the vulnerability that would come with being inextricably attached to the gypsies' time and

place.) Thus the initially incredulous and awe-inspiring reference to "the great Queen herself" (21) acquires new connotations, as the otherwise innocuous word "herself" shifts the focus from what the Queen stands for to the vulnerability of the Queen's own person, stripped of extraneous, metaphorical layers of meaning.

Orlando is from the start at odds with this first, flawed mother figure. Even though Orlando becomes the Queen's favorite, he always exists in a one-sided relation to her, a relation marked by antithesis, discrepancy, delay. Thus, for example, he is "late" (20) for the reception of the Queen. On another occasion, when she decides to honor him with the gift of a house, he remains unaware of this transaction: "Orlando slept all night in ignorance. He had been kissed by a queen without knowing it" (23). As with everything else, Orlando's side of the relationship is absent-minded, oblivious, tangential. Despite that, he is considered, by the Queen herself, to be her representative of life against death: "Lands were given him, houses assigned him. He was to be the son of her old age; the limb of her infirmity; the oak tree on which she leant her degradation" (25). The Queen's envisioned reciprocity in, essentially, buying Orlando's presence, is also confirmed by the fact that when she looks in the mirror, she sees Orlando (25-26). In other words, from the point of view of the Queen, the reflection is reciprocal, even though from the point of view of Orlando this is not the case. This comes to show that Orlando contains the Queen (in addition to himself, he is *also* her reflection), whereas she does not contain Orlando. Thus we see that Orlando transcends and incorporates the first mother figure he encounters in his life.

Just as the Queen herself exists in a thwarted relationship with the higher powers which she has to represent, so does Orlando exist in a similarly incomplete relationship to

her, whom he has to represent--the symbolical connections break down, and the physical ones remain. Her "son" does not exist in a symbolically fruitful relation to her--ironically, his love affair, which the Queen has the misfortune to observe in the mirror, in fact precipitates the Queen's death (26), so that the royal "motherhood" is symbolically set in opposition to love itself. Furthermore, the Queen's symbolical stature becomes increasingly insignificant as we see a long series of queens and kings reign interchangeably during the lifetime of Orlando, whereas it should be the sovereign property of the Queen to exist in the singular--to be only one and irreplaceable. Paradoxically, then, Orlando's life takes on the mythological dimensions of invulnerability and aloofness from life which the Queen figure has shed to become herself mortal, fragile, human. Thus, from the beginning, there is a reversal--the extraordinary, the distantly heroic, the mythical is robbed of its power and this power is conferred, instead, on the ordinary, the accessible, the everyday life of Orlando.

Orlando's association with mortality is not only secondary, expressed through the palpable decay of the mother-figure in the form of the Queen, but can also be traced in his or her own person. Orlando himself seems to be extraordinarily attuned to images of "ruin and death" (55) and attracted to melancholic sights. Even as a young boy, he feels that he is "in love with death" (15); later in the novel this emotion is re-introduced as if it is new: "Orlando now took a strange delight in thoughts of death and decay" (68), and this emotion is most often nourished by the presence of nature. The characteristic regressiveness of melancholy becomes apparent in Orlando's melancholic "moods" (44; also 71), which seem to be precipitated by observations of the repetition of nature. Since, according to Freud's definition in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, melancholy is one of the so-called

"narcissistic disorders" (427), it is inimical to change and consistent with repetition. As the ego becomes excessively concerned with itself, rather than with external objects, in the condition of melancholy this strategy is chosen precisely in order to avoid change, to avoid facing the reality of the disappearance of the loved object, and to preserve things the way they are. In "Mourning and Melancholia" Freud speaks of "an identification of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss" (*The Freud Reader* 586). In other words, as the ego clings to its affection for a no longer existent object, the affection is transferred on to the ego itself (the same happens in the phenomenon of "narcissistic identification" [*ILP* 427]), and the ego becomes objectified in the process. The "ego-loss" Freud speaks about can be defined here as the loss of mutability of the ego and its petrification into a rigid, unchangeable entity. It can also be said that the condition of melancholy would favor the single entity of the self (a characteristically narcissistic quality), rather than a plurality of objects or selves.

In this respect, it would seem that Orlando is a figure of incorrigible, irreducible plurality of selves and thus his/her personality would appear to be undeniably anti-narcissistic: "She had, it seems, no difficulty in sustaining the different parts, for her sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive" (211). However, the emphasis in the novel always falls on the extent to which Orlando, despite his or her many transformations, remains the same person: "Yet through all these changes she had remained . . . fundamentally the same. She had the same brooding

meditative temper, the same love of animals and nature, the same passion for the country and the seasons" (226). In fact, only such insistence on the immutability of the character could justify preserving the name "Orlando" throughout the book. In a way, the singular essence of Orlando is strengthened by his/her ability to retain something unalienably the same in the face of unceasing multiplicity of gender, age, time, fashion. Thus at the crucial moment when Orlando switches his gender[7], his/her sameness and identity[8] has to be re-emphasized: "Orlando had become a woman--there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity" (133). Similarly, when Orlando comes back to her old house after she has changed her gender, "No one showed an instant's suspicion that Orlando was not the Orlando they had known" (163).

This uniformity of self is not only physically carried out during Orlando's indeterminate life-span, but is also symbolically viable throughout the novel. The early symbol of the oak tree[9], the symbol of Orlando himself, testifies to Orlando's desire to cling to one stable thing, "beneath all this summer transiency, to feel the earth's spine beneath him; for such he took the hard root of the oak tree to be" (18). As Jean Alexander points out, "[t]he fundamental security of Orlando is in adherence to the order of nature" (134).[10] Maria DiBattista agrees: "immortal he and she [Orlando] may be, but unnatural she is not. In fact, Orlando's attachment to Nature . . . remains constant throughout her transformations" (127). It is significant that Orlando's manuscript "The Oak Tree" is "the only *mono*syllabic title among the lot" (74) [italics mine], which puts an emphasis on the singularity, rather than plurality, of what Orlando finds important--and, needless to say, this is the single surviving

manuscript. Even though Orlando's metaphors for this stability, this single self[11] change and grow, the essence he cannot articulate[12] remains the same underneath: "it was anything indeed, so long as it was hard, for he felt the need for something which he could attach his floating heart to" (19). But such stability is impossible, since Orlando cannot become one thing. As Pamela Caughie observes, "Orlando's identity, like her poems, is a palimpsest" (485). In other words, Orlando, like the manuscript, endures numerous revisions, and none of them converge to form a single identity.[13] Orlando cannot own himself completely, and that is the evidence that he/she is not completely natural, avoiding the self-identity of the natural process.

Thus his disappointment in his relationship with Sasha, for example, stems from the impossibility of "making her irrevocably and indissolubly his own" (48), whereas she is like "a wandering flame" (45), free and mutable, inconstant and unrepeatable. Sasha is a thing Orlando cannot control, or even understand.[14] She embodies, in a trans-subjective way, outside of Orlando himself, Orlando's own inability to be known, his ability to be "other" to himself. Thus even though Orlando is looking, in his experience with love, for somebody as stable and eternal, according to human standards, as himself, and so, in a sense, he seems to be narcissistically looking to find his own image in the object of his love, what he encounters is foreign and irreducible. As Gillian Beer observes, "[t]he self is always insufficient" (61). The narcissistic mind's project is to look for more of the self, rather than to mother another self. In this sense, Orlando does attempt narcissism but fails because of his failure to possess the other.

In fact, Orlando cannot really own anything[15], retain anything long enough. Even

his/her apparently eternal ancestral house is partly lost to time towards the end of the novel: "The house was no longer hers entirely, she sighed. It belonged to time now; to history; was past the touch and control of the living" (304).[16] The fact that Orlando's ownership is never completely achieved shows that he/she has a different, narcissistic notion of ownership, which cannot be realized in the transient world in which Orlando, by necessity, exists. The desire to own something is egocentric in the extreme, because in the case of Orlando it would mean fishing the object or person in question out of their own time and place and attaching them to the non-committal Orlando himself or herself.[17] The extent to which Orlando is independent of any specific location or age is simultaneously the extent to which he or she is not alive at this point of space and time. Consequently, the completeness of Orlando's love would mean death to anyone who is properly dependent on the particularity of calendars or geography.

Orlando's notable description as "incandescent" (52), as "burning with his own radiance, from a lamp lit within" (52), seeks to emphasize his solitary independence from any other source of life and warmth, his self-sufficiency and timelessness. Thus Orlando's narcissistic self is also what Orlando herself defines as her "key self" when we see her,

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

Orlando was certainly seeking this self. (295-96)

That she has finally become, by the end of the novel, "a single self, a real self" (299), "one and entire" (305), may be regarded as a victory in one way and as a defeat in another, namely, in that the narcissistic closure of singularity has enveloped Orlando, with the result of absolute self-sufficiency, irreversible regression back to an invisible single point without further fantastic dimensions.[18] Thus each acquired dimension, each transformation of the self tailored to the specific time period or social milieu in which Orlando finds herself, does not add to but subtracts from this core, this completeness, by adulterating what should be one and irreplaceable with the secondary ingredients of mutability and multiplication. That is why, instead of acquiring and accumulating selves throughout the ages, Orlando seems rather to shake them off, one by one, until she arrives at the present time and a definite self. Her self, in fact, seems to diverge from her art–while the self shrinks over time, the palimpsest of "The Oak Tree" expands, collecting its revisions.

Thus art emerges as alien to narcissism in general. While the ego insists on self-identity, in literature, as Orlando observes, "Everything, in fact, was something else" (138). Orlando in fact constantly poses the question of whether beauty is "in things themselves, or only in herself" (139), whether nature is meaningful by itself, and so on. Her desire to write is a temporary recognition of the ability of things to become "other," to enter multiple transformations and to exist in an anti-narcissistic space. Thus when Orlando is among the gypsies, longing for pen and paper ("Oh! if only I could write!" [140]), she seems to the people around her to be the embodiment of multiplicity and ambiguity itself: "here is someone who doubts; . . . here is someone who does not do the thing for the sake of doing;

nor looks for looking's sake; here is someone who believes neither in sheep-skin nor basket; but sees (here they looked apprehensively about the tent) something else" (141). These people are offended at the fact that Orlando cannot accept their time and place as all there is, their objects and tools as solid truths, but has to approach them negatively as what they are not.

Orlando's moments of disillusionment with literature, however, belie an inner conviction that each thing has an unalienable self-identity whose surface literature can scarcely touch. Thus, when Orlando is still a boy trying his hand at writing poems, the process of literary composition is irreparably upset by his looking "at the thing itself" (16) and recognizing its primacy, its superiority, its inimitable presence which cannot be displaced or replaced by symbols: "After that, of course, he could write no more. Green in nature is one thing, green in literature another. Nature and letters seem to have a natural antipathy; bring them together and they tear each other to pieces" (16). While the manuscript of "The Oak Tree" is "composed with a regard to truth, to nature" (267), the qualification "with a regard to" automatically inserts a delay, a gap between the thing itself, as it truthfully exists in nature, and its secondary representation in symbols.

Ultimately, Orlando chooses the reality of nature over its symbols, and Orlando and his/her art take different paths. Poetry itself becomes fragile and vulnerable to time. The words of Orlando's original manuscript rapidly disappear to be replaced by new ones ("he scratched out as many lines as he wrote in" [108]), until the poem is completed, at which point it is released into the world, the particular age, where it assumes the new, fashionable look dictated by the times: it appears in its contemporary incarnation as "a little square book

bound in red cloth" (309). As Maria DiBattista points out, "the imaginary is inducted, through print and through the artifact of the book itself, into material reality" (114). At this moment, "The Oak Tree" ceases to have any function in Orlando's life.[19] The book's publication leaves Orlando feeling not fulfillment but emptiness: "Now that the poem was gone . . . she felt a bare place in her breast where she had been used to carry it" (268-69). The transferring of the words from their secret place "in the bosom of her dress" (268) into the open, public, mutable world, is not Orlando's own realization in the world, but the desire of the poem to part from its unnatural association with Orlando, who loves nature and the purity of things as they are in themselves. The "fervent desire of the poem itself" (268) to be differentiated from Orlando's bosom, is a desire to be, in a sense, born into the world. As Orlando always exists in some fundamental opposition to the world around her[20], the poem conflicts with Orlando's own devotion to nature and distaste for people as such. Orlando is forced to abandon her solitude because her poem requires involvement with people: "It wanted to be read. It must be read. It would die in her bosom if it were not read.[21] For the first time in her life she turned with violence against nature. . . . Human beings had become necessary" (259-60).

The publication of the manuscript "The Oak Tree" is a process essentially similar, and metaphorically identical, to giving birth--the words of the poem have been conceived by Orlando, while their plunging into the world necessarily means alienation from Orlando herself. This ambivalent status of the manuscript mirrors exactly the differentiation of birth. Orlando thinks of the poem as "a being, who, though not herself, yet entirely depended on her" (260). The birth imagery, however, is undermined, as Orlando does not seem to take

part in the publication of the poem. The interaction that takes place does not involve Orlando herself--it is an interaction between the age and the poem, as the age, in the form of Nick Greene, demands the poem, and the poem wants, Orlando feels, to be released into the world (268), into time, to be realized, to stop existing only as a potential, which is, to a large extent, what Orlando herself has been doing all her life. In the constant battle between the immutable Orlando and the "spirit of the age," the transient age he or she is passing through, the manuscript is finally lost to the enemy, the words are ultimately superseded by Orlando's own unperturbed physical existence, which continues unattached to the conventions of the time. Orlando, forever seeking the exact word in poetry while accepting its impossibility, always prefers the "real" thing, the real self, the singularity of experience.

In Orlando's rejection of the symbolic she constantly substitutes the symbolic or metaphoric quality (immortality as only metaphorically possible through the words of poetry; the mother as only metaphorically present in her children), with its physically realized counterpart. Instead of entrusting her poem or her child with the symbolical continuation of her own life, Orlando appropriates their functions as well, in what can be said to be a clearly narcissistic unwillingness to let oneself be represented by something not oneself, and willingness to substitute oneself for everything else, to assume the functions of other people or objects. Both of these are deeply antagonistic to the definitive qualities of motherhood as such, to the extent to which the mother figure can practice both physical and symbolic self-sacrifice. On the contrary, Orlando is looking for the ultimate purification of his/her self, and his/her conglomeration of genders comes to show that Orlando, unlike the mother figure, contains, in herself, everything of any importance and does not need to delegate her existence

to another being. Since motherhood is fundamentally opposed to "the thing in itself" and requires transformations deeper than Orlando's, transformations which involve the abandonment of the master self and its dissolution into the multiple generations that will follow it, Orlando comes to exist in an unspoken conflict with the mother figure, foreshadowed by her initial conflict with the Queen, to the extent to which this mother figure contains the limitations and the need for self-sacrifice of an individual human being. Orlando's universal, all-encompassing, unisex[22] being from which nothing is excluded does not leave room either for things (words, symbols), or for people who can stand for Orlando.

Thus all moments of self-definition of Orlando are related to metaphors of nakedness, and, by implication, to a re-iteration of Orlando's singularity of self. Orlando's solitude as a young man and his abstraction from his surroundings isolate him into a single, naked being devoid of attachments:

> Orlando, to whom fortune had given every gift--plate, linen, houses, men-servants, carpets, beds in profusion--had only to open a book for the whole vast accumulation to turn to mist. The nine acres of stone which were his house vanished; one hundred and fifty indoor servants disappeared; his eighty riding horses became invisible. . . . So it was, and Orlando would sit by himself, reading, a naked man. (71-72)

The main symbol of stability and singularity in Orlando's life, the oak tree, unlike its mutable poetic counterpart, remains the true unchanged and reliable embodiment of nature, which becomes another image associated with nakedness (93). The self-sufficiency of Orlando becomes apparent when he assigns himself to be the sole authority over his own poetry:

"Memory ducked her effigy of Nick Greene out of sight, and substituted for it--nothing whatever" (99-100). The motif of nakedness continues in the crucial scene of Orlando's transformation into a woman. In the process, as the metaphorical figures of Purity, Chastity, and Modesty are banished by Truth from the room in which Orlando lies asleep, all manner of cover-ups, qualifications, excuses and nuances are also banished from the frank statement of Orlando's identity, to reveal "the thing itself":

> one terrific blast:--
>
> 'The Truth!'
>
> at which Orlando woke.
>
> He stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! Truth! we have no choice left but confess--he was a woman. (132)

Later in the novel there is another reference to the nakedness of Orlando at this moment, and to the uselessness of looking for metaphors or symbols, or anything that might negate the truth by secondary representation: "Having thrown their white garment at the naked Orlando and seen it fall short by several inches, these ladies [Purity, Chastity, and Modesty] had given up all intercourse with her this many years" (278). Thus Orlando remains immune to the fluctuations of time or custom, or to the different names ("man," "woman") which might be used to explain what Orlando is, purely, undeniably, but always fall short by covering up the essence under the protection of a shape, a definition, a name. And if everything around Orlando changes, she remains the same; precisely because her real self has always been naked, she does not have to change the "garments" she did not agree to wear in the first

place: "habits [read: clothes] that had seemed durable as stone, went down like shadows . . . and left a *naked* sky and fresh stars twinkling in it" (168) [italics mine].

In a way, Orlando is immune to the passage of centuries because she does not exist in them. With respect to any given epoch, she is invisible, anonymous[23], "legally unknown" (170), "incognito or incognita, as the case might turn out to be" (161). Nakedness is suspiciously close to nothingness, and the aloofness of Orlando's existence which fails to fit into the existence of everybody else, brings her closer to death and sleep than to life itself. Thus Orlando rhapsodizes about the infinite superiority of "obscurity" over any name which is thrown in society to seek fame:

> obscurity wraps about a man like a mist; obscurity is dark, ample, and free; obscurity lets the mind take its way unimpeded. Over the obscure man is poured the merciful suffusion of darkness. None knows where he goes or comes. He may seek the truth and speak it; he alone is free; he alone is truthful; he alone is at peace. And so he [Orlando] sank into a quiet mood, under the oak tree, the hardness of whose roots, exposed above the ground, seemed to him rather comfortable than otherwise. (100)

The self-justification and self-verification of "the only truthful man" once again confirms Orlando's narcissistic tendencies, as he is unwilling to invest himself in any way into the doings and customs of the world around him. Instead, he prefers the stability of the oak tree with which he feels "comfortable" and which can validate his solitary, self-contained, and self-searching ambition.

Pure actualization, participation in the world would be deadly, and Orlando's

commitment to her own realization is never complete--there is always something withheld, something reserved, un-shared, unspoken, private, which does not enter the public sphere of any age--this is the thing which remains unchanged. This unidentified, unspoken part of her undoubtedly has something to do with nature itself. Not only has Orlando been in love with nature all her life, but her commitment to people, the particular and interchangeable people of any age, has always been circumscribed by her devotion to the stability of nature. The gypsies, for example, shun Orlando because of her devotion to nature, which is an abstract and invisible nature and not the one which changes every second. Similarly, Orlando proclaims herself "nature's bride" (237) before and above her actual but secondary marriage to Shelmerdine. People themselves, in Orlando's eyes, have assumed some importance only if they have seemed to her to contain the secrets of nature or, in short, to be poets. Poets, in turn, whose physical appearance always seems somehow to be in disappointing discrepancy with the purity of their calling, are made by their greatness "invisible" (189) in the eyes of Orlando, so that, through them, she can get to the crystallized "truth" in the mythical, exaggerated sense of the word, which Orlando finds insufficiently pure--the poetic truth never completely coincides with its actual counterpart in the real world. Again, Orlando relinquishes the abundance of poetic approximations and insists on the real thing uncolored by the accessories of words, which can only be found in nature and not in poetry. The "real" poetry is not poetic–as we have seen in Mrs. Ramsay, there is nothing "real" about poetry.

The motif of "nothing has been changed" (313) is in fact a confirmation of the barren, deadly side of Orlando, to the extent to which motherhood itself can be defined as the embodiment of change, since the self-negation of the mother figure is necessary in order to

make room for her descendants. In this sense, Orlando has assumed the narcissistic aspect of immutability which, for example, Mrs. Ramsay was trying to avoid. That is why the ending of *Orlando* sounds somewhat less than optimistic--she returns to the scene from the beginning of the novel, and in this regressive move invokes the Queen figure, together with her association with death, which here is made even more explicit: "All was lit as for the coming of a dead Queen" (313). And here, the lack of change points to a death-like, rigid state rather than simple survival and endurance; it is death that completes the statement: "Nothing has been changed. The dead Lord, my father, shall lead you in" (313).

Orlando's inability to make her own absolute, singular ideal coincide with its compromised representation in the world is metaphorically reflected in the ongoing conflict in her life between the significance of silver and that of gold. Throughout the novel, the cold glow of silver has been associated with Orlando's being single and unattached, while gold has acquired the more human connotations of marriage and commitment to a particular age. Needless to say, silver happens to be Orlando's favorite metal, "for which he had an inordinate passion" (104). Incidentally, the personified forces urging and proclaiming Orlando's naked awakening as a woman are also associated with silver, and silver with the singularity of truth, a truth which cannot be attached to any of its approximations: "Putting their silver trumpets to their lips they demand in *one* blast, Truth!" (129) [italics mine].

On the other hand, the imagery of gold comes to signify the attachment to marriage, to other people, and, by implication, to the epoch. Gold is also the sign of Orlando's social presence as an Ambassador Extraordinary to Constantinople, as opposed to his personal, interior experience: "he would receive visits from secretaries and other high officials

carrying, one after another, red boxes which yielded only to his own golden key" (117).[24] Thus gold comes to stand for ceremony, for the symbolic interaction between people, and for social value, which is a matter of convention. In his incarnation as an ambassador, Orlando conscientiously practices the pure symbolism of drinking coffee in Constantinople for a while:

> The ceremony ended at length with the smoking of a hookah and the drinking of a glass of coffee; but though the motions of smoking and drinking were gone through punctiliously there was neither tobacco in the pipe nor coffee in the glass, as, had either smoke or drink been real, the human frame would have sunk beneath the surfeit. (118-19)

This is a description of the overwhelmingly artificial social convention, which is antagonistic to the "thing in itself"; society can make anything appear and disappear, and none of its symbolic activities will be more truthful than anything else: "At one and the same time, therefore, society is everything and society is nothing. Society is the most powerful concoction in the world and society has no existence whatsoever" (185).

However, Orlando soon gets tired of the emptiness of such symbolism, which he has abhorred all his life, though never encountered with such obvious absurdity. In a way, the demands of symbolism are what alienates Orlando from the social milieu of any historical age and prevents him or her from immersing him/herself into what is only a meager and superficial substitute for the real thing.

It has to be remembered that gold is also the metal of preference for society as a whole, just as society as a whole prefers the state of marriage to the state of being single.

Marriage, for society at large, is understandably necessitated by the realization that one person is not sufficient and will remain incomplete if he or she does not establish a connection with another--a reasoning ultimately foreign to Orlando herself, who aspires to personal completeness and self-sufficiency. Not only in a metaphorical, but in a quite literal way Orlando in effect attempts to substitute for the synchronic connection between a man and a woman a diachronic version of her own self, so that in alternating between the genders she can imitate their connection in an auto-erotic, narcissistic re-enactment of the interaction between the sexes which does not actually require the simultaneous presence of both genders--Orlando can assume both and alternate between them.

It is true that Orlando shows some socially dictated need for marriage. At one point, she has haunting visions of gold when she looks at the wedding rings, real or counterfeit (marriage is, for Orlando, a compromise either way), of everybody around her, until this vision blots out everything else:

> 'What a world to be sure!' Its complexities amazed her. It now seemed to her that the whole world was ringed with gold. She went in to dinner. Wedding rings abounded. She went to church. Wedding rings everywhere. She drove out. Gold, or pinchbeck, thin, thick, plain, smooth, they glowed dully on every hand. Rings filled the jewellers' shops, not the flashing pastes and diamonds of Orlando's recollection, but simple bands without a stone in them. (230-31)

Orlando's main objection to the symbolism of gold is that it implies a devastating insufficiency in the person. The marriage rings lack what is most solid and reliable--a stone.

Significantly, precious stones have been associated, in Orlando's life, with coldness, singularity, narcissistic self-reliance. Thus, when Orlando announces his desire to make Sasha "his own," he calls her "his jewel" (48), which becomes the preferred metaphor for this moment of Orlando's life. Similarly, before she is taken by the marriage frenzy, Orlando is wearing "the vast solitary emerald which Queen Elizabeth had given her" (229). Under the influence of the times, Orlando begins to reflect on the insufficiency of this one ring, this one symbol: "No, that is not enough; . . . [W]hat did it mean, this hiatus, this strange oversight? till poor Orlando felt positively ashamed of the second finger of her left hand without in the least knowing why" (229). Thus the emerald comes to signify the rejection of fertility, the denouncing of marriage, the purity of the self, to which Orlando always returns from her short and unenlightening escapades in the real-time world. It is true that she marries Shelmerdine, and the ceremony, although acoustically submerged under "a clap of thunder" (250), is authentic enough[25], down to "the golden flash" (250), which is the only thing people see of the wedding ring.

In a curious way, however, Shelmerdine himself, as the alter ego of Orlando, is connected with the same self-sufficiency that Orlando seeks. From the very beginning, he is associated with the imagery of silver and nature: Orlando meets him by "a silver pool" (236), when she is at the height of proclaiming her passion for nature and her vehement rejection of mankind, and, instead of greeting him as an "other" human being, she responds to him by a statement of her own (social) non-existence, which comes to define their interaction: "I'm dead, sir!" (239). The fundamental negation underlying their relationship becomes apparent in the way their identities are interchangeable: "they knew each other so well that they could

say anything, which is tantamount to saying nothing" (241). Shelmerdine gives the impression of existing only when summoned by Orlando--he does not mind the frequent breaks she takes from human intercourse, which are akin to his own "melancholy" temperament (239), and she is free to leave him and then go back to him "[a]fter some hours of death" (248). The reciprocity of spirit which Orlando finds in him offers to her her mirror image, unaltered:

> 'You're a woman, Shel!' she cried.
>
> 'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried. (240)

In other words, what Orlando finds in Shelmerdine is not a complementary part of her existence as much as a confirmation of her independence from humanity. Their existence together is a mirror re-enactment of the self-identity of a single subject incapable of mothering another.

Furthermore, Orlando seems to reject even her own, quite accurate, reflection in Shelmerdine as secondary to her real self, so that her own identity seems more complete than anything she can arrive at through her relationship with him, which would only dissolve the immediacy with which she can access the various experiences of life and death on her own. While his multiple names (Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine) have the potential of signifying different states of mind, including death, at various moments of their marriage (247), Orlando's single name sums it all up without remainder. To articulate a new mood or shade of thought in terms of Shelmerdine's name, she needs the plurality of several signifiers which are mutually exclusive (even their shared "code" language requires some, however small, number of differentiated words), while her own name brings down to a minimum, to a

single, compact, synthesized whole everything in the world. Again, she is capable of assimilating all the variety of experience and concentrating it into one point; her own versatility, undiminished by the marriage, can provide for any contingency, as Orlando can become anyone and remains alone in her completeness. Thus Orlando sees marriage to be something "much against her natural temperament" (232), and she is capable of sharing her life with Shelmerdine only to the extent to which he is himself the embodiment of the impersonal and universal nature, as the circumstances of their encounter suggest. At the end of the novel, Orlando goes back to her solitary "silver" days, recreating a landscape and an image of "the great house with all its windows robed in silver" (313).

The symbolism of gold Orlando rejects acquires, in society, a mythology similar to that of poetry, as both strive to represent something they are infinitely removed from--the value and the meaning of life, respectively. Hence the ironic twist in the (here compromised) mythology of literature--usually, it is the words that acquire the power of immortality to succeed the body, while in Orlando's case the relation is reversed, as her physical body continues through the ages and her words are inextricably bound with the customs of a transient epoch. The importance of the body in the book has been noted by critics like Gillian Beer who points out that "*Orlando* has at the centre of its discourse the body" (58). Even though Orlando's body is perhaps the most improbable thing in the book, physically impossible as it is, it nevertheless provides a perspective on Orlando's maternal (or anti-maternal) function. Her body is aligned with nature and it resists poetic creation–there always is some tension between body and language. As Minow-Pinkney observes, "representation is only possible at the expense of the body–both one's own body . . . and the

body of the mother" (107). This is a sacrifice, however, that Orlando is not prepared to offer. Her true, silent self is the naked, bodily self which resists communication and expression.[26]

For all practical purposes, Orlando can be said to be immortal. Thus we see neither Orlando's birth, nor her death, and the narrative explains that the time lag, the "extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind" (95), is a matter of psychological tuning, so that, ideally, Orlando's life can be indefinitely prolonged. The more she stays away from the actual life of any given society by using her "absentmindedness" (186), the more she can preserve her own life. The inverted mythology of immortality, like the reversals in the social and literary symbolism, consists in a rejection of the secondary and symbolic in favor of the physically viable. Orlando, "who believed in no immortality" (302), obviously exists in a relationship with immortality which is not based on belief but on biological reality. If it is true that "[t]he less we see the more we believe" (195), then Orlando, for whom immortality is palpable and real, has no need to erect the mythology of belief around it. It seems, then, that immortality has no transcendental appeal to Orlando, not because he/she is incapable of it, but because it has become common and banal to him/her--it has lost the mystery of the inaccessible, it has been plucked out of the realm of the mysterious and mythological, of the symbolical and divine, only to enter the realm of the physically possible, of the ordinary; it has lost its luster and transcendental power, because Orlando him/herself transcends everything in his/her way and has no use for an ideology of transcendence superimposed on the actual thing. Thus Orlando cannot regard a transcendental entity as alien but as coincident to him/herself.

The impossibility of conceiving of anything more vast and all-encompassing, more

transcendental than Orlando herself is reflected in the casual ease with which Orlando walks in and out of death, in and out of life, without choosing one over the other. Just as death loses its power and becomes incorporated into the life-experience of Orlando ("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?" [65]), so is unconditional, pure life a state too rigid and exclusive for Orlando (who is the ultimate all-inclusive self) to embrace it forever. When she declares her resolution to find "Life and a lover" (177), this decisive proclamation of commitment does not fit with the rest of her experience; pure life does not fit with Orlando: "'Life and a lover'--a line which did not scan and made no sense with what went before" (177).

Yet, despite the discrepancy, Orlando can adjust to life in the same way she can adjust to death. Her power of adaptation does not leave anything outside of and unassimilated by her own self. Thus, even though Orlando's mind has been described as "a welter of opposites" (22), his/her body as a "mixture of brown earth and blue blood" (27), and there would seem to be not a single quality about Orlando which could stand the test of purity, yet Orlando as whole is the point of absolute synthesis of all possible selves, the point at which all variations are summarized and synchronized into one. Hence the importance of the dominant theme of the twelfth stroke of midnight (it announces, for example, Orlando's "doom" (58) when Sasha forever disappears from his life). Midnight appears as the image which contains the most definitive assertion of time, the convergent point of astronomical synchronization, not only between day and night but also between centuries: "With the twelfth stroke of midnight, the darkness was complete. A turbulent welter of cloud covered the city. All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion. The Eighteenth century was

over; the Nineteenth century had begun" (216).

As Orlando's power of synchronization does not respect the boundaries between epochs, or even between life and death themselves, it can also converge space and time at a single point. It is significant that Orlando's house contains "three hundred and sixty-five bedrooms" (104), which coincides exactly with the number of days in a year. This number, interestingly enough, becomes distorted in the course of the narrative, as Orlando drifts away for a while from her house, from the synchronizing center of her being. Thus, when she is living among the gypsies, and specifically when she looks at the world from her their point of view (in other words, when she is immersed in her transient surroundings), the number loses its precision and begins to vary: "'Four hundred and seventy-six bedrooms mean nothing to them,' sighed Orlando" (144). On the other hand, when she remembers, re-lives her solitary life in the ancient house, the number is again the right one: "she could not help with some pride describing the house where she was born, how it had 365 bedrooms . . ." (141). The centripetal force with which the house attracts Orlando back from her occasional and temporary commitment to the mortal world parallels the singularity into which Orlando concentrates her various selves, time and space, life and death.

Much like life and death, the exclusive side of motherhood seems insufficient to Orlando. The common notion that motherhood is decidedly feminine to the exclusion of the masculine is undermined here, as the most powerful image of birth in the novel, the publication of the manuscript "The Oak Tree," synthesizes both genders in the ambivalent process of creation--the poem was first conceived by Orlando as a boy, and later published by Orlando as a woman. Thus the aspect of motherhood which seems attached to a particular

person is rejected only to be replaced by a more universal, inclusive mother figure, who, because she is all-inclusive, can no longer be a mother, since she cannot allow anything to separate from her in an act of birth.

In fact, in contemplating the portraits of his ancestors, all of them long dead, Orlando is unable to find what he is looking for, which is a figure of immutable power: "Orlando now took a strange delight in thoughts of death and decay . . . pacing the long galleries and ballrooms with a taper in his hand, looking at picture after picture as if he sought the likeness of somebody whom he could not find" (68). The thought that seems most repulsive to Orlando's synthetic and narcissistic self is that life consumes and exhausts human beings: "But of all that killing and campaigning, that drinking and love-making, that spending and hunting and riding and eating, what remained?" (78). In his inability to surrender his ego and transform it into something else, Orlando remembers his ancestors for the inheritance they have left, which he sees as explicitly disengaged from their physical selves, turned into the objects they have accumulated. Motherhood, however, by definition implies a different sort of inheritance--continuity in terms of physical life, not apart from it and despite it. And Orlando is prepared to give up anything in the realm of ideas and art, but nothing of his/her biological continuity. Thus, Orlando's view of continuity appears to be static and synchronic, rather than evolutionary and diachronic --inheritance is for him what has been left out from his ancestors' life, untouched and unspoiled by their own mortality and decay, rather than their own transformation into himself through a process of death and resurrection over many generations.

Orlando, then, has a notion of creation as something that should be complete and

static in time, and not something ongoing and unfinished. Thus, Orlando can see no place for his own contribution in the chain of continuity from ancestors to descendants, as he feels incapable of inserting his own symbolical stone in the building of creation: "Why, then had he wished to raise himself above them? For it seemed vain and arrogant in the extreme to try to better that anonymous work of creation . . . [To] add even a single stone seemed superfluous" (102-103). Instead of seeing the inheritance as the empty space to be filled up by the descendants (as Mrs. Ramsay defines her contribution), Orlando regards it as the degree to which the house is filled with the ancestors themselves, who leave no room for development and change. Similarly, when Orlando undertakes the preparation of his own inheritance (the furniture of the house), he wants his contribution to be the completion, and by implication the termination, rather than the perpetuation, of the project of creation: "there was no room for anything anywhere; in short the house was furnished" (106). Under normal circumstances, creation (the function of the mother figure) can never be considered complete--it is the essence of perpetuation itself that defies any notion of completeness, any point of completion like the one Orlando figures himself to be in.

The dissociation of motherhood, of the processes of perpetuation and continuity, from the actual life processes is the result of the fact that Orlando himself does not need the assurance of an abstract continuity which perpetuates the species while erasing the individual selves, when he can have the real one. As Orlando himself can continue through the ages, the Queens (in their plurality), the words of poetry, and even Orlando's own child, are shed along the way. As they are relinquished to a specific century in passing, their symbolic power is diminished and they cannot add any transcendental dimension to Orlando's life--if

anything, Orlando adds such a dimension to theirs. In other words, it is as if we are looking at the world from the point of view of the transcendental itself, from continuity itself, from motherhood itself, while everything else occurs as if by the way. The fact that even Orlando's child is time-bound (dissociated from Orlando herself, from her actual life, which would become mythological to the child), can be seen in the specific association of his birth with time: "Orlando was safely delivered of a son on Thursday, March the 20th, at three o'clock in the morning" (282). In contrast, Orlando's own birth remains nebulously distant and unknown, immune to time, inviolable in a way it should not be under normal circumstances; the first picture we get of him as a boy is already at the stage of a vaguely Oedipal chopping off of heads, getting rid of the necessity of ancestors. Similarly, Orlando is not much concerned with a delayed fulfillment through the mediation of children--he/she is looking for the satisfaction of the present moment or, more precisely, of her own self: "So absorbed was she in the sight, that she forgot to think how other ages would have envied her. . . . She was content to gaze and gaze" (213).

If we trace Orlando's family tree as far back as possible, we reach a figure which underlies and anticipates Orlando's own existence and is perhaps the most truthful ancestor of all:

> The long gallery filled itself thus, and still peering further, she thought she could make out at the very end, beyond the Elizabethans and the Tudors, some one older, further, darker, a cowled figure, monastic, severe, a monk, who went with his hands clasped, and a book in them, murmuring. (305)

This figure, whose "monastic" presence can be, significantly, traced back to a word derived

from the Latin *monos* (alone), is an anachronistic reflection of Orlando herself, with all the darkness and solitude of the un-shared, introvert, convergent self which aspires to sum up the world, to "clasp" the plurality of experience into the singularity of the self.

It is in the essence of the mother figure that she can change, through her children, by continuing her life in theirs, perpetuate herself into the world, become, in effect, someone else, or take on, practically, an infinite number of identities, male and female, through many generations. In that sense, the mother figure is exclusively feminine only as long as she is a particular person, but by giving birth she opens limitless possibilities for her own transformations in later generations--the fruit of her labor. In the case of Orlando, however, this distance between the mother figure and her re-incarnations in the world is diminished, virtually non-existent, simply because Orlando herself can take on these identities, can become these different people without the mediation of birth and motherhood. Orlando's whole life, in fact, seems to be a transcendental shortcut which obviates the need for the mother figure in the first place, the need for the indirect interchange between birth and death--the two moments which mediate between generations, and which are here conspicuously absent. Thus, on the one hand, Orlando's peculiarly universal existence acts as a negation of motherhood as such, motherhood being the more laboriously indirect path leading to the multiple transformations of the mother herself, through the self-destructive process of inheritance, into an infinity of personalities. When Orlando is looking for "life" and is unable to decide conclusively what "life" is, the one answer she has not considered is the one of self-sacrifice; in fact life is defined, at one point, as "labour" (258), which is precisely the aspect of life (involving the distinguishable moments of birth and death) which

Orlando omits by short-circuiting the maternal interval between one generation and the next, between one person and another.

On the other hand, it is possible to say that Orlando herself has become, in encompassing the ages, in sneaking up on time itself, the quintessential mother figure, who exists both as a (biologically improbable) actual person and a mythological, self-sufficient figure having the power to step in and out of an epoch, in and out of a personality or a gender. The reason we cannot see motherhood through the eyes of Orlando is that Orlando herself is the point in spacetime where the essential qualities of motherhood converge--the mother figure who is unable to see herself inscribed in any one given, particular situation, but has the power to span temporal and geographical boundaries--limitations which we see as laughably insignificant through her own eyes. Thus Orlando becomes the embodiment of the real and ideal mother figure and, for the first time, this figure is revealed in all her presence and actuality, rather than absence, delay, potential, or symbolism. At the same time, Orlando exists in constant tension with the notion of a mother *figure* as a single unit or agent of change. In a curious way, the book is about mother*hood* to the exclusion of the mother.

The facetious way in which *Orlando* approaches the topic is not accidental--it is the only way one can put oneself in the sacred shoes of the mother figure and undergo her many transformations, synthesize, "without irreverence" (52), as William Bankes from *To the Lighthouse* would say, multiple generations in one person and pretend to view the whole world from the god-like summit of mythological motherhood. It is like stepping "through the looking-glass," like crossing over to the other side of something we know nothing about--all is conjecture, play, hypothesizing, all is fantastic, unrestrained, gay. In *Orlando*, both the

playful exaggeration of Mrs. Ramsay and the "unnatural" side of motherhood re-emerge (what happens to Orlando herself is the most unnatural thing that could happen to a human being, if the word "natural" can mean something at all). For the first time, we are looking through the eyes of the transcendental--which neither Mrs. Dalloway nor Mrs. Ramsay was capable of, being only, consciously, the human counterparts of this divine maternal power. Here, for the first time, the unconscious totality underlying motherhood is endowed with consciousness and becomes self-aware, personified, articulated, inscribed in some way into the ordinary world, given physical dimensions and a name--a name which only means invocations of multiple names (294), just as the mother is, more indirectly, an invocation of her child. Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay--these are just the names of the particular "host" of motherhood at a given time and place, embedded in the world; they are family names associated with and distinguished from a particular husband (as we see from the ubiquitous "Mrs.") and a particular family; Orlando is the synthetic name of all.

Since this hidden universality, this blatantly narcissistic singularity of Orlando's essence is always at variance with his/her surroundings, Orlando has to suspend the synthetic self when he/she enters the world:

> Orlando now performed in spirit (for all this took place in spirit) a deep obeisance to the spirit of her age, such as--to compare great things with small--a traveller, conscious that he has a bundle of cigars in the corner of his suit case, makes to the customs officer who has obligingly made a scribble of white chalk on the lid. For she was extremely doubtful whether, if the spirit had examined the contents of her mind carefully, it would not have

found something highly contraband for which she would have to pay the full fine. (253)

Thus the innermost, singular core of Orlando's being presents itself in the world disguised as whatever happens to be a convincing disguise[27] at the moment (nobleman, ambassador, gypsy, poet, woman), in order to preserve and hide something which the world has no sufficient dimensions to accommodate. Indeed, any normal person would find it hard even to conceive of getting access to the transcendental powers of the mother figure without viewing it from the safe distance of its symbolic representations. That is why, in the character of Orlando, motherhood is in a sense smuggled into the world, so that it can become available to our normal perceptions.

The ambivalent definition of Orlando as a mother figure goes far beyond her actual experience of giving birth to a boy. Motherhood for Orlando expands to include the vastness of nature itself, the mediation between life and death and their ultimate reconciliation, and a process of perpetuation for which the specificity of gender, age, time, or personality becomes immaterial. If Orlando appears to be inexcusably antagonistic to the conventional attributes of motherhood (self-sacrifice, transformation, divine or symbolic significance), it is because these are all, indeed, the conventions of society, the indispensable lens through which the mortal human being can view an inconceivable reality. Instead of conferring any mythological dimensions on motherhood, Orlando claims his/her own, personal experience of it in all its layers and variations, in all future personalities only implied in the mother herself, to which, unlike most people, Orlando has individual access. Since he/she does not have to make this access public by sharing it with other people or mediating it through her

own child, Orlando's character becomes concentrated in the narcissistic singularity of a self which recoils from the inevitable distance even of its own reflection in the world. For Orlando, the variations inherent in any such reflection are not the source of freedom and progress they are for Mrs. Ramsay but, on the contrary, represent distortion, delay, incompleteness of what should be, ideally, a primary, unadulterated experience.

That is why, in the course of the novel, Orlando rejects the symbolism of poetry, as well as the unavoidable displacement of her self into her own child--both would take away from the immediacy with which Orlando would like to encounter life, personally. Delegating her own experience to another human being (usually the prerogative of motherhood), or turning it into a secondary, sublimated image expressed in symbols, would mean that Orlando herself is insufficient, that she exists to the exclusion of something else. However, in creating this impossibly versatile character, Woolf has given us a glimpse of a universality ordinarily inaccessible to the mother figure in her human limitations. Orlando, in a sense, not only symbolizes, but lives the lives of both the mother and her children, uniting past and future into one. In her personality, a fantastic conglomeration of characters has been assembled in order to defy the particularity of any one physical realization. As Orlando's embodiment of humanity at large is only partly visible at any given moment and in any given society, Orlando is forced to switch among personalities which make sense in the world but cannot be separated in the unifying space of Orlando's own synthetic self--the self which remains always partly hidden, partly mythical, invisible, but always present, so that each personality Orlando assumes does not exclude but implies all the others, which are smuggled together with it into the transiency of the epoch.

Notes

1. Pamela Transue calls *Orlando* "an anomaly" (111). It is so unique, in fact, that Delia Donahue describes *Orlando* as a totally unbelievable, incoherent book (pp. 149-60), and according to her Orlando as a character is "too foreign to human experience to be of interest" (158).

2. For *Orlando* as caricature, see John Graham, "The 'Caricature Value' of Parody and Fantasy in *Orlando*." [*Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Claire Sprague. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971. 101-16.]

3. Madeline Moore describes it as "a scene of birth in *Orlando* which completely transcends the physical limitations which would accompany it in the real world" (110). But the birth is transcendental in another way too, since it points to motherhood but not to *a* mother. It is significant that Orlando is only passively, if at all, involved in the process. As Rachel Bowlby observes, "[t]he actual baby . . . emerges almost parenthetically . . . and from the hands of another woman rather than from Orlando's own body" (61). In other words, Orlando receives a child, rather than gives a child life, which shows that she seeks integration with the child, rather than a separation from him; Orlando is thus unwilling to split herself into a mother and a child, preferring to assume both functions herself.

4. Susan Gorsky argues that the point of the book is "that no one is simply one person and that time is not simply linear" (83), and Rachel Bowlby speaks of Orlando's "infinitely mobile identity" (60). Thus, rather than search for different manifestations and expressions of Orlando, we need to find in what sense Orlando is really *one*, a single person. And it seems that the answer is motherhood, inscribed as continuity and inheritance.

5. On the presentation of time in *Orlando*, see Constance Hunting, "The Technique of Persuasion in *Orlando*," esp. pp. 432-35. [*Virginia Woolf: Critical Assessments*. Vol. II. Ed. Eleanor McNees. Mountfield, UK: Helm Information, 1994. 432-39. (From Modern Fiction Studies 2 (Feb. 1956): 17-23.)] See also Leon Edel, "Time" (1957), for the implications for biography and chronology in *Orlando*. [*Virginia Woolf: Critical Assessments*. Vol. II. Ed. Eleanor McNees. Mountfield, UK: Helm Information, 1994. 440-56.]

6. When T.E. Apter complains that "Virginia Woolf does not in *Orlando* solve the problem of the portrayal of a fully realised woman" (*Study* 110), it seems that, if such a portrait were to be painted, it would necessarily resemble the depiction of the Queen rather than that of Orlando–as much as "fully realized" means physically existing in the world, actualized, having space-time attributes, being physically possible.

7. Clare Hauson calls this transition "the moment of castration" (106), when Orlando turns from a man into a woman.

8. Some critics, such as Mark Hussey, do not see a unified, single Orlando; for Hussey, Orlando is "vulnerable to a loss of identity caused by her failure to synchronize the different times that beat within her. To have an identity . . . there must be a sense of being in a present" (37). However, it seems that memory (of the past), rather than the immediate experience of the present, would define identity.

9. Even though Pamela Transue warns us that "[w]e have no way of pinning down what the oak tree stands for, what it 'means'" (123), this image does outline a range of possible interpretations.

10. There is a reversal, in this respect, from the portrait of Mrs. Ramsay, whose power was directed against nature and toward the social identity. As Jean Alexander points out, symbolically "the house becomes oppressive [to Orlando], the tree never" (134). In the case of Mrs. Ramsay, it is possible to say the opposite–the lighthouse, in all its artificiality, is the object which never oppresses, while the sea and the wind embody the destructive influence of nature. But the tension between civilization and nature is re-defined in *Orlando*. Whereas in *To the Lighthouse*, as Howard Harper observes, the artist "can't choose the story–only how to tell it" (159)–cannot choose nature, only how to describe it–in *Orlando* this necessity is reversed. Nature is no threat, since time is tamed. What presents the problem is not the story, but how to tell it (an effort which requires many drafts of the same "Oak Tree").

11. Orlando is never really a unified being, as Howard Harper describes her, "secure now in her family heritage, accepting it as a transcendent unity" (200). The processes of inheritance and descent in Orlando's life, even though they do not involve other people, other presences, nevertheless involve Orlando's own absence, through sleep, when any crucial change is about to occur. Sleep has the function of divorcing Orlando from herself and re-introducing her as an other, rather than serving as a means of achieving unity, as T.E. Apter sees it, when he speaks of "the need for silence and retreat [e.g. sleep] as a healing and integrative process" (*Study* 110).

12. As Mark Hussey observes, "[i]n *Orlando* the 'true self' comes in silence, which suggests that it cannot be named" (38); it is a self located "outside language, outside naming" (38).

13. Here I cannot agree with Jane Marcus in her definition of Orlando as a stable feminine presence: "Despite sex changes and the passage of centuries, Orlando is the female erotic, an eternal language of desire and creativity that remains stable as patriarchal language changes with the times" (10). As Clare Hauson observes,"[i]f femininity is constructed, what, then, are the relations between biological sex, psychological gender, and identity? In *Orlando*, Woolf begins to explore the disjunctions between these, where she had earlier assumed continuity" (99). We cannot say with any certainty that Orlando is feminine, any more than we can define her as a man. Then the question arises, if Orlando is neither a woman nor a man, in what sense is she a mother? The answer is that being a mother does not present the same problems as being of either sex, since the mother figure is not so much a personal attribute as a function of continuity and displacement of inheritance through time.

14. In the words of Makiko Minow-Pinkney, "Sasha represents otherness to him [Orlando]; she is a foreign woman with whom he cannot communicate except in French, which is a foreign tongue for both" (122-23).

15. This inability to possess anything does not apply simply to objects. As Makiko Minow-Pinkney points out, "Orlando proves unable to master her own writing" (135).

16. Thus when Makiko Minow-Pinkney speaks of Orlando "[r]eturning to her origin [the house]" (149), it seems that Orlando no longer completely owns her origin. This appears to be an essential characteristic of motherhood, since the mother figure is not the locus of absolute origin so much as the next bearer of the already given life, which she will in turn transfer to another.

17. Here I cannot agree with James Hafley, who argues that "[t]ime and personality are fused in this book [*Orlando*]" (97). Orlando's relationship with a person or an object would mean breaking the connections of this person or object with its time and place of origin. Since nothing can belong to Orlando absolutely, this means that no object can be entirely divorced from its time and place (with the possible exception of the manuscript, but it has to revise itself–to become different things--in order to survive).

18. The more Orlando approaches a singularity of self, the less transcendental and improbable she becomes, until, as John Graham observes, the "distortions" (113) fade away and the fantastic element is diminished toward the end of the book.

19. At the moment of its completion, the book ceases to be associated with Orlando (who is never complete) and is trapped into a historical period which will pass. Rachel Bowlby emphasizes the "impossibility of concluding or completing" (142) in *Orlando*, and it seems that the artistic vision, because of its effort at completeness, cannot be enough for Orlando, who ultimately prefers the biological self-creation to the artistic one.

20. Minow-Pinkney points out that Orlando "reveals herself as a being who cannot be completely circumscribed within the social" (136). But the relationship between her and society is not simply one of imperfection; it is one of hostility. Thus Jean Alexander observes that "society becomes increasingly unsatisfactory to her as a woman, just as it had failed her as a man" (131), and Clare Hauson argues that "the social pressures . . . drive Orlando to take up a female reproductive role within patriarchy" (108).

21. Once again, art is aligned with the world (and opposed to natural creation). Just as the poetry needs to be "read," the world itself, as Rachel Bowlby points out, "is presented as something to be read" (142).

22. The theme of androgyny in *Orlando* has received extensive critical treatment. Shirley Panken, for example, speaks of *Orlando*'s "androgynous vision" (173), and John Batchelor identifies the main theme of *Orlando* as "the androgyny of the artist" (18). Rachel Bowlby observes that Orlando oscillates between sexes and that there are "always, potentially, two

sexes (at one time, rather than at different times), the one on the surface and the one underneath" (55). Clare Hauson remarks that "[t]he androgynous-looking figure presents us with an impossibility" (101), since it combines a pre-oedipal wholeness and "the threat of dissolution" (102). Pamela Transue also adds to the pre-oedipal analysis of the book by tracing Orlando's indeterminate sexuality back to a free id: "the sexual self in its uninhibited state is androgynous" (113). Gillian Beer goes even further, to interpret Orlando's immortality as the direct result of his/her androgyny: "The seamlessly en-gendered do not die. Death, it seems, finds its way in . . . by the separation of male and female" (60). Rather than denying such separation, however, Minow-Pinkney argues that "[a]ndrogyny in *Orlando* is not a resolution of oppositions, but the throwing of both sexes into a metonymic confusion of genders" (122), so that "Orlando lives alternation [of the sexes] not resolution" (131). For more on androgyny, see James Hafley, *The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist*, pp. 101-104.

23. Joanne Trautmann argues that "Orlando chooses obscurity [as an artist], even anonymity would be welcome" (89). The anonymity of Orlando, however, seems to be opposed to the production of her art, just as her nakedness is opposed to the fashion of the times. Here, again, artistic creation requires social norms, authorship, possession. Orlando, in other words, is anonymous precisely to the extent that she is not an artist but a natural being. In terms of motherhood, her anonymity puts her in denial of the maternal function, as much as this function demands doubling, a split into mother and mothered, because Orlando is not prepared to relinquish her own propagation to someone else. Thus, even though Michael Rosenthal sees only "one last enormous obstacle between Orlando and successful creation: the unyielding demands of . . . 'the spirit of the age'" (133-34), it seems more likely that the age encourages authorship, while Orlando avoids it in her attempt to be both the author and the authored, neither of which should be separated from her and allowed to enter time.

24. On *Orlando* and jewels, see Avron Fleishman, *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1975, pp. 141-43.

25. Even though Orlando's marriage, according to Maria DiBattista, "is more mystic than legal" (138).

26. Thus I cannot agree with Rachel Bowlby and her remark that "[o]nly in *Orlando*, as Françoise Defromont points out, do writing and motherhood go together" (61). Or rather, they do go together, but not in the sense that they both belong to Orlando, since Orlando is opposed to both. T. E. Apter argues that Orlando "feels that factual and poetic language are equally true" (*Study* 109), but it is possible to say that they are rather equally untrue to Orlando, although necessary for the detour of normal communication and inheritance; in this sense, motherhood is the detour Orlando refuses to take.

27. For more on disguise, see Minow-Pinkney, 132.

PART TWO: D. H. LAWRENCE

CHAPTER 5: *SONS AND LOVERS*--

THE ANACHRONISTIC MOTHERHOOD

D. H. Lawrence's first major novel, *Sons and Lovers*, creates an environment of intense, almost pathological attachment of the son to the mother figure, with the accompanying sense of constant deprivation[1]--the knowledge that the relationship with the mother cannot be consummated[2] through exchange of love, but only through the recreation of complete identification with the mother/object of love. The main quality of this identification is that it is an anachronism in relation to everything else (and above all in relation to Paul's bodily existence), because it was realized in the past, before the moment of birth, and, by necessity, has to remain in the past. The impossibility of envisioning this identification in the future makes Paul Morel's quest of working towards a realization of the love for his mother a regressive ambition which acts as a countercurrent to his progressive and necessary physical life. Paul's excessive attachment to his mother becomes anomalous when it prevents him from developing further, when the passage of time comes to represent for him nothing more than a painful delay and getting away from the initial, primordial contact with the mother. As time becomes an obstacle, Paul starts looking for some stable, static representation of his own being in the world. Paul's own identity, while ostensibly co-existing with the world around him, occupying the same space, is actually cut off from this apparently contemporaneous environment by an inherent chronological anomaly, as if

the sense of belonging exclusively to the mother has begun to function as a psychological time machine, which holds him back from the world in a constant delay of attention (everything matters only as far as it concerns the mother) and affection (contemporary expressions of love are viable only after they have been relayed back through his love for the mother[3], which is necessarily located in the indefinite past, lagging behind the changing world).

The fact that Paul's psychological reality has been arrested, firmly anchored in some point in time which is not part of the developing world but remains indefinitely anachronistic, becomes clear in the images of sameness and repetition which accompany Paul's love for his mother and come to define his very being. His dreams of the future are marked by sameness and sealed from change--they do not involve departure, adventure, exploration, expansion. On the contrary, Paul's plans for the future are always characterized by constancy and concerned with preserving his domestic intimacy with the mother. Thus they focus on the contraction of the whole world and all possible versions of his future into one imaginary, fairy-tale point of completion, the point he started from--his mother: "His ambition, as far as this world's gear went, was quietly to earn his thirty or thirty-five shillings a week somewhere near home, and then, when his father died, have a cottage with his mother, paint and go out as he liked, and live happy ever after" (89). Thus Paul is genuinely surprised at Miriam's ambition to leave her family and seek her realization in the world: "'Don't you like being at home?' Paul asked her, surprised" (155). The home is for Paul not only the place which contains him in the present, but also the environment which contains all possibilities for the future. In this view, the future, whose main characteristic is change,

becomes distorted, since the thing that Paul clings to is precisely the lack of change, the absence of delays, alterations, variants. The home is the realm of the here and now stuck forever in the present where everything is contemporaneous and synchronized. Similarly, in terms of space, the home is where everything belongs and nothing is displaced: "there was a simplicity in everything. . . . He was never ashamed in the least of his home, nor was Miriam of hers, because both were what they should be . . . so that nothing was out of place" (191). The rightness of the home space, the perfection of its layout, leaves no room for change or progress. Everything is made to appear just right, to fit exactly into the place provided for it. There is no lack and no excess. Similarly, in the eyes of Paul, his mother's gestures acquire a precision denied anyone else's: "Nothing she ever did, no movement she ever made, could have been found fault with by her children" (67). On the contrary, in Miriam's gestures, for example, there is always something to be desired, improved, changed: "She was not clumsy, and yet none of her movements seemed quite the movement" (154). This absence of precision, which characterizes the whole "love affair" between Paul and Miriam, a relationship which is never completely right or sufficient, implies the hidden threat of change. While the mother's perfection is realized in the present moment, a satisfactory relationship with Miriam (or any other woman, for that matter) is always displaced somewhere in the future, to be worked on, improved, developed. The change required by all actual, human contact that Paul initiates outside the protective circle of his own home becomes threatening--it suggests that the mother's presence may not be enough. Paul's insistence on her sufficiency reflects his own unwillingness to change, to grow, despite the physical necessity of change, to which his body[4] compels him: "But I shan't marry, mother. I

shall live with you, and we'll have a servant" (244). As Paul's dreams remain constant throughout the novel, we see that they have no basis in the reality of the rapidly changing present, but have an anachronistic quality which binds them to the past. Thus, even though we are told that Paul's "plans for the future were always the same" (244), it is easy to see that he is devising, in fact, plans for the past. Even when he can feel himself growing up, there is a distortion in his perception of himself which locates the change somewhere outside of him, as if it is not he who has changed, but only his environment: "Paul felt life changing around him. The conditions of youth were gone" (247). Thus instead of seeing his own self in motion, developing and expanding, Paul's regressive, wishful perception forces him to believe that it is only the world around him that is changing, and that change has nothing to do with his own existence, whose sameness remains untouched by the random and meaningless alterations in the background. His behavior is regressive in that the normal relationship with the mother has to move away from physical realization (after the child has been physically part of the mother but begins to drift away from her after birth); on the contrary, Paul's love for his mother is one of constant attempts to get closer to her, to realize/consummate physically a relationship which is intrinsically based on distance. As Faith Pullin observes, "what Paul wants is the actual physical presence of his mother" (72), even though what she can offer him is only spiritual closeness. Thus any bodily relationship between them is bound to fail.[5] Any attempt to restore physicality leads to regression and inertia.

If Paul desires any change, it is only to remove the distractions, the obstacles, one of which is his father's presence. Part of Paul's dream is an Oedipal[6] urge to take his father's

place, at the same time asserting himself as different from his father: "'I'm the man in the house now,' he used to say to his mother with joy. They learned how perfectly peaceful the home could be. And they almost regretted--though none of them would have owned to such callousness--that their father was soon coming back" (88). From the beginning, the make-up of Paul's family excludes the father, who was not initially present at the internal mother-infant bond within the womb, and whose presence now is seen in terms of that earlier superfluity of the father figure in the past. Mr. Morel, because of Paul's anachronistic view of the family, is seen as the ultimate anti-domestic, destructive influence, not because he is not there, but because he *was* not there, in the past where Paul lives. Consequently, the father is never seen as a key part of family life: "The family life withdrew, shrank away, and became hushed as he [Morel] entered. But he cared no longer about his alienation" (43). Thus, from their first conscious memories, the children are aware of the special status of the mother figure, who not only makes everything complete and verifies the reality of events, but who also possesses a sense of sufficiency,[7] the conviction that her presence is enough to complete and contain the whole family environment: "The children, alone with their mother, told her all about the day's happenings, everything. Nothing had really taken place in them until it was told to their mother. But as soon as the father came in, everything stopped" (63). Yet, despite all resentment and even outright hatred of the father, the family needs his presence as the presence of an object, like a prop whose mechanical functions are going on in the background, not especially meaningful or necessary but providing some kind of verification of the existence of the outside world, in which the image of the family life has to justify itself: "But if Morel had not come, they faltered" (61). It is as if the very necessity of

the mother figure is grounded in the children's rejection of the father, but this rejection has to happen over and over again, has to keep happening in the present. It seems that the mother's completeness then is an anachronistic negation of the father, since it rejects him in the present moment, but needs him to have been absent in the past.[8] In this sense, Paul has a negative[9] need for the father, while simultaneously rejecting him.

This dualism, however, does not hold for long. It is tempting to see Paul positioned in the exact center, in the middle between two equally strong forces (mother/father, mother/lover, home/world, etc.), but there seems to be an inherent disproportion in the weight these elements have in his life. In these binary pairs, one element is always passive and past-oriented (mother, home), and the other is always active and future-oriented (Paul's realization in the world; the prospects of marriage). The symmetry between the two, however, seems only superficial, as we see that Paul's starting point is always the passive state, and his aim in life is a regressive return to this same state. Thus the influence of the expansive elements related to the father, the external world, and the love relationships, is always seen as interference, an obstacle on the way back to the mother, and not as an equally attractive existential possibility.[10]

Since the mother comes to be defined as complete and sufficient, this means that all desire is banished from Paul's relationship with her, since all desire is necessarily the consequence of delay and unfulfilled urge. A complete, self-sufficient being[11] does not need anything and cannot desire anyone. And it is clear that the images of delay in *Sons and Lovers* are always associated, for Paul, with the relationships external to the home, the home itself being the locus of immutability. Thus, for example, there is the theme of waiting, an

explicit form of delay, which becomes prominent in Paul's attachment to Miriam and also, to a lesser degree, in his relationship with Clara. In the case of Miriam, there is the constant reminder of her fierce emotional "virginity,"[12] which displaces everything in the unspecified future: "He told himself it was only a sort of overstrong virginity in her and him which neither could break through. . . . It seemed as if virginity were a positive force, which fought and won in both of them" (276-77). It is as if they both exist in some preliminary stage where everything is still in its chrysalis state of contained and unrevealed potential whose realization remains forever *postponed* in the future, rather than already having been complete in the past. This state of potentiality is not merely physical but psychological as well. Even after Paul and Miriam consummate their love, there remains a sense of unfulfilled potential, as if their relationship is merely dragging out, misplaced and wrong all along: "Always, from the very beginning--always the same" (295). Thus we see Miriam's metaphorical state of waiting continue, as she is "all the time waiting until it [any distraction for Paul] should be over and a personal communication might begin" (158). Naturally, the usual position in which we find Miriam, even in the middle of her relationship with Paul, is "alone with herself, waiting" (298).

Although the love affair with Miriam is the most extreme case, Paul's other relationships are also characterized by some imprecision, displacement, waiting. Thus at one point Paul accuses Clara of the same incomplete presence he finds in Miriam: "'There is always about you,' he said, 'a sort of waiting. Whatever I see you doing, you're not really there: you are waiting--like Penelope when she did her weaving'" (265). Penelope's "arts of delay," in their mythological version, are meant to postpone her decision to marry again, to

postpone, in fact, all of life going on around her until the desired return of Ulysses. In the case of Paul Morel, however, these moments of waiting occur when he and Clara are in each other's company, when they are both *present.* In other words, Paul is never a metaphorical reflection of Ulysses, and whatever Clara is waiting for, it is not Paul. Paul himself is also waiting, with her, for something that never comes. He is never the venturing hero but the domestic lover, waiting for the love to blow away, so that the domesticity can remain. Although he does not realize it, this waiting is related to all his experience in the world--not only love, but any kind of activity which aims at something beyond itself, and therefore something he is unwilling to embark on since it might lead away from what Paul is *right now.*

The theme of waiting in the novel is explicitly related to the ongoing motif of poverty. From the very beginning, the desperate social circumstances of the Morels are epitomized by the submissive resignation with which the family *waits* for Walter Morel to come home from work or, more often, from the pub. The whole financial and social bondage of the mother to the father becomes apparent in these moments when "the room was full of the sense of waiting, waiting for the man who was sitting in his pit-dirt, dinnerless, some mile away from home, across the darkness, drinking himself drunk" (62). The sense of expectation only emphasizes the emotional poverty of the family in which people have to make the hardest concessions and sacrifices (the sacrifice implied by the suspension of all life when Morel has not come home), and all this for someone whose emotional connection with the family is at best tangential. Waiting, then, signifies a kind of psychological investment in something which never pays back but is always denied and delayed. A similar

situation occurs when the family is waiting for the arrival of William from London. The ritual of this vigil includes extensive preparation and excitement, followed by the anti-climactic, flat-lined dragging on of the evening, during which everyone "waited and waited" (80). The projection of the pivotal event somewhere in the future leaves the present with the sedentary and monotonous task of filling up the time in between, of weaving, like Penelope, the threads of delay and desire.

Since desire means, on some level, a lack, a need for something, its frequent association with poverty is only appropriate. Thus, for example, the theme of waiting for the father's arrival and for William's home-coming is carried on in the episode at the restaurant where Mrs. Morel takes Paul after his job interview. The waitress does not pay attention to them: "Mrs. Morel was angry. But she was too poor, and her orders were too meagre, so that she had not the courage to insist on her rights just then. They waited and waited" (97). And this is not an isolated occasion--in the life of the Morels, as long as they are poor, waiting is their normal condition in relation to the rest of the world: "'Now, just look at those black grapes!' she [Mrs. Morel] said. 'They make your mouth water. I've wanted some of those for years, but I s'll have to wait a bit before I get them'" (97). This suspension of participation in life is one of the major characteristics of Mrs. Morel herself, one which is announced in the first pages of the novel: "'I wait,' Mrs. Morel said to herself–'I wait, and what I wait for can never come'" (8). Her own relationship with her children, especially her sons, is one of waiting too: "She was a woman who waited for her children to grow up" (69). It is as if Mrs. Morel is not really interested in the pure biological fact of their existence, because it is a given, something which she cannot change and therefore she cannot control: "'What have I to

do with it?' she said to herself. 'What have I to do with all this? Even the child I am going to have! It doesn't seem as if I were taken into account'" (8). On the other hand, their growing up, their realization in the world[13] is what Mrs. Morel is looking for: "She thought of William. . . . He was away in London, doing well. Paul would be working in Nottingham. Now she had two sons in the world. She could think of two places, great centres of industry, and feel that she had put a man into each of them, and these men would work out what she wanted; they were derived from her, they were of her, and their works also would be hers" (101). At the same time, Mrs. Morel realizes that she herself has to be left behind, so that her sons' lives can be moved elsewhere, to these other "places" in the world. The relocation away from home in space carries with it a similar change in time--as the children move away they also move forward, and this movement gives the mother figure implicit control over the rest of the world, which is "what she wanted."

The reaching out "in the world" through the work (and not so much through the actual procreation) of her sons, shows how Mrs. Morel's love/loss of her children differs from her love/loss of her husband. Where Walter Morel is concerned, when she loses his love, her hope for the future is not affected; with her sons, on the contrary, all emotion is located in the future: "Before, with her husband, things had seemed to be breaking down in her, but they did not destroy her power to live. Now her soul felt lamed in itself. It was her hope that was struck" (131). The emphasis on her "hope" summarizes Mrs. Morel's view of motherhood and differentiates it from Paul's. For her, motherhood is synonymous with "future" in that it is something that expects justification from the world at large, something to be redeemed later, revenged, compensated for bringing the children into existence in a world

of poverty and pain: "Paul was going to distinguish himself. She had a great belief in him, the more because he was unaware of his own powers. There was so much to come out of him. Life for her was rich with promise. She was to see herself fulfilled. Not for nothing had been her struggle" (184). For her, the mere unconditional fact of giving them life is not enough; now they have to do something with this life, force the world to give them something in exchange for it, make the world account for itself. This is what Mrs. Morel sees as her victory, the prerogative of the mobile motherhood to be expanded, exchanged, sacrificed for something else the way the present is exchanged for the future.

The motif of the sacrifice haunts the novel as a whole. The most prominent example here is Miriam's interpretation of her religious devotion to Paul, when she "fell into that rapture of self-sacrifice" (172). It is a source of constant frustration to Paul that Miriam aims for something beyond himself: "That was because of him, Paul Morel. But then, it was not his affair, it was her own, between herself and God. She was to be a sacrifice. But it was God's sacrifice, not Paul Morel's or her own" (172). She is always looking in the distance, seeing through the physicality of Paul and towards something he (or, rather, his absence) stands for: "He felt that she wanted the soul out of his body, and not him" (193). In this sacrifice, Miriam wants to translate the physical side of their relationship, which exists in the present, into the spiritual redemption of the future. Thus the sacrifice becomes a form of waiting, a sanctioned escape from the present in which the present does not stand for itself but symbolizes the future. In this process, the body is invariably diminished in importance, as Paul observes when he is with Miriam: "His body was somewhere discarded" (194). The pattern of the sacrifice is that displacement, transformation of a thing into something else. It

is another variant of the delay that surrounds Paul's experience of the world. Sacrifice appears as a sanctioned, ritualized waiting, which is meant to signify the expectation of its fruition in the future. In a way, sacrifice is the ultimate re-incarnation of desire, in that it shows a state of lack and disregard for the present. Paul's dislike of Miriam's sacrificial rituals is a fear that the present in which Paul lives and from which he does not want to depart might not be sufficient.

In the single episode in the novel where Paul himself initiates a sacrifice--the burning of the doll Arabella[14]--there is a peculiar one-sidedness about the ritual. Unlike a normal sacrifice, where performing certain actions is meant to transcend the actions themselves, since the sacrifice aims at something else beyond the ritual, in this case the transcendental counterpart of the literal killing is absent. In other words, nothing remains to be realized in the future[15]; Paul does not experience the expectation of some completion of the ritual, in which the meaning of his actions will be revealed. Thus he does not see the sacrifice as the cause which is supposed to bring about some effect other than itself. Accordingly, the passage describing the sacrifice of the doll is exclusively concerned with the destruction itself, a destruction without an ulterior motive or sacrificial meaning: "He watched with wicked satisfaction the drops of wax melt off the broken forehead of Arabella, and drop like sweat into the flame. So long as the stupid big doll burned he rejoiced in silence. At the end he poked among the embers with a stick, fished out the arms and legs, all blackened, and smashed them under the stones" (59). It is interesting that Paul rejects the displacement of the meaning of sacrifice into the future, and his satisfaction with what he is doing lasts only "so long" as the burning itself is going on. He does not expect to arrive at some rewarding

result after or because of the destruction of the doll--the ritual for him is self-referential and there is no more to it than is available to the senses in the present.

Thus the notion of sacrifice receives new connotations here, and is re-defined as a self-contained and circular process which does not lead anywhere but is an end in itself. While traditional rituals of death are based on the idea that there is some compensation for the death, that the absence of the dead should result in the presence of something else, that the loss of one life will bring about another, in Paul's mind this dynamic does not exist. He is not looking for the desired future compensation for life. Instead of exchanging something for something else, which is the proper meaning of sacrifice, he is content to give something in exchange for nothing, to destroy with no expectation of return, to achieve the absolute end of life: "'That's the sacrifice of Missis Arabella,' he said. 'An' I'm glad there's nothing left of her'" (59). The pure annihilation, under the misnomer of "sacrifice," is a denial of the whole progressive pattern of exchange and delay which accompanies life in all its manifestations; thus it is also a denial of life itself, as well as of the necessary demands of temporality. In other words, Paul refuses to acknowledge the movement from present to future, which can only be achieved through a proper sacrifice of the present to the future. The simultaneity of cause and effect which Paul apparently seeks has no physical existence in the world; it is possible only in his personal mythology of identification with the mother which does not allow a cause-and-effect interaction with the future. Thus the double meaning of the sacrifice, and the duality of desire in general is lost for Paul.

While Paul wants to achieve an unconditional identification with the mother, rather than pursue what Baruch Hochman calls "emancipation from . . . the maternal world of

origins" (30-31), Mrs. Morel herself sees motherhood as the thing which is mobile, the thing to be exchanged; thus, her connection with her son is to be traded for his own, independent life in the world.[16] Or, in more general terms, motherhood means sacrificing the mother for the son, exchanging her life for his (not only metaphorically, but also literally, in chronological terms). In this economy of motherhood the original attachment to the home and the fixation on the mother figure must be overcome and transcended, so that motherhood itself can be extended beyond the personal mythology of the son and into the actual events of the world at large. This expansion is what the mother needs, because it would bring the element of infinity into the definition of the mother--it would open the possibilities for successive generations with their own personal myths of the mother. In other words, just as Mrs. Morel needs to see her children growing up, she is looking for her own perpetuation even beyond her children. She is always projecting her sons' importance and contributions into the future--only in some unknown point in the future will they be meaningful to her--which implies that if her children co-exist with her in time, or if they cling to the home and so co-exist with her in space, they have not been contributing to *her own* development, to her transformation in the future.

Paul, however, cannot see that things must follow this natural course of constant mutability and re-incarnation. His ambition is, above all, to co-exist[17] with the mother, not to succeed her. He cannot come to terms with the fact that there is exchange with the external world in which motherhood allows him to participate by giving him life--the currency which he is supposed to invest in the world. On the contrary, he sees the whole project of motherhood as the end, not the means. For him, the mother is concerned not so much with

providing the starting point of a life, as with giving it meaning, purpose, ending. It is as if he sees motherhood as an enormous, all-inclusive sphere, while the mother herself would rather see it as a door leading to other fields of experience and transformation. The need for stability and return to the mother makes Paul want to preserve the myth of the self-sufficiency and eternity of motherhood; he is unwilling to spend it, use it, make something with the life he has. Thus, in a sense, the mother is most impoverished by Paul's circular impulse, where he wants to coincide with her, to re-create the moment of pre-natal symbiosis, the perfection of instant and physical[18] communication and understanding between the mother and the son, and thus avoid the delay inherent in the external world.

The displacement of the external world is also reflected in Paul's relationship with Miriam, in which not only she is looking for something else beyond him, but he is also sacrificing her in turn: "she felt as if he were using her unconsciously as a man uses his tools at some work he is bent on. She loved it. And the wistfulness of his voice was like reaching to something, and it was as if she were what he reached with" (227). Unlike the first sacrifice Paul enacts at the beginning of the novel, a sacrifice which is only imaginary and wishful, and therefore frustrated and arrested in the process of arriving at a future result, a sacrifice which deliberately abolishes the element of delay and focuses on the present, Paul's real-life relationships in the actual world are faced with an inevitable delay, a displacement which he cannot merely wish away. While it was easier for him to "sacrifice" Arabella in one single moment without future ramifications, his real-life partners make his task much more difficult--they expect the relationship to continue into the future, to enter the dynamics of temporal give-and-take, to develop. That is why he demands of Clara that she relinquish

the future and "let the moment stand for itself" (350). To pretend that there is no future is the closest they can get to the completeness of the Arabella episode. His emphasis on the self-sufficiency of the present (which is itself a reflection of the past) and his denial of its duality, which first become evident in the burning of the doll, continue when he is an adult[19], and are still much stronger than his concern with the future--he does not regard the present as a detour or as a means to arrive at the future; rather, he sees the future as a distraction, delay in relation to the present. It is in the present/past that he has everything he wants to have--the close contact with the mother. The only contribution of the passage of time is that it will disintegrate this co-incidence[20] of son and mother which has been physically realized in the real world only once, and repetition of this moment is not possible.

The thing Paul seeks to go back to, all his life, is identity with the mother--a state which he can only approximate in his love for other women, and only when he ceases to see these women in their specific personality--when they become for him versions of the anonymous, archetypal presence of the mother[21]. Thus, in a sense, what he is looking for in women is not the creation of a future happiness but the re-creation of the past. That is why his relationships can be said to be anachronistic to themselves, because they do not coincide with their own meaning but are always concerned, from the point of view of Paul, with how accurately they reflect his attachment to his mother, how flawlessly they coincide with his dysfunctional, anachronistic symbiosis with her. A relationship will be successful, from his point of view, in so far as it relates to the past and not to the future, in so far as the woman is willing to enact a former, archetypal version of herself, to get as close as possible to an identification with the mother figure. But none of the women in Paul's life seems very

anxious to take on this role. That is why his relationship with Clara dissolves: "the fire slowly went down. He felt more and more that his experience had been impersonal, and not Clara. . . . He had wanted her to be something she could not be" (352). Similarly, in the rare moments when Paul can get close to this feeling of anonymity in Miriam, she resists this impulse and forces him back into consciousness: "Never any relaxing, never any leaving himself to the great hunger and impersonality of passion; he must be brought back to a deliberate, reflective creature. As if from a swoon of passion she called him back to the littleness, the personal relationship" (282). Her role is that of a specific tool[22] which he can use to get at the general realm of the maternal: "He seemed to be almost unaware of her as a person: she was only to him then a woman" (284).

Just as Paul uses the future (which he sees as an obstacle) to arrive, retrospectively, at the past, he uses love, or what Peter Balbert calls "the intrinsic power of lovers to get beyond their ego, will, and self" ("Forging" 99) as a tool to arrive at oblivion. In a telling scene, Clara asks Paul a pivotal question, put in blunt terms: "But is it me you want, or is it It?" (360). Since obviously Clara is not very crucial to Paul's experience of love, the answer the novel suggests is "It," or, in Freudian terms, "id."[23] Clara's concern is that Paul sees in her only a vehicle for the impersonal, anonymous force which extinguishes all identity and reifies its carriers--the concrete people. In other words, Paul's lovers will be treated as objects as far as they are seen as individuals at all, and treated as a vague maternal presence as far as they are erased as personalities. Thus a specific person would serve, in Paul's world, only as an agent of everything that person is not, while in fact each person truly exists only inasmuch as he or she is capable of difference: the person is trying to arrive at a sense of identity by

excluding everything else, by distinguishing self from environment, by drawing a line between what Rosenman calls the "me" and the "not-me" (12).[24] In Paul's love affairs, however, the women are always only vaguely present as themselves, and mostly sought as an expendable means of transcending the specific relationship they happen to be in. Thus Paul not only uses "woman-love" to arrive at "mother-love," but he also uses the self as a tool to reach out for the environment, or the "me" as a tool to achieve the "not-me." Paul, in the words of Aidan Burns, experiences "a hostility towards a fully integrated self" (113).

This means, broadly speaking, that he is also willing to use life to arrive at death, because life, in its tiresome specificity, emerges as an unwanted distraction from the blank generality and uniformity of death: "To him now, life seemed a shadow, day a white shadow; night, and death, and stillness, and inaction, this seemed like being. To be alive, to be urgent and insistent--that was not-to-be. The highest of all was to melt out into the darkness and sway there, identified with the great Being" (285). The image of "swaying," of suspension, is associated with death earlier in the novel when he tries the new swing at the farm: "'Now I'll die,' he said, in a detached, dreamy voice, as though he were the dying motion of the swing. . . . There was something fascinating to her in him. For the moment he was nothing but a piece of swinging stuff; not a particle of him that did not swing. She could never lose herself so, nor could her brothers" (152). This losing of the self continues to haunt him later, and not only with Miriam, but also with Clara, who again becomes a tool which can give him access to oblivion:

> To know their own nothingness, to know the tremendous living flood which carried them always, gave them rest within themselves. If so great a

> magnificent power could overwhelm them, identify them altogether with itself . . . [they] could let themselves be carried by life, and they felt a sort of peace each in the other. There was a verification which they had had together. Nothing could nullify it, nothing could take it away. (351)

Paul's belief that the unconscious is the carrier of life, or what Elizabeth Campbell calls "a belief in the unknown" (22), indicates that the involvement of consciousness signals death. This view is revealed once again in Paul's perception of the women in his life as individual people. It is significant that both Miriam and Clara are metaphorically associated with death when Paul first encounters them, when they appear for the first time on the scene and he cannot yet transform them into anonymous entities. It is only later that he is able to incorporate them into his vision of the mother; but at first contact, each woman necessarily asserts herself as a novelty, a thing in its own right, with its own personality. That is why Paul is always disturbed when he encounters things for the first time: "He suffered very much from the first contact with anything" (88). It is only appropriate, then, for him to feel that Miriam and Clara, in their initial, unadulterated versions which have not yet been subsumed under the vastness of the mother figure, should be associated, in their specificity and consciousness, with death. This call to consciousness, which comes from Miriam from the first moment Paul meets her, means death to him--treating her as a specific person would require an interaction based on consciousness[25] and recognition, which to him seems a distraction from the deeper roots of life.

But Miriam is not the only one who is associated with death and with the specificity of the world around Paul. When he talks to Clara for the first time, the subject of their

conversation is flower corpses (236), and Paul performs a mock funeral of Clara, covering her with flowers (237). She does not particularly enjoy this episode, but in the mind of Paul she remains associated with images of death, which he ascribes to her own will: "'I thought you wanted a funeral,' he said, ill at ease" (237). The theme of death continues when he visits her at her house for the first time, and his impression of the place quite explicitly brings up the destruction he sees in Clara: "She admitted him into the parlour, which opened on to the street. It was a small, stuffy, defunct room, of mahogany, and deathly enlargements of photographs of departed people done in carbon" (257). Similarly, the whole place has the look of a "mausoleum" (258). Gradually, these images of death cease to haunt Clara's personality, but this happens only after her personality has been compromised in its re-enactment of the mother figure, dissolved in the realm of general femininity in which Paul seeks shelter from the realities of life.

In his relationships with both Clara and Miriam, Paul ascribes to them wishful, maternal qualities, which he wants to see in all women. Thus, he complains that Miriam rejects and dissolves his personality, when this characteristic rejection explicitly belongs to the archetypal realm of motherhood: "Why did she make him feel as if he were uncertain of himself, insecure, an indefinite thing" (193). In fact, it is not he whose personality is dismembered in the relationship--it is Miriam's. She is unable to devote herself completely to Paul, because he makes her feel a deep "self-mistrust" (220)--a mistrust of the self, a suspicion that the self is too limited in its specificity to imitate or invoke the larger dimensions of the feminine power Paul is looking for: "Perhaps she had not in herself that which he wanted" (220). Indeed, in her "self" she is not able to offer him the vast,

self-destructive, maternal environment, which is by definition antagonistic to the confined and shrunk space called "self."

While Paul seems convinced that this erasure of the self is the only true life, we see that, in the novel, the presence of life is always signaled by the enhanced attributes of the self, namely consciousness, personality, recognition. Thus the downfall of William, for example, begins when he no longer appears to be "himself," when he takes uncharacteristic actions, prompted by social ambition and forgetful of his family and moral values: "She [Mrs. Morel] saw him saddled with an elegant and expensive wife, earning little money, dragging along and getting draggled in some small, ugly house in a suburb" (91). Even more than that, in the crucial scene of his death, we are explicitly led to believe that he dies because he cannot *recognize* his mother as a specific person, that if only he could regain consciousness, he would survive: "He was quite unconscious. . . . She [Mrs. Morel] prayed for William, prayed that he would recognize her. But the young man's face grew more discoloured, in the night she struggled with him. He raved, and raved, and would not come to consciousness. At two o'clock, in a dreadful paroxysm, he died" (134-35). In this episode, the identification of the self, its grasp on its singularity and the specifics of its surroundings, its very existence in the concrete contingencies of the world, are the things that preserve life and propel it forward. Thus the self has to keep up with the changing permutations of the world, to become aware of them and react to them, in order to survive.

An abandonment of the self or the losing of identity, then, can be described as losing contact with the tangible environment around the person, an inability to keep up with the mobile contingencies, a lagging behind of consciousness which creates a gap between its

self-identity and its expression in the world. In other words, any loss of self is not, strictly speaking, a dissolution of the self into its environment, but exactly the opposite--an identity lag in which the person continually fails to have adequate reactions to the changing world and thus remains static, repetitive, anachronistic in relation to the flow of life. Ironically, William is the one who specializes in keeping up with the world and responding to social conventions. But his implicit belief that he is never good enough, rich enough, fast enough in his adaptation to the world is negated in his death--he fails to respond on time when he is summoned by the world around him, fails to show the desire for more which has kept him going, the desire to catch up with the stimuli of his environment. While his unflagging social ambition embodies the impossibility of making desire coincide with its object, which is an exaggerated statement of the process of life itself, his death emerges as the final co-incidence of ambition and achievement, where he refuses to acknowledge the further stimuli reaching out to him.

Conversely, during the most dangerous stages of Paul's illness, which closely follows William's and clearly shows the contrast between the two, Paul retains his hold on life precisely because he recognizes his mother as the specific person she is, not as some anonymous force:

> Paul was very ill. His mother lay in bed at nights with him. . . . He grew worse, and the crisis approached. One night he tossed into consciousness in the ghastly, sickly feeling of dissolution, when all the cells in his body seem in intense irritability to be breaking down, and consciousness makes a last flare of struggle, like madness.

'I s'll die, mother!' he cried, heaving for breath on the pillow.

She lifted him up, crying in a small voice:

'Oh, my son--my son!'

That brought him to. He realised her. His whole will rose up and arrested him. He put his head on her breast, and took ease of her for love. (140)

Thus his mother is always urging him forward, towards the world, towards consciousness, towards life. She herself is distracted from life only once, after William's death, but then she recognizes this as a mistake and, from that point on, remains firmly attached to life: "'I should have watched the living, not the dead,' she told herself" (140).

It is much more difficult for her, however, to convince Paul that he should also pay attention to life and not surrender his own self in order to get closer to hers. The main quality of Paul appears to be some detachment from the world: "He was pale and detached-looking; it would be hard for any woman to keep him" (318). It is significant that his desire to stand aloof, always apart from the ongoing, small, temporary commitments and frequent exchanges of life would be associated with pallor, with draining of the blood, the life out of him. In his self-destructive impulse to identify with the presence of the mother, he brushes aside the possibility of coincidence, identification with the world around him. His being is always late in engaging with life because it lingers in the past. The project of self-surrendering, then, means that the person is always an anachronism in life. His ambition to recreate the past is incompatible with the progress and the necessary delay associated with the interaction between the present and the future; it is an ambition to be contemporaneous with death.

Thus Mrs. Morel senses some will in Paul to die.[26] Paul himself has no worldly

ambitions.[27] For example, when his mother asks him what he wants to be when he grows up, his answer is an uninterested, aimless "Anything" (89), as if he can suffer the world to impose some role or other on him, as long as it does not distract him from his family life. Also, in his carelessness about his own future there is the implied assertion of some inviolable identity, as if neither adverse nor favorable conditions can change what he is. His sense of identity is grounded in the past and cannot be affected by the future; in this sense, his identity is always anachronistic. It seems that from the very beginning Paul has what he wants--his mother--and any other relationship with the changing world around him is just interference, static, meaningless noise. In a way, the world does not have anything to give him, and Paul, accordingly, does not want to give anything to the world. When he is about to begin looking for work, the narrator observes that "nothing he had was of any commercial value" (89), which is a remarkable expression of Paul's inability to interact with his contemporary environment. To participate in any exchange, any contact with the world, he would have to submit to the economy of waiting, of desire, of giving and taking, and this whole process is repulsive to him in its fluidity and mutability, taking him away from the stable center of his mother. Without a "commercial value," without a part of himself which is exchangeable for something else, Paul in effect relinquishes life itself, because the only thing not exchangeable for something else is death. Thus he focuses narcissistically on a self-identity immune to any change or development, an identity grounded in the mother figure. Even more explicitly, he rejects happiness in the world, despite the insistence of his mother, who "seemed to fight for his very life against his own will to die" (256). His indifference or hostility towards the world is what she sees as a "slow suicide" (256), where

consciousness and identity become secondary and expendable, mere distractions from the main thing--the oblivion of the unconscious.

This teleological suspension of life sounds very similar to Freud's concept of the "death instinct." But the death instinct is not merely a regressive wish for unity with the mother; the instinct here has to be seen in its duality, its internal and externalized manifestations. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud defines a split in the death instinct, where

> a portion of the instinct is diverted towards the external world and comes to light as an instinct of aggressiveness and destructiveness. In this way instinct itself [which is always regressive] could be pressed into the service of Eros [progressive], in that the organism was destroying some other thing, whether animate or inanimate, instead of destroying its own self. Conversely, any restriction of this regressiveness directed outwards would be bound to increase the self-destruction, which is in any case proceeding. (*FR* 754)

The part of the death instinct which is invested in the world in a more healthy way can also be defined as the death instinct with "commercial value" which Paul Morel has suppressed. It is also the part of him whose task it is to engage with the world and participate in the progress of life itself. However, Paul does not recognize the ongoing exchange with the world as life. For him, the worldly interactions are an unnecessary delay, a mediation between beginning and end, birth and death, past and future--the elements which he wants to make coincide with and not merely follow each other in time. That is why he insists on a static, self-referential definition of life, where the world itself, in its variety and mobility,

appears as an obstacle.

The regressiveness of instinct finds another metaphorical link to Paul through his art[28], where he is fond of repetition rather than progression. His favorite architectural style, for example, is based on "horizontals" (177) (rather than verticals), and is that of "the bowed Norman arches of the church, repeating themselves" (178). We can cite Freud here in his definition of instinct in *An Autobiographical Study*: "[The] essentially conservative character of instincts is exemplified by the phenomena of the compulsion to repeat" (*FR* 36). The fact that Paul's behavior is grounded in instincts is not what makes it abnormal or self-destructive; the important thing is that his instincts are inwardly directed and unable to form a connection with the external world. In this way, the instincts become deadly and the self collapses under the pressure of holding back all senses which were meant to extend outward into the world and cathect with people in their specificity. When the senses gravitationally surround the self, instead of forming connections between the self and its environment, the result is a shrinking of the horizon, a psychological dead-end, where future and past become circular and meaningless.

That is why, in Paul's distorted perception of a future which veers back towards the mother, anticipation coalesces with memory and keeps moving in a circle. Thus, after Paul declares, yet again, his resolution to renounce marriage and to remain with his mother, he feels a vague inkling of repetition, of the impossibility of a forward direction: "The feeling that things were going in a circle made him mad" (348). Sometimes he tries to rebel against this repetition, and manages, indirectly through the narrator, to articulate this frustration: "he felt condemned by her [his mother]. Then sometimes he hated her, and pulled at her

bondage. His life wanted to free itself of her. It was like a circle where life turned back on itself, and got no farther" (342). But it is this circle that attracts him, or more precisely, that motivates and directs the death instinct in him back towards an earlier version of himself when he was a part of his mother. There is only one brief occasion when Paul locates his self in the future--when he first becomes enamored with Clara: "He felt that he would go mad if Monday did not come at once. On Monday he would see her again. All himself was pitched there, ahead. Sunday intervened. He could not bear it. . . . He was coming nearer to himself--he could see himself, real, somewhere in front" (302). But even when with Clara, who is his most likely candidate for a normal future, what he shares with her, when he is close enough to trust her in their intimacy, is his intention to abandon her for his mother: "[I want to go] somewhere in a pretty house near London with my mother" (349). Even Clara cannot make Paul break away from the pathological maternal influence; in the key scene of Clara's acceptance into the family, we see how, ironically, "she completed the circle" (320), thus asserting once again the regressive direction of Paul's life, to which she unwittingly contributes. This circularity of purpose is the opposite of desire, because the self-contained and self-referential perfection of the circle does not allow delay, need, insufficiency.

The mother figure possesses the retroactive feature of complete, contemporary realization, the memory of the immediacy of maternal response, the "oneness with the environment" (12) that Rosenman talks about. In this idealized maternal atmosphere, desire, in the strict sense, does not seem to exist, because what the infant wants is neither postponed nor denied, but received without delay "from the mother's apparently automatic responses to its [the infant's] needs" (12). This state of oneness will continue to exist subliminally in the

memory of the adult, and in fact, as Faith Pullin reminds us, "Paul was never able to develop an adult relationship with his mother" (52).[29] Paul has only the unconscious memory of the only possible situation in which the need would be simultaneous with its fulfillment. A nurturing environment of this kind, naturally, would not be compatible with any change or desire; it would be self-sufficient. In the supreme wholeness which Paul projects onto his mother, she does not even need the son (just as she does not need the father)--she is a given influence in his life, but his impact on hers is never completely realized, as she waits for him to grow up or to succeed in the world in order to fulfill his function as a son.

In a way, the basic conflict between mother and son lies in their incompatible definitions and expectations of motherhood. While growth and success in the world are the things that the mother needs to see in Paul, the things that would extend her own existence into the world and perpetuate herself beyond her own death, they are precisely the things he is trying to avoid in order to stay with his mother, to recreate the anachronistic unity with her, a unity inherently incompatible with his existence in the world. Thus his mother seems sad when he declares his intention not to marry (348), instead of being happy about his unconditional devotion to her. In fact, Paul is trying to make his life completely independent of contingencies and changes--every new thing frightens him (88). In his fear of change (especially the fear that his mother is growing old), he seeks to imitate the maternal power, which, as far as he is concerned, is given and immutable like a mathematical constant. What he forgets, however, is that his connection with the mother is constant precisely because it remains inactive, in the past, while his life will be subject to change because its purpose is located in the future.

The desire to avoid change becomes apparent in the way Paul and Miriam "dread the spring" (192), although their connection is based on a shared love of nature, and the season of spring is the most triumphant manifestation of nature. Again, the irreconcilable duality of life takes over--nature seems to consist of two different phenomena (or, rather, one phenomenon and one metaphysical state). While Miriam and Paul share a love for the abstract, transcendental, capitalized Nature (149, 166), they conscientiously avoid nature as it appears in the physical embodiment of things when life is resurrected in spring. With the coming of spring, the feeling of restraint, of withholding something from the world, emerges in Paul: "Paul was afraid of the things he mustn't do" (167). He is not prepared to commit himself to any connection with his environment, especially in the physically demanding spring time. For him, the renewal, the re-nurturing of the physical processes with the coming of spring is grounded in a dangerous, endless succession, in which one life follows another but cannot co-exist with it. Thus the occasion of Easter, the ultimate symbol of revival into nature, of celebrating the physical viability of God as body, is here counterpoised against the image of a body which refuses to take part in the natural physical interaction--namely, the image of the narcissi with their "subtle scent" (167) and, inevitably, with their Freudian connotations. The narcissistic tendency of Paul is defined by his refusal to engage with the world in a reciprocity of affection. This lack of reciprocity is also implied in Freud's definition of this phenomenon in "On Narcissism: An Introduction": "The libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism" (*FR* 564). In the case of Paul Morel, all possibilities for full external connections with the world are ignored and he remains isolated,

"detached," cold and, ultimately, alone. To celebrate the resurrection of spring and Easter and the philosophy of life they imply would mean accepting the normal relationship of mother and son, in which the latter is the re-incarnation of the former displaced in time.

However, the last thing Paul wants is to relate to his mother as a son--that would mean letting her depart and taking over her life, so to speak, assuming the responsibility for her existence as well.[30] On the contrary, Paul wants to share his life with his mother's, not to substitute it for her own. That is why he is so upset contemplating the inevitable discrepancy in time between mother and child: "Why can't a man have a young mother? What is she old for?" (240). But the impossibility of chronological co-incidence of the different generations has been foreshadowed as early as the beginning of the novel, where we learn that "Gertrude Morel was very ill when the boy was born" (15), which emphasizes the crucial incompatibility of mother and child. It is significant that in this sentence she is referred to by the proper noun of her own name, rather than as "Mrs. Morel" or "the mother." The absence of a generic reference to the mother makes it clear that it is her personality, her self that is in conflict with the birth of a child which signals and sanctions the eventual death of this self. That is why she is "feeling sick to death" (33) at the moment of Paul's birth, as well as during the birth of her other children (33)--here, Paul is not an exception, because making his mother sick "to death" is only the normal course of events, the announcement of the substitution of the mother by the child.

Similarly, the child would be expected to leave the home; significantly, the children do lose their status as specific personalities and become indistinguishable from each other: "They're all alike. . . . [They] don't care about helping you, once they've gone" (99). The

implication is that their task is to succeed the mother, to gain a distance in time and space which would not allow her to recognize them as persons any more simply because they are no longer contemporaneous with her but join the more or less anonymous body of future generations. Thus William, for example, leaves the home, embraces the fate of just another child released in the world, and, accordingly, he is no longer able to recognize his mother on his deathbed (135). The absence of recognition comes to show that the mother is always contemporaneous with the promise, the potential of her children but not with themselves. At the time mother and child co-exist, the child has not yet been developed and realized in the world; when this happens, the mother has to remain in the past, so that it is impossible to know her as a person. In other words, in the normal mother-child dynamics, neither of them can know the other as a specific individual--from the point of view of each, the other has to grow distant, abstract, archetypal, never co-existent. It is only as an abstract influence that each of them is implicated in the other's self, but the two selves, in their specificity of worldly circumstances, are forever separated; each has to form connections with its own environment, and not with the anachronistic past or future embodied in the other.

Paul himself rebels against this course of events; he tries to get closer to his mother in her personality, to the point where he indirectly identifies with her illness, and both mother and son suffer at the same time: "He had a dislocated shoulder, and the second day acute bronchitis set in. His mother was pale as death now, and very thin. She would sit and look at him, then away into space. There was something between them that neither dared mention" (365). (Similarly, later, when she is on her deathbed, he attempts to do the same: "It was almost as if he were agreeing to die also" [389].) But this attempt to re-create the symbiosis,

the primeval connection between mother and child by uniting them in their illness, understandably has to fail, because Paul's physical life is bound for the future (therefore his body[31] cannot follow where his mother's body is going), while hers is turned to the past. The two can just pass by each other at the tenuous point where past and future intersect. Interestingly enough, the cause of Paul's illness in this episode, the illness that brings him close to his mother, is his fight with Baxter Dawes--a fight in which Paul's mind is overcome by blind instinct, and it is this blind instinct that, unwittingly, draws him back to the mother to share, or at least make a feeble attempt to duplicate, her illness.

During the actual fight, when he encounters Dawes, instinct takes over reason: "Pure instinct brought his hands to the man's neck. . . . He was a pure instinct, without reason or feeling. His body, hard and wonderful in itself, cleaved against the struggling body of the other man; not a muscle in him relaxed. He was quite unconscious, only his body had taken upon itself to kill this other man" (363). Immediately after this, his instinct is re-directed towards the mother: "He wanted to get to his mother--he must get to his mother--that was his blind intention" (364). Thus it becomes clear that the rage against Baxter Dawes is not really an instinct to kill, but a self-destructive, inwardly directed instinct to return to his mother, to imitate and live in her own illness in immediate physical identification. The threat of Baxter, or any other motive of self-preservation has nothing to do with it. It is characteristic of Paul's psychological experience that his instincts are withdrawn from the world and coiled back on themselves. In fact, we know that if Paul is faced with an external danger, his instincts would not awaken with such force as when they are faced with internal reasons: he insists that he cannot approach a fight directly, but must choose a tool which will work

between him and the enemy to arrive at a mediated death: "No; I haven't the least sense of the 'fist.' It's funny. With most men there's the instinct to clench the fist and hit. It's not so with me. I should want a knife or a pistol or something to fight with" (343). In other words, when it is a question of an encounter with external phenomena in the world, Paul regards them as distractions and cannot fully engage in them--he needs a "tool" to approach death in the world, just as he uses Miriam as a "tool" to approach life in the world. When it comes to his own internal motives, however, when the fight is not simply a fight with a stranger but is meant to resolve the deeply personal tension between Paul and his mother, then instinct comes into play and direct assault takes over any mediated, tool-assisted, conscious approach. That is why, in this encounter with Baxter Dawes, Paul is able to form, as Freud would put it, a cathexis with an object (the apparent object of his hatred), to invest his emotional energy into it. Ultimately, however, this is revealed as a false or incomplete cathexis, because it is not a connection with the outside world as much as it is a narcissistically folded connection with his own self. That is why the apparent cathexis collapses upon itself and can be traced back to its roots in the desire to identify with the mother's illness.

His desire to co-exist with his mother makes him sometimes violent in his insistence that she should behave as if she is young, as if he is the man in the house, as if they are husband and wife or lovers. Thus Mrs. Morel is described as a "beloved" (68) or "a sweetheart" (92) in relation to Paul, and when he brings her flowers, she accepts them like "a woman accepting a love-token" (69). He has to remind her to play her part in this make-believe: "You forget I'm a fellow taking his girl for an outing" (239). It is Paul, and

not so much his mother, who needs to perpetuate the illusion that "The two shared lives" (114). The theme of their mock courtship, or a relationship of simultaneity in time and space, builds up throughout the novel, leading to the most impossible statement of all: "The mother and son were in ecstasy together" (125). The phrase "mother and son" signifies the mythology of the archetypal pair, and thus implies the archetypal impossibility of such co-incidence, if the two people participate in it *as* people rather than as archetypes. At the same time, the word "ecstasy" (or, elsewhere in the novel, "the excitement of lovers" [92]), suggests exactly such a relationship between two independent, simultaneously adult (given the sexual connotations) people, who can perceive each other in their specificity and not anonymity. This relationship is, in turn, inherently incompatible with the unit "mother and son," because it is anthropomorphic, concretely human and not mythologically abstract.

Paul's desire to make his mother a human, accessible figure of concrete dimensions can be seen in his painting too. The act of painting itself is always associated with the presence of Mrs. Morel; they are the two things he cares about: "still he stuck to his painting, and still he stuck to his mother. Everything he did was for her" (114). More importantly, the act of painting and the presence of the mother are physically compatible and can occur simultaneously: "He loved to sit at home, alone with his mother, at night, working and working" (158). Paul himself admits that she is a necessary condition of his work: "I can do my best things when you sit there in your rocking-chair, mother" (158). Thus his painting emerges as a way for him to arrive at a metaphorical, mediated co-existence with her. After the death of Mrs. Morel, Paul's work is affected most of all: "Everything seemed to have gone smash for the young man. He could not paint. The picture he finished on the day of his

mother's death--one that satisfied him--was the last thing he did" (406). It is clear that being an artist, even though it remains open as an option at the end of the novel, is not what draws Paul away from his mother and forces him to go on on his own. Throughout the novel, painting is in alliance with motherhood and subordinate to it.

Unlike the stereotypical opposition between home and work, in which the beginning of work means leaving the home and the mother figure and venturing outward into the world, Paul's real work, his painting, is concentrated in the home; it becomes parallel, and not antagonistic, to the mother. Just as the mother's influence is the anonymous, impersonal force in Paul's life, so painting requires the "impersonal, deliberate gaze of an artist" (186). Furthermore, his art begins as an attempt to capture the world in its fluid indeterminacy reminiscent of the archetypal maternal presence: "there's scarcely any shadow in it; it's more shimmery, as if I'd painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not the stiffness of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real living. The shape is a dead crust. The shimmer is inside really" (153). This explanation is given to Miriam, who is the first person Paul seeks to dissolve in general femininity. On the contrary, when it is a question of his mother's identity, he is looking for the specificity of a person, and not for some abstract, undefined presence. Accordingly, the function of art changes depending on whom he is directing it to. In the beginning, his main audience is Miriam, and so his paintings emphasize the need to uncover the underlying sameness of the world, the degree to which people are repetitions of each other and shapes are just different permutations imposed on the uniform, vital foundation of life. Similarly, when Paul is with Clara, he has the same perception of an inherent sameness permeating all experience: "The

little, interesting diversity of shapes had vanished from the scene; all that remained was a vast, dark matrix of sorrow and tragedy, the same in all the houses and the river-flats and the people and the birds; they were only shapen differently" (271).

Unlike the paintings (and feelings) Paul shares with Miriam and Clara, which focus on some primal, inarticulate force, some deeper and instinctual being, his art later in the novel, the art which is more like a satellite of the mother figure, reflects his obsession with her as a specific human being. (Thus, after her death, he denounces the way his father reacts: "He [Walter Morel] never thought of her personally" [398].) In a way, Paul's affections are diametrically reversed--he ascribes the more typical maternal qualities to the two women, while he endows his mother with characteristics normally associated with lovers, and this reversal is also visible in his art. The actual subject and style of his paintings are also significant in that they struggle for concrete shapes and outlines: "He loved to paint large figures, full of light, but not merely made up of lights and cast shadows, like the impressionists; rather definite figures that had a certain luminous quality. . . . And these he fitted into a landscape, in what he thought true proportion" (299). In a way, his paintings attempt to contain and limit the unknown, overwhelming qualities of light and shadow, to mold them into specific figures, just as Paul himself is trying to fit motherhood into a concrete person. The larger plain, the landscape in his pictures, remains secondary, merely a background against which the figures loom up. There is a certain force and stubbornness in the way he "fits" the figures into their place, as if this process requires some unnatural, extra effort on his part. There is no sense of ease and harmony in the way the human and the natural images co-exist on the canvas, just as the co-existence of Paul with his mother is

necessarily forced and painful, because her essence, in relation to her children, should be regarded as natural, immortal in its subsequent reincarnations, and no longer concretely human.

But Paul wants too much, and it is impossible to rebel against the natural course of events; the mother as a human being can accompany him only so far: "he would have her walk with him more than she was able" (300). This statement is not merely literally true, but also relevant in terms of his rejection of the chronological side of motherhood, which compels the son to go on living in a time not animated or contained by the mother's presence. And it is difficult for Paul to imagine the existence of anything which is not inhabited by the mother's spirit. In his personal mythology of the mother, he can only relate to her through her spirit; if he is excessively concerned with her body as well, with the way she looks and with how young she is, it is because he rebels against the necessity of her body's decay. In other words, it is the body that gives way under the pressure of time--it is the thing that fails to co-exist, to relate to the son. Thus, while Paul is looking for co-existence, the body of the mother, the foundation of her definition as a specific person, emerges as the main anachronistic element, the thing that lags behind and decays into the nebulae of the past. Thus the body is of special interest to Paul, because it serves as a measure of the biological passage of time--an indicator of time discrepancy, a measure of how contemporaneous the mother really is with the son. And the discrepancy in time marks the extent to which Paul can be independent of the mother figure. As T. H. Adamowski observes, "[l]ike garlic flowers against vampires, sexuality [the body] becomes a way of defending one's ego from the terrible maw of the object" ("Intimacy" 83), especially against "the *Ur*-object, the

mother" (87). The physicality of the body is then the Achilles's heel of motherhood--the heel which is vulnerable because it is anachronistic and not contemporaneous with the rest of the mother's image.

Paradoxically, it is precisely this desire on the part of Paul to relate to his mother at a personal level, to imitate a cathexis with her in the world, in the impossible physical circumstances distorted by the discrepancy between the respective time frames of mother and son, that saves him in the end. In his insistence upon a personal connection, his desire that the mother should acknowledge him as a concrete man and not a generic child, he is in effect looking for a place for himself in motherhood. In other words, if he wants to belong to the realm of the maternal, he has to make room in it for himself; thus the main question he poses to his mother always is: "What's the good of that to me?" (241). Similarly, he reads the meaning of the world in terms of himself, and his mother criticizes his conviction that whatever people do, they do it always in relation to him: "You always think people are meaning things for you. But they don't" (96). Thus he cannot admit that the world is simply out there, and that the events of life are external to him (thus, at the end, the thing that tempts him to renounce the world is that "he had no place in it!" [416]). On the contrary, Paul is always narcissistically involved in the phenomena around him, as if everything happens for his benefit. From the very beginning, he is "suffering convulsions of self-consciousness" (71), which suggests that he sees the world only in so far as the world concerns him. Self-consciousness, in the novel, is always associated with contraction, rather than expansion, of the world, and is described as "shrinking" (88, 89). It shows again Paul's tendency to withdraw his emotional attachment from the world at large within himself. This

is also the reason why he is so shy when he has to say his name, for example, prompting the narrator to remark: "It is curious that children suffer so much at having to pronounce their own names" (106); the painful experience of acknowledging his own name means that he is to sanction an image of himself which is released into the world. Such an act would seem completely meaningless, given that the whole experience of life so far has been, for Paul, a one-way exchange--he is concerned exclusively with what inner representations he has of the world and finds it difficult to think of the world as having objective existence, an alien realm where his own name will be circulated. Thus the first two-way introduction to life is not so much threatening as irrelevant to him--if the world means only in so far as it is internalized by him, he does not need to justify his existence in the world, to externalize part of himself whose function is to signify himself, to mean himself in another system of meaning which is not his own.

Paul's desire to internalize external phenomena is also applied to motherhood when he feels the need to make the mother figure personally meaningful to him. But customizing the maternal space in this way is tantamount to making motherhood less complete and self-sufficient and more user-friendly, so to speak. That is why when Paul decides to open a niche for *his own* experience of the mother, he in effect undermines the very foundation of the image of absolute and unconditional motherhood he has created for himself. In his attempt to insert himself in the maternal space, Paul in fact denounces the immutability and circularity of that space. His desire, then, can be defined as an impulse to find a place for desire itself, in so far as desire is defined as some sort of deficiency, within a motherhood which, as he initially sees it, is unconditional and not contingent, which does not await its

realization but departs from it with the passage of time, and which does not admit of development. In seeking a place for desire Paul is, in effect, seeking to insert some difference or displacement into the self-sufficiency of the mother, because her self-sufficiency means there is no place for him in it ("What's the good of that to me?" [241]). In the end, Paul gets to the stage where he can feel the distance: "His mother had really supported his life. He had loved her; they two had, in fact, faced the world together. Now she was gone, and forever behind him was the gap in life" (403). Finally, Paul re-enters the normal course of events[32]--the emotions he associates with the death of his mother are actually reflections of something which should have happened a lot earlier, has happened a lot earlier, physically--his separation from her. And indeed, by the time the concept of motherhood can be legitimately used--by the time the baby is born--the child is already differentiated from the mother and no longer part of her.

Thus her death is a psychological re-enactment of the physical separation of mother and child which took place a long time ago, except this time the roles are reversed: instead of the son, this time it is the mother who leaves and interrupts the symbiotic bond, and instead of birth, this interruption is called death. As Barbara Ann Schapiro points out, Paul's killing of Mrs. Morel invokes and opposes the process of birth: "The act . . . reverses and vengefully attacks the original oral relationship between mother and child" (52). Hence the image of the mother as a child during the final stages of her illness: "Paul carried his mother downstairs. She lay simply, like a child" (372). At the crucial moment, too, when she is given the overdose of morphine, she gets as close as possible to the final aim, the ultimate destination of her regression--she is completely trusting and seemingly innocent and helpless, like an

infant: "she went on with the draught. She was obedient to him [Paul] like a child. He wondered if she knew" (391). There is some fear that she will not die--her condition is always "the same" (388), and Paul complains to Clara that "it seems as if she [Mrs. Morel] would never go--never!" (384). But somehow the most frightening thing about this prolonged expectation is that she seems to be able to live through Christmas: "'She'll live over Christmas,' said Annie. They were both full of horror. 'She won't,' he [Paul] replied grimly. 'I s'll give her morphia'" (390). Thus the approaching of Christmas precipitates Paul and Annie's decision to help their mother die, and it even appears as the sole apparent cause of that decision. Christmas, with its special significance as the ultimate celebration of birth, is exactly the moment they are waiting for, in reverse. Similarly, at the moment of her death everything becomes its mirror image--when Paul looks at the dead body of his mother and wants to say how well she looks[33], he chooses, through the narrator, the following description: "The mouth was a little open as if wondering from the suffering, but her face was young, her brow clear and white as if *life* had never touched it" (396) [italics mine]. Instead of seeing her body untouched by death, which would have been the usual remark to make, Paul has a vision of her as a newborn, a creature who has never yet had a chance to live. Thus the process of regression is completed, and the mother has accomplished her role as a child--she has done for her son in death what he refused to do for her in life--go away. She has also shown that Paul is an other in relation to her. If Mrs. Morel regresses back in a reverse birth, then, as in birth, she needs an Other, an accomplice–hence Paul's role in her death. Just as otherness is essential in order to "give" birth, it also becomes significant to Paul when he has to "give" death *to someone*.

Significantly, when Paul is called upon to perform the reciprocal role of the adult, the parent, he fails. When he has to carry his mother down the stairs, he feels incapable of handling this responsibility: "'I'm so frightened of these beastly stairs,' she said. And he was frightened, too. He would let Leonard do it another time. He felt he could not carry her" (372). While she obediently fulfills her role as a child to the end, he cannot reciprocate as a parent but has lapses back into the image of a child. Thus he and Annie are specifically described as pranksters sharing a private joke when they devise the plan for killing their mother: "both of them laughed together like two conspiring children" (390). It is as if Paul remains a child even with the death of his mother--he cannot play the part of the adult even when she makes things much easier for him by undertaking the role of the child. In her unwillingness to die, she also re-enacts his own unwillingness to be born, to separate from her. His inability to respond to this reversal of roles, to accept his mother as a reflection of himself, is confirmed by his inability to look at his reflection in the mirror: "He dared not meet his own eyes in the mirror; he never looked at himself" (409)--it is not that he is afraid of what he might see, but of the possibility that he might not see anything: "there was nothing to get hold of" (409). This means that there is a narcissistic fear in him that he might not see his reflection, that perhaps the world would not return his image. This is the first sign that his life is becoming open-ended, and that he does not expect to see himself because he no longer projects onto the future an image of the past--in other words, he does not know what lies ahead. As he is no longer trying to superimpose past and future in a chronological shortcut, he begins to live in the present, which does not have any reference points in time at all: "There was no Time, only Space" (416). His connection with the mother is no longer an

anachronism, not because she has abandoned the past, but because he has ceased to bring her into the present. In the end, he has to depart from the mother's influence by realizing the meaning of birth for the first time--leaving all familiar space, letting go of all props and safety nets (Miriam, for example [415]), and "starting again" (399).

It is the duality of his instinct for survival that saves him. On the one hand, his need to make a place for himself in the realm of motherhood shows signs of a narcissistic involvement with himself; on the other hand, by seeking a place for a gap, for desire (which is also a place for delayed fulfillment, for difference), he is interested in a differentiation which would cancel the normal narcissistic impulse to identify oneself with the object of one's love. In other words, the very process of looking for a complete identity with the mother figure implies Paul's need to see himself taken into account. In this way, he is differentiating the state of motherhood as it exists, self-sufficient, on its own, from motherhood as meaningful to him, and the mother in general from a particularized, customized motherhood which concerns him personally. The realization that he is only in so far as he is different from the mother is a painful one, since it makes his impulse to get closer to his mother a self-destructive impulse. Thus the choice he is faced with throughout the novel is one between an ontologically validated narcissism (which would mean actual survival of the ego and so would be life-affirming) and a mythologically validated narcissism (which would destroy him by sacrificing him to the myth of the mother, and so would be life-denying). Paul's task of survival at the end of the novel requires him not to choose one or the other, but to reconcile the two, to accept their paradoxical simultaneity. His embracing of the world in the end, then, also has double meaning--it signifies not only his release from

the mother, but her victory over Paul as well--she has managed to transform him, from an aspiring lover and a contemporaneous adult, into a son, a child who remains forever at odds, chronologically speaking, with the mother. Thus he is both closer to her *as a son*, and infinitely far from her as a person. Similarly, the difference inserted between the two at the moment of death is the equivalent of the separation at birth. When he finally has to accept this separation, he acknowledges her as a mother, and himself as her son. That is why, paradoxically, the cup of poison he gives her signifies his gesture of taking off the pretense that they are lovers and accepting her in her more abstract maternal role. Killing her, then, becomes tantamount to calling her "mother." The killing thus marks the difference between Paul's final words to her before she dies: "You'll sleep, my love" (391) and his first words after he has seen her dead and "untouched by life," after she has completed the process of absolute return to the birth/death point of separation, of, as the chapter title suggests, release: "Mother, mother!" (396). The release is the freeing of motherhood from the anachronistic lock in which it has been kept. Ultimately, Paul has freed himself from the mother and he has also stopped resisting her at the same time.

Notes

1. As Thomas Caramagno observes in relation to Woolf, "[t]he illusion of perfect mothering creates endless hunger" (248).

2. The impossibility of actual physical relationship here is seen by some critics as the result of a body/spirit split. Thus Mark Schorer identifies the novel's main theme as "the 'split' between kinds of love, physical and spiritual, which the son develops" (67). Similarly, James Cowan observes in *Sons and Lovers* a "split between spiritual and sexual love" ("Fallacies" 115). Cowan quotes Freud in his description of people who suffer from such a split: "Where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love. They seek objects which they do not need to love, in order to keep their sensuality away from the objects they love" (qtd. in Cowan, "Fallacies" 115) [from Freud, "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols, trans. James Strachey, (1957), 11: 183]. Another critic, Daniel Weiss, argues that "Gertrude's careful distinction between the mind and the body . . . leads, in her life with Paul, to a love affair of the spirit" (94). Similarly, Charles Rossman points out that "she [Gertrude] dismisses his sexual impulses as something base, preferring to love him spiritually" (263). Giles Mitchell adds that "[h]is mother presents to Paul a split image of herself . . . [and] Paul therefore develops a double image of woman as soul and body, as virgin and as prostitute" (215). Paul's problem, however, is that he cannot maintain such a split–what he wants is a complete relationship. If a stable body/spirit separation could be found in the novel, that would have taken care of Paul's dilemma about how to love his mother in the first place. While Cowan argues that "Lawrence's purpose was to heal the split" ("Fallacies" 115), it seems that in the case of Paul Morel and his mother what is needed is for Paul to be able to introduce and sustain such a split, rather than "heal" it. But the novel does seem, as Marguerite Howe suggests, to "deal explicitly with the origin of the mind-body dichotomy" (1). For more on the mind / body split in *Sons and Lovers*, see Scott Sanders, *D. H. Lawrence: The World of the Five Major Novels*, pp. 48-53.

3. David Cavitch points out that "Paul identifies both girls [Miriam and Clara] with his mother and he explores the errors and consequences of his illusion of her in his actual love affairs with them" (*World* 24). In other words, for Paul the reality of actual love takes a detour through the fantasy of the mother–the physical takes a detour through the spiritual. Or, in the words of Adrienne Gavin, "he [Paul] puts words between himself and her [Miriam]" (29).

4. If the mother in *Sons and Lovers* is "a mother who devours and uses her son" (Clayton 209), then the only part of him which cannot be devoured appears to be his body. As T. H. Adamowski observes, "[i]t is his [Paul's] physicality . . . that seems to be indigestible" ("Intimacy" 82), and so he cannot be eaten / incorporated by Miriam or the mother figure. Adamowski goes on to say that "[o]nly a flesh defiantly flesh can resist such a dematerialization" ("Intimacy" 84).

5. In "D. H. Lawrence's Mother as Sleeping Beauty: The 'Still Queen' of His Poems and Fictions," Judith Farr draws a parallel between the sexual connotations of the act of awakening of Sleeping Beauty and a similar but thwarted attempt in *Sons and Lovers*, where "the dead Mrs. Morel becomes Sleeping Beauty; and Lawrence / Paul, kissing her in what is both farewell and an acknowledgment of passion long suppressed, is unable to awaken her" (201). What Farr calls "the failed kiss" (202) signifies the inherent impossibility of a sexual encounter between Paul and his mother.

6. For more on the Oedipal theme in *Sons and Lovers*, see Giles Mitchell, "*Sons and Lovers* and the Oedipal Project," *DHLR* 13.3 (Fall 1980): 209-19, and Evelyn J. Hinz, "*Sons and Lovers*: The Archetypal Dimensions of Lawrence's Oedipal Tragedy," *DHLR* 5.1 (Spring 1972): 26-53. Daniel Weiss suggests that "*Sons and Lovers* is a comedy of the Oedipus complex" (110). The novel's exclusive focus on the mother, however, seems to resist interpretations which, like the Oedipal one, propose a configuration of three figures, rather than a binary mother-son problem. Daniel Schneider, for example, argues that "the oedipal problem does not entirely explain Paul Morel's behavior" (69).

7. In order to make progress, Paul needs to find the mother insufficient, either spiritually or, more likely, physically. Some critics are optimistic: Giles Mitchell, for example, argues that the "euthanasic death of his mother has revealed that within Paul the inchoate, oceanic, undifferentiated mother is dying and that Paul can learn to nurture himself, to bear his fate and master it, instead of being its helpless object" (218).

8. Daniel Schwarz envisions a slightly different chronological development of Mrs. Morel's maternal power: "As she gradually establishes her dominant position, *she* assumes the role of father" ("Speaking" 259). The present argument will seek to show that this power of self-sufficiency is not progressively acquired over time, but rather regressively retrieved from the past and projected onto the present.

9. Here I cannot agree with Faith Pullin in her observation that "the true love in *Sons and Lovers* is between Paul and his father" (52). Their relationship, on the contrary, is never articulated in positive terms, and what Paul needs is the father's absence, the knowledge of his exclusion.

10. The fact that Paul's existential choices are wholly based on his relationship with the mother cannot be overemphasized. In "The Two Analyses of D. H. Lawrence," James Cowan, for example, suggests that "[f]or both Hamlet and Paul, these psychological issues come down to the question of whether 'to be or not to be'" ("Two Analyses" 150). But this dilemma is not the result of Paul's interaction with the world; rather, it revolves around the possibility of his access to the mother figure. As Marguerite Howe points out, without the mother, Paul suffers from "chronic uncertainty about whether or not [he] actually exists" (17). Similarly, Barbara Ann Schapiro argues that in *Sons and Lovers*, there is a "[l]ack of faith in the mother's independent reality and the comcomitant [sic] sense of one's own insubstantiality" (23).

11. The mother as a goddess, a traditional trope, is also present here; as Maurice Beebe points out, "[g]ift-offerings to the mother-queen Gertrude provide a running motif throughout the novel" ("Lawrence's" 544). However, what Paul ultimately seeks is to disrupt the completeness of the mother figure, so that she can experience insufficiency, and therefore desire.

12. Miriam's qualities are not necessarily her own, but Paul's projections. As Adrienne Gavin remarks, "Paul does not see Miriam clearly, and is obsessed with what she reflects of himself" (29). And Diane Bonds points out that "Paul needs for Miriam to remain non-sexual and virginal" (143). Miriam emerges as a faithful reflection of Paul; thus Barbara Ann Schapiro speaks of "her [Miriam's] status as the object of Paul's narcissistic projections" (37), with the result that Paul "is never able to relate to Miriam as *other* than self" (40).

13. The mother, unlike Paul himself, can recognize that her power is external to her sons and no longer essential; Mrs. Morel knows that what she can control and relate to is the existence of Paul *in the world*, rather than in a private or fully shared bond between them. In the words of Charles Rossman, Mrs Morel "presses her sons toward the ideal vision she holds of them" (263), and that vision excludes any physicality, any direct connection in her control of her sons. As Daniel Schwarz remarks, there is in Paul a "tension between *extrinsic* standards inculcated by his mother and his inherent need to fulfill himself" ("Speaking" 265) [italics mine].

14. This scene has another important function as well. In "Play, Creativity and Matricide: The Implications of Lawrence's 'Smashed Doll' Episode," Daniel Dervin argues that "[t]he immolation of Missis Arabella makes matricide feasible, and the question of whether the doll was alive to the children extends to the guilt of the young adults–which indeed seems minimal" (85). This is another example of the regressive fusion of past and present, as well as Paul's inability to distinguish between internal and external, dead and alive: "The inanimate [the doll] assumes qualities of life, the living [the mother] assumes the shape of death" (86).

15. As Daniel Dervin observes, the destruction of the doll signifies Paul's "simultaneous discovery and destruction of something" ("Play" 85). In other words, Paul is not really involved in a ritual of sacrifice here–since discovery and destruction happen simultaneously, we cannot say that he destroys *in order to* discover, so that the killing has an ulterior motive with relevance to the future.

16. That is why I cannot agree with William H. New, when he depicts Mrs. Morel as sharing Paul's regressive impulse: "The effect of this lack of moderation [in Mrs. Morel's love] is to perpetuate childlikeness in both boys even after they have physically grown up, and their roles as sons and lovers become confused. As a result they cannot . . . bring their physical hunger and their attachment to their family into any kind of living synthesis" (34).

17. As Daniel Weiss observes, Paul experiences "[t]he inevitable wish of the child that his mother remain young" (93), but even more than that, Paul's desire "is not even that his mother remain young, but that they be equal in age no matter what it is" (93).

18. Scott Sanders points out that "[m]ost of what she [Mrs. Morel] communicates to her son is nonverbal" (27); this appears to be true from Paul's point of view. Even though most of what she wants from him is to conquer the world on her behalf, Paul himself wishfully perceives her presence as "nonverbal" and therefore physical.

19. Some critics argue that, in fact, "Paul has never become an adult–he has never emerged as a separate human being" (Pullin 73).

20. Such co-incidence is not possible; thus Barbara Ann Schapiro speaks of "the paradox of the m/other as both external and internal, separate yet deeply identified with the self" (85).

21. Thus Faith Pullin remarks that "the Lawrentian hero can't cope with women except in their maternal aspect" (71).

22. Using people as tools or objects is itself an infantile relationship with the world. As Faith Pullin, remarks, Paul "never emerged from the infantile state in which other people are merely instruments" (49). The narcissistic urge to incorporate everything into the self shows an oral, pre-Oedipal attitude which persists in Paul's projections. Pullin goes on to say that "the mother, Miriam and Clara are all manipulated in Paul's painful effort at self-identification, the effort to become himself" (49). In "Self-Encounter and the Unknown Self: *Sons and Lovers*," John E. Stoll agrees: "The process of assuring her [Clara's] wholeness will ultimately lead to his own [Paul's]" ("Self-Encounter" 98-99).

23. It has to be remembered that Freud's original terminology in German used precisely this word to describe the unconscious, egotistical entity he was seeking to define. As Raymond E. Fancher notes in his *Psychoanalytic Psychology: The Development of Freud's Thought*, "the term that Freud actually used in his native German was "das Es," which when literally translated means "the it. As was their habit, Freud's English translators Latinized his original everyday term" (202).

24. Such differentiation is important to Lawrence; in the words of Elizabeth Campbell, "'self' is Lawrence's alpha and omega" (22).

25. Donald Mortland argues that Paul "tends to conceptualize experience, to raise the unconscious to the conscious level and thereby to negate the possibility of escape through the brute sensuality of the tavern. In short, his intellect raises a barrier between him and the vital currents of nature that are communicated on a purely sensual and unconscious level" (312). It seems, however, that his problem is the opposite–he resists consciousness in the same way and for the same reasons refuses to differentiate himself from the mother figure. Here, I can partially agree with Mortland that Paul's "solution is to extinguish his consciousness altogether" (312), with the objection that this is the problem, not the solution.

26. Paul's will to die cannot be attributed to Mrs. Morel's desire, as H. M. Daleski suggests: "Eventually Paul comes to realize that his mother is defrauding him of life" (55). Therefore, what Marguerite Howe calls "the myth of the mother as murderer" (13) remains a myth.

27. Maurice Beebe would disagree; he sees Paul as an artist who needs to interact with the world in order to create: "Portraits of the artist in fiction tend to fall into two groups: those which exalt the Ivory Tower concept of the artist as an exile from life and those which champion what I call the theme of the Sacred Fount, the view that the artist must experience life in order to depict it in art. . . . In *Sons and Lovers* . . . Lawrence wrote a portrait-of-the-artist novel of the Sacred Fount type" ("Lawrence's" 540-41).

28. Even though Maurice Beebe maintains that "Paul Morel is clearly a true artist" ("Lawrence's" 543), and consequently all women in Paul's life function as muses ("Lawrence's" 545), it seems more likely that art is just another expression of Paul's regressive ambitions regarding the mother figure. Mark Spilka observes: "We see no development in Paul's style; we see few examples of his art. . . . What we do see, however, is his artistic dedication to his mother" (366).

29. William H. New also agrees that "Paul's difficulties stem from his inability to adjust to or even to assess the difference between adult and childish relationships" (32-33). His attempt to relate to adults (including his mother) through identification with them which is meant to recreate the primordial union with the mother is bound to fail, resulting in resentment. As Barbara Ann Schapiro points out, "the mother is repeatedly cast as an object of the child's narcissistic rage" (27).

30. Natasha Saje argues that "Paul takes responsibility for his mother to the ultimate extent because his father does not meet her standards" (341). Assuming responsibility for the mother, however, would mean taking over life in her place, and not being contemporaneous with her, which is what Paul wants.

31. As T. H. Adamowski points out, "[f]lesh and bone preclude all dreams of identity and all refusals of the differences of otherness" ("Intimacy" 72). Just as his body cannot identify with the mother's body and die simultaneously with it, Paul himself cannot enter a physical relationship with Mrs. Morel–for actual love to take place, as John Haegert observes, Paul would have to "acquire in erotic union a new identity based upon the body's natural wisdom" ("Eros" 209), and participation of the body is not possible with the mother. That is why, as Anthony Burgess tells us, "[t]he near-incest it [the novel] depicts is unfulfilled and hence, unlike the classical Oedipus coupling, sterile" ("Lawrence" 117). Some critics would disagree. Gerald Doherty, for example, seems to argue in favor of the mother as a physical presence, as a body: "Miriam and Clara occupy the alternative poles of the dialectic between which Paul oscillates. But is there a middle ground between these extremes, one occupied by a character? In effect, Mrs. Morel inhabits this site, a space of comparative rest and consolidation, from which the oscillation between poles is judged and assessed. She occupies a kind of *literal* space, resistant to those radical metamorphoses of meaning to

which all other spaces are subject. . . . Not herself subject to vacillation, she represents the base in the *real* upon which Paul imagines himself constructing a stable identity" ("Dialectic" 339-40) [italics mine].

32. Critics cannot agree on the meaning of the novel's ending. Some interpret it as Paul's release from bondage; Elizabeth Campbell, for example, argues that "[t]he reconciliation which Paul achieves, however, is not so much with his mother, but with his own consciousness: his mother now forms part, but not the whole of his identity" (31), and Natasha Saje observes that "at the end of the novel, Paul is no longer dominated by melancholy" (344). While it is true that Paul enacts a separation from the mother figure, this split is not a matter of his conscious decision, but of his body's irreducibility to death. Duane Edwards tells us that "Paul reacts against being pressed into extinction" (83). Paul has invested everything in a belief in the mother's physical availability, so that with the physical disappearance of Mrs. Morel, his liberation is complete.

Other critics see the end of the novel as a continuation and confirmation of the mother's power over Paul. Thus Daniel Schwarz argues that "Mrs. Morel's will continues to dominate him after her death. In turning from darkness, he turns to another kind of darkness because he has not yet exorcised the ghost of his destructive oedipal relationship" ("Speaking" 274). Similarly, Donald Mortland agrees that "Paul is going to continue in his drift toward death" (305), and Gerald Doherty interprets the death as a problem in signification, rather than bodily absence: "Mrs. Morel's death creates a vacuum that voids the literal basis of sense, and that throws sense-making itself into question. It opens up a domain of non-meaning which no rhetoric can grasp or encompass" ("Dialectic" 340). And finally, Ira Bruce Nadel acknowledges the fact that Paul's body remains separate and alive, but does not give much significance to it: "[her death] painfully separates him [Paul] from her but does not release him. Ironically, it solidifies their bond" (235).

33. Daniel Weiss observes that in death Mrs. Morel "is, for the first time in the novel, sexually desirable [youth imagery] and seemingly available to the son" (97). Death, in other words, simultaneously invokes the body and denies physical contact.

CHAPTER 6: *THE RAINBOW*--MOTHERHOOD AND THE LIMIT

While *Sons and Lovers* poses the problem of the *temporal* integrity and identity of the mother, where she is forced to lead an anachronistic and unfulfilled existence, Lawrence's *The Rainbow* brings up and redefines the *spatial* metaphor of the circle in relation to motherhood. The underlying religious context of the novel, and especially the story of Noah, the flood, and the rainbow[1], serves to establish an inherent opposition between the circle as a complete, perfect entity, and the rainbow in its incompleteness[2] as an arc, which can be seen also as one half, the visible half, of the circle. The constant tension in the novel between the definite self of lovers and mothers, and their amorphous, instinctual need to belong to a larger whole, remains unresolved at the end,[3] and its resolution remains beyond human scope. The intensity with which the self is trying to become exclusive and unique, to reach the magical and undefined "beyond," is always undermined by its desire to belong, to share, to obliterate itself. This dualistic[4] balance cannot be destroyed as long as the self remains in the physical world. Even Ursula Brangwen's decisiveness at the end of the novel, reminiscent of the categorical gesture of Paul Morel's leave-taking of the world of the mother in *Sons and Lovers*, serves only to outline the limit of the self, the ultimate truth that the person has to choose either satisfaction or adventure, but cannot reconcile the two and by the very act of making a choice the self excludes a part of the world, remaining incomplete.

The place of motherhood in *The Rainbow* is also that of the borderline, of the liminal, of that which defines the self and limits it at the same time. Motherhood emerges as something vague and metaphysical, and at the same time concrete and physical, something on the edge of the self which is not totally of the self but partakes of the beyond in spirit, if not in the actual, physical reality. In a sense, motherhood has the tragic role of reminding the self of its inability to cross over into the beyond--the self tries to transcend itself, brings forth its most unselfish qualities, and brings into the world a child. But this process contains some irony, in that the self is reaching as far as possible but still brings the child, the product of that transcendental urge, back into the world. That is why motherhood shares the duality of the rainbow itself.[5]

In terms of religion, the rainbow or the arch has the existential duality of a bridge between life and death. In the words of John E. Stoll, "the rainbow is a symbolic device that reconciles horizontal and vertical, time and eternity, life and death" (*Novels* 126). The rainbow is at once the rejection of absolute destruction (the promise of God that there will not be another flood), and the acceptance of intermediate, worldly destruction, as the rainbow hides the other half of the circle. Although Graham Hough defines the rainbow as "the harmony of seen and unseen" (59), it seems that such harmony should belong to the invisible circle of which the rainbow forms a part. The rainbow itself, however, is only visible, and its invisible counterpart, its completion, lies underground, beyond the worldly reality. The existence of the hidden circle in fact announces the end, the necessary death of the visible arch. If the arch / rainbow is a circle whose other half is hidden but existent beyond the knowable world, then the arch is the acceptance of the objective world on its own terms, but

also the realization that it will never be enough by itself, and that the constant delay of desire will not cease until the other half has been recovered.

The novel begins with descriptions of that overwhelming impulse to transcend the actual, everyday, known universe [6] and stretch over into the "beyond." From the beginning, we see the superimposition of "two worlds" (459)--the normal, unadorned world is haunted by the temptations of another, larger world, whose structure is essentially different from that of reality in that it allows men to be genuinely free: ". . . where men moved dominant and creative, having turned their back on the pulsing heat of creation, and with this behind them, were set out to discover what was beyond, to enlarge their own scope and range and freedom" (43). The envisioned civilization establishes the opposition between the created human being and its own creative[7] impulse. While the human sensibility can be contained and surfeited by the simple natural cycles of living close to the land, such an existence would be undifferentiated, "unresolved" (43), unacknowledged. Conversely, the "other" world strives for supreme differentiation, sometimes going to the extreme of the individual incompatible with society at large. Thus when Anna Brangwen meets the Skrebensky family, she is mesmerized by their ability to be so removed from the imperfect reality they happen to be walking through: "She seemed to be breathing high, sharp air, as if she had just come out of a hot room. These strange Skrebenskys made her aware of another, freer element, in which each person was detached and isolated. Was not this her natural element? Was not the close Brangwen life stifling to her?" (241).

From the very first pages the novel announces its agenda to articulate, if not comprehend, the world. In all episodes of courtship and marriage there is the mystery of

embracing something without comprehending it first.[8] Such is the case of Tom Brangwen and Lydia: "Behind her, there was so much unknown[9] to him. When he approached her, he came to such a terrible painful unknown. How could he embrace it and fathom it" (94). Ultimately, all lovers, husbands, and wives over the generations[10] learn to accept the intimate physical presence of the other human being without explaining or making sense of that presence. But this communion with the other person, this physical proximity brings the man or woman back into the underlying, unified common being, and fails to differentiate each individual ambition as it reaches out into the world. The mastering of the unknown, as it appears in the novel, is by nature domestic, internal, local. In the words of Ronald Schleifer, *The Rainbow* "tries to render an inhuman vision in a human expression, to deal with the 'unknown' in terms of the 'known'" ("Vision" 167). This attempt to domesticate the unknown threatens the natural self and its symbiosis with the Other[11], but at the same time erects a social self. While people can unquestioningly belong to Nature, thus being immersed in the Other without seeking to comprehend it, incorporating the unknown into the known becomes an act of self-assertion.

Self-assertion emerges as a progressive, outward-bound impulse which leads people toward creativity, art, and symbolic expression. According to Freud, the opposite impulse, the erasure of the self, or what he calls the "death instinct," is an *internal* impulse, as opposed to the progressive development of the self, which is precipitated by external circumstances--Freud refers to this in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as "the conservative nature of living substance" (*FR* 612). Venturing out into the world is, in this sense, a life-affirming attempt at differentiation. Indeed, the adventurous existence in foreign lands,

the appeal of the stranger and the traveler, is always grounded not so much in the act of blindly throwing oneself into the unknown (364), as in an increasing sense of articulation of the environment around the self, of some intellectual and linguistic mastery over the physical turbulence of life. That is why the larger, richer person in the vision of the "beyond," the stranger-traveler is the one who has "uttered himself" (43), who has managed to bring something inherently private into the public world, to give it objective form among the other things which exist, and thus to legitimize its existence. The life "beyond" is like an "epic" (45)--meaning not that it is more vivid than the life on the farm, but that it is working as a narrative to make sense of the lived experience. The conscious life of the adventurer is one of "thought and comprehension" (45). Human progress, then, can be defined as a transition from the "blind intercourse . . . to the spoken word beyond" (42), where the speaking of the word has been occasioned by the self's confrontation with the world, the need to make sense of it.[12]

It is interesting to observe that in *The Rainbow* the conventional thwarted love scheme is reversed--instead of both lovers having complete understanding between them, and being confronted by the skepticism or judgment of the external world, the people in love are always prevented from perfect communion by *their own* incomplete understanding, their own internal inability to establish truthful communication, except through the symbolism of a ritual external to them--the marriage. The external conditions are always favorable for the love affair, while the internal relationship has a tendency to be unstable and tense. For example, after Ursula's prospective marriage and trip to India have been arranged and legitimized by the outside authority of the parents, she finds that the obstacle to her love lies

in herself (527). This is a telling instance of a Freudian problem, where the regressive, problematic impulses come from the individual who resents his or her articulation in the world. For Ursula, "the antagonism to the social imposition was . . . complete and final" (501), and Anton feels that "[to] make public their connection would be to put it in range with all the things which nullified him" (503). Thus they are both afraid of the articulation of their relationship, of their engagement with the world, which is the mark of progress.

Traditionally, the whole process of creation of the human being is, in a metaphorical and religious context, such an articulation ("In the beginning was the word"). In *The Rainbow* itself, bearing a child is also defined as articulation, as in the case of Anna: "She was willing now to postpone all adventure into unknown realities. She had the child, her palpable and immediate future was the child. If her soul had found no utterance, her womb had" (249). The key word here is "palpable"--it signals the reality of the child, the fact that it belongs to the world of actual events and that its concrete physical presence is the result of a departure from the vague maternal instinct, which has sought fusion and unity with the flow of life. In fact, motherhood itself can be defined as the turning point where the regressive desire of the human being to return to the undifferentiated life, or what Freud would call the death instinct[13], turns around and, despite itself, creates new life, tangible, separate, and mortal. So man, having been created / uttered into the world, instead of striving to repeat this process in his own life and on his own terms--becoming conscious and creative in turn--seeks to go back to the passive dependance on the unified life-giving force, which does not require his initiative or participation.

This regressive urge, however, ends in a dualistic loop, and brings about its opposite

--while the most supreme fusion is the obliteration of the self in its "inarticulate" (92) contact with the other, in the relationship of man and wife, this marital union is objectified in its result--the child. In other words, the more the self struggles to erase or subsume its identity under the natural, primeval instinct by means of the unity of love, the closer it gets to the actual world of specificity and separation in which the child is born[14], until the process leads to the ultimate differentiation whereby the most personal thing, the inner essence of the womb, has become the most palpable, objective, and articulated thing--the child who must be let go. Birth leads toward history and away from nature. Motherhood, then, can be viewed as the supreme mechanism for precipitating consciousness and preventing the person from self-erasure, despite all the natural incentives to merge and regress back to the original union of the womb. In fulfilling this function, motherhood emerges as a borderline phenomenon, since it pushes humans, through the process of birth, toward the world, while at the same time it re-introduces in them the memory of an original maternal fusion. Motherhood, then, is an unwilling ally of the artificial and secondary social process, and in constant interaction with history and the world, and not merely a function of the primary, inarticulate, purely natural world which contains the life force.

Furthermore, as the biblical parallel in *The Rainbow* reminds us, God's agenda is exactly to show man how he can make progress, because man's innermost nature, different from and superior to that of the animals, is to grow and develop, regardless of the regressive urges of his underlying animal nature[15]. Of the two competing forces, the superior, distinctively human, civilizing impulse turns out to be, ironically, more life-affirming than nature itself. Thus, when Tom Brangwen dies in the flood, which has to be seen as the

epitome of undifferentiated nature smashing and incorporating everything in its way, this death itself appears as *unnatural* and fits the family profile: "There was a saying that the Brangwens always died a violent death. . . . Fred went about obstinate, his heart fixed. He could never forgive the Unknown this murder of his father" (296). "Murder" is a loaded word which invokes characteristically unnatural violence, just as the impetus of the flood and its general, unarticulated, blind nature are uncharacteristic and foreign to the concrete human being who has been destroyed by them. Furthermore, Tom Brangwen dies precisely because he goes looking for the cause, the reason of the flood, because he seeks to understand nature and incorporate its irreducible otherness into his consciousness. As long as he is merely going through his habitual motions in his drunken state, he is safe: "he led the horse washing through the gate. He was quite drunk now, moving blindly, in habit" (288). But when he breaks through the oblivion of habit, of the generic, mechanical behavior, and starts probing, asking questions, making epistemological demands on the flood, trying to arrive at a personal understanding and knowledge, then his behavior runs into conflict with everything the flood represents, and he is destroyed: "He went to meet the running flood, sinking deeper and deeper. His soul was full of astonishment. He had to go and look where it came from, though the ground was going from under his feet" (289).

If we turn again to Freud, we can see that the human being does not actually need an outside force to destroy it--it destroys itself, and the outside forces only serve to divert or slow down that destruction. As Freud points out in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for internal reasons--becomes inorganic once again--then we shall be compelled to say that 'the aim of all

life is death' and, looking backwards, that 'inanimate things existed before living ones'" (*FR* 613). But it is important to note that the human being is not just seeking death indiscriminately--it is not a general death that will serve the purpose of the self. As Raymond Fancher puts it, "the death toward which the organisms are instinctually driven is not just any kind of death, but a particular death that satisfies the particular repetition needs of the organism. . . . The death instinct . . . impels each organism toward a highly specific kind of death" (190). In other words, the obliterating anonymity of the flood is ultimately foreign to the human being in that it is not specific enough, not contingent on the life circumstances of the individual. But the moment we begin to demand contingency of death itself, it becomes more artificial, secondary, and man-made, and less violent and impersonal--it becomes the worldly death, and precisely the one which the contract with God has substituted for absolute death.

Violence in general appears where the self is confronted by powers which it cannot negotiate with. Even the outside, objective world can be such a force, as long as it is anonymous, so that the self cannot see its own role in creating this world. In the biblical story, the act of God, who gives man control over the world, is aimed at personalizing this world, making the human race responsible for it, rather than imposing some inevitable, objective reality which man cannot change. In order to become an arena for expansion of the self, the world has to appear as a manageable, artificial thing, whose mechanism is exposed to man and susceptible to human understanding, as opposed to a foreign, mystifying, inexplicable thing resembling, in its uncanny power, the life force itself. The invasive objectivity of the world, like the mystery of inarticulate, non-historic creation, is violent in so

far as it is not susceptible to a dialogue with the self--it is a reality which asserts itself "without refusal" (88), as in the case of Lydia Lensky, who is forced to come back to life by the insistence of the sheer reality around her, after she has lost husband, children, and all interest in life. The call of necessity is one she cannot refuse but has to accept passively. This necessity takes the form of nature, whose inarticulate presence cannot be argued with: "This was the first shake of the kaleidoscope that brought in front of her eyes something she must see. It hurt her brain, the open country and the moors. It hurt her and hurt her. Yet it forced itself upon her as something living" (88). Again, the response which the natural setting elicits from her is purely physical[16]--she is forced to continue living, just as she was forced to be born in the first place--it is a mechanical, natural thing, not a conscious, intentional choice.

However, the self can be defined as the power of discourse, of language, which departs from the purely natural and intellectually unadulterated physical existence of humanity. The rainbow itself is the introduction of a sign[17], of the mediation of language, and the covenant is more than a simple understanding between man and God--it is understanding made public, objectified in an external sign, articulated. Thus the mark of civilization is public morality--the ability to negotiate, argue, and choose. The omnipresent symbol[18] of the rainbow signifies precisely this freedom to choose, since the rainbow itself is the signature in a contract between man and God. Once signed, it cannot be changed, but the important difference which sets it up above the necessity of the mere presence of life is that the contract is artificial and not inherently, naturally necessary. And that is why the rainbow has significance for human morality, not just human nature.

In this sense, motherhood, too, can be said to be a moral rather than a physical act--it confers the most objective, external, artificial state of the world onto the child by bringing the child out into this world, setting it free to negotiate its way through life without the help of the primary, physical connection with the mother. Since the child is, at the same time, an extension and a negation of the mother's body, it represents a questioning of the sufficiency of this body, of the given and necessary reality from which it springs, and its departure into a moral, negotiable, worldly reality which is free of necessity. While a person cannot control his or her inner identity, mastery over the manifestation of this identity in the outside world, the world of civilization, is possible--since the child is the ultimate representation of the mother in the world, sending it out and away from the body is tantamount to giving it language[19] and the moral significance of freedom, which can arise only in social, historical circumstances.

The morality which underlies the imagery of the rainbow and of motherhood itself has its biblical parallel too. God, in addition to the primary and necessary fecundity, gives man, in the form of Noah, the power of secondary, negotiable, conventional civilization, which relates only to man and not to the animals. Man has to assume the responsibility of devising laws which would articulate and structure society as a whole. The moral significance of this superimposition of some secondary creation over the primary, natural one, lies in the definition of the place of man in the larger order of the universe. While the self-satisfied sufficiency of natural and unquestioning procreation, the instinctive fecundity, is indifferent to everything else around it and does not require man to make a choice, the contract imposed by the rainbow serves to circumscribe the possibility of the mortal sin of

pride and to induce a more humble understanding of the world by humanity. In other words, by making man realize that the world is one of social convention, which is objective, public, and external to nature, God has in effect put man in a position of constant and self-enforced imperfection. God has made the human race supreme on earth, ruler of all creatures: "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes in the sea; into your hand are they delivered" (371). Thus the mastery over the animals which is given to man is actually a humbling device--having been given the mechanism of making up his own laws, man knows how imperfect and incomplete they are--to live by them is to live in a constant moral struggle which requires difficult moral choices. The introduction of convention means that humanity can accept nothing as simply given but has to fight to improve and change, to make progress.

Conversely, the sin of pride is the regressive sin of arrogant self-sufficiency, where the person believes that there is nothing more to achieve; it is deeply antagonistic to progress as such. It is pride that makes Ursula think: "The world was not strong--she was strong. The world existed only in a secondary sense:--she existed supremely" (503). This is the thinking of a self that is closed in its inherent virtues, which it believes to be sufficient, and remains oblivious to its own mediation through the external world and to the necessity of a social and historical expression and action. Thus when Ursula and Anton live their shared secret life, they feel detached and invincible: "They had revoked altogether the ordinary mortal world. Their confidence was like a possession upon them. They were possessed. Perfectly and supremely free they felt, proud beyond all question, and surpassing mortal conditions" (504).

But it is precisely these "mortal conditions," the specific and mutable circumstances of the world that induce change and progress. As Freud puts it, "the phenomena of organic development must be attributed to external disturbing and diverting influences. The elementary living entity would from its very beginning have had no wish to change; if conditions remained the same, it would do no more than constantly repeat the same course of life" (*FR* 613). In other words, the detour of one's sense of identity through the world has the advantage that the identity has acquired the new dimensions of morality and responsibility, according to the conventions of social reality.

The enhanced mode of that reality, the higher degree of civilization, seems alternately desirable, as far as it is beyond reach, and inhuman, as far as it is a social convention divorced from nature. Thus, for example, when Tom Brangwen visits his brother's lover, Mrs. Forbes, at first he feels the new environment, with its aura of permeating education and sophistication, to be liberating and open: "The room was of a kind Brangwen had never known; the atmosphere seemed open and spacious, like a mountain-top to him" (127). At the same time, he feels that this new world poses a certain threat: "there was something about her and her place that he did not like, something cold, something alien, as if she were not a woman, but an inhuman being who used up human life for cold, unliving purposes" (129). The sophistication and the artificiality of the place appear to take away from the living, human warmth by trying to analyze and dissect it, in short, to know it. And this is what Brangwen resists[20]. But the purpose behind the whole project of humanity is ultimately self-transcendence[21], and this involves transcending one's own unwillingness to develop and grow, one's inertia to stay comfortably within the limits of consciously unacknowledged,

pure life. The human creations that threaten to destroy this purity are scorned for their artificiality. The transition between the natural and the architecturally shaped existence of humanity seems impossible and unnatural. When Will Brangwen contemplates the progress of civilization, it all seems somehow alien to what man stands for:

> He was out in the wilderness, alone with her. Having occasion to go to London, he marvelled, as he returned, thinking of naked, lurking savages on an island, how these had built up and created the great mass of Oxford Street or Piccadilly. How had helpless savages, running with their spears on the riverside, after fish, how had they come to rear up this great London, the ponderous, massive, ugly superstructure of a world of man upon a world of nature! It frightened and awed him. Man was terrible, awful in his works. The works of man were more terrible than man himself, almost monstrous. (234-35)

This monstrosity, however, merely illustrates the departure from self-identity which is involved in any creation. Creation itself can be seen as the production of a stranger[22]--a being who is inherently separated from its original source and is not retracing its steps in a circular fashion. It is easy to see why every human being would be inclined to see this violation of the fundamental narcissistic principle of all life as unnatural. The gradual distancing of the individual, always due to outside circumstances, farther and farther away from an initial state of self-identity, is all that motherhood is about. Motherhood ensures that even when people abandon themselves to the most intimate, most satisfying and timeless passion, they end up with the creation of an alien body, a separate individual who will not

duplicate their own lives but will depart in an arch. This new person is so alien to the parents that they can ensure their own objective existence by looking at their reflection in the child. For example, Will Brangwen seeks to find the dimensions of the "other" in his daughter, to recognize her as an extraneous and independent being: "As the newly-opened, newly-dawned eyes looked at him, he wanted them to perceive him, to recognise him. Then he was verified" (254).

In that sense, motherhood emerges as essentially impersonal and trans-subjective. As Lydia Blanchard points out, *The Rainbow* is primarily about difference, about the fact "that it is possible for a woman [Ursula] to be someone other than her mother" (80). Indeed, Ursula in particular is looking for an expansive direction in life, and she finds that only "something impersonal" (527) can serve that purpose, can take her somewhere: "Love--love--love--what does it mean--what does it amount to? So much personal gratification. It doesn't lead anywhere" (527). This image of love and the related maternal function is described elsewhere in this way: "What did the self, the form of life, matter? Only the living from day to day mattered, the beloved existence of the body, rich, peaceful, complete, with no beyond, no further trouble, no further complication" (536). Here, motherhood is seen as a passive adaptation to existing conditions, the perfect union with life. Anna has the same experience: "She seemed to pass off into a kind of rapture of motherhood, her rapture of motherhood was everything" [23] (255). The mother, then, appears in her archetypal guise of a formless and sufficient being, while the differentiation of the self, which gives form to life, is avoided as a painful and unnecessary disruption. And this is all Ursula sees in her mother; she fails to perceive the connection between the natural instinct of self-contained, satisfied circle, and the

anti-narcissistic impulse of love, which is in itself an externalization of the personality, a transcendence of the individual--his public or social manifestation in the form of the child. When she criticizes her mother for the oblivious fecundity of her married life, Ursula ignores the fact of her own departure from her origins--a departure which has been made possible exactly by the mother. Thus, almost unwittingly, the mother gives direction and outward impetus to something which she intended to remain enclosed and personal.

The temptation of the static maternal satisfaction, which can never be actually realized, because the external circumstances interfere and enforce expansion and departure towards the world, is like the general, regressive temptation to take the content of life for granted without trying to give it form and shape, which come with progress and are artificial, secondary to life itself. This process of refinement, of articulation of life, is compared to the exhausting and daunting climbing of a hill, where it is never entirely clear to the human being why it should make the effort to develop, to break out of its comfortable narcissistic shell: "Why must one climb the hill? Why must one climb? Why not stay below? Why force one's way up the slope? Why force one's way up and up, when one is at the bottom?" (543). But the very act of asking these questions shows that the person has already been made aware of some discrepancy between the physical fact of life and its alienation into meaning.

Similarly, in her own brief pregnancy, Ursula wants to know whether bearing the child will lead anywhere or will be just a completion of a circle: "Then gradually the heaviness of her heart pressed and pressed into consciousness. What was she doing? Was she bearing a child? Bearing a child? To what?" (536). The need for outward direction rather than a natural cycle is the need of the ever-restless mind, and not of the body. It is not

accidental, then, that Ursula's questioning of the reasons and rationale behind life itself (she is not content to be a mere vehicle, even though it will be the supreme vehicle of life) coincides with the moment when she is "pressed into consciousness." Her criticism of motherhood is related to the fact that she has seen her own mother, Anna, bear children one after another in a kind of dazed repetition of the process. Ursula's resentment of the circularity of motherhood results from her inability to see that motherhood has anything progressive in it. But even she has to admit that the mechanisms of procreation are open-ended, rather than closed. This becomes clear in her attitude toward Anton, for example: "He seemed completed now. He aroused no fruitful fecundity in her. He seemed added up, finished. She knew him all round, not on any side did he lead into the unknown" (525). His attractiveness is that of the self-collapsing circle, whereas she is looking for the trajectory of the arch toward the unknown. Paradoxically, only the unknown can provoke people into knowledge--the very word "unknown" means that a question has been asked, that life has been approached critically and consciously. Thus Anton's world offers to Ursula only the limitation of the "known"--which does not necessarily mean that knowledge is involved. The "known" here functions as the given, as the medium in which life finds itself from the beginning--something which is one with life and not differentiated into consciousness, something which lacks the critical distance of history.

Another occasion on which this definition of "known" is explored is the episode in the biology lab, where Ursula is looking at a piece of living stuff through a microscope: "She looked still at the unicellular shadow that lay within the field of light, under her microscope. It was alive. She saw it move--she saw the bright mist of its ciliary activity, she saw the

gleam of its nucleus, as it slid across the plane of light" (491). Anton himself is associated with the image of that life-form in the circle of light under the microscope: "This was he, the key, the nucleus to the new world" (492). The stability and visibility of the nucleus make it the perfect image for the oblivious, transparent life which is physically unambiguous and unaware of itself, the life of a creature which simply exists but cannot trespass that existence into the self-knowledge beyond.

The unfathomable life "beyond" is the expanded, conscious version of the "local" (44), and stands in opposition to that which is enclosed and narcissistically limited, withdrawn into itself.[24] Thus "local" comes to mean not only the physical area or environment in which the characters find themselves, but the existence "on the safe side of civilization" (46), the limitation of the known, the concentration of all being into one point which is not extended, articulated into the world. Increasingly in the novel, the growth of the human being outwards from this point of established knowledge is associated with mastery of some sort, with gaining, and not losing, control. Thus the almost mythological inhabitants of the far-away world of the Brangwens' dreams are always the bearers of civilization: "What was it in the vicar, that raised him above the common men as man is raised above the beast?" (44). In the Bible version of this growth of man, Noah is given control over the animals, and this mastery becomes significant in *The Rainbow* as well, when the people who can have control over their own destinies, and not merely over the lower forms of life, stand higher than everyone else and have about them the magic allure of education and consciousness.

The control over the individual destiny, the differentiation of oneself from the role that the world expects one to fulfill by the sheer inertia of being born in a certain

environment, may seem superficial and secondary compared to the compelling inner drive towards unity with the life flow. The relaxation of the self into the comfortable darkness of anonymity and fusion is always antagonistic to any adventurous roaming of the "beyond," as in this scene of Tom Brangwen's merging and identifying with his wife: "he took her and was with her and there was nothing beyond, they were together in an elemental embrace beyond their superficial foreignness" (95). Two generations later, when Ursula is faced with the same problem, she feels a similar contempt for the self-consciousness of civilization: "What are you, you pale citizens? . . . You subdued beast in sheep's clothing, you primaeval darkness falsified to a social mechanism" (499). Here, Ursula praises the satisfaction and rest that come with giving oneself over to "the dark stream that contained them all" (498), and mocks the attempt of civilization to give shape or symbolical meaning to things, to privilege one thing over another, to create order and structure: "'The stupid lights,' Ursula said to herself, in her dark sensual arrogance. 'The stupid, artificial, exaggerated town, fuming its lights. It does not exist really. It rests upon the unlimited darkness'" (498). She proclaims her intention to partake of the stream of life unconsciously, in the contented, exuberant physical dimensions of motherhood: "She had the potent, dark stream of her own blood, she had the glimmering core of fecundity, she had her mate, her complement, her sharer in fruition. So, she had all, everything" (499). But expanding into the world means giving up some of this satisfaction, not "having it all"[25] but investing some, a part of one's being, into something different from oneself, or, in Freud's terminology, forming object-cathexes (*FR* 638). The primeval fusion, the surrendering of the self to the larger stream of life, takes place only at the physical level, and even then not completely, since each

human being is physically differentiated from everybody else. Indeed, Ursula ultimately rejects the passivity of accepting the available, ready-made happiness, in favor of working out for herself[26] some other existence, as yet unclear at the end of the novel.

However, all characters, at one point or another, are tempted to settle for the easy, pleasurable satisfaction of unquestioned domestic life, and abandon their outward-bound ambitions. This has to do with a regressive urge on the part of the human being to go back to the source of life[27], to return to the state of created, rather than to become a progressive, creative being. Accordingly, there is a resistance in the human being to having to articulate oneself in terms of the world, which would be tantamount to mediating oneself through the Other. The narcissistic, inward-oriented question of what the world can mean to the individual has been turned around, when the person has begun to articulate life and not merely live it, and has posed the productive[28], creative question of what the person can mean to the world. And this transition is always uncomfortable and unwelcome, because the self has to incorporate some secondary element into its own self-definition--the element of its own symbolic representation in the world, of its own historical, moral, trans-subjective choices. Thus, when Tom Brangwen Sr. is still a child learning to appreciate literature, he has difficulty in the transition from listening and absorbing, internalizing, the sound of poetry, to managing its objective, material representation on paper: "the very fact of the print caused a prickly sensation of repulsion to go over his skin, the blood came to his face, his heart filled with a bursting passion of rage and incompetence. . . . And he hated books as if they were enemies" (51).

Similarly, when Ursula has to write a letter to Anton Skrebensky, she feels that this

task is burdensome and meaningless because the objective representation of her inner self seems forced, false, and ultimately foreign to the thing itself: "It bored her to write a letter even to him. After all, writing words on paper had nothing to do with him and her" (353). Thus, at this moment she denounces the ability of the world to validate internal experience, and postulates the self as the last and ultimate authority, the complete and final essence which exists regardless of the reality around it. This attitude would be contrary to the whole biblical project of the rainbow, whose purpose is to present reality as the indispensable medium of the self. As God requires part of the self to become objective and exchangeable, to commit to a social structure of external order and laws, he prevents the human being from the narcissistic belief that the individual contains and exhausts all of reality. Instead, man is forced to give himself some tangible form through which he can participate in the outside world--to symbolize himself so that he is able to communicate and exchange, not merely absorb and contain.

The tension arising between the passive reception of physical life and the active exchange which accompanies intellectual or spiritual life is the tension between the complete and self-involved circle and the outward-bound, open arch.[29] While the circle is unchangeable in its redundant, self-duplicating trajectory, the arch is the symbol of linear progression, which is also related to the individual life of the self. Thus, when Tom Brangwen feels completely separated from and foreign to his wife, concentrated into his own self, it is the arch that he resembles: "He felt like a broken arch thrust sickeningly out from support. For her response was gone, he thrust at nothing. And he remained *himself*, he saved himself from crashing down into nothingness, from being squandered into fragments" (101)

[italics mine]. The equation of the arch with the self gives it both direction (the arch, unlike the self-repeating circle, has chronology) and limitation (the arch is not a full circle but remains incomplete). In this sense, I cannot agree with Daniel Dervin in his statement that the arch (rainbow) "locks nature and culture, flesh and spirit, male and female" ("Symbols" 519)–this seems to be rather a function of the circle in its completeness.

Unlike the arch, the circle itself is so self-sufficient that nothing can be added to or subtracted from it, and it cannot participate in any form of exchange with anything other than itself. It is like the flood in its ubiquity, enclosure, and limitation. When Tom Brangwen, just before he dies, contemplates the eternity of water, he says: "Th' rain tumbles down just to mount up in clouds again. So they say. There's no more water on the earth than there was in the year naught. . . . There's no more to-day than there was a thousand years ago--and no less either. You can't wear water out" (288). The recurrence of the water/flood, whose movement is circular and purposeless, is the spacial counterpart of the temporal, and equally closed, loop of the seasons. In this sense, the circle appears regressive because immutable, while the arch fosters development and progress--it is unfinished, and so it is open to incorporate or communicate with the space outside itself, with the Other. That is why Paul Poplawski calls the rainbow an "image of transcendence and self-creation" (109). To transcend[30] the all-inclusive circle of life *and* death is possible only when life and death are separated, so that only life is known in the world--this is how life can seem linear and progressive, with a beginning and an end. The point of communication between life and death is motherhood, which can be defined as the exchange of lives, the moment which contains both a beginning and an end and thus is reminiscent of the circle itself.

Motherhood, then, is the point of the arch closest to the completion of the cycle of life, where the past is re-iterated in the present.

Another important difference between the two geometric modes of describing the world lies in their respective openness to knowledge. The circle, in its unquestioning perfection, delineates the given and categorical parameters of physical being, but it does not point the way to making sense of that being. If the traveler is someone who can break free from the repetition of the circle, he is also the one who seeks to understand, and not merely live, life through his "power of thought and comprehension" (45). Thus when Ursula realizes how impossible it is for her to fall in love with Anton, she locates the problem precisely in the discrepancy between her own restlessness for knowledge and his self-sufficient, circular existence: "But she was a traveller, she was a traveller on the face of the earth, and he was an isolated creature living in the fulfilment of his own senses" (467). Ursula's rejection of the contained, sufficient, but not critically examined or intellectually acknowledged life, is the rejection of the circle[31] itself as a metaphor. This chapter in the novel is titled "The Widening Circle," and it becomes clear that the circle can only expand to the degree to which it is becoming an arc.

Similarly, before Anna Brangwen ventures into her own independent existence, her world is contained and enclosed within the all-inclusive, infinitely caring world of her parents, which seems to be exactly sufficient: "She looked from one to the other, and she saw them [her parents] established to her safety. . . . She was no longer called upon to uphold with her childish might the broken end of the arch. Her father and her mother now met to the span of the heavens and she, the child, was free to play in the space beneath, between" (134).

At the moment when Anna begins to feel safe and cared for, she acquires the childish freedom of not having to question, doubt, or fear for her parents--the freedom not to approach life through knowledge, not to seek explanations or guarantees, but to accept, passively, as given, the life provided by the parents, and to plunge uncritically into that existence--to be the perfect created, and not creative, being. Later, the circle of this oblivious happiness will have to be broken--she will have to add her own creativity to this world, and, ultimately, to subtract herself from the idyllic unity of parent and child. This progress can only be made if she rejects the circle and accepts the arch as the governing principle of her existence. Thus the growing-up of a person is the disruption of the circle, and the new, independent self appears as the arch, the gap in the circle which leaves future possibilities open. For example, when Tom Brangwen feels excluded from his wife's previous life, his own self appears as the exception to the circle:

> There was a vagueness, like a soft mist over all of them, and a silence as if their wills were suspended. Only he saw her hands, ungloved, folded in her lap, and he noticed the wedding-ring on her finger. It excluded him: it was a closed circle. It bound her life, the wedding-ring, it stood for her life in which he could have no part. Nevertheless, *beyond* all this, there was her*self* and him*self* which should meet. (74) (italics mine)

Here, the self is associated with the "beyond," with something different from the circle, with the unknown future which the self is free to make up. But the two selves can never meet completely, because the self, by definition, is the disruption of domestic perfection, the flaw in the primeval unity. That is why it is necessary for the individual will to "suspend" the self

in its union with the flow of life. Married life, in its completeness, exists only in so far as the self--the opening up of the whole--is not part of it. In this sense, the self is destructive of self-contained perfection. In the absolute communion and instinctive understanding between man and wife, the self can be regarded as the random noise in their interaction, because it aims at realization in the outside world, at distance and progress, at the delay and innovation for which the circular perfection has no room: "Inside the room was a great steadiness, a core of living eternity. Only far outside, at the rim, went on the noise and the destruction. Here at the centre the great wheel was motionless, centred upon itself. Here was a poised, unflawed stillness that was beyond time, because it remained the same, inexhaustible, unchanging, unexhausted" (185). The immediacy of this absolute union recreates the direct contact, without delay, between mother and child: the mother, in this case Anna, is "absorbed in the tiny baby. It was entirely hers, its need was direct upon her" (255). Anna, instead of accepting the dissatisfaction of being devoted to the growth of one child and seeing it depart from her, prefers to return to the gestation of a new one every time, to recreate the moment when the first child was not yet out in the objective world but was identified with her in a complete circle; the weaning of the child is the transition from the circle to the arch. It is also the transition from the physical to the spiritual, from the "blind intercourse . . . to the spoken word beyond" (42).

Similarly, what makes Ursula seek the shelter of indifferent married life, at first, is the physical fact of the child in her womb: "it was the child. The child bound her to him" (544). However, what later liberates her from that decision is not the fact that the child is gone, not any physical compulsion: "There would be no child: she was glad. If there had

been a child, it would have made little difference, however" (546). Her departure from the physical necessity of life toward a life which is trying to make sense of itself is also reinforced by the fact that during her illness her physical body is almost obliterated. At the end, she arrives at a different, intangible, moral space, which is not grounded in her body. Conversely, she always defines her love for Anton as a matter of physical satisfaction: "she loved him, the body of him" (494), and it would have been the same with her marriage and her child-bearing. But the satisfaction, the abundance of motherhood can last only until the child is born--after that, it is time for expansion outwards, for desire/insufficiency, for a sense of beyond, which did not exist in the immediate contact between husband and wife, mother and child. This picture of the perfect closure without interference from the outside world cannot be sustained for long--the circle as a figure of immutability is impossible in the physical world, where only one half of it--the rainbow--can exist, because, through its incompleteness, it allows development, communication, and historical progress.

The possibility for change and renewal is inherent in the arch, because its trajectory does not collapse back on itself. To go back to Freud, the return to the inanimate, or even animal, origins of man is precisely what God's symbolical rainbow is meant to prevent. The rainbow imposes a contract, which is by nature a social, verbal[32], public phenomenon, and this contract serves to push man forward into a social world based on laws and convention:

> And God said; This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations; I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth,

> that a bow shall be seen in the cloud; And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. (371)

The contract between man and God establishes the formal bounds of human freedom, expressed in the extent to which man can make and enforce his own laws on earth. There is, again, a binary discrepancy between the actual emergence of the new world itself and its codification in laws. All images of birth in *The Rainbow* are associated with nakedness and lawlessness, as if the physicality of birth is inherently opposed to the ultimate function of birth, which is separation and a journey into the world. Thus, in the very beginning, Tom Brangwen relates the physical act of re-birth to the loss of self, which is the loss of the highly organized conscious life: "He submitted to that which was happening to him, letting go his will, suffering the loss of himself, dormant always on the brink of ecstasy, like a creature evolving to a new birth" (74). It is not just the case that the birth is a natural process uncontrolled by human will; even more than that, the imagery of new beginning, of creation, seems hardly compatible with the artificiality of laws: "He [Tom Brangwen] returned gradually, but newly-created, as after a gestation, a new birth, in the womb of darkness. Aerial and light everything was, new as a morning, fresh and newly-begun" (81). Will Brangwen has a similar experience: "The veils had ripped and issued him naked into the endless space" (157). The adjective "endless" emphasizes the fact that the birth-like experience merely throws him away into the open, without any limits, shapes, or rules--an environment intrinsically alien to the idea of human law. The new creature seems free from any bond or contract with the world outside itself. Towards the end of the novel, for

example, Ursula's illness serves to "discard" the remains of the previous world and open space for the coming, potential, "lawless" (342) world. Furthermore, this comes at a time when she is exempt from all conventions, when her mind is undifferentiated and delirious: "And again, to her feverish brain, came the vivid reality of acorns in February lying on the floor of a wood with their shells burst and discarded and the kernel issued naked to put itself forth. She was the naked, clear kernel thrusting forth the clear, powerful shoot, and the world was a bygone winter, discarded" (545).

The convention of rules, which is the mark of the outside world, appears at first glance to be a negation of the natural process, an expendable piece of decoration cast accidentally on the inherently "naked" body of the newborn. The law of civilization, seen this way, can almost appear to do violence to the pure, unspoiled, automatic process of creation. Most of all, civilization can appear to be expendable: "And now, lo, the whole world could be divested of its garment, the garment could lie there shed away intact, and one could stand in a new world, a new earth, naked in a new, naked universe" (190). The nakedness of the newborn organism implies that it is somehow sufficient within itself, that, even without any clothes or cover, it can be identified and recognized as itself, can exist unaided, unnamed, ahistorical.

However, birth is also the necessary transition from oblivion to separation and recognition. The moment recognition takes place, the moment the new organism can be named and pointed out and acknowledged, it has already entered the external world. That is when the organism has ceased to be merely itself, self-sufficient in a social vacuum, and has become simultaneously more and less than itself. As the newborn enters the world, it

assumes and incorporates the secondary tools of language and signification, so that it can form connections with its environment. To the extent to which the organism is cathecting outside itself, it adds to itself. And, conversely, it subtracts from itself to the extent to which it needs to give up absolute being in order to assume a relative, partial one, which is possible only in relation with the Other. The elements that have been given up are those related to the absolute values of narcissism, while the new, added, social features have to do with communication, language, code, order--everything that is based on relations and exchange. It is true that the physical process of birth does not need any artificial rules *per se*, but in order to be incorporated into the social, moral sphere, to become meaningful for civilization, it has to be encoded, distinguished from the archetypal mold which is impressed equally on all newborns. In this sense, the introduction of laws makes the whole process personalized and unique, since it confers the conventions of civilization (one of which is naming) on the newborn, and distinguishes it from the uniformity which produces but cannot makes sense of each new generation on its own terms.

At times, the characters in *The Rainbow* attempt to create a new world by isolating themselves from the existing one and proclaiming the beginning of a new epoch. The whole Brangwen family is described at one point as a self-contained world of this kind: "They were a curious family, a law to themselves, separate from the world, isolated, a small republic set in invisible bounds" (140). Similarly, when Will and Anna spend their honeymoon oblivious to everything outside, this isolation is given the status of a new law, in imitation of the covenant itself: "Then they were the only inhabitants of the visible earth, the rest were under the flood. And being alone in the world, they were a law unto themselves, they could enjoy

and squander and waste like conscienceless gods" (184). But this state of being is not a faithful imitation of Noah's law--it is based on the false premise that they are alone in the universe, that the world does not exist: "he was with her, as remote from the world as if the two of them were buried like a seed in darkness" (185). Thus they subscribe to the mock hubris of gods making up their minds as they go in a perfect vacuum. The idea that they do not depend on anything external to them means that they claim to possess essential, internal being which does not need to be expressed in order to be realized. The whole point of the covenant, however, is to make sure that the human laws take into account the external world, that people exist in connection with the rest of the universe. The symbol of the rainbow is established as a communication tool, a set code, so that people can look at the sky and recognize its meaning--meaning coming from outside themselves.

Thus, when Will and Anna finally emerge outside and begin to take into account the world around them, Will mistakes this for an interruption and degradation of their previous, god-like state, which he has, misguidedly, associated with Noah's Ark: "But when he unbolted the door, and, half-dressed, looked out, he felt furtive and guilty. The world was there, after all. And he had felt so secure, as though this house were the Ark in the flood, and all the rest was drowned" (187). But if the covenant is all about a new social standard, about communication and understanding, and the loneliness of the flood itself only a prelude to Noah's future responsibilities and commitment to the world, then Will's vision of an empty universe where he and Anna are the only survivors implies not so much a new beginning as the end of the world: "And to him, as the days went by, it was as if the heavens had fallen, and he were sitting with her among the ruins, in a new world, everybody else buried,

themselves two blissful survivors, with everything to squander as they would" (184). If anything, the contract between God and Noah commits humanity to an economy of negotiation and relativity, where it is impossible to waste anything, because the currency used is the signs of language, and these are always exchanged between people, never grounded in the possession of a single person who can dispose of them as he or she wishes. The substitution of the symbolic, worldly universe for the actual, unavailable one means that actual possession is impossible--nothing is the thing in itself but it only assumes meaning through its relations with everything else[33]--it acquires symbolic existence.

It is the same with marriage--Ursula and Anton undergo this period of passionate, intimate connection, which nevertheless remains unacknowledged in the outside world, before whose judgment they do not care to legitimize their relationship: they feel that they are "surpassing mortal conditions" (504). However, as Tom Brangwen's wedding speech earlier in the novel implies, marriage is by definition a negotiation with the imperfect circumstances outside of it: "'There's no marriage in heaven,' went on Tom Brangwen; 'but on earth there is marriage'" (177). In other words, it is the external circumstances of the imperfect material world that keep people forever separate, so that the lovers need to articulate, to confirm their connection, to accept the symbolism of marriage. The symbolic unity achieved through the ritual of marriage becomes, in a way, the substitute for the actual unity which is the ideal of the circle and not accessible to the mortal human being. The biblical rainbow, again, serves to emphasize the importance and real meaning of symbols, which can be taken seriously only on earth (and sometimes that is difficult to do--Anna Brangwen, for example, finds the "language" of the church meaningless because "the falsity of the spoken word put her off"

[143]). But in the social world of constant negotiation the symbols are needed to fill the gap between the ideal unity of things and the worldly imperfection of separate human beings.

The natural resistance to any kind of symbolic integration into the world becomes clear in Anna's arguments with Will, where she refuses to attribute any meaning to the church artifacts, such as the lamb: "Whatever it may pretend to mean, what it is is a silly absurd toy-lamb with a Christmas-tree flag ledged on its paw--and if it wants to mean anything else, it must look different from that" (202). Similarly, she sees the sacrifice of Christ as a gruesome, actual murder, and the Sacrament as a real, physical dismemberment of the body: "It means your human body put up to be slit and killed and then worshipped--what else?" (202). When Will Brangwen wants to propitiate Anna and enjoy normal family life, he has to "forfeit from his soul all his symbols" (203). Even Will doubts the purity of the symbolical meaning: "Water, natural water, could it suddenly and unnaturally turn into wine, depart from its being and at hap-hazard take on another being? Ah no, he knew it was wrong" (213). On the other hand, there seems to be some dissatisfaction on Will's part with objects that are simply present but not endowed with any significance beyond their presence. Thus, when he paints the church tower, he somehow fails to add anything to the actual building: "his church tower stood up, really stood and asserted its standing, but was ashamed of its own lack of meaning" (404). The tension between the instinct toward natural and literal meaning, and the compulsion toward mediated, symbolical meaning, is never resolved--it is the engine that drives human life forward. The whole point of religion, however, and especially the covenant, seems to be the introduction of that arbitrary assignment of secondary meaning, regardless of the actual object or event which happens to

contain and symbolize the transcendent religious meaning.

The artificial and human character of meaning, which the human beings have produced in their encounter with the world from whatever physical materials are available, cannot fail to incite doubt and resentment, and that is why people are looking for some correspondence between the inherent meaning and its material shell, which is contingent on the random external circumstances. The best example here is the physical structure of the church, which has to perform the difficult task of supporting the abstract ideas of religion with their incompatible manifestations in reality--a task similar to that of the womb, to which the church is compared (243). When Will Brangwen shows interest in the artificial architecture of the church, Anna cannot understand why he is so excited about it: "What was the cathedral, a big building, a thing of the past, obsolete, to excite him to such a pitch?" (243). And: "It was the church building he cared for, and yet his soul was passionate for something" (251). The ability to reconcile the stone representation with the higher ideal would be tantamount to extending the visible arch, which is the trajectory of earthly human life, into a complete circle, which includes both life and death:

> Containing birth and death, potential with all the noise and transition of life, the cathedral remained hushed, a great, involved seed, whereof the flower would be radiant life inconceivable, but whose beginning and whose end were the circle of silence. Spanned round with the rainbow, the jewelled gloom folded music upon silence, light upon darkness, fecundity upon death, as a seed folds leaf upon leaf . . . upon the root. . . . Here in the church, "before" and "after" were folded together, all was contained in oneness. . . . the hush

of the two-fold silence, where dawn was sunset, and the beginning and the end were one. (243-44)

The summit of this perfect unity is "at the apex of the arch" (244)[34]. But as soon as this vision has appeared to Will, he begins to see that the "perfectly proportioned space" (245) of the cathedral is inherently artificial and incomplete--there is a lot more space outside, which has been excluded from the structure of the church in order to give it the shape, proportion, and order it boasts: "Outside the cathedral were many flying spirits that could never be sifted through the jewelled gloom. . . . There was life outside the church. There was much that the church did not include" (248). Anna, too, regards the actual building as an actual confinement, not metaphorical universality: "she remembered that the open sky was no blue vault, no dark dome hung with many twinkling lamps, but a space where stars were wheeling in freedom, with freedom above them always higher" (245). The man-made structure, the finite form imposed on the notion of infinity, seems unnatural to her: "She claimed the right to freedom above her, higher than the roof. She had always a sense of being roofed in" (245). Anna wants to find the natural, unlicenced, unrecorded freedom, which is also impersonal and inhuman, because it does not have to take into account the human element and is not tailored to fit any concrete historical circumstances.

Similarly, in his desire for truth, Will feels intuitively that the less complete representation is the more accurate one, so that if a church has to stand for everything in the world, it will do it better if it is dissolved into the world: "He thought of the ruins of the Grecian worship, and it seemed, a temple was never perfectly a temple, till it was ruined and mixed up with the winds and the sky and the herbs" (248). What this dissolution amounts to,

ultimately, is the rejection of all synthetic and condensed symbolization--letting the world stand for itself. But Will recognizes the futility of such absolute freedom, since absolute measurements cannot be applied to the human condition in the world: "He had always, all his life, had a secret dread of Absolute Beauty. . . . For it was immoral and against mankind. So he had turned to the Gothic form, which always asserted the broken desire of mankind in its pointed arches, escaping the rolling, absolute beauty of the round arch" (280). The broken path of the arch is like the incomplete life of the individual self, and no identical recurring of the self is possible. In fact, the only way the person can get beyond the arch to the other side of the circle, the only way to receive any intimations that the circle exists, is through individual death and transformation into future generations. Each generation, individually, is finite and breaks down, but, taken collectively, the generations span the whole, the circle of life and death.

Anna, in her search for actual infinity, and not the imperfect, social symbols of it, ends up choosing recurrent physical procreation--trying to prolong endlessly what in reality can only be a single moment of ambiguity between the two worlds--the moment of birth[35], after which the material parameters of nature take over and the child emerges in concrete dimensions, rooted in the imperfection of space and time, just like the building of the cathedral. Just as the symbolic order is necessary to replace the actual one, the process of birth can be seen as the symbolization of the invisible infinity into concrete meaning[36], as the giving of form to a shapeless content--the organization of form being the thing that makes the individual exclusive and unique in his or her self: "the pain of a new birth in herself strung all her veins to a new *form*" (75) [italics mine]. While the content may be said to be uniform,

and everyone to be ideally equal, the form is what carries all individuality and all imperfections. This is because, to apply Freud's argument on the necessary external delay of the internal death-instinct[37], the form can be seen as the organism's specific response to the objective external conditions, which can only be tackled by a creature with a definite shape, solid, specific, and individual like the objects surrounding it. Thus, Will Brangwen considers the dangers that would confront a shapeless and naked creature in the physical world: "One evening, suddenly, he saw the tiny, living thing rolling naked in the mother's lap, and he was sick, it was so utterly helpless and vulnerable and extraneous; in a world of hard surfaces and varying attitudes, it lay vulnerable and naked at every point . . . so utterly delivered over" (254). There is an essential discrepancy between the internal environment which the child is part of, and the external one which the child is suddenly thrust into. It is like a piece of shapeless subjectivity stranded alone in the objective world--it needs to acquire objective existence itself, it needs to have its own representation in the world, through which it can safely interact with the alien bodies around it.

This is the point where the self has begun to be not purely itself but mediated through the external world and through the social Other. Now the self is not only primary and physical, but also secondary and historical. It is as though the potential organism has to become concrete in the separation of creation. The ambiguity of creation and motherhood lies in trying to capture exactly the moment where nature and law intersect, where the physical necessity ends and the moral freedom begins. In the phrase "create the world afresh" (99), it is a matter of shifting the emphasis from "afresh" (which would relate to nature and the physical processes of regeneration), to the active verb "create" (which would

stress the artificiality, the human, personal involvement in shaping the world). The rainbow itself is a sign, a symbol which by its very presence announces the arrival of convention into the previously merely natural life of humanity. In God's gift to Noah there is a definite social element, the beginnings of the structure of civilization and a system of law. The impossibility of reversing the process and recovering the purely natural origin of man (which lies in the self-referential, indiscriminate passion: "she all the while revelling in that he revelled in her" [99]), is guaranteed by God's promise that the flood will not be repeated, which means that one stage of human existence has been overcome and finished and there is no going back.

This irreversibility introduced by the rainbow in the biblical context defines the issue of inheritance as well. On the one hand, inheritance is a passive process whereby the person receives, in due course, what he or she is entitled to merely by virtue of the chronological progression from the ancestors to the descendants. In this sense, there is nothing specific that the person has to do in order to deserve the inheritance or influence the course of events--the process becomes a matter of fate, something settled from the beginning, something which can be viewed as certain and inevitable. A description of the Brangwens on the first page of the novel introduces this kind of passive participation which does not interfere with the natural course of events: "They had that air of readiness for what would come to them, a kind of surety, an expectancy, the look of an inheritor" (41). Conversely, the beginning of consciousness, of articulation and differentiation of the self, marks the reception of a different kind of inheritance. Thus when Ursula grows up, restless and anxious to enter the world at large, which is an artificial, conventional, man-made structure, she becomes a more

active successor: "She became aware of herself, that she was a separate entity in the midst of an unseparated obscurity, that she must go somewhere, she must become something. . . . This was torment indeed, to inherit the responsibility of one's own life" (328). There is indication that the fated inheritance is not the real one, and that to inherit something means to make it one's own by re-creating it--in other words, to turn the primary into secondary. In the biblical subtext of the novel, Noah is also asked to claim actively his inheritance by creating his own laws, to take charge of the life for which he is now, irreversibly, responsible.

This view is very different from the Brangwens' strong sense of fate, which obviates the need for conscious decision-making. Tom Brangwen, for example, characteristically avoids any active, critical examination of his life but relies on a trusting, blind sense of fate to shape the future: "There he sat and stubbornly waited for what would happen next" (62). When he meets Lydia for the first time, he feels a "certainty about her, as if she were destined to him" (67). But the feeling he has is one of waiting, of motionless acceptance of the future, as if the flow of time, outside himself, is the only active force: "It was coming, he knew, his fate" (67). The perceived necessity of his life, which has been "ordained" (76), diminishes the possibilities and erases the role of the self. By definition, the self is fragmentary, so that any completion has to come from the outside, as in the case of Lydia, who "would bring him [Tom] completeness and perfection. . . . [It] could not be otherwise" (76). The transition from some vast, natural realm towards a personal choice is an unwilling one: "He had his fate to follow, he lingered here at the threshold" (79). His personal contribution is not the act of falling in love, which is involuntary, but his determination to acknowledge this event, to

codify it, and to present it to the world: "He wanted it said that there was something between them" (64). The deliberate, optional articulation of the necessary, natural love marks the movement from silent understanding to knowledge: "He was to be her husband. It was established so" (94). His freedom in making this decision can exist only in the symbolic universe, because this freedom itself is symbolic--a manipulation of signs, an exchange of conventional, ritual, public gestures.

The duality ("the old duality of life" [328]) that haunts human beings cannot be overcome--the rainbow itself is a sign of duality, because it is only one half of something larger, and it presupposes, while excluding, the other half. The main symbol for this duality[38] in the novel, besides the rainbow itself, is the image of the phoenix.[39] This is, of course, a non-existent bird--it exists only in so far as it is represented in pictures or legends, and therefore, like the rainbow, it has a purely symbolic existence, while the actual object that the symbols refer to remains forever invisible. The phoenix appears for the first time when Will Brangwen carves it in wood for Anna: "His favorite work was wood-carving. The first thing he made for her was a butter-stamper. In it he carved a mythological bird, a phoenix, something like an eagle, rising on symmetrical wings, from a circle of very beautiful flickering flames that rose upwards from the rim of the cup" (154). The "home base" of the phoenix, its natural environment, is the "circle"--the absolute synthesis of all experience. From there, it plunges into the arches of its temporal and spatial, material re-incarnation and acquires specificity and meaning. As the classical symbol of re-birth, the phoenix resembles the "seed buried in dry ash" (487), and serves to emphasize the renewal of life in the visible world, which is possible only because the visible is interrupted by the invisible, and when life

is interrupted by death. Thus the feeling of newness in the re-birth of the phoenix is the false, artificial invention of the material world, which prevents us from seeing the complete, circular process connecting life and death. Instead, we see only a series of separated lives, whose unarticulated symbiosis remains underground. Thus life itself has no choice but to be specific and limited, because it is the carrier of variations--the visible part of the ice-berg of universal, uniform creation. That is why every single instance of the recurrence of the phoenix seems different and individually meaningful: "Strange, to lift the stamp and see that eagle-beaked bird raising its breast to her [Anna]. And every time she looked, it seemed a new thing come to life. Every piece of butter became this strange, vital emblem" (154). It is not accidental that the vitality of the object should be related to its being "strange"--the specificity and differentiation of life prevent the individual object or person from establishing any connection, except the symbolic one, with any other object or person. The most intimate, direct connection is that between the mother and the child who is "drinking life from her to make new life" (255). But even the mother has to accept the fact that the child is a stranger to the extent to which it is "new," and familiar to the extent to which it is "old" and contains in it the mother herself–therefore the child is not a stranger only to the extent to which it is not a child, but a duplication of the mother.

The specific imagery of the phoenix in *The Rainbow* aspires toward the borderline point of synthesis of ideal and material existence. The fact that the mythological creature is on a stamp, meant to impress its image in infinite duplicates on ephemeral, physical, man-made material--something which people use for food, furthermore, and thus ensure its extinction--makes the tension between the two worlds all the more apparent and at the same

time reinforces the connection between them. In the same way, a different instance of the symbolism of the bird parallels the bond of parental love: "he [Will] would make on a piece of bread-and-butter a bird, out of jam: which she [Ursula] ate with extraordinary relish" (257). Here, the roles of the ideal and the real seem to be reversed. It is not the case that the real piece of bread is meant to be preserved or somehow elevated because of its symbolical value; on the contrary, it is the picture of the bird, carrying on the phoenix imagery, that is sacrificed--it is designed and crafted so that it can be destroyed in a flash, as if the value of its destruction, its consummation by the ever-hungry, ever-unfinished life-process is greater than the value of its unadulterated mythological significance. And indeed, this seems to be the implication of *The Rainbow* as a whole--the rejection of the absolutist claim on the completeness and inviolability of the circle, and the acceptance of phoenix-like, sporadic, contingent life signs, which make sense only when integrated into the code of civilization but seem inferior when viewed in their fragmentary physical dimensions. Motherhood, then, appears to be not a denial of the limitations of physical space, but an act of conferring physical shape and organized being on the newborn. In other words, the process of birth is the process of transcending the circle and breaking out into the uncertainty of the individual arch.

In the religious undercurrent of *The Rainbow*, where humanity is mothered by God, the implication is that for God this duality between circle and arch does not exist, since God functions in the perfect, all-inclusive circle. For man, the rainbow is the articulated part of the circle, the visible part, because man is a creature condemned to language--to symbolic connection but physical exclusion. The importance of the rainbow for motherhood itself lies

in the ability of the mother to make contact with the underground flow of life, with the invisible half of the circle. If the arch can be viewed as an inverted pendulum (appropriate also as a clock marking time), giving birth marks the swing of the pendulum at its highest point, where it stops for a second to reverse direction, to return to the physical world. That is why the act of motherhood is the act of limiting all of experience to reality and allowing the newborn to experience life in its isolation from death, in its specific, contingent circumstances. Through motherhood, as through the contract of the rainbow, humanity turns back to the world, unable to go on into the unknown except through death. While the anonymity of physical love (the "impersonal look . . . female to male" [118]) unites the archetypal Man and Woman, the giving of birth is the return to individual existence, where connection is possible only through social conventions, which personalize, rather than generalize, the world.

But motherhood is also the guardian of life, because its turning to the world, although it allows for worldly death, keeps man from absolute death, just as the rainbow promises less than total destruction, no real death but only worldly transformations from one generation to the next. Thus we see that in the novel the first generation is preserved in the spirit of the last, and the original dilemmas are repeated almost verbatim in the lives of those who follow. The image of the phoenix illustrates the transformations in procreation, which would have been identical and meaningless if they did not encounter the physical world every time under the guise of unrepeatable circumstances which have generated artificial, conventional, and also individual responses and moral choices. Even though motherhood aspires towards its mythical, archetypal, impersonal power, when it encounters the world it is compelled to

break down into specific, individual lives. Hence the importance of the material world and the human mastery over it, which has been announced by Noah's contract with God, and which allows humanity to approach life creatively and design its own laws. Without the impediment of the imperfect reality the human species would have fallen into a regressive, self-absorbed contentment--people would have been satisfied to undergo their physical life span without trying to exist historically in the world, without taking into account external reality, which is the indirect source of progress.

At the same time, while in the physical, worldly environment motherhood is life-giving, in metaphysical terms it marks the limit of life, the border with the unknown which is not life, but which informs and makes possible life itself. If so far the mother has been the object of admiration, attention, or obsession, it has always been confined (in *Sons and Lovers*, on purpose) to the physical world; here, the mother figure can be seen as the end of the world (given that the world, since Noah, has no real end, only material transformation), not as its linear termination, but as its circular limit. In other words, motherhood is the suggestion, the invocation of the circle by the individual arch, an intimation that there is something more beyond the visible. Ultimately, the appeal of motherhood is that of the enigmatic foreigner in *The Rainbow*--someone who has been very far, perhaps on the other side of the rainbow, into the unknown, and then has been resurrected into the ordinary world.

Notes

1. Frank Kermode observes that "*The Rainbow* came to represent the Old Testament (Law) and *Women in Love* the New Testament (Love)" (20); he goes on to remark that "*The Rainbow* is deliberately rendered as a kind of Genesis" (20).

2. It appears that the general critical tendency is to associate the symbol of the rainbow not so much with the incompleteness of the arch, but with the completeness of the circle. H. M. Daleski, for example, argues that "[t]he rainbow is one of many symbols that Lawrence employs to convey his sense of unity in a dualistic universe" (88). On the other hand, Daniel Dervin shows that "the rainbow is an open form; it unites opposites by being a broken circle" ("Symbols" 520).

3. As Alan Friedman points out, "*The Rainbow* is planned to provide, inevitably, for the absence of any conclusion" (qtd. in Schleifer, "Vision" 164).

4. Paul Rosenzweig emphasizes this dualism as the main theme of the novel: "At the thematic center of *The Rainbow* lies Lawrence's vision of man's dualistic nature: the inherent tendency toward a split in . . . each individual, relationship, and society; the increased disjunction between the two halves of the duality in progressive generations and the need in the western societies of the twentieth century for a reconciliation–an organic coordination–between polarities is symbolized in the title metaphor of the rainbow" (151).

5. Another parallel between motherhood and the rainbow is made by Elizabeth Fox, who applies Lacanian terms to show that the completeness of the rainbow, just as the completeness of the mother-child relationship, is illusory: "Rainbow and mirroring are of the same kind, Lacan states: they are things that do not speak, that one does not speak to, that are only appearances, and are insubstantial, before the move into language and symbolization. . . . The rainbow exists entirely in its appearance, like the imaginary relation between mother and child, with nothing behind it" (211). The present argument, however, will outline another interpretation, in which the rainbow is not seen as existing "before" symbolization, but as the beginning of symbolization.

6. Baruch Hochman tells us that "*The Rainbow* opens with a vision of an almost complete harmony between man and nature" (35). However, the word "almost" suggests that such harmony is inherently impossible, and in fact, from the very beginning of the novel there is a strong urge to transcend the natural given into something that will not be purely natural any more, but social and symbolic.

7. In "Lawrence's World Elsewhere: Elegy and History in *The Rainbow*," John Haegert analyzes Lawrence's philosophy of human historical development: "Two 'forces,' he [Lawrence] believed, rule mankind: the force of Law, by which man exists in the flesh, as a pure creature of nature; and the force of Love, which compels him to consciousness, knowledge, and a sense of his own god-like power as creator" (118). While other critics (cf. Frank Kermode) assign the symbolism of "Law" to *The Rainbow*, it seems that the novel is

much more concerned with the social expression and historical self-creation of the human species, or, in other words, with the "force of Love." For more on Lawrence's theory, see George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulten, eds, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence (1913-1916)*, Vol. 2, London: Cambridge UP, 1981: 182-84, and Lawrence, "Study of Thomas Hardy," in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Edward D. McDonald, NY: Viking Press, 1936: 464-76.

8. Thus Paul Rosenzweig says "the split is essentially one between 'being' and 'knowing,' between man's original tendency to live instinctively through the action of his body and his increasing disposition in modern times to live cerebrally and unspontaneously through the abstracting processes of his mind" (151).

9. Homer O. Brown emphasizes the importance of the word "unknown" (278) in *The Rainbow*. He also associates this word with the "process of translation of the unconscious into consciousness" (282-83), which seems to undermine the status of the "unknown" and make it subordinate to the known, the consciously mastered.

10. In "Lawrence's World Elsewhere: Elegy and History in *The Rainbow*," John Haegert points out "the central conflict or tension is not between one generation and another, but is rather a recurrent struggle in each generation for the great 'unknown'" (127).

11. As Wallace G. Kay points out, "[t]he self cannot fuse with the 'other,' else the 'other' ceases to exist" (211).

12. In *Psychoanalytic Psychology: The Development of Freud's Thought*, Raymond Fancher describes this paradox: "the instinctual aspects of behavior tend to be conservative or regressive, while those aspects deriving from the contingencies of external reality are progressive and life-extending" (190).

13. In *An Autobiographical Study*, Freud emphasizes the fact that the drive towards death is an internal drive, and every aspect of the differentiation of an organism is, in a somewhat Darwinian way, the result of external, hostile influence: "Instinct in general is regarded as a kind of elasticity of living things, an impulsion towards the restoration of a situation which once existed but was brought to an end by some external disturbance. This essentially conservative character of instincts is exemplified by the phenomena of the compulsion to repeat. The picture which life presents to us is the result of the concurrent and mutually opposing action of Eros and the death instinct" (*FR* 36). In other words, love and other forms of cathexes with the world are external to the human being. See also the passage on the "instinct of death" in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (*FR* 754).

14. Thus Marguerite Howe emphasizes the fact that humans are historically grounded, and "history, which is the descent from infinity into time and matter . . . [is] a birth" (36). In other words, the historical existence requires a partial renunciation of the dream of completeness and union with Nature, and in fact we see the characters in the novel get farther and farther away from such unconscious union, seeking to form a conscious, historical

relationship with the world around them.

15. Although Scott Sanders argues that, in *The Rainbow*, "nature invariably dwarfs society" (63), and that "Man is first of all a physical creature–only derivatively is he a creature of society or history" (67), it seems that the project of *The Rainbow* is not as simple and straightforward as that. Above all, as even Sanders agrees, "Nature is speechless, society verbal" (66), and we see an urge toward verbalization of experience from the very beginning of the novel. Nature is not sufficient in the world, even though man, in the end, will return to the simplicity and harmony of a natural union with the larger forces of life and death.

16. In "*The Rainbow* and 'Otherness,'" T. H. Adamowski maintains the inarticulate and inaccessible nature of the Other: "We know that there is otherness, and we know it because we cannot know the Other" (60). Accordingly, "the self may try to find its completeness in non-human experience" (72), in experience which is foreign to human sensibility because it is a non-symbolic, non-historical experience. In fact, these inhuman forces explicitly reside in nature, in what is the most natural part of man--his body: "This 'other' self is a body-self" (65).

17. Some critics would not agree. James Cowan, for example, explicitly associates the symbol of the rainbow with nature, in saying that "the rainbow describes the natural parabola of life" ("Introduction" 198). However, the word "describes" suggests precisely the rainbow's participation in language. If the rainbow is a symbol of anything at all, it is undeniably a symbol, and therefore a social and historical phenomenon, rather than a natural one.

18. Homer Brown's argument in "'The Passionate Struggle into Conscious Being': D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*" also seems to move in that direction, as he points out that "the rainbow is the promise, always the promise, of greater fulfillment, constantly leading the soul forward in its quest" (289). Above all, a promise is a verbal act, and if it does not lead to any fulfillment in the physical world, then it remains a pure symbol devoid of material reality.

19. As Makiko Minow-Pinkney points out in relation to Woolf, "representation is only possible at the expense of the body–both one's own body . . . and the body of the mother" (107).

20. Another way in which feminine subjectivity (and motherhood) seems to be central to the novel is the apparent difference between men and women in *The Rainbow* in the way they interact with the unknown. Women seem to be more attuned to the adventure of transcending themselves than men are. Thus Peter Balbert points out that "[i]n *The Rainbow*, men have the greater difficulty in accepting this pure unknown in their mates. . . . The quest for the unknown is no less intense in the men than in the women, but often inhibitions and egocentric worry hamper the male . . . [unlike the] consistent depiction in *The Rainbow* of the willingness in women to embrace the unknown" ("Logic" 48). Balbert, however, finds this female impulse grounded in the body, which is to say in nature: "a woman's search for the beyond [is] less fraught with self-consciousness and fear of failure. Her body's structure thus

gives confident direction to her quest" (49). However, the quest of mastering the unknown, of incorporating it into the moral and historical life of people, requires the unknown to be confronted by consciousness and transformed into a meaningful artifact. Therefore, the female power to articulate, which is parallel to the maternal power to separate (through birth), becomes essential. In contrast to the female, as David Manicom points out,"[t]he male tends to have only 'inarticulated' desires" (475). And in "Lawrence's World Elsewhere: Elegy and History in *The Rainbow*," John Haegert also emphasizes the difference between the female drive forward, into the world, and the more regressive male drive to go back to the union with nature / mother, which has been lost upon entrance /birth into the world: "In this sense, the men are the true elegists of *The Rainbow*. If the women mainly anticipate, the men mostly remember" (124).

21. And this transcendence has to be historical, although some critics have identified it as a transcendence back into nature: "Dissatisfied with society, therefore, in *The Rainbow* he [Lawrence] recommends nature for his transcendent order" (Sanders 70). And Anthony Burgess similarly identifies Lawrence as "a poet of the instincts" ("Lawrence" 118), thus giving primacy to the natural and discrediting the historical.

22. The ultimate expression of the self is in a creative act and, at the same time, creation is inherently bound up with the unknown. In the words of T. H. Adamowski, "[t]here is no way of being 'true to oneself' that does not involve the Other" ("Otherness" 76).

23. The desire to belong to the totality of nature, to that "everything," is a regressive, nostalgic human feeling. The entrance into history and morality, on the contrary, means an acceptance of fragmentation, just as the rainbow itself is only the worldly, visible part of an invisible whole. For moral choices to be made, man has to acknowledge the fragmentary and inconclusive nature of history. In "D. H. Lawrence and the Aesthetics of Transgression," John Haegert observes that in *The Rainbow* there is a "continuous interdiction and subversion of competing truths, none of them total, all of them partial" (4). While nature is simply given, so that man cannot adopt a critical attitude towards it, social existence allows the possibility of being wrong and therefore, in its fragmentation and insufficiency, forces man to be a moral creature.

24. See "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (*FR* 545-562) on the parallels between withdrawal, shrinking, and narcissism, especially Freud's definition of narcissism: "The libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism" (546).

25. See note 23 above.

26. Here, I cannot agree with Elizabeth Fox in her account of Ursula as a regressive character: "The independent New Woman whom Ursula had shown such promise of becoming, fades to the point of disappearance" (199), and: "The plot of female quest stalls when the text is content to leave Ursula an object instead of a subject (or agent) of desire and responsibility" (205).

27.See Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, on the regressive purpose of all living organisms (*FR* 612).

28. Even though she has physically lost her child, Ursula has entered a more productive social and historical relationship with the world around her. In this sense, even though she is not a mother in a physical way, she is associated with motherhood as a function of entering the world, of separation and freedom. In "Lawrence's World Elsewhere: Elegy and History in The Rainbow," John Haegert also draws a parallel between motherhood and Ursula's stance towards life at the end of the novel: "At the end she [Ursula] is left abandoned but unbroken, with a serenity resembling maternal bliss" (122).

29. That is why *The Rainbow* can be seen as a mostly optimistic vision, unlike David Manicom's view of it as "an apocalyptic novel" (474). As John Haegert notes in "Lawrence's World Elsewhere: Elegy and History in *The Rainbow*," the novel is "a profoundly positive work which looks to the future rather than lamenting the past . . . [and which is not] focusing [on] a sense of loss" (116).

30. Poplawski also points out the importance of the rainbow as a symbol of renewal and progress through birth and separation: "Finally, the rainbow is constituted of light and water, the one symbolizing spiritual transcendence, and the other birth and potentiality" (109).

31. Ursula's hostility towards the circle is a hostility towards the cycle of nature. As Edward Engelberg observes, "[i]t is Ursula's express triumph over her experience to break through all circles, all encircling hindrances, and among them, particularly, the circle of the wedding ring" (167). Finally, the uncritical totality of nature is negated by "Ursula's journey through the widening circles of experience, and her ultimate flight beyond those circles into the arches of heaven" (173). So, at the end, she fulfills what Peter Balbert calls her "quest for self-definition and transcendence" ("Logic" 60).

32. The rainbow is from the first a symbol of language and social convention, rather than nature. Thus Poplawski points out that the rainbow "is insubstantial and evanescent and it seems to create itself out of nothing" (109). Unlike the solidity and stability of the natural world, symbols, convention, and words seem to be made-up, created by the mind out of nothing.

33. Homer O. Brown points out, "[t]he thing-in-itself is a concept, an ideal or idea, and therefore fiction: it doesn't exist. . . . In the Lawrentian system, there is no thing-in-itself, because there is no thing-by-itself; there is only relationship" (220). [In"'The Passionate Struggle into Conscious Being'" D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*." (1974) *D. H. Lawrence: Critical Assessments*. Vol. II. Ed. David Ellis and Ornella De Zordo. Mountfield, UK: Helm Information, 1992. 214-25.]

34. Poplawski distinguishes between "the contained spiritual consummation represented by the pointed finite arch of the man-made church, and the constant potentiality for fulfillment represented by the natural, rounded rainbow arch" (87).

35. Marguerite Howe argues, in fact, that in *The Rainbow* it is "the birth metaphor which dominates the book" (31).

36. See note 14 above.

37. See Fancher, pp. 186-193.

38. Lyna Lee Montgomery, on the contrary, sees the phoenix not as a symbol of duality but as a "singular creature" (268), since it is always single and cannot multiply.

39. For more on the symbol of the phoenix, see James C. Cowan, "Lawrence's Phoenix: An Introduction," *DHLR* 5.3 (Fall 1972): 187-99, and Douglas J. McMillan, "The Phoenix in the Western World from Herodotus to Shakespeare," *DHLR* 5.3 (Fall 1972): 238-67, as well as Lyna Lee Montgomery, "The Phoenix: Its Use as a Literary Device in English from the Seventeenth Century to the Twentieth Century," *DHLR* 5.3 (Fall 1972): 268-323.

CHAPTER 7: *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER*--
MOTHERHOOD VS. THE EXHAUSTED WORLD

While the project of *The Rainbow* aimed at circumscribing the metaphysical, stationary character of motherhood and opening up its possible worldly and socially conditioned dimensions, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, set in a post-war time frame, brings up the issue of the danger of civilization to the human spirit. The way this danger is revealed, however, has special relevance to motherhood itself. The framework in which the novel endeavors to study civilization, against the backdrop of its usual binary counterpart, nature, is very similar to that of *The Rainbow*--the dynamic relationship between the closed circle and the open arch. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, however, the coordinates of openness and limitation are not spatial but temporal. Broadly speaking, the whole attempt on the part of civilization to control the natural world through constructing a social world is an attempt to predict and condition the future, to transpose the vision of the present into its projected realization. For the civilized mind, then, the future is hardly an open-ended affair, and neither is the present. The idea behind the domestication of time itself is precisely a mastery over this open-endedness and the establishment of a closed chain of possibilities for the future, all of which converge towards the ultimate mythology of "the end of the world"--a piece of pessimistic machinery to achieve absolute control through willed self-destruction, or, in other words, the temporal equivalent of the spatial closure of the circle. The project of

civilization is the project of knitting events together in a loop, which makes it possible to call the present technologically "visionary" and to foresee or shape the future, so that it can relate in an apparently meaningful and complete way to the present.

The "natural"[1] side of things, on the contrary, emerges as that which is unforeseen, un-envisioned by the mind in its future permutations. The natural, the novel stresses throughout, is that which is incomplete.[2] The unfinished nature allows development and the prospect of a future, rather than a past. Eugene Goodheart, for example, points out that "[f]or Lawrence, nature–the physical, bodily life of man–becomes primarily opportunity" (86). Thus, in one of her frequent skeptical moods, when she feels aloof and above the plebeian fragility of the human physique and its functions, Connie contemplates: "And she thought, as she had thought so often . . . what a frail, easily hurt, rather pathetic thing a human body is, naked; somehow a little unfinished, incomplete" (72). But it is precisely this incompleteness that allows for natural connections[3] between human beings to happen, as in the case of the keeper: "he felt cruelly his own unfinished nature. He felt his own unfinished condition of aloneness cruelly. . . . It was the cruel sense of unfinished aloneness, that needed a silent woman folded in his arms" (153). The natural and the physical allow communication of the fact that they are unfinished, and that what they lack, what they seek is the Other.[4] Thus only through nature can the self "escape behavior rooted in narcissistic yearning for fusion" (Clayton 215). To go back to nature[5] does not mean to go back to the past; instead of the popular and simplified view that nature leads back to the original self, Lawrence seems to propose a solution to the problem of civilization in which nature leads forward to the Other.

It seems that the whole progress of civilization, on the other hand, is aimed toward

some mythical, narcissistic self-sufficiency[6] of the individual human being which, in its ultimate form, would not require any connections[7] (cathexes) in order to function, but would encapsulate intellectually, falsely, all of existence, so that even that part of existence which is not available experientially will seem accessible through a synthesizing thought process. At this point, civilization will not need an "other" to relate to, or an incompleteness to fill up, but will be complete in itself--it would make the body obsolete. As Adamowski points out in "Intimacy at a Distance," "his [Lawrence's] point is that we have lost the body" (72). Or at least that is what Connie hopes for in her more rational moods, when she observes her lover from the distance of a sober self-sufficiency: "His body was a foolish, impudent, imperfect thing, a little disgusting in its unfinished clumsiness. For surely a complete evolution would eliminate this performance, this 'function'" (185). This is the constant fear civilization is based on--that the body inherently "lack[s] something" (72), that the capacities of pure physical registering of the world and the intricate human skills of life and death are somehow insufficient without an ordering mechanism which can synthesize them in an intellectually comfortable, contained pattern of knowable parameters. The ultimate fear in Connie's mind is that she, as a lover and as a mother, in her explicitly physical interactions with other tactile entities, might be engaged in something unknowable to her mind, something which takes the form of "the unknown man" (187), a fear that her own behavior lacks patterns and intelligibility, that her body rebels against her mind.[8]

In moments of clarity induced not by intellectual analysis but rather by some instinctive understanding of how nature redeems mankind, Connie acknowledges the power and fruitfulness of this rebellion of the body--because of its incompleteness and

unpredictability, the body is allowed to develop, to breathe, to interact, to build up. Furthermore, nature seems to favor a tactile[9] interaction, so that everything natural appears as that which, being beyond[10] conscious control, does not need to be conceptualized in order to exist--it interacts with people on the level of their physical make-up. The natural, then, is that which has no notion of itself and which cannot put itself in front of its own gaze and contemplate its possibilities for the future. On the level of the material and physical reality of the body, the concept of "future" does not exist, since no concepts exist. At the same time, the body is the only thing that can allow the future *to happen*, since because of its insufficiency it urges the self to cathect forward, outside and beyond itself. The main endeavor of the main characters in the novel, therefore--their conscious[11] attempt to secure some kind of future for themselves and by implication for civilization as a whole--almost imperceptibly entangles them more and more into the flawed mind-set of the sophisticated animal *homo sapiens*, the only organism that wants to create an epistemological mirror for itself and mold its own future according to its projected needs.

In this sense, the whole project of civilization can be said to be fundamentally narcissistic--it adds a self-contemplating layer and teleological self-analysis on top of the essential and unquestionable physical growth and instinct-directed, oblivious survival. Narcissism is civilization's cerebral garment to cover the threatening nakedness of what life would be like without the human mind. The narcissistic, concept-laden downfall of civilization presupposes an idyllic vision of sufficiency which is self-centered because it does not need to look further than itself to find perfection. The mind will be enough, having outgrown the necessity for the body. Thus the idyllic perfection here is associated with the

narcissism of civilization rather than with the imperfection of nature with its need for development, openness, and future.

In one fundamental and traditional sense, motherhood is the ultimate concept of the "future"; however, it contains the future without the pretense of seeking to own[12] it. Thus motherhood is the only thing that can bring together the affirmation of life and the notion of a non-narcissistic future--the two things which civilization has cut adrift.[13] The self-contained, narcissistic ego is best overcome, in a natural way, by the process of motherhood, which is capable of reversing even the most egotistic, primary, and savage self-love. This is a topic to which Freud devotes a passage in "On Narcissism: An Introduction":

> Even for narcissistic women, whose attitude towards men remains cool, there is a road which leads to complete object-love. In the child which they bear, a part of their own body confronts them like an extraneous object, to which, starting out from their narcissism, they can then give complete object-love. . . . At the most touchy point in the narcissistic system, the immortality of the ego, which is so hard pressed by reality, security is achieved by taking refuge in the child. Parental love, which is so moving and at bottom so childish, is nothing but the parents' narcissism born again, which, transformed into object-love, unmistakably reveals its former nature. (*FR* 555-56)

The ability of motherhood to transcend the inherent narcissism of self-preservation, while at the same time ensuring a more valid self-preservation than is offered by, for example, the public attribution of a name to an intellectual enterprise (as in Clifford's writings)[14], makes it the perfect tool for exposing the limitations of civilization, which is incapable of being

vulnerable, open, unfinished. Motherhood, in contrast, makes Connie drop her social defenses and feel the unprotectedness of possibility; she is no longer self-contained, but now uncertain as to what she is and unable to account for it: "Another self was alive in her. . . . In her womb and bowels she was flowing and alive now and vulnerable, and helpless. . . . It feels like a child, she said to herself; it feels like a child in me" (143). She is literally split into a self and an other, realizing that the self is therefore only partial and vulnerable to the other. The intellectual helplessness gives her physical freedom.

Motherhood itself is safe from narcissistic self-entrapment because, in its very essence, the mother function is always displaced from the mother to the child. Motherhood, then, is not something that belongs to the mother in any regular sense of the term. On the contrary, it subsumes the mother figure under a system of meaning which is not immediately apparent and available for analysis, least of all by the mother herself. The same intellectual barriers that prevent humans from achieving a satisfactory understanding of life and death also interfere with making sense of love and motherhood, which two favorites of Lawrence remain safely outside the appropriating grasp of civilization. It is only during moments of intellectual auditing of her feelings that Connie experiences disillusionment and doubt, inertia and complacency. And, conversely, in the moments when she is able to abandon the artificial life of the mind and to frustrate the socially regulated anticipation and interpretation of her actions, she finds what can be termed most accurately "happiness." The need of explaining herself to a system of pre-established and transparent social meanings serves to put her on her guard and force her to reserve some things to herself--to live in secrets which remain unchanneled through the acceptable, public pathways of love life, and which threaten

to continue invisibly, with no social mirror put up to them and no verbal acknowledgment of their existence. Thus Connie begins to drift away from narcissism and toward motherhood, seen as the possibility of bodily meaning--meaning which is lived and not contemplated, located, pointed out, or discussed. The body emerges as the main source of meaning, although its insights cannot be articulated. As Julian Maynahan observes, "[i]n Lawrence generally the ground of all value is physical experience" (78). This value is in turn derived from the irreducibility of the body to the mind.[15]

In a sense, in the midst of all this destructive symbolism aimed at the ownership and destruction of nature[16], motherhood can be said to rebel against its own name--being a lover and a mother is for Connie an experience which goes far beyond its own labeling and interpretations within the framework of her paralyzed social life. Consequently, the physical experience cannot be intellectually contained. This is true not only of Connie's transformation into lover and mother, but also of the peculiar position Mellors occupies within the social framework--he, for example, possesses a chameleon's ability to slide into languages which are otherwise socially stratified and incompatible with one another. The following description which Connie offers of Mellors conveys two different assessments of his social adaptability; on the one hand, his social breeding is superior to his actual environment, while on the other hand his native nobility is supremely irrelevant to his social identity: "he could go anywhere. He had a native breeding which was really much nicer than the cut-to-pattern class thing" (297). This unsettled anonymity of his can make him both socially mobile and an outcast; his physical reality, his body and his voice, have no social equivalent, and can therefore be dragged into intellectual arguments on both sides. Thus

Connie, too, can see her own actions alternately as degrading and regressive, and liberating and meaningful. None of these labels seems to apply. Any instance of intellectual assessment of her physical instincts is bound to fail, since the physical defies interpretation, either positive or negative. The body, as a biological given, asks and receives no validation from any social conventions; it contains its own truth. In "Mr. Mellors' Lover: A Study of Lady Chatterley," Duane Edwards similarly observes that "[f]ortunately, Connie's body is real whether or not she experiences it as real" (121). Whether or not she knows it[17], she leads a life of the body that is vital and victorious. As Connie remarks, "I believe the life of the body is a greater reality than the life of the mind" (254). That is why the fact that she is pregnant, for example, has no immediate relevance to the social *status* of her child as an heir. Any social rendering of the fact of love or pregnancy will do violence to the actual experience, which is sufficient without symbolic interference. The healthy state of the body emancipated from the mind is best portrayed through Connie's experiences in Venice:

> health, health, complete stupor of health. It was gratifying, and she was lulled away in it, not caring for anything. Besides, she was pregnant. She knew now. So the stupor of sunlight and lagoon salt . . . was completed by the pregnancy inside her, another fulness of health, satisfying and stupefying . . . the fulness of physical health made forgetfulness complete. She was in a sort of stupor of well-being. (283)

In this passage, Connie is so excessively introspective that Venice itself does not matter, and hardly even exists for her: "How awful, that I don't really care about the landscape any more" (277). Her life is now internally directed, focused, in a narcissistic way, on her own body;

but this is a fleeting, self-defeating narcissism, since, in her body, the body of another is incipient, and she herself contains the alien personality that is inside it.

The moment of tactile but not verbal understanding which accompanies the acts of love and motherhood will inevitably get lost in its rendition to the outside world; in this sense, the natural, like Freud's unconscious, has to remain repressed[18] in order to exist at all. Repression can take different forms, and one of them, prominent in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, is that of the narcissistic gaze, where the ego perceives itself (or another person) as an object. An example of that tendency in the novel is Clifford's obsession with words, in which he sees himself narcissistically reflected. The ego is paralyzed by its own image as an object, and thus the social interpretation of a private bodily experience is allowed to do away with this experience. In other words, anything with a social function (for example Clifford's name and title), but without any biologically validated substance (he cannot have a true heir, even if there is a child who might inherit his name) points to the distortions of civilization, where the social replaces the physical. The ego only wants to be socially functional, and Clifford ultimately wants to believe that the individual is self-sufficient, with social completeness and without the inherent defects of the body. Thus, even though aristocratic sophistication is functional within the social system, it remains internally empty and physically useless and unproductive, incapable of tapping its own physical, natural resources.

That is why the heir of Wragby does not have to possess any definite personal characteristics--even the son of the lover can perform the function of the son of the husband, even the illegitimately natural can on occasion mimic the legitimately social. On one occasion Mrs. Bolton contemplates: "that would be a Tevershall baby in the Wragby cradle,

my word! Wouldn't shame it, neither!" (158). But as far as all labeling of function can be described as a narcissistic process of external self-legitimation of identity, the social would appear to be irredeemably regressive and a remote substitute of true interaction. Thus, as Julian Maynahan points out, Clifford creates "a complex pattern of abstract relationships to substitute for felt connections between himself and others" (78). In narcissistic relationships, the ego cannot form a cathexis with anyone other than itself and its own social status. That is why all of Clifford's interaction with other people, including Connie, is filtered through his own social status and social needs, so that there is nothing personal or physical about these relationships. Unlike the empty and regressive social ambitions, nature's forward movement involves an infinite series of encounters with foreign objects. Thus, for example, Connie encounters, in Mellors, the most socially disparate kind of person for her. As Duane Edwards points out in "Mr. Mellors' Lover," she responds to Mellors "personally (rather than socially)" (123). Her relationship with Clifford is the exact opposite–it is exclusively social, a marital union concerned about material and social inheritance rather than true physical procreation. The chronology of civilization is continuously self-involved in a vision of the perpetuation of the ego. While giving birth to a child means, as we saw in *The Rainbow*, the separation of that child into another person, what Clifford's heir, if there is one, would inherit would be an ownership of Clifford's possessions, which will remain the same, preserved intact, as if it is Clifford himself who wants to continue in them. A part of true inheritance is the sacrifice of the body, and its substitution with another, separate body belonging to a different individual, the child. But the continuity sought by Clifford is that of the unchanging possessions which are always the same, hostile to all foreign bodies--that of the lover in the

act of love, or that of the child in the act of motherhood. The transference of social status serves to parody the movement of natural, dynamic inheritance, whose basis is the incompleteness of the body. The social appears as a narcissistic caricature of nature, based not on the transformations of the body, but on the paralyzing sameness of objects. That is why, as Scott Sanders points out, it is necessary "to use nature as an antidote to society" (57).

The comfortable assurance of the mind that it can not only complete but replace the body does violence to the physical experience of the universe. Clifford, for instance, has a definite view on the subject: "Emotions that are ordered and given shape are more important than disorderly emotions" (147), and this is not merely because physical pleasures are outlawed, but because the intellectual tyranny which seeks to account for everything diminishes the physical possibilities of the regeneration of the human body through time. The inherent incompleteness of the body is necessary, since it designates nothing less than a beginning, a promise for the future, an openness of childhood that can only exist where there is "a ponderous, primordial tenderness, such as made the world in the *beginning*" (186) [italics mine]. Beginning is unconditional existence, open to future transformations and potentialities; it is existence without any demands of ownership on the future. In contrast, the aristocracy as a whole and Clifford in particular base their comprehension of the universe on the world's ability to be intellectually contained--the value of life becomes dependent on the person's ability to manipulate and control life, so that the future is a matter of planning and organization, not organic development. That is why Clifford constantly imposes demands on the future and insists that it be known[19] and reliable. Thus, for example, Mrs. Bolton is "waiting for Clifford to be really re-assured that it was daybreak. For when he was

sure of daybreak, he would sleep almost at once" (154). On another occasion, Clifford becomes chronically upset with the possibility that Connie, who "promised so faithfully she'd come back" (314), might break her promise. And this is a promise on which his whole confidence in the intelligibility of the world depends, the only solid thing: "On this point he was finally and absolutely fixed. Connie had promised to come back to Wragby, faithfully" (318). He proceeds to blackmail her with his obsessive faith in the stable arrangement of the future: "If you don't come back to Wragby now, I shall consider that you are coming back one day, and act accordingly. I shall just go on the same and wait for you here, if I wait for fifty years" (318). But it is not the future that Clifford is concerned about; it is his *control* of the future *in the present*, the binding vows or long-term plans that assure him of his ability to manage the fate of Wragby.

Such demands for certainty require from nature a false, categorical assurance, which nature itself is not in a position to provide, since nature is always and by definition unfinished, pressing blindly forward. In a way, nature needs a new sunrise every day--it is never certain that there will be a sunrise, but to demand a promise of one means to admit the possibility of the end of the world. Very few people in the novel appear capable of living without some sort of assurance for the future, and the keeper, for instance, is worried that a child might require him to change the way he approaches life, in that he will have to start thinking of the future, and even, through the child, make contact with it: "It [the child]'s the future. . . . I have such a terrible mistrust of the future" (298-99). The keeper's notions of an organized and laid out timeline are extremely doubtful: "You can't insure against the future, except by really believing in the best bit of you, and in the power beyond it" (327). In other

words, the individual cannot narcissistically project himself beyond the present moment, all the way along the chronology of his life, without falling into the intellectual illusion that he can possess the future, and therefore completely possess himself. The antithesis to that intellectual ambition is the unfinished body, the unfinished person, the nonexistent personality, which can acknowledge its need for the Other. The people like Clifford, in contrast, seek to create and maintain their illusion of completeness by resorting to a narcissistic mirror, which would seem to add the *other* half, the future half of the self, so that the self can add up and become self-sufficient and whole. Connie's comment to the keeper, however, rejects such a need for certainty: "But why offer anything? It's not a bargain. It's just that we love one another" (299). In a way, she is prepared to throw away all preparation, and relinquish her control of the future.

The lack of such control means that Connie and Mellors are willing to be defenseless, open to each other and to the rest of the world, while Clifford, for example, is obsessed with control: "He was, in some paralyzing way, conscious of his own defencelessness, though he had all the defence of privilege. . . . She was so much more mistress of herself in that outer world of chaos than he was master of himself" (7). He shows the same fear in his midnight choice of entertainment, based on the oxymoron of safe gambling: "he and Mrs. Bolton would gamble on till two and three in the morning, safely, and with a strange lust" (232). The zero chance of loss ("daring everything while risking nothing" [279]), which implies a zero chance of gain, has the quality of a rhetorical gesture rather than genuine interaction. What Connie, on the other hand, manages to accomplish in the course of the novel is to overcome her socially superficial existence and relinquish control of her life. In a way,

Connie's ability to have a child, to engage physically with the world in an enterprise she can never adequately grasp or explain with her intellect, makes her defenseless, like the little chicken whose birth she observes: "Life, life! Pure, sparky, fearless new life. New life! So tiny and so utterly without fear! It was not really frightened, it took it as a game, the game of living" (120). And later, "Young life! And so fearless! So fearless because so defenceless. All the older people, so narrow with fear!" (139).

Another dimension of defencelessness, more specifically related to the body, is nakedness, which appears again as a threat to Clifford. Even after his war trauma and injury, he strives to prevent any failure in his external shell and pretends to have retained his completeness: "[he is] just as carefully dressed as ever" (13). A metaphorical expression of his paranoia that the world might invade his inviolate castle of isolation is the clearing in the woods that makes them vulnerable: "This denuded place always made Clifford curiously angry" (42).[20] This place in the woods is the Achilles' heal in the make-up of the house which can allow outsiders to gain access to what belongs, but only pro-forma, to Clifford, the same way Connie belongs to him--without a real bond. That is why his possessions need protection and maintenance in lieu of a natural and easy confidence that he belongs there: "this is the old England, the heart of it; and I intend to keep it intact . . . I want this wood perfect . . . untouched. I want nobody to trespass in it" (43).

In contrast, the bond of love or motherhood is such that trespassing is acknowledged as possible and inevitable, so the person who genuinely belongs has no fear and needs no defenses. Such a person is Mellors, comfortable in his body, who tries to make Connie aware of the possibilities of nakedness: "She was her sensual self, naked and unashamed. . . .

She saw her own nakedness in his eyes, immediate knowledge of her . . . male knowledge of herself" (268-69). The aloneness[21] of nudity is the opposite of the aloneness of self-sufficiency--nudity is the public acknowledgment of incompleteness, a sort of an invitation for itself to be destroyed, invaded, to be able to participate more fully in the outside environment, to merge with the rain, or another's body. It is an aloneness which designates not surfeit with oneself, but room for otherness. Furthermore, nakedness cannot be rendered in terms of a symbolical system, nor be translated into a social medium. That is why, since it can never become anything other than itself[22], nakedness can form genuine and unfeigned connections, without the political proxy of tradition or the social intermediary of class.

Nakedness is also associated with birth and renewal: "Far down in her she [Connie] felt a new stirring, a new nakedness emerging" (133). Similarly, love is presented in the novel as a gateway to beginning: "[Connie] moaned with a sort of bliss, as a sacrifice, and a new-born thing" (187). The theme of renewal is central to the novel, and the question is that of Connie's rejection of the wasteful and unproductive life of her paralyzed body. Hilda urges Connie to look at the unredeemable waste of social conformity: "You've got to be amused, got to! Your vitality is much too low; no reserves, no reserves. . . . You're spending your life without renewing it" (81). Connie must abandon her excessive intellectualization of life, which brings no profit, being simply imposed on the world without actually making contact with it, in favor of a more physical activity, which enters a natural cycle of loss[23] (a non-wasteful investment) and renewal. But this renewal, this new birth is not an absolute beginning--nothing self-created is suggested here. The notion of "sacrifice" which accompanies the "new-born thing" in the above description of Connie's love-making

means giving up something for something else, and suggests that birth does not happen out of the blue but is the continuation of the past, a trade-off for death. It is a re-birth in the most exact sense of the word, not narcissistic self-creation, but a continuation, revision, development, true progress. Connie, walking through the woods, tightening her connection to nature, is able to appreciate the delicate interaction between birth and death: "Ye must be born again! I believe in the resurrection of the body! Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it shall by no means bring forth" (88). The difference between a vision of the future and the actual, progressive life of the body is that the body has to die, which means that there must be an interruption in the chronology, a cycle of change. As civilization does not account for death, it cannot accommodate re-birth either.

Without this necessary trade-off, Mellors remarks, the young people become corrupt: "they're sacrificing nothing, they aren't: they're all for self" (108). And the self is tied up in the illusion of completeness and the sufficiency of the moment. In Connie's youth, she is still thinking in absolutes: "one's whole dignity and meaning in life consisted in the achievement of an absolute, a perfect, a pure and noble freedom" (3). Purity is another thing that nature makes impossible, not simply in the necessarily heterogeneous interaction of genes, but in terms of emotional connection of belonging, of being dependent, which is something the young Connie dismisses as an unforgivable weakness: "The beautiful pure freedom of a woman was infinitely more wonderful than any sexual love" (4). Nature, in contrast, requires trade-offs to determine the value of life; its value is not absolute but always in relation to something. This is especially true of the sacrifices of motherhood, common to both people and animals; the keeper observes: "There's no self in a sitting hen; she's all in

the eggs or the chicks.' The poor mother hens; such blind devotion! even to eggs not their own!" (183). Connie also feels an empathic desire to help: "she was pining to give them [the hens] something, the brooding mothers who neither fed themselves nor drank" (120). This emphasis on sacrifice suggests that life is necessarily a trade-off for death, and can never be just thought up, invented, willed out of oblivion. It must be seen, instead, as only one part of a sequence, a cycle.

Creation from nothing, on the contrary, is associated with civilization and, more specifically, with money-making: "Make money! Make it! Out of nowhere! Wring it out of the thin air!" (64). And again, with reference to Clifford's writings: "the money began to flow from the invisible; it was a question of power. It was a question of will; a subtle, subtle, powerful emanation of will out of yourself brought back to you the mysterious nothingness of money: a word on a bit of paper" (65). The will, which is the sole driving power behind money, suggests that the individual is a free agent of creation, that the self, being complete, is autonomous enough to bring things into the world without sacrificing anything in return, without investing any of his own strength or being. Always gaining but without losing--this is the formula of money divorced from life and from necessity. Disregarding the natural balance of trade-offs, a person ends up with absolutes, such as the notions of the end of the world and of an absolute self-creation from nothing, or even the very idea of "nothing," which does not properly exist in nature.

But it is precisely "nothing" that Clifford is associated with throughout the novel, most notably in the stories he writes: "It was as if the whole thing took place in a vacuum" (14), akin to the "artificially-lighted" (14) modern life. The best criticism Clifford gets, from

Connie's father, is also the most devastating: "Nothing in it! What did he mean by nothing in it? If the critics praised it, and Clifford's name was almost famous, and it even brought in money . . ." (15). Here, substance can only be guessed at by its social outline: if the stories have generated the conventional social responses, then they have entered the social system of dissemination, rather than procreation. Clifford's language, then, has been cut off from physical reality[24] and instead deals with "nothing," is about nothing. Connie also has moments of nothingness. Thus her pessimism reaches its summit when she begins to think of life itself in terms of nothingness, to equate existence and non-existence: "Nothingness! To accept the great nothingness of life seemed to be the one end of living" (56). A similar example of defeatist thinking in absolutes occurs in the following passage, where Clifford estimates Connie's value to him not in an equal relationship between one thing and another, but as something in relation to nothing: "for you I am absolutely nothing. I live for your sake and your future. I am nothing to myself" (118). Nothingness, being devoid of physical substance or biological necessity, is Connie's nightmarish antithesis of love. "The fear of nothingness in her life" (51) is the fear of social, intellectual, or historical configurations which are arbitrary and independent of reality: "It was words, just so many words" (51). It is a language that people adopt when they need to give social disguise to their non-verbal, physical pursuits, which are by definition insufficient: "Michaelis was even better than Clifford at making a display of nothingness" (52). It appears paradoxical, then, that Clifford, who needs nothingness in order to go on, should be afraid of the dark: "he was haunted by anxiety and a sense of dangerous impending void" (148). But this apparent anomaly only confirms the unspoken need of every living organism to avoid non-existence; as nothingness

is not possible in nature, Clifford's misgivings only show how far away from nature he is, divorced from it not merely to the point where he thinks he can create something out of nothing (money), but, more disastrously, to the point where he can create this "nothing" as an idea where it does not naturally exist.

A logical continuation of the idea of nothingness, and a further stage of deterioration of the self, is the image of civilization in the novel with its focus on an end-of-the-world sensibility. Having abandoned the natural cycle associated with beginnings and re-birth, the characters begin to comprehend the world in terms of endings, and in their cynicism can present the end of the world almost as a consolation: "Perhaps they were only waiting for the end" (67). The novel presents the picture of a world closed to development and expansion, surfeited, full, a world in which there is no more room. Perhaps the best metaphor for this state of things is the Victorian box, old but without the breath of decay and, like a ghost, impervious to time:

> Everything was perfectly new, and the whole thing, when shut up, was as big as a small, but fat weekend bag. And inside, it fitted together like a puzzle. The bottles could not possibly have spilled: there wasn't room. The thing was wonderfully made and contrived, excellent craftsmanship of the Victorian order. But somehow it was monstrous. Some Chatterley must even have felt it, for the thing had never been used. It had a peculiar soullessness. (159)

This piece of equipment symbolizes the ultimate efficiency and containment; in its monstrous self-sufficiency it is finished, artificially complete to the point of exhaustion (it is "fitted with every imaginable object" [158]; it contains everything there is to be contained). This is the

point of the end of the world, the point of narcissism (since there is no more, no "other" to relate to) and not true relationships, of melancholy and not hope (as in the melancholic Michaelis who "rather hated hope" [28]). The end-of-the-world mentality is a belief that everything about the future has already been settled in the present, that there is nothing to hope for, that nothing can change or develop: "The human world was just getting worn-out" (276). This fundamentally narcissistic attitude is a negation of all open-ended nature.

In his own definition of the end of the world, Freud opposes this exhaustion of cathexis to a healthy, external investment of the libido. In "On Narcissism: An Introduction," he writes:

> We see also, broadly speaking, an antithesis between ego-libido and object-libido. The more the one is employed, the more the other becomes depleted. The highest phase of development of which object-libido is capable is seen in the state of being in love, when the subject seems to give up his own personality in favour of an object-cathexis; while we have the opposite condition in the paranoic's phantasy (or self-perception) of the "end of the world. (FR 547)

Thus, Freud distinctly relates the apocalyptic vision of the self with narcissistic self-sufficiency and internal surfeit without external connection to an object of love or an "other." In Lawrence's novel Connie, for example, becomes more and more open to an outside influence different from the ego and able to redeem her narcissistic self-absorption: "She wished some help would come from *outside*" (101) [italics mine]; that is, she is looking for help to come from what she is not, realizing that enclosure and self-sufficiency give her

defenses that isolate her from the natural environment around her. Clifford, on the other hand, is described in such a way that his decay becomes visible through his deteriorating contact with the external world around him: "his insanity might be measured by the things he was not aware of" (101-102). Thus he is less and less outward-looking, and increasingly occupied with himself. For Clifford, the Other does not exist. His self-absorption is "a negation of human contact" (13).[25] Although Clifford observes what is outside himself--the world--very carefully at times, and even though he meditates on various issues of civilization and economics, he is so removed from an actual, guttural contact with the subjects of his scientific investigations that the outside becomes irrelevant to him, and he assumes a position of complete self-sufficiency in relation to the world: "He was remotely interested; but like a man looking down a microscope, or up a telescope. He was not in touch" (13). This indifference cancels the possibility for any genuine contact, either of love or of hate: "It was not that she [Connie] and Clifford were unpopular, they merely belonged to another species altogether" (12). The negative result for himself is that his personality takes over, as a substitute for the whole outside world; at the same time, his personality ceases to exist as a natural, unfinished self-in-progress, and becomes reified and rigid. In its illusions of self-sufficiency, the ego melancholically[26] perceives itself as an object, an image of completeness and not possibility: "he was neither liked nor disliked by the people: he was just part of things, like the pit-bank and Wragby itself" (12). Clifford is quick to reciprocate: "he saw them as objects rather than men, parts of the pit rather than parts of life, crude raw phenomena rather than human beings along with him" (13). In order to see something in them that they share with him, he would have to see something in himself that he shares with

the outside world, and that poses the threatening suggestion that he is not as self-sufficient as he would like to be. So the gap remains: "There was no communication between Wragby Hall and Tavershall village, none" (11).

Losing all connection with the outside, Clifford is unable to enter any cycle of regeneration larger than himself. Thus he overlooks the importance of losing, sacrificing, or otherwise devaluing personality in order to surpass the narcissistic stage and make a connection with the rest of life. Such a connection is bound to be "impersonal" (50) to some extent. Since nature, as the wholeness of organic life, is inclusive, the intellectual image of independent personality itself can emerge only with the organism's deprivation of belonging to life and its consequent desire to enter a conceptual, intellectual life through a mimetic, narcissistic mirroring process. Personality, therefore, suggests isolation, intellectual enclosure, and delusions of completeness. It is not accidental that Connie's first contact with the keeper is sub-conscious--their physical recognition of each other happens "blindly" (122). Connie is aware that at some level what they find in each other is impersonal: "he was a passionate man, wholesome and passionate. . . . It really wasn't personal. She was only really a female to him" (129). Until, and possibly beyond, the end of the novel, Connie retains a certain fear of losing her personality, a fear of sacrifice and self-erasure: "It was not the passion that was new to her, it was the yearning adoration. She knew she had always feared it, for it left her helpless; she feared it still, lest if she adored him too much, then she would lose herself, become effaced, and she did not want to be effaced, a slave, like a savage woman. She must not become a slave" (144). The impulse to abandon her defenses as an individual comes, Lawrence suggests, from "something old, old, and acquiescent in the race!

Aeons of acquiescence in race destiny, instead of individual resistance" (22). For the duration of a real human contact the two human beings cease to exist as two human beings, and translate themselves into the relationship itself, which is the only non-narcissistic cathexis.

Freud's definition of narcissism shows that one of its symptoms is an apocalyptic angst, and it is of constant concern in Lawrence's novel that time is running out, from the very beginning: "Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins" (1). It is not only that time is coming close to its end, but that it has already in some sense surpassed history and fallen back on itself in an unproductive, empty vision of renewal, in which the new is grotesque and not usefully nascent: "'modern' dwellings, set down like a game of dominoes. . . . And beyond these blocks of dwellings, at the back, rose all the astonishing and frightening overhead erections of a really modern mine, chemical works and long galleries, enormous, and of shapes not before known to man. . . . This was Stacks Gate, new on the face of the earth" (165). The very word "modern" endows these buildings with the suggestion that they are primarily to be seen as a forced, progressive novelty, rather than as places of habitation or work, organically connected to the physicality of human existence.

The new inventions, divorced from their individual purpose, exist only through a general social pattern--they have no use, only function. Within the framework of decay and renewal, use would be associated with an organic, natural process, in which a thing is put to work and fulfills a concrete human purpose, exhausting itself but also investing itself in something larger from which a new process of generation would begin. The opposite

extreme would be that of "function," best defined as a public or social *projection* of what a thing (a building, or Clifford's stories) is supposed to do, after which the thing itself is separated from its socially envisioned function. The public conventions allow the function to continue indefinitely, going on to infinity without even requiring human participation–just as Clifford's property and possessions will go on in mock "inheritance" to his heir, regardless of the absence of actual physical connection between the child and Clifford himself. The social function is never exhausted, since it is not human and physical but abstract and verbal. Nevertheless, it seeks to appropriate and control the individual human beings. Thus, for example, it does not matter what individual buildings actually make up the new neighborhood, since they function socially only as whole–as an intellectual vision of completeness. In the same way, Clifford sees the miners not as individual people but as interchangeable pawns in an intellectual game larger than life.

But this attitude does not make Clifford biased specifically against the people of the lower classes, since he looks at himself, at his own functions as an owner and heir in the same way, including his desire for an heir, someone who is a function of the larger entity Wragby regardless of who will fill in the position. The irony is that, while the function is perpetual and self-generated (money, coming from nowhere, is the quintessential function), it does violence to the individual objects or people it appropriates. This is what Mellors calls "killing off the human thing, and worshipping the mechanical thing" (235). The keeper himself is close to the earth ("lying on his belly on the big earth" [202]) and innocent of the mechanics of the unnatural and artificial: "I'm afraid I know nothing at all about these mechanical things, Sir Clifford" (202). But within the more sophisticated aristocratic context

the individual people must assume some mechanical functions in order to fit into their roles, and these functions will waste the human element, the people themselves, not because the social system or class stratification overtaxes the individual's abilities, but because it leaves them untapped, latent, unnecessary. Thus, a hypothetical heir to Wragby will find his skills and talents as a human being largely unused, even though he can still fulfill his nominal duties. Of course, this scenario does not have to be hypothetical, since Clifford himself is an illustration of this paradox, and his capacity as an owner and a public figure continues uninterrupted by his physical disability or emotional inefficiency in his private life: "Aristocracy is a function, a part of fate. And the masses are a functioning of another part of fate. The individual hardly matters" (197). The private has no bearing on the public; use and function diverge. Clifford explains: "It is not who begets us, that matters, but where fate places us. Place any child among the ruling classes, and he will grow up, to his own extent, a ruler. . . . It is the overwhelming pressure of environment" (197). At one point Clifford describes Mrs. Bolton as a functional "nonentity" (85), to be perceived as a feature of the house, which is the result not of her personal inability to be anything else (in fact, she personally becomes much more important to Clifford than that), but simply the result of the assumption that her duties have been assigned to the whole class of people to which she belongs. Clifford goes so far as to allow individual freedom within the confines of private life, simply because the content of private life has been outlawed from its public representation: "people can be what they like and feel what they like and do what they like, strictly privately, so long as they keep the form of life intact, and the apparatus" (193). The irrelevance of content is necessary if that content is to function socially.

Clifford similarly resents the total absence of function in a flower: "It's a very fine colour in itself . . . but useless for making a painting" (198). Connie's perspective is diametrically opposed: "She was angry with him, turning everything into words. Violets were Juno's eyelids, and windflowers were unravished brides. How she hated words, always coming between her and life" (97). So Clifford diminishes life by comprehending only the functions of things and being blind to their real use and meaning. Of course, a painting of a flower will need to deal with flowers, but they will be abstract, conceptual flowers, unrelated to any larger biological cycle. And conversely, even though the body makes no use of an object or a person, the mind can assign to that object or person a function within the social framework: "The life of the mind needs a comfortable house and decent cooking. . . . It even needs posterity" (32). This is one model where the child would fulfill a function in the lives of its parents as a secondary attachment, and its physical presence will be only marginally necessary. The intellectual is then the antithesis to real motherhood: "while you live your life, you are in some way an organic whole with all life. But once you start the mental life you pluck the apple. You've severed the connection between the apple and the tree: the organic connection" (37).

Connie herself has embarked on a journey to escape the reification of function which leaves her unused as a human being: "She, herself, was so forlorn and unused, not a female at all, just a mere thing of terrors" (119). Thus she is objectified in her empty environment of convention and tradition, all of which implies waste: "All these endless rooms that nobody used, all the Midlands routine, the mechanical cleanliness and the mechanical order! . . . No warmth of feeling united it organically" (14). The fact that her own room is the only one in

the house that is really made use of foreshadows Connie's desire to exchange, later, function for use, the anonymous and perpetual for the personal and fragmentary, the conceptually solid for the physically fragile: "Her room was the only gay, modern one in the house, the only spot in Wragby where her personality was at all revealed. Clifford had never seen it, and she asked very few people up" (23). But the dominant expression of Connie's development is in the state of her body, whose social function strives to negate it, while its use is the only thing that can redeem it: "Her body was going meaningless, going dull and opaque, so much insignificant substance" (73). The descriptions of disuse again suggest the void--a regressive process whereby she is sliding back into nothingness. Thus her body is not simply getting old with use and exhaustion, with exertion and movement, but "old through neglect and denial" (73). And the images of neglect do not settle down into loose, voluminous flesh, but, on the contrary, imply waste, as if the body is vanishing without return, squandered and not invested (as the keeper says in his letter, "If you could only tell them that living and spending isn't the same thing!" [326]); in the case of Connie herself in the beginning of the novel, "she was thinner, and going unripe" (73). This passage outlines a trajectory for Connie opposite to that of pregnancy, since in pragnancy the body is getting not thinner but ripe, growing, filling up. Thus pregnancy and motherhood emerge as the epitome of use and therefore the strongest negation of the arbitrarily functional.

This process of regeneration begins for Connie with her first meeting of the keeper: "she noticed a narrow track between young fir trees, a track that seemed to lead nowhere. But she felt it had been *used*" (91) [italics mine]. Even though the path does not appear to have all the legitimate signs of being a path, with the publicly accepted definition that a path

must lead somewhere, it still has its unregulated, uncodified but practical use and foreshadows a love relationship and motherhood of the same kind. In another instance, when Connie and Mellors have to push Clifford's wheelchair together, they feel a connection created by the physical work and the *use* of their strength, the use of their bodies to accomplish a purpose that is different from anything else: "It was curious, but this bit of work together had brought them much closer than they had been before" (207). Conversely, Connie and Clifford have no points of convergence when it comes to physical contact: "bodily they were non-existent to one another" (16). Their interaction requires deliberate alchemic intervention in order to go on: "It was like his habit to make conversation to Connie about some book, since the conversation between them had to be made, almost chemically" (252). Other intellectual men from the same circle exhibit the same disease with lesser intensity; Connie's other choices of men from among those engaged in producing "nothing" seem slightly more promising: "As between the two men, Michaelis had far more *use* for her than Clifford. He had even more need of her" (75) [italics mine]. While the blunt realization of the physical use of the body can be cynical and degrading, to the point where Connie begins to resent it--"She didn't at all like his saying he had been made use of; because in a sense it was true" (183)--it still emerges as the only meaningful way to treat the body. It is a recognition that the body is necessary to life.

Perhaps the most obvious antithesis to the ideal of love, motherhood, and regeneration, is Clifford's own body: "He had so very nearly lost his life, that what remained was wonderfully precious to him. It was obvious in the anxious brightness of his eyes, how proud he was, after the great shock, of being alive" (2). Clifford stands, from the beginning

of the novel, in a position which allows him to lead his life without being alive. He has suffered an injury which has pushed him over the dividing line between fully proportioned physical life and its conceptual counterpart--the idea of a fulfilled life. He feels capable of appreciating life only after losing it. His development, then, the opposite of Connie's movement toward pregnancy[27], is one from the content to the form of existence, from merely being engaged full time in living, to grasping it intellectually from a distance. Having made that jump, he insists on imposing some coherent form on the rest of existence as well (existence which does not care about being mirrored into concepts), on organizing things and people into categories and giving everything a name. His interest, therefore, lies in words which do not necessarily have a referent, such as "Juno's eyelids" and "unravished brides" (97). Clifford's words seek to depart from the actual nature[28] they are trying to describe, and Connie can sense how artificial they are. But, as Daniel Schneider observes, "the so-called mental events cannot be separated from bodily events" (189).

It is this artificial disparity between function and use that creates the possibility for disproportion, or what Connie sees as "[i]ncarnate ugliness, and yet alive!" (171). In her mind, this ugliness is associated with images of the underworld: "And when the wind was that way, which was often, the house was full of the stench of this sulphureous combustion of the earth's excrement. But even on windless days the air always smelt of something under-earth: sulphur, iron, coal, or acid. . . . she felt she was living underground" (11). In terms of "use" as defined above, the "refuse of the underworld" (41) can be seen as that which is no longer needed, the waste[29], the symptom of function. The tension between the healthy and open and the paralyzed and closed finds expression in the undecided status of

this ugliness--the ugly is defined as that which should not be alive, and yet it is, as becomes clear from this description of Tevershall: "It was producing a new race of mankind, over-conscious in the money and social and political side, on the spontaneous, intuitive side dead, but dead. Half-corpses, all of them: but with a terrible insistent consciousness in the other half. There was something uncanny and underground about it all. It was an underworld" (164). The same disgust that Connie feels toward this place makes the keeper exclaim to a hypothetical audience: "You're not alive. Look at yourselves!" (238).

What emerges from these passages is a sort of a vampire[30] existence which no longer has a sustained connection to the life-giving powers of actual physical processes but has retained a social visibility, a place in the hierarchy of industrial constructions which gives this half-life, this non-life a functional niche, a form of being without content. Ugliness then appears as the absence of any organic connection to life, a pure social convention and functionality; it is not related to poor people, but to poverty, not to workers but to the conditions of work. So the miners are not people in the mine, but "[c]reatures of another reality, they were elementals, serving the elements of coal" (171). This existence divorced from the fluctuations of regenerative death and life does not involve individual human beings, but humans as parts of a larger, indelible social pattern, which is ugly in its presumption of life. Clifford feels more and more that he is becoming part of that abstract, predatory entity: "Then it was ghastly, to exist without having any life: lifeless, in the night, to exist" (149). The prolongation and expansion of such half-life is in fact the opposite of the organic processes of motherhood which recreate life through death and without planned uniformity. In ugliness, life is not equal to the function of life--things can continue to go on

functioning, showing some movement, and yet they are cheated out of life and away from themselves, embedded into a social structure which operates on the pretense that it can objectively organize their life-functions (eating, making love, working) into social patterns no longer dependent on the individual.

The same disproportion and tension between public and private, between the social and the physical, allows distorted images of childhood in the novel, as in the inverted relationship between the full grown and the young, the complete and the incipient, the end and the beginning. The child is the most unfinished thing, and that makes it impervious to end-of-the-world paranoia, in which growth is carried out to its extreme, to the image of fulness, excess, and death. In this sense, the novel is trying to outline the basic childhood characteristics and trace their deterioration in grown-up people. Men, for example, are associated with children throughout the novel. In her youth, Connie regards them as spoiled and sensitive, while she sees herself as capable of providing them with the almost maternal care of physical love: "And a woman had to yield. A man was like a child with his appetites. . . . But that is how men are! Ungrateful and never satisfied. When you don't have them they hate you because you won't; and when you do have them they hate you again, for some other reason. Or for no reason at all, except that they are discontented children, and can't be satisfied whatever they get, let a woman do what she may" (4-6). Similarly, Mrs. Bolton forms a maternal bond with the miners: "The colliers had been so like children, talking to her, and telling her what hurt them, while she bandaged them, or nursed them. They had always made her feel so grand, almost super-human" (85). Such a relationship emphasizes the need that the men feel for the woman, as if they are still organically, physically bound to

her in an umbilical unity. This relationship is naturally reciprocal, and the woman also feels incomplete on her own, so that she recreates the bond and love of motherhood in all her other relationships with men. Mrs. Bolton is the one who most obviously establishes the similarities and blurs the lines of division between children and men: "they're babies, just big babies. Oh, there's not much difference in men" (103). Connie has a similar need to respond in a maternal way to the desperate summons of somebody like Michaelis, for example: "From her breast flowed the answering, immense yearning over him; she must give him anything, anything" (24). He duly rewards her with a child's unrestrained and unqualified appreciation: "his child's soul was sobbing with gratitude to the woman" (27).

The portrayal of men as children, however, has two different implications; on the one hand, grown men can be children only insofar as any person can possess children's characteristics, and in this sense it is possible to argue that all people are children in that they are ultimately incomplete and fragile and must become aware of the limitations of their own personalities, transcend their narcissistic need for autonomy, and seek external connections. On the other hand, grown men run the risk of becoming children as the result of a regressive[31] movement away from the fear of nothingness and toward a possessive tyranny of the self. Thus, broadly speaking, the novel offers two versions of childhood and explores the fine line between them.

Connie's whole affair with Mellors is prophetically triggered by the sound of a real, non-metaphorical child crying: "the infant crying in the night was crying out of his breast to her in a way that affected her very womb" (24). It is this occurrence that forces her to interfere in the life of the keeper for the first time. Mellors himself embodies all the

children's characteristics that redeem his imperfections as a man: "There was something curiously child-like and defenceless about his naked body; as children are naked . . . doubly naked and like a child, of unfinished, tender flesh, and somehow struggling helplessly" (27-28). In the "good" childhood adults acknowledge their vulnerability, incompleteness, and potential. In this sense, childhood emerges as a progressive state of recognition of physical imperfection and potential; this is a psychological state preferred by Lawrence, which leads to what David Cavitch calls the "disavowal of adult and circumstantial experience" ("Solipsism" 501).

The "bad" childhood, on the other hand, is one in which the adults are narcissistically enamored of themselves and clinging to others, while the "others" are seen as existing as functions of the self who depends on them, not as independent entities[32]. And conversely, the self becomes a lifeless function of its own narcissistic vision of merging with its own projections--the people around it: "for you I am absolutely nothing. I live for your sake and your future. I am nothing to myself" (118). And on another occasion we learn that "[h]e worshipped Connie, she was his wife, a higher being, and he worshipped her with a queer, craven idolatry, like a savage, a worship based on enormous fear, and even hate of the power of the idol, the dread idol. All he wanted was for Connie to swear, to swear not to leave him, not to give him away" (117). In other words, here the self is as grounded in and extinguished by the wholesness of the self-perception it proposes, a totality which mirrors the self (the universe coincides with the ego), as are all the people around the self, who become mere functions. The desire for self-erasure suggests a melancholic commitment of the self to itself as a dispensable object. In the case of Michaelis, for example, this feature of

self-destructiveness and humility is enhanced, as we get the images of "[h]is sad-dog sort of extinguished self" (26) and "plaintive melancholy" (28). Michaelis best exemplifies the tension between the natural childish helplessness of man and the excess of regressive drives which represent an unnatural return to the distorted childhood of melancholic objectification of the self: "He seemed so old . . . endlessly old, built up of layers of disillusion, going down in him generation after generation, like geological strata; and at the same time he was forlorn like a child" (21).

Melancholy is not a natural feature of the child, but it is something that results from the confusion of use and function, intellect and body. As in ugliness, there is something unnatural and only half-alive in the disproportionately childish men, men like Clifford when abandoned by Connie. Thus Mrs. Bolton initially observes that Clifford is like the miners: "she found he was like the rest, a baby grown to a man's proportions" (103). Over time, however, he develops a more pathological dependence on women, or rather on the images he creates of these women, especially his idealization of Connie, who is absent. With Mrs. Bolton he behaves "as if he were a child, really as if he were a child" (115), and that can even appear endearingly simple: "he put his arms round her and clung to her like a child. . . . And finally he even went to sleep, like a child" (316). But soon Clifford begins to define himself solely through his weakness, so that the description "like a child" mutates into "like a child, almost like an idiot" (117), and later even includes some more obviously dysfunctional elements: "It was sheer relaxation on his part, letting go all his manhood, and sinking back to a childish position that was really perverse" (316). The "perversity of being a child when he was a man" as he and Mrs. Bolton enter "into a closer physical intimacy, an intimacy of

perversity" (317), suggests that his need for love and attention has begun to regress into a narcissistic theater of role-playing designed to project onto the others his own fantasies of fulfillment. So Mrs. Bolton becomes "the Magna Mater, full of power and potency, having the great blond child-man under her will and her stroke entirely" (317). And again, the outside world is doomed to reflect Clifford's desires, since the world exists for him only insofar as it is a functional double of the ego. This allows Clifford to pay attention, albeit misguided, to the world around him, with emphasis on efficiency and function: "Mrs. Bolton made him aware only of outside things. Inwardly he began to go soft as pulp. But outwardly he began to be effective. . . . he seemed verily to be reborn. Now life came into him" (112-14). It is clear that this mock revival of his spirit is only a parody of a real regeneration, as we see him inhale poison as if it is physically necessary for him: "The very stale air of the colliery was better than oxygen to him. It gave him a sense of power, power. He was doing something: and he was going to do something. . . . And he felt triumphant. He had at last got out of himself. He had fulfilled his life-long secret yearning to get out of himself" (114). Whether or not he in fact succeeds at "getting out of himself" is doubtful, since he still regards the world in terms of function and remains oblivious to things and people as they are physically present--he still cannot see the workers as individuals, and the dusty air of the mines has no material reality for him, other than its symbolic value of being a functional part of Clifford's vision, while he fails to make contact with his immediate surroundings.

In the same way that Clifford is out of touch with the objects and persons around him, he also fails to establish any contact with people through time. The aristocratic emphasis on the functional role of the heir leads to a parody of heritage, in which the heritage symbolism

replaces the true inheritance of continuity. From the beginning, Clifford is most concerned with the family name, and only secondarily with what it stands for, if anything: "Clifford came home to the smoky Midlands to keep the Chatterley name alive while he could" (2). It is as if the very circumstances of his birth conspire to make him evaluate everything according to its manifest social significance, as opposed to some latent, inherent meaning: "His importance as son of Sir Geoffrey and child of Wragby was so ingrained in him, he could never escape it" (8). While Clifford mocks his father's preoccupation with family traditions (Sir Geoffrey "wanted Clifford to marry and produce an heir. Clifford felt his father was a hopeless anachronism" [8]), he gradually falls into the same pattern of artificial continuity through time. He does not even need his heir to be his son, as long as the child is a function of Wragby: "'It would almost be a good thing if you had a child by another man,' he said. 'If we brought it up at Wragby, it would belong to us and to the place. I don't believe very intensely in fatherhood. If we had the child to rear, it would be our own, and it would carry on'" (44). Clifford's mistake is that he thinks that fatherhood is a matter of "belief," an intellectual enterprise rather than a physical function. The unnatural continuity here is further brought forth by the rumor / public knowledge that Clifford can in fact have a child only through artificial means. In a sense, the result cannot be a child but an heir, which is only the symbolical representation of a child. To Connie all of this seems out of place: "Would you even let the child be legally yours, and your heir?" (323). This grotesque system of heritage harks back to the ugliness of half-life, which is only public life, a social function, whereas the real heritage would come from the relationship between mother and child, physically grounded in the bond with the lover, and regardless of the legal social status of the

offspring.

Related to this thwarted continuity is a larger parody of the historic progress of the whole country, as nothing seems to follow naturally from its predecessors but new things jump into being to embody some intellectual concoction of the human brain--not creation but invention of the most artificial sort: "The industrial England blots out the agricultural England. One meaning blots out another. The new England blots out the old England. And the continuity is not organic, but mechanical" (168). This absence of connection and meaning organically sustained through time again suggests that the world is full, overpopulated with machinery to the point where there is no room for more: "There was a gap in the continuity of consciousness, almost American: but industrial really. What next? Connie always felt there was no next" (170-71). And the artificial, unreal quality of the industrialized world leaves the confines of meaningful necessity: "it was like the simulacrum of reality. . . . No substance to her or anything . . . no touch, no contact!" (16). Unlike the chronologies of love and motherhood, where time is measured by the sequence of events, and the events happen only when they are physically ripe to happen, the history of Lawrence's civilized world is abstract and indifferent to the human experience: "Time went on. Whatever happened, nothing happened, because she was so beautifully out of contact. . . . Time went on as the clock does, half-past eight instead of half-past seven" (17). When the natural chain of necessity is broken and the flow of time is not recognized by change but by the regular movement of the clock hands, progress becomes arbitrary. The "next" loses its meaning, since what follows no longer adheres to a logical sequence. As Mellors puts it, "Now anybody can 'ave any childt I' th'world" (190)--the chronology and biological

necessity which bind the parents to the child are lost in an arbitrary arrangement in which any child can be matched to any parent, and that puts Connie in a social situation that allows her lover's child to be her husband's heir. The full, filled-up world, the world at its end, is one in which the intellect is not only defying nature, but has outreached it to grasp a vision of exhaustion of possibilities, a vision of "nothing" which has no natural existence.

Such exhaustion, fullness of the world, means that the world is self-destructively complete, that it represents a whole with no more room for anything. Thus, when the pessimistic vision of the world is countered by the vague possibility of a happy ending, this happiness is necessarily presented as fragmentation, since only fragmentation can defeat the artificial wholeness: "Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. . . . We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen" (1). The implication here is that any natural life must be, by definition, local and "little," since the function of globalization and artificial completeness, absolute interconnection, and the sufficiency of surfeit belongs to the crippled vision of civilization, not to the ever-incomplete and experimenting, quiet mutability of nature. It is essential for civilization to project its vision of wholeness as containment, as a cancellation of mutability, a triumph over death. On one occasion Connie's father, Sir Malcolm, presents her with a grim vision of her social responsibility toward something immutable and deathless--Wragby: "The world goes on. Wragby stands and will go on standing. The world is more or less a fixed thing, and externally, we have to adapt ourselves to it. . . . You may like one man this year and another next. But Wragby still stands" (296-97). As the mind attempts to gain control over

everything, appropriate what is outside itself (the body) into its own functions of social behavior, and transform differences into sameness, it can only function as an ideal, illusory whole; the intellect can comprehend things only as absolutes in their wholeness. That is why the question Connie and Mellors ask– "Couldn't one go right away, to the far ends of the earth, and be free from it all?" (304)--remains without a satisfactory answer: "While the wireless is active, there are no far ends of the earth" (304). The escape from the intellectual whole becomes problematic: "The moon wouldn't be far enough. . . . nowhere's far enough away to get away" (238). The danger is that there hardly remains any "outside" for bodily meaning to go to: "it was like being inside an enclosure, always inside" (41), "the vast evil thing, ready to destroy whatever did not conform" (126). All the loose ends that organically follow from the physical make-up of life, as death follows birth, are tied up and cut short by civilization in an effort to keep it all together, in the knowable, controlled, transparent realm of life, beyond which nothing is acknowledged. The human body's functions (or uses, rather) take on the outlawed, nomadic movement of stray animals, secondary attachments to the civilized mind: "It was the talk that mattered supremely: the impassioned interchange of talk. Love was only a minor accompaniment" (3).

The body and its activities, such as lovemaking and motherhood, which are here presented as intensely physical experiences, are marginalized by the mind in its grandiose visions of the future--civilization is expected to do away with the need for sexual contact. So the narcissistic projections of the future always exclude the body--the body lives in the absolute present, in its nakedness from time itself, stripped of all future and all past. That is why Clifford is afraid of the body, as he is of anything which is not grounded in a vision of

the future. Thus his misplaced affection for Connie is based not on her actual presence in the house, which, in itself, does not seem to mean much, but on her promise to remain there, on her commitment to an ascertainable timeline extended infinitely into the future and immune to the realities of the present. In this sense, Clifford does the opposite of what Paul Morel does in *Sons and Lovers*, where Paul's agenda is founded on the essential anachronism of keeping his mother existing in the present and dragging her out of the past--the past which is her rightful place in relation to her son, regardless of the actual co-incidence of their two lives. From the mother as an anachronism, as something inherently and unavoidably from the past which is forced to live in the present and therefore exists in a constant conflict with its own function of motherhood, Lawrence now turns to the opposite problem--the problem of the decadence of civilization, embodied in Clifford. This decadence is not at all centered on the past--on the contrary, its anachronistic quality stems from its anomalous link to an exhausted future which subordinates and distorts everything else. Accordingly, it is no longer a question of the mother (in the past) but of the wife (in the future) and her ability to fulfill her social function of inheritance, which would take her away from motherhood proper, since now she is forced to have a child and an heir without her husband's physical presence in love and fatherhood. In trying to obliterate his objective, physical connection with the world, Clifford substitutes for it a visionary, theoretical connection to the future, which becomes translated into a theoretical connection with fatherhood itself, taking out the physical element. Conversely, the other man in Connie's life, Mellors as the *other* father, is exclusively focused on the present; for him the child does not even exist in any real sense yet, and he is unwilling to promise anything or to envision any future. It seems, therefore, that

the only mediation between present and future can be carried out by the mother herself, who is not pathologically concerned with the future as an abstract field of possibilities, and yet contains the future in herself.

Occasionally, Connie entertains a hope that she can bring together the body and the intellect: "She had had fugitive dreams of friendship between these two men: one her husband, the other the father of her child" (206), but they will remain separate entities, forever keeping the two realms of symbolical function and physical content separate. On the other hand, the child will remain in the conceptual limbo between "child" and "heir," between its social, symbolic status and its physical, bodily existence, just as Connie's female status remains ambiguous, her femininity suspended between her double vision of love as, alternately, "function" and "use." In a sense, it is a taboo for the individual to try to function in the future, a future which rightfully belongs only to the species but not to the self; it belongs to the wider circle of existence. By claiming the future for himself, Clifford violates some fundamental limitation of the individual personality whereby the individual gives place to a superior scale of rebirth, and allows his own death. Paradoxically, it is the *use* of the individual, not the social function, that requires the individual to die. An individual serving merely as a function, a cog in a larger framework, will be unused, unexhausted, potentially functional forever, unborn and undead.

Notes

1. The consensus among critics seems to be that in the novel nature remains pure. Thus David Cavitch, for example, points out a "contrast between the innocence of experience in the forest and the decadence of life in the world" ("Solipsism" 498), arguing that "Connie and Mellors live in a world of pastoral idyll" (498). Some critics, however, see even nature to be in a state of degeneration. In the words of Reloy Garcia, "*Lady Chatterley's Lover* is the story of personal regeneration amid both social and natural decay. To provide his existential hero with an external paradise is to give Sisyphus a wheelbarrow" (112). It does not become clear, however, where the personality can find a regenerative source of purity except in its *natural* self. In this sense, I have to agree with Scott Sanders' observation that Lawrence "ventured . . . deep into the unconscious in search of the natural man" (60). To reach that natural state means, in a way, to reach back into childhood. As Carol Sklenicka observes, "Lawrence believes that the young child's unconscious exists in its pristine . . . state, as yet undistorted by mental conceptions" (151). The problem Lawrence faces is to show that the act of recovering that earlier state of natural purity is not a regressive, narcissistic process. And in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* he seems to propose a solution: although the natural in man is related to and invokes childhood (therefore going backwards), the natural still remains a state of incompleteness, rather than self-sufficiency, just as childhood itself can be seen as the stage of development where the human being is still incomplete. This non-narcissistic will toward nature will guarantee that the self is future-bound, other-bound.

2. Here I cannot agree with Garcia, when, in "The Quest for Paradise in the Novels of D. H. Lawrence," he argues that "*Lady Chatterley's Lover* closes the circle on Lawrence's quest for paradise" (110). Closure of any kind can be seen only as a hindrance to modern man's ambition of returning to natural purity.

3. Establishing a genuine connection with the other is a dominant theme in all of Lawrence's writings. Thus Howard Booth points out "Lawrence's interest is in the possibility of an encounter with the 'other' that transforms and changes the self" (171).

4. Nature, then, is not seen as undifferentiated unity, but as the very basis of differentiation; the self is separate and incomplete as long as it is natural (only through civilization can the self falsely acquire a sense of completeness and self-sufficiency). Thus Eugene Goodheart observes in the works of Lawrence "a bodily recoil from any connection which might confuse the self with another" (112), and Baruch Hochman agrees: "This desire for disjunction and independence is rooted in the soma, below the threshold of consciousness" (147). Similarly, in "Self / Body / Other: Orality and Ontology in Lawrence," T. H. Adamowski explains that the unconscious is "individual" (195), and what makes it individual is the "body" (196); "the self is *embodied*" (196).

5. Even though nature is not conscious, it becomes the source of human values; as Eugene Goodheart observes, "[w]e are presented with the paradoxical situation of a human world

which no longer creates values and the presumably value-free natural world which provides the hero with an ethical code" (64).

6. It could be argued, as T. H. Adamowski does in "Self / Body / Other: Orality and Ontology in Lawrence," that the return to an idyllic state of nature is no less narcissistic and that "nostalgia for the absolute bond of child and mother . . . is powerful in Lawrence" (204). The aim of the self in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, however, is to recover the incompleteness and potentiality of childhood, rather than the unity of motherhood.

7. Motherhood emerges as progressive here, since what it offers is not union but relationship; as Sheila MacLeod observes, the mother is "the one with whom we have our first physical relationship. . . . She is the one who first defines relationship for us and . . . defines love. As she handles our bodies, so will we handle them" (15).

8. This fear is justified. As Duane Edwards points out in "Mr. Mellors' Lover: A Study of Lady Chatterley," "Connie's body begins to assert itself independently of her mind" (121), which leads her to recognize her self as incomplete and in need of the Other, and therefore "she accepts the gamekeeper as an individual man apart from herself" (123).

9. Critics have pointed out Lawrence's emphasis on touch as the means of healing mankind. Furthermore, it is "only through touch" (Schneider 181) that genuine communication can take place. In "Lawrence and Touch," James C. Cowan emphasizes this trans-subjective function of physical contact: "Of all the senses available as means of integration and of communication with others, touch had the most profound significance for DHL" ("Touch" 121). In singling out the importance of the body, Reloy Garcia observes that "*Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a tactile book, not a visual one" (111), and John Clayton tells us that "[f]or Lawrence the way through is *touch*" (214).

10. This does not mean that the body is self-sufficient; on the contrary, its incompleteness is needed to make the self vulnerable to the Other. In this sense, it is fair to say that the body needs the mind. In the "dialectic of *body* and *voice*" (43), as David Kellogg, observes, "[s]ex stands both beyond language and in desperate need of articulation" (39).

11. In "D. H. Lawrence: Tragedy in the Modern Age," Duane Edwards also argues that planning the future is in fact a denial of living it: "to anticipate is to live not experientially, but in the mind" (81).

12. As Alastair Niven observes, "[p]ossession disrupts equilibrium" (68); civilization, it seems, desires to possess the future, rather than interact with it, live it.

13. Even motherhood itself will have to be saved from the desire of civilization to own it, turning it into the function of sexuality; as Hochman observes in *Another Ego: The Changing View of Self and Society in the Work of D. H. Lawrence*, "The problem of modern man is . . . that his sexuality no longer offers release, fulfillment, and a link to the cosmic life. Instead, it leads away from nature and into self-conscious artifice" (22).

14. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the proposition of immortality is not grounded in the representations of art, but in the procreation of the body. In "Lapsing Out: Ideas of Mortality and Immortality in Lawrence," Donald Gutierrez calls it "corporeal immortality" (175).

15. In "Lapsing Out: Ideas of Mortality and Immortality in Lawrence," Donald Gutierrez argues that "[s]ex here [in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*] is the body *and soul* of man" (170). Similarly, Gary Cox argues that "Lawrence proclaimed the affirmation of the physical self as a spiritual act" (175). However, the advantage of the body is that it allows and embraces the existence of the Other, that it excludes something and is not everything. The body is not a wholeness but a deficiency through which we know that the Other exists. We cannot say, therefore, that the body replaces the mind as an absolute source of unity, because such unity would be artificial and as harmful as the conceptual one of the mind. Thus the body cannot include the soul (even though the soul can pretend to include the body), and it is precisely this limitation that makes it valuable.

16. Symbolism is inherently opposed to nature; as Joan Resina points out in "The Word and the Deed in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*," "[t]here are no natural symbols" (180).

17. In this, Connie seems to speak for Lawrence himself: "I am what I am, not merely what I think I am" (Lawrence qtd. in Edwards, "Mr. Mellors' Lover: A Study of Lady Chatterley," 87).

18. Ideally, however, people would be fully conscious, and they would not need to repress anything; the unconscious would be unnecessary. As Eugene Goodheart points out in *The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence*, "Lawrence has tried to conceive the unconscious as it might be constituted in a condition in which repression no longer exists" (107).

19. Recall Duane Edwards's comment that "to anticipate is to live not experientially, but in the mind" ("Tragedy" 81).

20. Anger itself is also related to narcissism. In "The Problem of Narcissism in Lawrence's Late Fiction," Duane Edwards explains the connection: "Narcissism is a defense against rage which results in inner emptiness. When an infant is unable to separate properly from adults, especially the mother, he feels helpless and expresses great anger" (63-64). Consequently, in order to overcome this state of narcissism, it is necessary to "learn to express . . . aggression normally" (68).

21. Eugene Goodheart emphasizes the importance of this personal independence (which implies personal insufficiency as well): "The goal of a man's life, as Lawrence conceives it, is *aloneness*" (113).

22. In order for nakedness to relate to another, it must not *become* another. As Shernaz Mollinger points out, quoting G. L. Cary, "identification with another tends to exclude the ability to experience oneself" (84). [G. L. Cary, "The Borderline Condition," *Psychoanalytic Review* 59 (1972): 33-54.]

23. The importance of loss or death lies in its proof that life is never complete and sufficient and, like the body, life itself needs the other: "For Lawrence the rhythm of death and rebirth is an eternal rhythm which can never be transcended as long as there is life. Lawrence consequently loathed the idea of immortality" (Goodheart 91).

24. Joan Peters emphasizes this quality of Clifford's writing to negate physical experience: "As an artist, Clifford is also somehow compelled to express himself in metaphor. His particular brand of metaphor, however, is not one which attaches itself to concrete experience in order spiritually to define it, but one which imposes figurative abstraction on a notion of common experience which is, for Clifford, already only an abstract idea" (8).

25. As Julian Maynahan observes, "he [Clifford] cannot see human beings as flesh-and-blood realities, only as functions of an abstractly formulated process" (79).

26. See Freud, "Mourning and Melancholy."

27. The trajectory of Connie is the one preferred by Lawrence. As Elaine Baruch points out, "*Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a climactic overturn of that tradition which seeks knowledge through the mind. . . . In Lawrence, the progression is from mind knowledge to blood knowledge" (353).

28. Clifford's illusory perception of his self-sufficiency is related to his conviction that if he has language, he no longer needs the world. As Goodheart points out, "[t]he conflict between the Laurentian hero and the world is too often resolved by abolishing the world" (35), or, in other words, abolishing Nature and "its defiant otherness" (71).

29. As Niven points out, Lawrence's "tragedy is defined . . . by *waste*, repression and denial" (44). [italics mine]

30. In "The Vampire Lust in D. H. Lawrence," Sung Ryol Kim discusses the issue of predatory vampirism, especially as a female quality, in the works of Lawrence. Vampirim, however, is not confined to the female possessive urge towards the male; as Kim observes, "for Lawrence, vampirism is more than simply a lust for blood or a means of energy transfer. It entails significantly a lust for knowledge of another being, an unpardonable sin in Lawrence's universe" (436). Lawrence himself relates parasitic violence to the impulse for intellectual ownership: "It is 'easy to see why each man kills the thing he loves. To *know* a living thing is to kill it. You have to kill a thing to know it satisfactorily" (qtd. in Kim 438). For more on vampirism, see James Twitchell, "Lawrence's Lamias: Predatory Women in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*," *Studies in the Novel* 11.1 (1979): 23-42.

31. In "Maternal Bonds and the Boundaries of Self: D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf," Barbara Shapiro explains the danger of regressing back into a nostalgic state of union with the mother: "In Lawrence, the emphasis is on separation and autonomy. Intimacy with women threatens over-dependence, possessiveness, total absorption or loss of self" (349).

32. In this relationship with the world there is something missing–what John Clayton calls the "[a]we in the presence of radical otherness" (213).

PART THREE: JAMES JOYCE

CHAPTER 8: *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN*--MOTHERHOOD IN EXILE

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, motherhood does not explicitly emerge as one of the main themes[1]. On the contrary, compared to religion and literature, it seems quite insignificant and tangential. It does, however, occupy a place of some importance in Stephen's personal scale of guilt--motherhood, represented here more specifically as maternal love, is the last thing to fail the artist, who remains restless and compelled to wander around the world, forever unsatisfied with his destiny. In his search for a redemptive reality which could correspond to the multiple visions of redemption in his imagination, Stephen successively dismisses God's anger, divine love, the maternal anger, and the maternal love. The increasing indifference of his sated, philosophical mind culminates in the rejection of the mother figure, which takes the form not so much of a willful, deliberate disobedience as of a puzzled, benign incomprehension. He cannot find it in him to believe either in the concept of love, or in the warmth and care for another human being, mother or a beloved. Stephen's skeptical intellect, while searching for a vision of the soul, continually reverts back to the mind, and the pervasive doubt, which comes to characterize his very being, is a doubt of the reality, not of the imagination. In this inverted picture of his world, the imaginary is given more weight, the weight of conviction and understanding, than the actual events and people around him. As Sheldon Brivic[2] points out in *The Veil of Signs*,

Stephen from the *Portrait* must face "the truth about how language constitutes his life" (1). He goes on to explain that "what the protagonists of James Joyce perceive, in fiction as in fact, is a field not of things, but of words . . . a tissue of signs" ("The Veil" 737). In this environment of uncertainty, "Stephen learns about things through words and learns words by being uncertain about them" (*The Veil* 38). The figure of the mother, then, although she has a solid connection to reality, cannot form such a connection to the imagination or to language–Stephen cannot "learn" about her[3], and she remains a fleeting, incomprehensible, and infinitely foreign image, which remains stuck in the physical reality and is not processed by his imagination--it is never appropriated or understood by Stephen.

The conflict between the unconvincing real world and its, paradoxically, more credible and lively imaginative counterpart is also reflected in the figure of Christ, with its double allegiance to the mother (Mary) and to the father (God). One of these ties confers reality on Christ himself, but even at the end of the novel Stephen remains uncertain as to which one[4]. His early devotion to the invisible divine world is never completely erased, and the reality of the maternal function in the real world remains nebulous. In his indecision, he avoids any commitment to either answer, without renouncing any of them, since it is the nature of doubt itself not to reject but to question--rejection would involve decision and therefore would be too structured and unambiguous to fare well with the fluidity of the imagination. As Peter Dorsey explains, Stephen "renounces all manifestations of structure, especially those of art, family, nationality, and religion" (507). Stephen's repulsion for the very definitiveness of answers and allegiances makes him choose the course of elusive, infinite questioning. Thus his inability to communicate with his mother or participate in any

kind of love bond with her (even she is unable to prevent him from leaving at the end), points to a parallel rejection of the defining act of creation motherhood stands for. If there is anything definite and categorical in the world, it is the process of birth through which a being is given its primary, ontological definition[5]. But an unequivocal gesture like that of birth seems threatening to Stephen, dangerous because of its intolerance to any questioning. And since he lives by questioning, he has no concept of anything which does not allow doubt. His escape from all ties--to his country, past, religion, friends, family, mother--is an escape from the unequivocal. In a sense, he embarks on a search for an imaginary reality different from the binary, physical one where the moment of birth separates the two definite states of existence and non-existence, just as, in the ideological realm, religion demands a separation of saved from damned, and politics a clear line between ally and enemy. Thus Stephen is unable to gain any understanding of maternal love as long as he stays in the binary shelter of ambiguous and non-committal morality.

From the beginning of the novel, Stephen is faced with multiple interpretations of events, so that he is unsure how it is possible to present one or another of them as the "truth." He knows that the status of all these versions of the universe is equal in his imagination, but there is no evidence as to which one of them weighs more in the dimension of reality. Thus, the story of Stephen's life begins in the classic mode of acceptable doubt of reality--the fairytale: "Once upon a time . . ." (171), a mode of narration which does not determine anything "beyond a reasonable doubt." Thus, from the very gesture which initiates the story, the narrator is careful to waive all commitment to what might otherwise be assumed unequivocal, since it is his own life, from his own point of view, that follows this tacit

disclaimer. What can then be the epistemological status of his accounts of the world, if he, as the third-person limited narrator, is not even unambiguously there to tell his own story? But the truth about himself will be the last thing, to follow from the truth of other things, of all those kaleidoscopic items in his childhood field of vision which he encounters in his first, incoherent introduction to the world. His first memories are extrovert--he has no sense of himself as an observer, but his attention is overwhelmingly outward-directed. Stephen notices the silhouettes of Uncle Charles, Dante, and his parents as they combine to form his universe, but the closest he gets to locating himself in it is through his mysterious presence in language, his inexplicable power to be part of the story his father tells[6]: "He was baby tuckoo" (171). This displacement into language will exacerbate over the years and foreshadow a crisis of identity in relation to the mother, which Stephen never overcomes.

Coming from two parents, Stephen's origin appears ambiguous from the start. As James McMichael succinctly puts it, "two is an exorbitantly large number for Stephen, and so he remains suspicious of anything that comes from it" (104). What if this "anything" is Stephen himself? He cannot be like *both* parents, since they represent two distinct and mutually exclusive possibilities of existence, with a clear and visible differential between them[7]. Even from his earliest, incoherent years, Stephen has a sense of this insurmountable difference: "His mother had a nicer smell than his father. She played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe for him to dance. He danced" (171). The mother and the father are never the same thing; they coincide in only one way--in Stephen's existence itself. But from what he can observe, from all the evidence available and visible to him, these are two incompatible entities whose dimensions never overlap. That is why it is possible to make comparisons

between them: the mother smells better; the mother plays, but does not dance; the father dances but without playing. They pass by each other in space without so much as touching each other. How can then Stephen be *one*? The logical consequence of these first, hardly conscious observations, is that this conflict of the single against the multiple, of the one against the many, has to translate somehow into Stephen himself, that somewhere in his own obscure ontological makeup there is a place where the rift refuses to close, even though the only name Stephen himself has for all the multitudes within him is "Stephen."[8] The puzzling variety of parentage continues to challenge Stephen's self-identity[9], as he observes that other children must go through the same conflicts of descent he does: "The Vances lived in number seven. They had a different father and mother. They were Eileen's father and mother" (171). Stephen wants to get away from these variations, which seem unnatural, strange, uncomfortable: "All the boys seemed to him very strange. They had all fathers and mothers and different clothes and voices. He longed to be at home and lay his head on his mother's lap. But he could not: and so he longed for the play and study and prayers to be over and to be in bed" (176). It will be a while before Stephen learns that his mother "cannot offer a viable sanctuary from the male-dominated power structure that controls the outer world" (57), as Suzette Henke puts it in "Stephen Dedalus and Women: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Narcissist." The bed, as a locus of self-containment, of enclosure which often marks the setting of birth and death, is a regressive image of return to the mother, or, as Brivic, phrases it in "The Father in Joyce," a return to the "liquid paradise the mother withholds from her son [which] is the source of his dreams" (75). This regression opens up definite narcissistic possibilities as well, most obviously related to the narcissistic state of sleep,

which is inherently opposed to the diversification of worldly life in which the young Stephen is asked to participate by division of the desired unitary self into multiple social roles.

The problem this division poses for motherhood comes from the fact that if the child must identify with one of the parents, the most obvious choice for this parent would be the mother; after all, the child and the mother were one entity before they got divided into life. The suggestion that the mother is, in a sense, Stephen, is entertained for a while, as in the episode when we first hear the mother speak: "O, Stephen will apologise" (172). Here, the mother speaks for Stephen, and at the same time, she has no other voice, which would be her own. What we hear is an utterance in a first-person, not a second-person (e.g. "Stephen, apologize.") relation to Stephen. In fact, it is quite a while before the mother speaks for herself. So, at least in the beginning of the novel, there is the nostalgic and fleeting possibility that the two are one, that the mother is all, that Stephen has a unity of existence. But this short instant of self-identity is interrupted by its own constitution--because self-identity is constructed through language. Language is from the first a paternal function, a tool of removal from the immediately physical and into the social rituals of descent[10]. Stephen's name is explicitly related to the social status of his father: when Stephen is unable to explain the significance of or reason for this particular combination of sounds which stands for him in the social world ("Stephen Dedalus"), the next question which follows logically and which can perhaps clarify the mystery posed by the first is: "What is your father?" (172). To this, Stephen has an answer: "A gentleman" (172), and with this he is able to give some validity to his own name too, to translate the properties of one sign to those of another, even though he knows from a very early age that he is different from his father and

the two of them can meet only in the symbolic world of language. Now, through the unity of his name, Stephen begins to reshuffle the priorities of his cosmology, so that the only unity and possibility for self-identification are through language, through the paternal, the artificial, the social. This point of his development foreshadows his future state of mind, in which the imagination, and not reality, will be the source of stability and the foundation of his identity. As Winston Weathers says in "A Portrait of the Broken Word" apropos of the Joycean hero, "if one finds oneself in a situation where one's private definition [of a word] does not coincide with reality, then reality is in error" (33-34). For Stephen, this means that his imagination can offer him a coherence that reality lacks.

In another reality, that of religion, the name of Christ the Son is also His paternal property and the one that can single him out from his earthly relation to His mother, the Virgin Mary. Presumably, even though she is a very real physical presence in His life, it is the father's name that endows Christ with symbolism and, at the same time, suggests a reality more solid and reliable than the earthly one. All this comes to show that Stephen, who is suspicious of the stability and unity of the visible reality from the moment we encounter him in the novel, has begun to build up a new abode for the safety of identity--a cosmology of the imagination, which he trusts more than the real world around him. But the passage into language is far from simple and easy. Stephen is quick to notice that no words are stable: "He kept his hands in the sidepockets of his belted grey suit. That was a belt round his pocket. And belt was also to give a fellow a belt" (173). Nothing is unequivocal, and every word has a patch of semantic quicksand for the unwary. The enduring mystery of Stephen's life is that every thing "is also" another. And this transformation does not happen in addition

to a primary meaning embedded in the word--the two (or more) meanings are equally there, in the word, inclusively present at all times. This unexpected property of language puts pressure on the unity of mother and child and begins to interfere with the otherwise unambiguous realm of simply belonging--to the mother, to oneself, or to life. Living is no longer a settled question of "to be or not to be," as the mother has established the difference between these two states at the moment of birth. Being simply alive no longer answers any of Stephen's questions and does not mean anything specific, just as the presence of the mother is no longer unequivocal.

Thus, for example, we see the key word "double" in the description of Stephen's mother[11] as she lets go of him, physically and symbolically: "The first day in the hall of the castle when she had said goodbye she had put up her veil double to her nose to kiss him: and her nose and eyes were red" (173). In the very effort to unveil the mother, she becomes more than one, and her veil, instead of disappearing, doubles up. Now Stephen can perceive two states of the mother: "She was a nice mother but she was not so nice when she cried" (173). In a metaphorical sense, after Stephen leaves home to go to boarding school, the mother can exist in two places--if she is the same as Stephen, then she can be said to be wherever he is, and at the same time be away from him, somewhere else. The very fact that the mother can be absent is enough to show that she is not physically necessary to Stephen--the two of them can completely miss each other ontologically: "He might die before his mother came" (185). In other words, any connection with her would have to be carried out through a symbolical doubling up of her unavailable literal presence.

But it seems that this double vision, which makes possible the metaphorical unity

with the mother through language, does not naturally originate with the mother, but with the father. The opposition of one versus many challenges the one, not the many, so that the fact that there are both a mother and a father undermines the mother, but not the father, whose existence is more consistent with pluralities of all sorts. It is the influence of the father and his language that seeks to destabilize the mother, to incorporate her into the fiction, the narrative. As Brivic puts it in "The Father in Joyce," in the *Portrait* "the threat of the father Stephen meets in each chapter is creative because it forces him to imagine a new version of mother to aim at" (76). In effect, Stephen has learned that the attributes of "father" are linguistically conditioned, and so he seeks a similar symbolic status for the mother. In "James Joyce and Women: The Matriarchal Muse," Suzette Henke formulates this need in the following way: "[the] creative process . . . allows Stephen to 'transubstantiate' the female into an accessible *object d'art*" (121). What seems problematic in this assertion is the word "allows"–it is extremely doubtful whether Stephen can indeed accomplish the task of incorporating the maternal image into any kind of art as part of the more general process of what Marguerite Harkness calls the "transmutation of life into art" ("Storytellers" 47). That this is the solution that Stephen, as an artist, is trying to find seems to be generally a matter of critical consensus. Brivic, for example, talks about Stephen's "major solution in *Portrait* [which] relinquishes the reality of mother to construct an artificial mother in the stasis of art. Thus the movement in the novel is one of sublimation, and Freud favored sublimation as a successful defense" (*Joyce Between* 68). It would seem that an artist would have a natural advantage over most people when it comes to coping with the oedipal ambiguities related to the mother figure. Art has the task of structuring things by articulating them to endow them

with meaning. Even death is supposed to step down and be superseded by poetry. As Richard Ellman puts it in "From Daedalus to Dedalus," even the "dead can be reborn through the medium of art" (69). In fact, for the purposes of art, any defect in the physical attainment of unity with the mother can only be indifferent, if not beneficial, since the lack or ambiguity of the mother figure will be immaterial to its transformation into artistic artifact. Her presence or unity will become irrelevant. Mark Shechner explains this ideal trade-off between life and art, which comes to the forefront most clearly in *Ulysses*, this way: "His [Stephen's] life becomes art according to a syllogism: if real loss, then symbolic gain . . . if victim, then victor; if lost son, then eternal father; if a victim of family, then creator of his own family. All things that oppress him are grist for his mill, because as an artist, *loss is his gain*" ("Song" 72). But the mother figure seems to present problems for Stephen, as it refuses to multiply symbolically–the mother's multiplication is singular, physical, and unique, and so she remains a unitary presence which cannot be subsumed under the imagination. Here, it seems, I must disagree with Kristeva, who, in "Joyce the Gracehoper," postulates an equality between the figures of the mother and the father: "Love's two forms–which are two variants of identification, the one paternal and symbolic, the other maternal . . .–are united in the artist's experience" (178). It seems more plausible to argue that the mother is problematic precisely because she cannot be incorporated with her unitary status into the artistic imagination, which can communicate only with polyvalent meanings.

Unlike the mother figure, the father emerges as an entity much more flexible and susceptible to fictions. At the most basic level, as Maurice Beebe argues, "there are several candidates for the fatherhood" ("James Joyce" 285), as opposed to motherhood, for which

there is only one. What is even more important is that Stephen fails to find a symbolic equivalent for the mother figure–a symbol which could then be manipulated, displaced, transferred onto other love interests, and generally used as a healing image of sublimation in Stephen's oedipal struggle. In both the *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, substitutes for the mother are scarce, and Stephen repeatedly returns to the actual person. In "The Joyce of Sex," Morris Beja tells us that the "chief archetypal mother in Stephen's life is his *actual* mother, who is both loving and terrible–as well as devouring" (116) [italics mine]. The mother, then, resists symbolization and fiction, and Stephen fails to find another figure or even object to stand for her, as if his umbilical separation has not yet occurred on the basic physiological level.

In contrast, Stephen's fathers are always plural, and he encounters many options to choose from in *Portrait*: "The novel begins with a biological father . . . [and] ends with an appeal to an imaginative father, Daedalus" (54), Marguerite Harkness observes in "Storytellers." She goes on to outline the multiplicity of fatherhoods that Stephen faces, ever "new fathers with their voices and their plots" (54). Their artistic value consists in the fact that Stephen can do something with them as symbols: "What these literary figures [father figures] share is their ability to be manipulated" (73), and manipulation through language is the ultimate (and only) form of artistic expression. Even the beginning of *Portrait* shows us these dimensions of fatherhood, as Stephen's father is the one who is associated with language and writing letters: "And his father had told him if he wanted anything to write home to him" (173). The writing now designates the distance from "home" as the place of unquestioning belonging and self-identity. Stephen no longer has an immediate access to that place, but must resort to the medium of language, with its inherent delay, in order to

interact with what he earlier took as given. The very demand for interaction implies a distance from the source that allows communication between two people, the writer and the addressee, the sender and the recipient, the son and the mother. One has become two. Two is one too many to uphold the illusion of the mother as all there is. The mother, therefore, is in some measure helpless at the assault of language, crippled by her insistence that not all language carries truth value and some words are closer to reality than others. She explicitly states that there are types of speech that are not to be tolerated: "Really, Simon, said Mrs Dedalus, you should not speak that way before Stephen. It's not right" (193). This censorship shows how distrustful she is of linguistic structures, in which she prefers not to take part.

Stephen, on the other hand, feels a need to know precisely the forbidden words, the language which has been withheld from him: "But what was the name the woman had called Kitty O'Shea that Mr Casey would not repeat?" (195). Stephen needs to know all of language, not just the part that is "right." However, this is a language that the mother cannot provide, since she is associated with a definite value system incompatible with language at large--that is why she is also seen as more or less mute in the beginning of the novel. While her very first speech in the novel was an identification with the son, her second sentence is a reflection of the father: "Then at the door of the castle the rector had shaken hands with his father and mother, his soutane fluttering in the breeze, and the car had driven off with his father and mother in it. They had cried to him from the car, waving their hands:--Goodbye, Stephen, goodbye!--Goodbye, Stephen, goodbye!" (173). While the parents may seem indistinguishable here, the father precedes the mother syntactically on two occasions in the

previous sentence, so within language, at least, the father has a primacy over the mother. Similarly, later, during the Christmas dinner, the mother's language takes the form of reported speech: "They had come home a little late and still dinner was not ready: but it would be ready in a jiffy, his mother had said" (187). The father's presence, however, is clearly affirmative, presented, one page later, through direct speech which, significantly, begins with a "yes": "Mr Casey tapped the gland of his neck and smiled at Stephen with sleepy eyes: and Mr Dedalus said to him: --Yes. Well now, that's all right. O, we had a good walk, hadn't we, John?" (188). The visibly more aggressive and positive manner in which the father functions within language shows that the mother is not as comfortable with symbolic gestures as he is--the mother is more alive in the real world, and less alive in the symbolic one.

The father is also the one associated with equivalencies and exchange--here, in the form of money: "And his father had given him two fiveshilling pieces for pocket money" (173), and later, at the Christmas dinner, this association is confirmed: "He knew that his father had paid a guinea for it [the turkey] in Dunn's of D'Olier Street and that the man had prodded it often at the breastbone to show how good it was" (189). To haggle, negotiate, buy and sell comes down to the acknowledgment of a virtual system of equivalent values, in which things can be exchanged for one another without loss--one is as good as the other. While the turkey is more valuable than the money it will cost for the man who wants to buy it, his money is more valuable than the turkey for the man who is trying to sell it. None of the two items outweighs the other in any significant way; instead, their value fluctuates according to what is done with them, how they are put to use. Thus Stephen's father

functions in a paradigm of shifting meanings in which no element is single--it is always doubled up with the thing it is exchanged for, always seen in terms of something else[12]. But such an inherently linguistic system of creating meanings does not puzzle or incapacitate the father, since he can find his way around in it with ease and confidence: he can get the turkey he wants, and he knows exactly what Stephen must do in order to manipulate the system so that he can get the desired result--to write a letter home in order to reach home. In this way, instead of an obstacle, the doubling becomes a very useful tool of existence. For Stephen, for example, the letter is the only way to communicate with "home" and by extension with the mother. Instead of being a measurement and reminder of distance, language becomes a tool of proximity, a drawbridge which, when extended in the right direction and skillfully manipulated, allows one to connect with virtually everything--virtually, not really.

All of these implications of speech and writing Stephen learns at an early age, and this feeds his untiring ambition to master language. While language violates the one (the mother) in favor of the many, it can strive to make amends by working with representations of the mother, by doubling her up, incorporating her into the imagination, reconciling her with language (but this is a project which succeeds only much later, in *Finnegans Wake*). Stephen's distance from "home," as a general designation of the "one," is also manifest in his inability to access it except through reported speech: "Going home for the holidays! That would be lovely: the fellows had told him" (181). The same symbolism that interferes with his immediacy of connection to "home" also appears in the way he measures his distance from it, not only in space but in time: "Soon they would be going home for the holidays. After supper in the studyhall he would change the number pasted up inside his desk from

seventyseven to seventysix" (173). What is supposed to be an unambiguous, stable given, is here presented in terms of numbers, which are another form of unstable symbolization: "seventyseven" means the same thing as "seventy-seven," as well as "77"; however, two words that follow the same pattern (the unhyphenated "seventyseven" and "seventysix," for example) do not necessarily mean the same thing. Similarly, it is very difficult to make generalizations, to assert anything with any certainty: "He wondered whether the scullion's apron was damp too or whether *all* white things were cold and damp" (176) [italics mine]. It is a game, and the game has rules, contained within the imagination, a closed system.

There is some vague notion of a closure, of "inside" that Stephen associates with language, placing language at the site which "home" previously occupied in the scale of things[13]. In the fresh and clear little world of the boy, the outside is cold, wet, and hostile, while the inside is, above all, far away--either barricaded in the distant warmth of the castle, or feverishly vivid in a dream of home: "Mother was sitting at the fire with Dante waiting for Brigid to bring in the tea" (174). The inside is also, because of its distance, almost fictional. In a sense, anything not immediately present does not exist--the light and warmth nestled in the castle is physically irrelevant to Stephen who is outside freezing. The inside has the reality of imagination, and what is distant in time and place is as good as fictional: "It was nice and warm to see the lights in the castle. It was like something in a book" (173). From here, it is only one small step to the realization that in some ways the fictional may even surpass the real, that "[it] would be better to be in the studyhall than out there in the cold" (173). The inside is the inside of a book, the containment of language, which is seen as the only possible substitute for the unity of the mother and son where unity would be absolute

containment without distance, convergence into a single point of unambiguous meaning.

Language itself is limited in that it would be impossible for a single stray element to leave the system and wander off beyond the possibility of connection--each word is doubled, and its semantic counterpart always creates a fictional environment, a context for the text, a mirror for meaning. Language is profoundly narcissistic. In the context of religion, the doubling is called "sin," defined as "a twofold enormity . . . physical and spiritual" (268). And the danger it poses to motherhood is that it threatens to double up the significance of the mother into a narcissistic attempt at interpretation which makes two out of one--a "one" looking at itself in language where it does not belong. The more accurate the reflection, the more pathological the narcissism.

The mirror, which in Stephen's case is a symbolic one, has various connotations related to the narcissistic state[14]. John M. Menagham, for example, traces the etymology of the word "mirror" back to its Latin roots *mirari* ("to wonder at") and *mirus* ("wonderful") (253). Furthermore, he points out, "mirror" and "miracle" have a common source, and "mirror" has the additional meaning of "an optical illusion by which very distant objects appear close at hand" (Skeat, qtd in Meneghan 253). These observations show the intimate connections between the concept of a mirror and narcissism. The mirror, like the narcissistic state, brings objects and people closer to the self, even though this proximity is an optical illusion. Within the boundaries of reality, such centripetal absorption of objects by the self to the point where the self creates his or her own universe, will appear to be nothing less than a "miracle"[15]. In this convergence of the world into the self, the mother figure, as well as the female object in general, are not exempt from being narcissistically fictionalized either. As

Henke remarks in "Stephen Dedalus and Women: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Misogynist," in *A Portrait*, women "often appear as one-dimensional projections of a narcissistic imagination. . . . They stand as emblems of the flesh–frightening reminders of sex, generation, and death" (82). In other words, women, and the mother figure in particular, become symbolical projections which can be manipulated by the imagination (death can be avoided) within Stephen's narcissistic world. This control over the universe, however, comes at the expense of genuine communication and relationships. In the words of Winston Weathers, "the Joycean hero manages to create for himself a veritable anti-language, with all the outward signs of a communicative possibility but so functioning as to deny any fulfillment of that possibility" (37). The problem is that the "only communication that remains is with oneself . . . [a] soliloquy" (39). Weathers, however, neglects to mention that narcissism is a basic condition of *all* language[16], and that all symbolism functions in a virtual reality which has only a tenuous and arbitrary bearing on the real world. Thus, when Henke tells us that Stephen's "communication is a matter entirely of narcissistic projection" (*James Joyce* 75), it is possible to add that the reason for this lies as much in Stephen himself as in all verbal communication[17]. As Barbara Babcock points out, "Language is the most important mirror in which the self is created and reflected" (1). And since the shifting and unstable properties of language do not allow it to privilege one meaning over another, the self is prompted to choose the meanings that make sense *to the self*, in the self's narcissistic universe, but not necessarily in the objective world. In this sense, we may wish to qualify Henke's assertion that "[N]arcissism and misogyny are adolescent traits he [Stephen] has to outgrow on the path to artistic maturity" (*James Joyce* 84). "Artistic maturity" would

involve, above all, a maximum awareness of the possibilities language offers for manipulation of the real world, and all these possibilities are inherently narcissistic in nature.

As long as the mother cannot be creative herself, she will be threatened with the delusive accuracy of reflection which designates narcissism. The only way out is for the mother to master language, to accept its differences, so that the doubling of the self-identical can become a displacement on to the different, looking no longer inside but outside, within the limits allowed by language. Escape from the self can never be complete, since in the search for identity the self will be looking for similarities, but language is in a position to offer some differentiation even where it seems impossible: "They [the sentences] were like poetry but they were only sentences to learn the spelling from" (174). This quality of something to be "like" something else "but" different sums up nicely the function of language. It is within the system of "like . . . but" that the mother has no place. Motherhood is not supposed to be "like" anything else; it is expected to be as unequivocal as life itself.

But for Stephen, life has ceased to be unequivocal from before the opening lines of the novel. Even basic conditions like sensations of the flesh appear to Stephen ambiguous and overlapping: "To remember that [the sound of water] and the white look of the lavatory made him feel cold and then hot. There were two cocks that you turned and water came out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot: he could see the names printed on the cocks. That was a very queer thing" (175). Hot and cold are not mutually exclusive; in the symbolic universe, they--or the signs for them, their names--exist simultaneously, so that one can choose either one or the other or both. What seems pathological in Stephen's case, and also serves to establish a connection between his imagination and sickness, is that he internalizes

these symbolic conditions, so that he can physically feel what he can see in his imagination--cold and hot together, co-existing, interchangeable, and completely divorced from reality. Things can then exist in contradiction to themselves: warmth, for example, can mean both the cozy enclosure of home, and the symptom of a sickness, fever (182). This makes it impossible for Stephen to be a reliable source of information even when it comes to his own physical condition:

> Fleming said:
>
> --Are you not well?
>
> He did not know. (182)

Faced with impossible questions like this one, which have to do with distinguishing between sickness and health, or between death and life, Stephen is forced to make decisions about the real world based on his symbolic version of it, to derive the truth about himself from the way he has been presented to the world: "That was the infirmary. He was sick then" (184). Being unable to testify to his own internal condition, he must accept the outside symbols of his physical state as truthful, all the time being aware that language is an unstable thing. From here on, everything becomes difficult to define and hardly anything can settle down into a stable definition: "Some weeks Jack Lawton got the card for first and some weeks he got the card for first [in sums]" (175). It becomes impossible to determine who is better at sums, if there are two, equally valid, alternating states of reality. It is no longer a valid statement to say that one of them is better than the other, but only that being "better" is a quality associated with the card and has nothing to do with either Stephen or Jack Lawton. In his fever, Stephen even goes beyond reality to think of things that do not exist: "Lavender and

cream and pink roses were beautiful to think of. Perhaps a wild rose might be like those colours and he remembered the song about the wild rose blossoms on the little green place. But you could not have a green rose. But perhaps somewhere in the world you could" (175).

There is another reality made up of abstractions, which has prepared Stephen for the time when he would be required to trust language more than its referents: the reality of God. God exists only in the abstraction of a name, and in at least one example in the novel the afterlife is associated with another form of abstractions--numbers:

> Dingdong! The castle bell!
>
> Farewell, my mother!
>
> Bury me in the old churchyard
>
> Beside my eldest brother.
>
> My coffin shall be black,
>
> Six angels at my back,
>
> Two to sing and two to pray
>
> And two to carry my soul away. (185)

The "six" and "two" and "two" logically follow the farewell to the mother and emerge as markers of the departure from her and from life, as the body ceases to be living but can still be counted, since it retains the symbolic status of "one"--one dead body. Thus religion tells Stephen that symbols are more durable than life, though with a vitality that is not immediately comprehensible. Nevertheless, the religious tokens and symbols gain primacy over the materially verifiable presence of the real: "God and religion before everything! Dante cried. God and religion before the world!" (197). On the other hand, the belief in God

includes the anticipation that man will eventually abandon the symbolic to be reunited with the literal. God proper is intimately connected to the physical make-up of things, and shares with the world an immediacy of interaction at the guttural level, which is more "real" than the reality available for observation and which will be restored after death. Christ's name will then be coincidental with his body, so that the mother and father will reunite in him--the earthly and the divine will not be distinguishable. In this way, religion becomes a road towards the eradication of the symbolic as different from the literal. The natural, healthy condition of man is one in which symbolism will be obsolete and supplanted by immanence. Conversely, Stephen's condition is one of sickness, as he seems to be embarking on the opposite journey--towards the symbolic.

In his case, imagination and symbolism are at times explicitly associated with sickness, as if he is getting away from real life and from the mother and entering further into language. On one occasion, Stephen makes a connection between deterioration and books: when he is in the infirmary, he knows that the sicker he is, the better the chance of getting a book to read: "But he felt better now than before. It would be nice getting better slowly. You could get a book then. There was a book in the library about Holland. There were lovely foreign names in it and pictures of strangelooking cities and ships. It made you feel so happy" (187). Thus the sickness brings closer, in his imagination, the foreign names to the disease itself, the expansion of the mind into language to the wasting of the body. As the doubling of the mother in language is a rejection of the mother, so is any kind of abstraction a rejection of the object: "White roses and red roses: those were beautiful colours to think of" (175). The abstracting of the colors from the objects they pertain to essentially negates the

objects in their physical existence. The abstract properties of the roses show Stephen's further immersion into fiction, as they come back to haunt the real world, so that some lines later it is the colour that creates the rose (the green one), and not the other way around. Accordingly, Stephen's vision of the *real* world has to be revised to accommodate the fiction of the green rose, and he asserts that perhaps there are places where this kind of rose is physically possible: "But perhaps somewhere in the world you could" (175). The wider and wider repercussions of the initial symbolic act (isolating "colour" as a property of the rose) are symptomatic of Stephen's increasing inability to take the world for granted--he trusts his own revisions of it more than the raw material he started out with.

In this constant escalation of the symbolic it becomes increasingly difficult for him to look for answers, since things lose their properties of being right or wrong. In language, questions do not narrow down the world to answers, but open up a series of risky linguistic traps:

> --Tell us, Dedalus, do you kiss your mother before you go to bed?
>
> Stephen answered:
>
> --I do.
>
> Wells turned to the other fellows and said:
>
> --O, I say, here's a fellow says he kisses his mother every night before he goes to bed.
>
> The other fellows stopped their game and turned round, laughing. Stephen blushed under their eyes and said:
>
> --I do not.

Wells said:

--O, I say, here's a fellow says he doesn't kiss his mother before he goes to bed.

They all laughed again. Stephen tried to laugh with them. He felt his whole body hot and confused for a moment. What was the right answer to the question? He had given two and still Wells laughed. But Wells must know the right answer for he was in third of grammar. . . . He still tried to think what was the right answer. Was it right to kiss his mother or wrong to kiss his mother? What did it mean, to kiss? You put your face up like that to say goodnight and then his mother put her face down. That was to kiss. His mother put her lips on his cheek; her lips were soft and they wetted his cheek; and they made a tiny little noise: kiss. Why did people do that with their two faces? (177)

Stephen's dilemma is initiated only when he starts to probe the physical act for an explicit linguistic meaning. Before he was aware of the multiplicity of interpretation, kissing seemed just a given, a part of reality as it is. But the realization that reality could be changed demands of the physical act some justification: Why do people do that? There is nothing like an unequivocal kiss in the world of Stephen any more, as he begins to intuit the fact that he can kiss his mother just as easily as he can do without kissing her, and it is impossible to tell which of the two is more meaningful. It makes sense, therefore, to read the last line of this passage as a tacit suggestion that people have "two faces" each--for Stephen, the kissing one and the non-kissing one, for his mother, the face he knows and then the unkissed face he does

not know, the one that drifts away from him, the one that is purely physical and unprocessed by language. It defies all reason, then, that the kissed and the unkissed faces are one, and coincide in the mother. How can the plurality be resolved in unequivocal unity? These questions haunt Stephen in relation to his own place in the universe as well:

> He turned to the flyleaf of the geography and read what he had written there: himself, his name and where he was.
>
> Stephen Dedalus
>
> Class of Elements
>
> Clongowes Wood College
>
> Sallins
>
> County Kildare
>
> Ireland
>
> Europe
>
> The World
>
> The Universe (178)

It is a source of wonder for Stephen how all those different boys and girls, with all those different mothers and fathers, can all be part of the same universe. While the inclusiveness of the universe to a certain extent ameliorates the problem of the relationship with the mother (at some level Stephen and the mother unite), it nevertheless creates the problem of universal proximity, which would mean that if Stephen can connect to his mother, it is possible for everyone else to connect to Stephen's mother as well, and there is nothing, it seems, that would allow Stephen to be unique in himself and yet form a bond outside himself. Having

exhausted all other options, Stephen finds that it is his name that makes him unique, just as God's name makes him special: "God was God's name just as his name was Stephen. Dieu was the French for God and that was God's name too. . . . But though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages still God remained the same God and God's real name was God" (179). Even though Stephen cannot understand how the symbolic mechanism resurrects the same name in a different language, he still intuits that God does not have to be one or the other, but that language makes it possible for God to be two or more at the same time. And so can Stephen. This realization means that, in the long list above, he can identify interchangeably with "Stephen Dedalus" and with "The Universe," and neither would take away from his uniqueness. In fact, he briefly entertains the possibility of being God-like in scope, when he decides that "by thinking of things you could understand them" (200), just as God was able to achieve a physical contact with the world (creating it) by speaking it, by entertaining its existence symbolically in his mind. As James Klein observes in "Out of Mere Words: Self-Composition and *A Portrait of the Artist*," "Stephen, who imagines himself born by his father carving a word in a desk, who kills his father with a bit of Shelley's poetry, finally arrives at the wish to so perfect his writing that he will exist in the relation to his writing as God to his creation" (305).

But there is something that frustrates his efforts–a flaw in the design which will not allow Stephen to achieve perfection in writing, and that is that he finds himself with a spelling mistake right in the middle of his name, the name which is the only thing that can identify him as the author of his own world just as God is the author of His world. The flaw

in question is the spelling of "Dedalus," which diverges from its source, the "real" name–"Daedalus."[18] Such an important detail cannot be accidental. If Stephen, who has recognized the primacy of language over reality, has to live with a linguistic displacement at the core of his name, this implies that language is inherently about error and always deviates from what is "right" (in the unequivocal sense in which Stephen's mother does not want him to say things that are not "right"). But what is even more significant is that the "original," the "correct" name is conspicuously absent from *A Portrait*–Daedalus himself does not make an appearance to Stephen, neither during Stephen's youth, nor later, in *Ulysses*[19]. The peculiarity of the mistake renders the name recognizable, in fact, identifiable beyond doubt to the ear as "Daedalus," while at the same time graphically different–and the difference of a single letter in writing is a radical difference. In this case, Stephen recognizes the capacity of language for the production of counterfeit words, as well as the reverse proposition that all words are counterfeit in some sense. He also becomes aware of his own budding capacity as an "artificer." Stephen's journey into language, however, is by no means complete at this point–he is still at the stage where he can consider "things" as well as the "thinking" of them. He discovers that he would like to be able "to think about everything and everywhere" (178), but these big words, although inclusive, do not yet confidently encompass things that do not exist--Stephen is still unable to imagine what comes after the universe, which is where his list ends. For now, he simply coincides with the universe.

While this idea places him firmly in the realm of narcissistic identification, in which the world becomes a reflection of the ego reincarnated in material forms and shapes, it poses another problem--Stephen cannot recognize where he himself ends and the others begin:

"What was after the universe?" (178). The mechanisms of narcissism ensure that there is nothing "after" the self or "more" than the self. Anything that seems different is in fact the self symbolically posing as his own object of cathexis. In the symbolic universe all entities occupy interchangeable places. In a sense, Stephen wants to keep the mother figure outside the manipulation of language, in order to be able to relate to her in a more genuine way, in order to be sure that she is herself and not his own version of her. Now Stephen is faced with a different crisis--it is no longer the absence of the mother as a unity, as one, that hurts him, but now it is his inability--as he stands for all the universe--to distinguish anything different from himself, to transform the one of the ego, which invades and inhabits the physical world, into the two of self and other. As he is no longer sure of himself, Stephen rejects the existence of a clearly definable "other" too. Stephen is not exclusive of anything.

A model for a clear-cut distinction between two mutually exclusive sides is politics, a term which stands for a binary opposition of right and wrong answers: "He wondered which was right, to be for the green or for the maroon. . . . That was called politics. There were two sides in it: Dante was on one side and his father and Mr Casey were on the other side but his mother and uncle Charles were on no side" (179). Thus Stephen is presented with a semantic model in which there is a definite right answer, and then a definite wrong answer, and then a bunch of things, including the mother, which exist but take no sides--they have physical presence but no epistemological validation; they are alive without being true. The unequivocal is challenged again: "It pained him that he did not know well what politics meant and that he did not know where the universe ended" (179). Nothing is certain. Even politics, then, fails to show Stephen what is right and what is wrong, since the wrong clearly

exists on an equal footing with the right, like two faucets with different labels for cold and hot water, yet equidistant from the truth.

But politics itself enters into a bitter conflict with religion. Since religion is a tool for the unification of the symbolic and the literal, and politics is a paradigm of two mutually exclusive sides, their contact is rather bumpy and awkward every time. Thus the Christmas dinner is almost spoiled when the subject comes up:

> --It is religion, Dante said again. They are right. They must direct their flocks.
>
> --And preach politics from the altar, is it? asked Mr Dedalus.
>
> --Certainly, said Dante. It is a question of public morality. A priest would not be a priest if he did not tell his flock what is right and what is wrong. (191)

In this case, we see that religion, as it exists on earth, is not an ultimate state of synthesis, but a dividing line between right and wrong--it has sunk to the level of politics. That is why Mr Casey, for example, complains of "too much God": "No God for Ireland! he cried. We have had too much God in Ireland. Away with God!" (197). Even the basic distinction between the saved and the damned would be too clear-cut to hold, since it would not be able to account for the creatures that are alive and wrong to be so. Just as motherhood draws a dividing line between things that exist and things that do not exist, or between life and death (a line which Stephen finds it hard to accept), so both politics and religion posit divisions of merit and truth that appear untenable in the larger fluctuations of language, where the question "Who was right then?" (194) becomes meaningless.

The significance of the question of right and wrong, however, is renewed painfully

for Stephen when he is unjustly accused and punished at school. Initially, the physical sensation of pain seems derivable from abstractions of pain, such as the sound: "There were different kinds of pains for all the different kinds of sounds" (202). Here, Stephen arrives at the contemplation of pain backwards, from the qualities of abstraction: "A long thin cane would have a high whistling sound and he wondered what was that pain like" (202). Thus the most immediate of all sensations has to be processed through Stephen's mental apparatus of analogies in order to reach some sort of working definition. But he soon has the chance to experience it firsthand, when he gets punished for not writing his assignment in class, after he has been excused:

> It was unfair and cruel because the doctor had told him not to read without glasses and he had written home to his father that morning to send him a new pair. And Father Arnall had said that he need not study till the new glasses came. Then to be called schemer before the class and to be pandied when he always got the card for first or second and was the leader of the Yorkists! How could the prefect know it was a trick? (207)

The only one who does in fact know that Stephen did not break his glasses on purpose, that this was not a "trick," is Stephen himself. In this case he has entered a linguistic situation in which statements appear supremely unverifiable and tenuous. All the documentation (cards for first or second) testifying that he is the best student in the class cannot prove, in this instance, that he is a good student at all; the fact that he has done the best work has no bearing on the question whether he is doing any work at all. It is a maze of trick moves which comply with the rules of the game but have no relation to the truth: thus, if he is not

doing any work right now, he can still be punished in such a way that the punishment stands to reflect his character in general--that he is a "lazy idle little loafer" (206). Even for a person like Father Arnall, who can tell the difference between a hard-working boy and a lazy one, there is no way to translate this distinction into the symbolic dynamics of crime and punishment: "It was cruel and unfair to make him kneel in the middle of the class then: and Father Arnall had told them both [Stephen and the boy who was really guilty] that they might return to their places without making any difference between them" (207). Since the way things look has a very palpable influence on the way they are treated, Stephen begins to question the social validity of his own internal knowledge of himself, and together with it, the communicability of his own notions of right and wrong:

> It was wrong; it was unfair and cruel: and, as he sat in the refectory, he suffered time after time in memory the same humiliation until he began to wonder whether it might not really be that there was something in his face which made him look like a schemer and he wished he had a mirror to see. But there could not be; and it was unjust and cruel and unfair. (208)

For the first time, it seems, Stephen displays some stubborn and inviolable confidence in his own discriminating judgment, regardless of the outward look of things or the possibilities of their symbolic manipulation. In a moment of rejection of narcissistic validation, he renounces his need for a mirror and, by extension, for a way to represent himself symbolically to himself--the truth he knows does not need an extra layer of justification, explanation, or reflection. Its social representations, in fact, can be misleading, as Stephen learns during his punishment, when the prefect touches his hand: "He felt the touch of the

prefect's fingers as they had steadied his hand and at first he had thought he was going to shake hands with him because the fingers were soft and firm: but then in an instant he had heard the swish of the soutane sleeve and the crash" (207). The outward conventions of a friendly gesture and a cold-blooded punishment appear identical. For the first time, Stephen gets hints that doubling things into the mirror of language or social representation can be destructive.

What makes him take action to clarify the ambiguity of his situation and complain to the rector is the fact that the prefect has asked Stephen to repeat his name, to double himself: "he heard the voice of the prefect of studies asking him twice what his name was. Why could he not remember the name when he was told the first time? Was he not listening the first time or was it to make fun out of the name? The great men in the history had names like that and nobody made fun of them" (210). Here, the act of doubling things contains a definite possibility of twisting and distorting them out of proportion, and even the most straightforward of things cannot escape this linguistic violence, just as even the most noble and virtuous of people cannot defend their public image against the distorting influence of slander. Everything falls vulnerable to the merciless, amoral, and volatile linguistic reflections of itself. In this particular case, Stephen is able to find an ally in a higher place--the rector--who seems, from the point of view of the students, to be somebody far beyond these petty misunderstandings and social blunders. Like the priests, the rector can "know" what is wrong from a height of theoretical distance, without doing it: "because a priest would know what a sin was and would not do it" (204). Thus the rector appears as somewhat of a god-like arbiter and creator of the rules themselves, without being subject to

them, since he is the one who makes the decisions. But decision-making, ironically, has the potential of undermining Stephen's ideal cosmology, which consists of a messy underworld of linguistic manipulation and a clear overhead stratosphere of sensible and knowledgeable judgment.

The whole episode forces Stephen to do something he has never really done before in a significant way--to make a choice. He must eliminate all the options until he arrives at the right one: "The fellows at his table stood up. He stood up and passed out among them in the file. He had to *decide*. . . . He had reached the door and, turning quickly up to the right, walked up the stairs and, before he could make up his mind to come back, he had entered the low dark narrow corridor that led to the castle" (210) [italics mine]. In the linguistically formed universe which Stephen has entered before, there is no corridor leading to the "right" choice, no injustice, and no punishment. In the process of looking for justice, he discovers that he is actually capable of choosing the right thing, preferring one option among all the others, and finding a justification for it outside of the social machinery designed to distribute justice blindly, without external referents. The importance of this episode for Stephen's maturation in the symbolic universe lies in its reminder of the power of language, as well as the attendant dangers of it; the possibility of extra-linguistic value is confirmed, yet Stephen can see a wide rift between the "truth" and its appearance, where the hostile forces of social convention impede him in his decision-making. But the drive for truth emerges nevertheless as a confirmation of the mother and the un-symbolized definition of life she carries.

This is the point where the imagery of doubling gives way to something which is more like "veiling"; going back to the mother's depiction in the beginning of the novel when

she lifts the veil to reveal her face, we can see that now Stephen feels deep mistrust of unveiling--he knows that appearance does not correlate with essence in any consistent or certain way. The truth, he learns, is there, but always veiled and invisible. The truth does not exist in language. And, conversely, language itself is veiled from reality, leading an independent existence from it: "Words which he did not understand he said over and over to himself till he had learned them by heart: and through them he had glimpses of the real world about him. The hour when he too would take part in the life of that world seemed drawing near and in secret he began to make ready for the great part which he felt awaited him the nature of which he only dimly apprehended" (216). The forked paths of reality and language vie for Stephen's soul, and he begins to feel how language, independent of reality as it is, has some arcane power to summon him away from the more literal pleasures of the world. The world appears to be the more fragile and unstable of the two. The very bastion of the home inexplicably shifts and wobbles, borne by the mysterious symbolism of hostile social currents: "For some time he had felt the slight changes in his house; and these changes in what he had deemed unchangeable were so many slight shocks to his boyish conception of the world" (217). Stephen reverts to the stability of a vision inviolable by material influences. Instead of trying to make sense of life after encountering it, Stephen wants to anticipate it, to shape it in his mind--hence the emphasis on "foreknowledge" and "intuition" (217). Redemption of the world and of the losses of childhood exists in his mind only: "he was different from others. He did not want to play. He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. He did not know where to seek it or how" (218). At this point Stephen needs to forge some matrix of correspondence between

his vision and reality, but their connection continues to elude him. Having left the enclosure of home and the space of the mother and finding himself in a vaster, wilder, incoherent panoply of new dimensions, in the face of Dublin, Stephen is unable to locate himself in it without mapping out his coordinates, without the tools of language: "In the beginning he contented himself with circling timidly round the neighbouring square or, at most, going half way down one of the side streets: but when he had made a skeleton map of the city in his mind he followed boldly one of its central lines. . . . yet he continued to wander up and down day after day as if he really sought someone that eluded him" (219). No tangible connection can solidify his imaginary map into actual shapes and people with whom Stephen can communicate, so he covers all the space of the city in his nomadic brooding, "detaching himself from it" (219). He is an observer, not a participant: "His silent watchful manner had grown upon him and he took little part in the games" (221), which is the reverse of his former self-identification with the mother, where he can only be an absolute participant in life, without the distance necessary for observation.

From his new vantage point as an observer, Stephen forms a view of reality as something so remote from his imagination that it can only be defined as fiction--he falls into heresy: "This fellow has heresy in his essay. . . . It's about the Creator and the soul. . . . without a possibility of ever approaching nearer. That's heresy" (229). Heresy, as the failure of religion, is doubt that the soul can get closer to God, or symbols to reality, or language to its referent, or the son to the mother. Heresy is to think that you are stranded among symbols and unable to return home to immanence. Religion, on the contrary, is above all a form of correspondence which maintains that language can approach reality. But what Stephen

observes is that language deteriorates as it does:

> his very brain was sick and powerless. He could scarcely interpret the letters of the signboards of the shops. By his own monstrous way of life he seemed to have put himself beyond the limits of reality. Nothing moved him or spoke to him from the real world unless he heard in it an echo of the infuriated cries within him. He could respond to no earthly or human appeal, dumb and insensible to the call of summer and gladness and companionship, wearied and dejected by his father's voice. He could scarcely recognise as his his own thoughts, and repeated slowly to himself:
>
> --I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. We are in Cork, in Ireland. Cork is a city. Our room is in the Victoria Hotel. Victoria and Stephen and Simon. Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names. (240)

The closer he tries to get to reality, to surprise it into some kind of stability, the more his language has to deteriorate in order to prevent itself from doubling up into stray meanings, into metaphors and imaginary phantoms. His words must be slow and repetitive and basic, like the words of one learning a language, one for whom language still tries to serve as a guide within reality: "Where is the train station? What's the time?"--these are the tourist mapping techniques which seek to establish correspondence between the inner mind and the outer world. But the closer the words get to reality, the farther away they flee from language itself. If Stephen is to return to a sober and realistic social functionality, he realizes he would have to abandon language as such.

However, by now language is more real and meaningful to him than anything else, and so he decides to leave the whole religious paradigm instead, which is a model of word/world reflection. A mirror relationship between language and reality could be either mimesis (reality reflected in language) or narcissism (language reflected in reality). While both of these can be described as sins within the framework of religion itself, to claim that reality and language do not mirror each other at all, but diverge and miss each other completely, is a heresy. In Stephen's case, ideas are so abstract that they fail to relate even to their own material signs--the words. (And it is the solidity, the physicality of writing that reminds us of the solidity of the mother figure–as Thomas Calvin points out, "the body of the mother [is] relegated to the *materi*ality of writing" [290].) Thus, for example, when the boys taunt him about the girl he likes, "He scarcely resented what had seemed to him at first a silly indelicateness for he knew that the adventure in his mind stood in no danger from their words: and his face mirrored his rival's false smile" (228). Imagination is safe even from words themselves. The evolution of language has reached a stage of purity where it is no longer equivalent to signification: "The word now shone in his brain, clearer and brighter than any ivory sawn from the mottled tusks of elephants. Ivory, ivoire, avorio, ebur" (309); "Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour?" (299). The phonemes have a purity of meaning denied to the actual signification which still has to work with things in addition to words.

That is also why Stephen "cannot repent" (365)--repentance requires words and presupposes that these words have a definite relationship to the human actions they designate: "He had to confess, to speak out in words what he had done and thought, sin after

sin" (267). The assumption is that "[no] matter how many or how foul the sins if only you repent of them [in words] they will be forgiven you. Let no worldly shame hold you back" (274). For a moment, it seems to Stephen that words are too powerful even to pronounce them, that, like some ancient spell, the sounds can evoke God or betray man: "Shame covered him wholly like fine glowing ashes falling continually. To say it in words! His soul, stifling and helpless, would cease to be" (280). In his brief religious fervor, Stephen allows religion to give words a material significance they do not possess[20]. But soon he finds himself up against contiguous moments of immanence which fail to create a cumulative significance: "A restless feeling of guilt would always be present with him: he would confess and repent and be absolved, confess and repent again and be absolved again, fruitlessly" (289). More of the same does not become another--words added to words add no force.

Furthermore, it seems that words lose their force when pronounced. The power of the unused hand of cards, the power to blackmail and bluff appears superior to the open and vulnerable confession, since it suggests that there is always more to come. Thus Stephen enjoys even his unused ability to sin which in effect blackmails his own purity: "It gave him an intense sense of power to know that he could by a single act of consent, in a moment of thought, undo all that he had done" (288). Language can have strong influence not only when spoken, but also when withheld, and that is why one of Stephen's chosen weapons is cunning: "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use--silence, exile, and cunning" (363). What Stephen regards as "free" expression does not

necessarily involve open, clear expression without remainder; in fact, all the evidence in the novel leads toward a more complex definition of free expression, which would include the right not to express love for the mother, country, or God. This would explain why Stephen is unwilling to follow even the meaningless form of an Easter ritual he does not believe in, even though to do so would require no effort on his part and would honor his mother's wish. Cranly's argument: "Do as she wishes you to do. What is it for you? You disbelieve in it. It is a form: nothing else. And you will set her mind at rest" (359). But it seems that withholding the ritual has more meaning than performing it--while going through the motions would mean nothing, rejecting them would be tantamount to an act of rebellion.

This comes to show that silence can carry more weight than words. The more is kept secret, the more power language wields. This is precisely what seems so attractive to Stephen in the ordained religious life--"the vague acts of priesthood which pleased him by reason of their semblance of reality and of their distance from it" (293). Priesthood is one way out of the unequivocal, "offering him secret knowledge and secret power" (293). The whole mechanism of the secret is based on the suppression of words–"I'll tell you but you can't tell," or, as one of Stephen's friends at school puts it, "I will tell you but you must not let on you know" (199). Stephen can see himself as a priest who "would know obscure things, hidden from others" (294). But even the religious order structures this power into the rigid sequence of a ritual too explicit for Stephen's purposes: "His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders" (296).

In his elusive maneuvers away from any commitment via words to things, Stephen has decided to discard language as a mere tool of communication with other human beings or

representation of human values:

> The question of honour here raised was, like all such questions, trivial to him. While his mind had been pursuing its intangible phantoms . . . [the voices of his father and his masters] had now come to be hollowsounding in his ears. . . . And it was the din of all these hollowsounding voices that made him halt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms. He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades. (233)

In a sense, Stephen withdraws into a powerful anti-narcissistic current which severs all relations between him and the world: as he refuses to reflect what the world expects of him, he assumes that the world, too, would fail to reflect his own presence in it. That is why he is surprised to find that his imagination can have objective, external expression at all: "It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind" (238). The mind for him is the heresy which refuses both mimesis and narcissism and leads its own existence. While religion asserts that we can see meaning in things because meaning is inherently built into things, that we can make sense of them because they are made of sense, the mind claims no objective power for itself, which is a point Stephen concedes without regret: "I neither believe in it [the eucharist] nor disbelieve in it" (357). When Cranly counters with: "Many persons have doubts, even religious persons, yet they overcome them or put them aside, Cranly said. Are your doubts on that point too strong?" Stephen makes it clear that he rather likes his non-committal position: "I do not wish to overcome them, Stephen answered" (357). In his struggle to avoid

the religious process which gives definitive shape to ideas and physical dimension to words, he strives to qualify even basic ontological events like life and death: the life of the mind is not real life, just as the death of the mind is not literal death: "But he [the person Stephen was before] had not died then [when he was sick]. . . . he had not died but he had faded out like a film in the sun. He had been lost or had wandered out of existence for he no longer existed. How strange to think of him passing out of existence in such a way, not by death but by fading out in the sun or by being lost and forgotten somewhere in the universe!" (240). Stephen wants to be exempt from any material formalities of existence, so that he would not be functioning in terms of physical processes at all. His aging process is similarly unavailable for measurement in normal chronology: "His mind seemed older than theirs [his father's and his friends']: it shone coldly on their strifes and happiness and regrets like a moon upon a younger earth. No life or youth stirred in him as it had stirred in them. . . . Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust" (242).

As lust can be defined in terms of an empty expression of love without its love-content, so the mother's love appears as the opposite--a deep feeling not necessarily expressed according to the recognizable patterns of social coding. In fact, his mother never explicitly acknowledges her love for Stephen, which contributes to his perception of her as almost naked, or socially inept, not presentable symbolically. Thus when Stephen goes to pick up the prize money for his essay, his mother and brother wait outside, while he and his father go in: "Stephen looked at his thinly clad mother and remembered that a few days before he had seen a mantle priced at twenty guineas in the windows of Barnardo's" (243). The passage re-asserts Stephen's association with exchange, appearance, coverage, while the

mother remains outside, both literally and metaphorically, taking no part in the exchange of money or in the essay writing itself. As far as Stephen can see, she has no place in language. The mother demands to be accepted without being understood and put into words, without being subjected to the analysis of comprehension which requires a narcissistic removal and doubling of terms.

With the prize money, Stephen attempts to establish a new order in the family and fails: "How foolish his aim had been! He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up, by rules of conduct and active interests and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of the tides within him. Useless" (244). He fails because he does not realize that filial relations can never be "new"--he tries to create them from nothing, from money and not from blood. In his idealism Stephen briefly entertains the idea that a hypothetical construct of the mind can support a family tie without the help of family feelings; everything appears manmade and "nothing [is] sacred" (245). Thus Stephen has drifted away from his origins: "He saw clearly too his own futile isolation. He had not gone one step nearer the lives he had sought to approach nor bridged the restless shame and rancour that divided him from mother and brother and sister. He felt that he was hardly of the one blood with them but stood to them rather in the mystical kinship of fosterage, fosterchild and fosterbrother" (245). With this, Stephen is getting very close to what in the religious context would be called "hell": "In hell all laws are overturned: there is no thought of family or country, of ties, of relationships" (264). (That is why "things which are good in themselves become evil in hell" [271]--they are still the same in themselves but lose connection to the whole.) In the linguistic context,

this means that mother and son lose their connection---she becomes the foster mother of addition (as if she were an accessory, a nonessential feature of the son), not the natural mother of subtraction (as in the loss of something essential which leaves the son incomplete). Consequently, Stephen does not suffer from feelings of incompleteness: "The falsehood of his position did not pain him" (250). If he is unable to feel any pain, it is because of this falsehood with which he perceives himself: "a cold lucid indifference reigned in his soul . . . a cold indifferent knowledge of himself" (249). The inability to detect the absence of the mother (and, in fact, she is hardly even mentioned in the novel) speaks to Stephen's attempt to build a system of semantic completeness that can encompass and surpass the mother as a physical entity. If the mother's presence is such that it can find no linguistic equivalent and cannot be processed by the imagination, then Stephen would rather do without it--without the mother's presence but also without her absence, which is the pain from her loss. As "the greatest sin is the pain of loss" (268), a feeling of separation from the mother would reinstate the son within the terms of religious belief and thus ground him in extra-semantic reality which he would be unable to manipulate through linguistic means. Thus neither of the possible states of mind in relation to the mother--of presence and absence, of reaching out for the mother and being unable to reach her, of happiness or mourning--has any equivalent in Stephen's imaginary world. He does not know how to speak of the mother:

> Let me ask you a question. [Cranly said.] Do you love your mother?
>
> Stephen shook his head slowly.
>
> --I don't know what your words mean, he said simply. (358)

It is doubtful that Stephen will be able to dissect language into units small enough and simple

enough for him to know exactly what they mean; even the word "mother" seems to take on an ambiguity which is foreign to the mother herself. As Cranly points out, "Whatever else is unsure in this stinking dunghill of a world a mother's love is not. Your mother brings you into the world, carries you first in her body. What do we know about what she feels? But whatever she feels, it, at least, must be real. It must be. What are our ideas or ambitions? Play. Ideas!" (359). But the "real" is precisely the thing Stephen cannot capture in language. A thing that cannot be another thing even for a second has no place in the imagination. But the mother is not the only one who suffers as a subject of Stephen's noncommittal elopement with language: Stephen himself has to endure self-alienation in his self-imposed solitude of the mind, which is not perfect because, even in its solipsist enclosure, it is not self-created:

> The language in which we are speaking is his [the dean's] before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (317)

By now, even language itself has become too stable and rigid for Stephen, as he looks to escape the confinement of meaning: "when the moment had come for him to obey the call he had turned aside, obeying a wayward instinct" (298). It is not precisely thinking or speech that Stephen chooses to serve, because his rejection of authority is pure and intransitive: "I will not serve" (357). What he is looking for is to encompass the whole world of possibility and impossibility, existent and non-existent: "There was a lust of wandering in his feet that

burned to set out for the ends of the earth" (302). His nomadic freedom of alternately using and withholding language, of comprehension and incomprehension, of knowledge and secrets, puts him outside any definite meanings, in a movement away from the mother of which she disapproves: "Yes, his mother was hostile to the idea, as he had read from her listless silence" (298).

The closest Stephen can get to the mother is by letting her believe that she has, for a moment, a purifying influence on him:

> --Well, it's a poor case, she said, when a university student is so dirty his mother has to wash him.
>
> --But it gives you pleasure, said Stephen calmly. (306)

The discriminating separation of purity and dirt is no longer among Stephen's life goals; on the contrary, he is trying to enhance the inclusive capacities of his mind to embrace both the high and the low: "he had been acquainted with nobility. But, when this brief pride of silence upheld him no longer, he was glad to find himself still in the midst of common lives, passing on his way amid the squalor and noise and sloth of the city fearlessly and with a light heart" (307). But it is not simply a sense of life as a whole he is after--now he can look to the place "after the universe"; he is no longer just interested in creation but also in the uncreated: "Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (368). In a way, Stephen proposes to supplement the mother, who has brought to life the created, by

branching out into the uncreated, the second-hand and the unthinkable[21], the thing forbidden by the mother, which has to be censored by her just as bad language is earlier in the novel: "Ah, it's a scandalous shame for you, Stephen, said his mother, and you'll live to rue the day you set your foot in that place. I know how it has changed you" (306). The mother is not enough. Morality is not enough. Life itself is not enough. Stephen can pass from moral to immoral without difficulty: his favorite poet, for example, is Byron, "a bad man," but Stephen cannot see how morality can be relevant to the creation of the artist: "I don't care what he was, cried Stephen hotly" (231). His friends also notice the same Byronic qualities in Stephen: "You're a terrible man. . . . Always alone. . . . What with your name and your ideas . . . Are you Irish at all?" (327). But Stephen's project is that he should not be confined to anybody in particular at all--not specifically Irish, not specifically Catholic, not specifically a son. This nebulous being, Stephen assumes, must be the versatile, noncommittal artist: "The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (338). But this privileged position outside of the known universe does not allow Stephen to assume a definite role within that universe; it is as if he is trying not simply to interact with, but to become the unknown.

Conversely, as Cranly has also pointed out, the mother stands for all that is definitive and unequivocal in the world. Throughout the novel, Stephen has already successively dismissed politics and religion as two other possible manifestations of the unequivocal. While politics outlines two mutually exclusive camps, it has become clear to him that people who belong to his family and so can be seen as interchangeable within the family circle, can

nevertheless subscribe to different political credos. This fact throws doubt on the validity and truth of the division itself. The same doubt later loosens the much more tenacious grip of religious belief. Religion itself is powerless to encompass all; even if Stephen can assure himself of his own purity and salvation, there is still the interference of the world around him: "His prayers and fasts availed him little for the suppression of anger at hearing his mother sneeze or at being disturbed in his devotions" (287). He realizes how much remains outside the scope of religion, how much is missed by the mind and left unlived: "Consciousness of place came ebbing back to him slowly over a vast tract of time unlit, unfelt, unlived" (279). His soul, therefore, embarks on a mission of plural lifetimes: "To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life!" (304). In this recreation of life, however, Stephen will be trying to make life less unequivocal and clear, and more vague and indefinite: "His soul was swooning into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain as under the sea, traversed by cloudy shapes and beings" (304). In a sense, he has moved from the well-lighted confines of the home to the cloudy, unknown, imaginary forms of another dimension which denies physical existence (or spiritual clarity, for that matter). This transition is accompanied by some slightly unsettling loss of orientation: "A sense of fear of the unknown moved in the heart of his weariness, a fear of symbols and portents, of the hawklike man whose name he bore soaring out of his captivity on osierwoven wings" (346). But the mythology holds. Stephen chooses his mythological father over his real-life mother. In fact, he now declares that what confers reality on Christ is exactly his mythological, unavailable origin: "He is more like a son of God than a son of Mary" (360). Thus Stephen prefers the inhuman and the unknown, as long as it can remain unknown, to the things known

and close to him, which are blurred and incorporated into the shadows of the mind: "The inhuman clamour [of birds] soothed his ears in which his mother's sobs and reproaches murmured insistently and the dark frail quivering bodies wheeling and fluttering and swerving round an airy temple of the tenuous sky soothed his eyes which still saw the image of his mother's face" (345). The blurring of the mother's face, where no veil can be distinguished from her features any more, coincides with Stephen's inability to visualize her existence in his world; he has no image for the mother, even for one as readily visible as Cranly's mother figure, who appears with distinct moral clarity: "[Cranly] attacked me on the score of love for one's mother. Tried to imagine his mother: cannot" (364).

The rejection of the mother in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is far from being an active denial of filial love; it takes the form of a failure to incorporate the original, founding act of creation into the imagination, where the created and the uncreated co-exist and interact. The feeling that there must be more to it than that, that the mother's presence is not enough but must work together with the mother's absence to produce meaning, while it is even doubtful that her absence could make a difference for the imagination, all of this is suggested very early in the novel by the inexplicable division of the origin into mother and father, by the hints of forbidden language and hidden secrets. The relativization of the concepts of life and death themselves, which now have to do more with symbolic than with ontological states, leads to a redefinition of the process of creation. The mother, with her immediate, immanent involvement in the acts of birth and death, no longer presents a valid model of creation. Now Stephen looks to the "artist" as the agent of origin within the system of language. Even language, however, is abandoned as Stephen seeks to explore the unsaid,

the unspeakable, and the silent as well, to dabble in both existence and non-existence, away from the unilateral decision of life which is the prerogative of the mother.

Notes

1. Implicitly, however, we see that Stephen's preoccupation with his mother is so strong as to prompt Chester G. Anderson to remark that "He [Stephen] becomes his own virgin mother" (166). In other words, motherhood emerges only as a narcissistic reflection of Stephen himself; it is not directed outward toward her person, but inward toward how Stephen can impersonate her. As Suzette Henke explains in "Stephen Dedalus and Women: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Misogynist," "like Narcissus, Stephen has fallen in love with his projected self-image clothed in female garb" (93).

2. Similar observations have been made by other critics, most notably Katie Wales: "Language for Joyce is not simply a transparent medium of reality but that reality itself" (67), and Rosemarie A. Battaglia, regarding Stephen's "obsession with words as things" (37).

3. The problem that imagination creates for knowledge, namely, that the protean transformations cannot lead to unequivocal assertions, is also discussed by Brivic in *The Veil of Signs* as "the separation from God involved in not knowing" (39). With the removal of oneself from the certainty of the God-given, signification becomes more and more arbitrary and morally ambiguous--"every sign involves a sin" (38). And that is because, while each sign presupposes many signs, "the good is and is one" (McMichael 106).

4. It is not accidental that Morton P. Levitt formulates the problem with religion in this way: "The rock upon which James Joyce builds his church is the theme of betrayal" (285) [in "Shalt Be Accurst? The Martyr in James Joyce" *JJQ* 5.4 (Summer 1968): 285-96]. The dual nature of Christ allows for an ambiguity of allegiance (simultaneously to the divine and to the earthly), in which a choice of the one alternative would be a "betrayal" of the other and therefore a source of guilt.

5. This definitiveness is also reenforced by Freud himself–not only insofar as his whole theory of the Oedipal instincts revolves around the mother figure, but also as a direct statement made by Freud: "no one possesses more than one mother, and the relation to her is based on an event that is not open to any doubt and cannot be repeated" (qtd in Sprengnether 1) (from SE II:169). In contrast, James Fairhall points out,"nothing generated by language is singular, unitary, unambiguous. . . . To assert is to deny; to construct is to deconstruct; to rise is to fall" (244).

6. Later, as Stephen comes to claim his own part in the discourse called life, the roles are reversed, and he becomes, as Riquelme points out, "the teller of a tale in which his father plays a part" (Riquelme 69).

7. In "The Father in Joyce," Brivic remarks that "the established functions of the two parents may be distinguished by saying that the father's role is to push forward while the mother's is to draw back" (75), but that seems an insufficiently rigorous distinction. The difference between the two parents in terms of their potential for symbolization (or sublimation, as defined by Freud) will be examined shortly.

8. As Thomas Calvin speculates, what lies at the heart of Stephen's dilemma is not necessarily his failure to connect with others, but his failure to represent a unitary human being to begin with: it is "the problem of separation, not of Stephen from his mother's body but of Stephen from himself" (287).

9. Kristeva defines the artist as "an avid assimilator of his two parents" (178). But such an assimilation is a rejection of the irreducible duality of his origin, and a denial of the parents as individual and meaningful entities. Ultimately, Edmund L. Epstein tells us, Stephen "casts off both his parents" (91). This rejection of parentage in general is necessitated by Stephen's quest for the monocausality and self-sufficiency of art. In the words of Christine Froula, the *Portrait*, "which begins with a natural father (Simon Dedalus) and ends with a cultural father (Daedalus), represents its own origins not as a birth from a mother but as a triumphant self-fathering" ("Gender" 157).

10. Here, both Kristeva and Lacan would have something to say. See *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia UP, 1986, esp. her discussion of the symbolic and the semiotic; also Lacan's language-based theory of the unconscious, the symbolic order, and the Name-of-the-Father in Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1977, and *The Four Fundamental Concepts in Psycho-Analysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, New York: Norton, 1978.

11. A number of critics have pointed out the two poles of ambivalence–"virgin and whore" (Henke 59)--in Stephen's attitude toward his mother; see, for example, Suzette A. Henke, *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire*, esp. Chapter 2, "Stephen Dedalus and Women: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Narcissist," pp. 50-84. In *Joyce Between Freud and Jung*, Brivic also devotes some attention to this duality, pointing out how "Stephen's view of the world and woman remains split between spiritual ideal and physical bestiality" (45), and how Stephen "divides life into unattainable spirit and decaying matter" (62). This ambivalence is also what, in *Ulysses*, will bring Stephen closer to Hamlet. As Janet Adelman tells us, "the alternatives that govern Hamlet's imagination of his mother's body are the familiar ones of virgin and whore, closed or open, wholly pure or wholly corrupt" (19). In addition, a certain privileging of the negative version of the mother by Stephen has been pointed out–compare Caitriona Moloney: "In Stephen's case, the maternal is more often a degraded form of the preoedipal mother–the hag and the whore–than the queen" (109).

12. For a discussion of *A Portrait*, the artist, and the subject in terms of production, see Thomas Calvin, "Stephen in Process / Stephen on Trial: The Anxiety of Production in Joyce's Portrait." Especially valuable is his definition of the "relationship between language and the body as a relation of production" (282), and "the way in which language inscribes the body as its own productive site, or agency, a corporeal matrix of openings for the reception, reproduction, and re-presentation of words [in] a complex dialectic of internalization and externalization" (282). For the tension between aesthetics and consumption, see Garry Leonard, "The City, Modernism, and Aesthetic Theory in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*," especially his observation that Stephen is unsuccessful in "separating works of art

from commodities" (96), as well as the dynamics of aesthetics and pornography: "Commodity culture is pornographic in the sense that it is anti-aesthetic; it generates sensation indifferent to the politics of affect based on self-surveillance. . . . The pornographic generates pleasure by transgressing, the aesthetic by conforming. . . . [Pornography] disturbs [our] system of self-surveillance" (82-83).

13. In "The Father in Joyce," Sheldon Brivic observes that "Stephen has to pass outside the enclosure of his present home" (78), but as early as the infant memories in *A Portrait* we see that Stephen has already abandoned the physical locus of the home and realized that it does not overlap significantly with its notion.

14. Stephen's narcissistic tendencies are manifested very early in the novel, during his compulsory participation in sports, for example, when, Beebe points out, he becomes "conscious of his inability to compete with his fellows on their own terms–terms of physical ability and worldly knowledge" ("James Joyce" 270), which can only mean that from now on Stephen will seek to impose his own terms on the world, to internalize it.

15. That is why when Menagham proposes the term "Modernist mimesis" (252), defined as the author's attention to the inner world of characters, we must keep in mind the fact that these characters have already taken over the whole world, symbolically, and so the delimiting of the narrative focus to the personal conflicts of the self does not appear to limit the narrative in any way to the self proper. As Suzette Henke points out in "Stephen Dedalus and Women: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Narcissist," "Stephen imagines his soul creating and destroying the universe" (68).

16. As early as1941, Harry Levin emphasizes the internalizing power of language: "You gain power over a thing by naming it; you become master of a situation by putting it into words" (90).

17. The verbal expression, insofar as it is related to oral communication, has an additional parallel with narcissism, since the narcissistic state is one of absorption, of swallowing of the world. As Jeanne McKnight reminds us, "Stephen Dedalus is haunted from the beginning by needs and fears that have something to do with his relationship with his mother . . . [and, more specifically] with what Philip Slater has called the 'oral-narcissistic dilemma,' the infantile conflict between the desire to remain an undifferentiated part of the mother and the developmental wish to be separate and free" (421-22). The orality of Stephen's relationship with the world comes as a sign of interiority, motivated by "the fear that 'someone else' or something else can be . . . overwhelming to his identity" (422), so that unless he can internalize (absorb) the foreign agent, he will be in turn absorbed and extinguished.

18. In "From Daedalus to Dedalus," Richard Ellman proposes a rather different theory for the change in the spelling of the name: Joyce "dropped the *a* from the diphthong in Daedalus, to diminish a little its ostentatious hellenism, and to make it more compatible with local patronymics" (15).

19. "Daedalus" does not appear in *Portrait*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*. Sources consulted: *Word Index to James Joyce's* Portrait of the Artist, by Leslie Hancock. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1967; *Word Index to James Joyce's* Ulysses, by Miles L. Hanley. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1965; *A Concordance to Finnegans Wake*, by Clive Hart. Corrected ed. Mamaroneck, NY: Paul P. Appel, 1974.

20. On the linguistic and symbolic implications of confession, see Gerald Doherty, "The Art of Confessing: Silence and Secrecy in James Joyce's 'The Sisters,'" especially his observation that "confession turns both on what can be openly spoken about and what it is forbidden to name . . . [and] is ultimately bound up with narrative" (657). Doherty also discusses the secularization of confession, which has been transformed from religious to psychoanalytical (657). We could extrapolate from this statement to say that confession is a mechanism kindred to Freud's ego defenses, and undermining them, since, in the words of Doherty, confession "exacerbates the gap between the latent and the manifest . . . [and] draws them together" (658). For a more detailed discussion of confession as a performative utterance, see Kathleen O'Gorman, "The Performativity of Utternace in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*." She observes that both "confession and communion are predicated on an acknowledgment of the capacity of language to function in a performative mode: to do something rather than simply to say something" (419); she also argues that Stephen does not question this property of language: he "destroys the boundary between literary and non-literary language when he conceives of both as functioning in the same–i.e. performative–way" (425). However, O'Gorman contends that for Stephen language does not have primacy over reality, and he acknowledges a form of authority other than the arbirarily symbolic: "[Stephen's] recognition of the church's authority as an extra-linguistic institution makes [his] rejection of that institution the more forceful, certainly, but it simultaneously ratifies his choice of the notion of performative utterance for his artistic vocation. In affirming the power of utterance in one context, he grants it as well in the other" (424). It does not seem very probable, however, that Stephen can look to any extra-linguistic reality for confirmation of his artistic choices–on the contrary, the performativity he finds in language is purely narcissistic. In other words, the realities created by language have no contact with the "actual" reality; they remain virtual, imaginary, and free from materiality.

21. The question of the insufficiency of language could also be phrased, as by David J. Leigh, as the "problems raised by *A Portrait* about the very possibility of a mythmaker in a postmythic context" (371).

CHAPTER 9: *ULYSSES*--MOTHERHOOD AND THE FAILED GHOST

Following Stephen's meditations and self-searching in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses* refrains from presenting any solutions. If anything has changed in the isolation of the mother, it takes the form of a deepening feeling of guilt, triggered by the helplessness of the imagination in the form of the maternal. The detailed and coherent religious arguments which occupy Stephen's mind in *Portrait* are here replaced by an emphasis on the body--instead of a vague spiritual entity, the mother appears in disturbingly physical imagery of fragmentation and failure of the body, a body which she is unable to leave. In contrast, the image of the father has taken the shape of a spiritual advisor of sorts[1]--a ghost--present not in himself, through his body or image, but through his teachings and warnings. In a sense, *Ulysses* represents a vain attempt to detach the mother figure from the raw and de-spiritualized confines of the body and turn her into a ghost which the imagination can deal with. Even though Stephen attempts to imagine her as a ghost, she fails to display convincingly the properties of one and is denied, in effect, the spiritual status of ghostly presence. The ghost also emerges as a structure of historical continuity, following the pattern of Hamlet's conversation with Hamlet, his father--insofar as the ghost is an absence, a past replaced by a present, it designates a healthy continuity; insofar as it is present, its unwanted return is pathological, since it is part of a narcissistic identification of

the mourner with the departed–a narcissism of contemporaneity which shows that the historical continuity is flawed. The mother, who is not in a position to be treated as a ghost[2] and to enter the dynamic system of historical reciprocity, is denied access to the son, in the sense that after their physical separation, and without a spiritual connection, she can no longer claim anything of his as hers.

Thus, in *Ulysses* Joyce re-examines the mother-son relationship, paying particular attention to the burden of succession (part of the "history" from which Stephen wants to "wake up" [28]), and the impossibility of full inheritance. Stephen keeps seeing disturbing visions of his mother, in which her body is always "wasted," as if the process of creation from her body, instead of reinforcing the primal source of life by the replenishment of procreation, has exhausted and drained this source. The notion of waste[3] has the wider implication that the created and the creator are not equal, that there is an imbalance, a diminishing, a loss which becomes apparent in the process of inheritance. In other words, the son can never fully inherit the mother, because he can never have an existence as full as hers. Thus, while Stephen feels an enormous emptiness and futility in his life, a stasis further emphasized by being literarily inflated, his visions of his mother always keep her suspended in some unnatural physical animation, either before or after her death–an animation which Stephen himself lacks, as if her presence is more physically true than his own.

The noticeable lessening of life in the further stages of creation (with its large-scale parallel in the anticlimactic heritage of a heroic, ancient Irish race), finds one expression in Stephen's notion of "misbirth" (32). In a sense, all birth is misbirth because the son is never equal to the mother--he is always somehow less than her, and the part of her that fails to

regenerate, to be re-born in him, is wasted. Bloom, too, sees his dead son only as pure potential, with a lot less realized than was possible. His visions of Rudy portray him as he would have been had he lived, and the cumulative conditional burden on the syntax of this possibility applies to Stephen as well. Thus for both Stephen and Rudy, the possibility of full realization of what was transmitted to them through creation remains illusory--the son is always "less than." This in turn means that the son is always compared to his ancestors, never judged on his own terms but always referred back to his creator (the mother or, in the case of Bloom, an often androgynous entity), and the creator's expectations--for Rudy, to be eleven years old; for Stephen, to kneel down in prayer. The created son is never complete because he is an inaccurate reflection of the creator, a reflection in a cracked mirror. As Bloom aptly phrases it, "My son. Me in his eyes" (73); what the parent wants to see is a faithful replica of him/herself, and the son will feel diminished if he fails to achieve that degree of correspondence.

But in the case of Stephen, it becomes impossible for him to be an accurate replica of anything, since he does not live in an accurate world, but in a world of constant parody--all events and people around him appear as diluted and rarified versions of what they try to imitate. Even his own name is branded as a degenerate Hellenic moniker, implying that it does not so much designate Stephen as an individual human being as it invokes a whole ancient culture of ideals which has ceased to be available except in a mock version of itself, and that there is something the name has failed to live up to: "The mockery of it! he [Mulligan] said gaily. Your absurd name, an ancient Greek!" (3). The sustained caricature of culture and history continues with the image of the tower itself, which is associated not

with ancient heroes and defenders of the city, but with young people full of doubts, who possess but do not inhabit the fortified dwelling--they lock it from the outside, rather than defending it from the inside (15). Thus the tower remains unused for its designated purpose of defense but imitates this purpose in a parodic imitation.

Another parody is presented in the character of the woman who brings milk to Stephen and his companions at the beginning of the novel, and who goes through the motions of mock nursing: "That woman is coming up with the milk," remarks Haines (11). But she has no real claim on the functions of a mother figure, since she is detached from everything she should be connected to. She is detached from the milk which is "not hers" (12), and it is milk she does not give away, or give to a specific, irreplaceable person, but sells for money and to whomever can pay for it; she is also separated from her own language, unable to recognize even the sound of Gaelic, and this ineptness with language in general prevents her from taking part in the young men's literary and historical allusions brought up at her expense. She cannot participate in a conversation about herself but must remain the unconscious subject of it. The only tenuous connection she manages to form is with Buck Mulligan, whose profession she can inexplicably guess ("Are you a medical student, sir?" [12]), as if drawn towards some kindred immanence of the body, of flesh and bone which can operate without words and can die and rot without a eulogy:

> Stephen listened in scornful silence. She bows her old head to a voice that speaks to her loudly, her bonesetter, her medicineman: me she slights. To the voice that will shrive and oil for the grave all there is of her but her woman's unclean loins, of man's flesh made not in God's likeness, the serpent's prey.

And to the loud voice that now bids her be silent with wondering unsteady eyes. (12)

To some unhallowed end of profanation of the body the words of the conversation break and scatter and leave Stephen invisible to the woman, while creating a silent understanding between her and the "bonesetter" Mulligan, a connection not based on words, not on the ongoing conversation, but on the more basic, inanimate givens of the human body, which they both understand–Mulligan is thirsty and he has to drink milk, and that is a need of the body he does not have to explain.

During this scene, we see Stephen pay for the milk; even though Mulligan is the one who produces the coin (which was probably borrowed and does not belong to him in the first place), the actual financial exchange takes place between Stephen and the old woman, as it also does, in general, between Stephen and Mulligan as the latter borrows money on a regular basis. Thus Stephen is located at the center of these interactions, but he does not consume what he has paid for--we see him get paid at the school, or spending money on the milk, always at the locus where the exchange takes place, but the one who actualizes the money's potential into some material object is not Stephen–in the scene with the milk woman the man we see drinking the milk is Mulligan (12). This comes to show that while Mulligan is interested in the end product of the process, in what can be done with the money, Stephen renounces the importance of the application, the usage, and focuses on the exchange itself, on its symbolism, with no view toward its result or meaning. Another indication of Mulligan's anti-symbolic and literally-material stance toward life is that he is the one with a cynical view of death, unburdened by the religious questions of continuity and the consubstantial spirit; it

is, in effect, an attitude which does not question death and does not offer any alternatives:

> And what is death, he asked, your mother's or yours or my own? You saw only your mother die. I see them pop off every day in the Mater and Richmond and cut up into tripes in the dissectingroom. It's a beastly thing and nothing else. It simply doesn't matter. You wouldn't kneel down to pray for your mother on her deathbed when she asked you. Why? Because you have the cursed jesuit strain in you, only it's injected the wrong way. To me it's all a mockery and beastly. Her cerebral lobes are not functioning. She calls the doctor sir Peter Teazle and picks buttercups off the quilt. Humour her till it's over. You crossed her last wish in death and yet you sulk with me because I don't whinge like some hired mute from Lalouette's. Absurd! I suppose I did say it. I didn't mean to offend the memory of your mother. (7-8)

Without any real intention to honor her, Mulligan manages to accept the mother on her own terms, as that which lives and dies on its own and can be "nothing else." His acknowledgment of the mother's bleak mortality has the effect of giving her autonomy from language which Stephen is not prepared to allow. The son wants the mother to do more, to be comprised of more than is apparent in her sickness and senility, to *mean* not to herself but to him. He wants her to transcend her own decay and put herself into words. By the rules of signification, she is not allowed to be contained within her own pain and death but is required to signify outside of it, to transmit a message to the son over the void that should have been inheritance. When that does not happen, Stephen continues to replay the scene in his mind, looking for clues to decipher some hidden alternative to death. For Stephen, with his

experience of withholding language in *A Portrait*, the created and the uncreated, the dead and the alive are equally real, because he sees anything which is apparently absent as hidden. In other words, the events and people unavailable to him are not so because they have ontologically ceased to function, but because they have been denied him through language. It does not matter much how the absent elements exist on their own, but only how they relate to Stephen; and if they do not, they cannot be necessarily called deceased, just silent, unavailable in words, as the dead who have hung up on the living[4]. In this sense, the mother would not be dead but only supremely inarticulate or deliberately secretive. Indeed, Stephen's memories of her tend to focus on her private possessions whose meaning was withheld from Stephen as a child: "Her secrets; old featherfans, tasselled dancecards, powdered with musk, a gaud of amber beads in her locked drawer. A birdcage hung in the sunny window of her house when she was a girl. . . . Folded away in the memory of nature with her toys" (8-9). What looms up most clearly in his examination of her life are the things that were secret to him, not the ones immediately present, and the secrets are things that do exist–they were merely prevented from existing *for him*, which he assumes may be the case with the death of his mother too. A thing that is tangibly unavailable may still be viable as a linguistic effect, a creature made of signs. And we see that signs govern Stephen's relationship to his mother–in "Jung's 'Dual Mother' in Joyce's *Ulysses*: An Illustrated Psychoanalytic Intertext," Jean Kimball points out that "[a]lthough mother and son speak to each other . . . they do not touch" (486). In other words, Stephens' knowledge of her, as well as his attempts to understand her, are mediated through signs and are never unequivocal.

Thus Stephen cannot take the image of woman at face value. It simply has to mean

more than he can see. That is why he interprets, for example, the presence of the milk woman in a way that turns her, in his eyes, into a witch[5]--in other words, he interprets her inarticulateness as the monstrosity of equivocation:

> He watched her pour into the measure and thence into the jug rich white milk, not hers. Old shrunken paps. She poured again a measureful and a tilly. Old and secret she had entered from a mourning world, maybe a messenger. She praised the goodness of the milk, pouring it out. Crouching by a patient cow at daybreak in the lush field, a witch on her toadstool, her wrinkled fingers quick at the squirting dugs. They lowed about her whom they knew, dewsilky cattle. Silk of the kine and poor old woman, names given her in old times. A wandering crone, lowly from an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer, their common cuckquean, a messenger from the secret morning. To serve or to upbraid, whether could not tell: but scorned to beg her favour. (12)

The images of plenty and the images of waste merge as the immortal mother figure is disfigured into a witch. Stephen's attempt to see her as a messenger is an attempt to integrate her into language, albeit in a passive role of bearer and not a creator. But her message is indecipherable and ambiguous--it could be one of life ("the goodness of milk") or one of death ("old shrunken paps"). As Colleen Lamos observes, the "difference between the good and the bad woman brings Stephen to an aporia" (129). The ambiguity[6] of her presence makes her threatening, not to Stephen, who revels in word play, but to the sanctity of the mother figure. The woman is not what she appears to be, so her words of praise for the milk cannot be trusted, and Stephen will not "beg her favour"--he is hesitant to accept her milk as

an unambiguous token of life, which means that he is hesitant to acknowledge her gift of life to him. Suspicious of the unstable significations of life, and putting the most sacred and archetypal symbol of the mother--the milk-- in doubt, Stephen cannot be sure whether the mother figure has brought him life or death[7]. After all, if Christ takes his identity from the father's name, if the son is "consubstantial" (17) with the father but not with the mother[8], then the presence of the mother adds the doubtful element of an entity which cannot participate fully in the process of inheritance because she cannot work with symbols: "A horde of heresies fleeing with mitres awry: Photius . . . and Arius, warring his life long upon the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and Valentine, spurning Christ's terrene body, and the subtle African heresiarch Sabellius who held that the Father was Himself His own Son" (17-18). In the absence of the "terrene body" which has been inherited from the mother, but cannot count as any real inheritance[9], the name and substance of God can continue on without the material accessories of the body. Frequently, the infirmity of the body can be even beneficial to or indicative of the spiritual health of a person. Similarly, in Mulligan's mock fast-forward of human evolution he dispenses with body parts to designate spiritual elevation: "My twelfth rib is gone, he cried. I'm the Ubermensch. Toothless Kinch and I, the superman" (19). What can ensure continuity through time is not the self-identity of the body, but an idea stored in memory; the diminishing and distortion of the body not only does not impair the seamless continuity of the spirit through time but may be even necessary for the purity of history, a history without the body. It is important to note here that any differences between religious creeds and individual heresies are immaterial--as Stephen puts it, "There is only one sense of the word [believer]" (16). The necessity to believe already

presupposes some alienation or hostility toward pure physical contact outside of language, which is seen as insufficient. In all the permutations of the word "believer," Father and Son do not need to share their body since they share their name in language and make their own history from which the body and the mother figure are excluded. The mother is therefore either mortal, left behind by the father-and-son communion, or immortal but witch-like in her multiple meanings, which are divorced from her (the milk she gathers is not hers) and left for interpretation by the son--her own interpretation, or what she claims is true about the goodness of the milk, is not reliable. As Colleen Lamos points out, "Stephen's self-constitution as a son is blocked by his deep ambivalence toward his mother" (128). And if the son is left alone to make sense of the mother, he cannot be certain that what he encounters has any bearing on her, instead of merely consisting of his own empty words about her. Thus the mother cannot be a messenger in any real sense of the word because the message is left to the creativity of the son. In effect, the son has to compose the message he hopes to receive from her. This inability of the mother to be irreverent, creative, counterfeit in language has been pointed out more generally as a female trait in *Ulysses*. According to Marguerite Harkness, "[w]omen exist in the novel as fantasies of men. . . . None of them exists separately with thoughts or needs of her own. None of them offers, as do Stephen's literary fathers, materials from which Stephen draws to construct his world. And none of them is a storyteller, the guardian of words and hence of reality" ("Storytellers "57). Here the word "hence" seems a bit problematic, as the mother *is* the guardian of reality, even though not through the arbitrariness of words. The problem of encountering the mother figure lies precisely in this discrepancy between language and reality–the realities created by Stephen

cannot satisfy him, because he knows they are multiple and can be reshaped at will.

The difference between the mother as a messenger[10] and the other messenger who makes an appearance in *Ulysses*--Hamlet's ghost--is that the message of the ghost does not have to be verified in order to be acted upon, whereas a woman's words must be truthful and have a "real" connection to her, and this requirement in fact makes words impossible for her to use. If the mother is in possession of the truth, then she cannot have truth *value*. The mother, Shari Benstock observes, "presents herself not as a hieroglyph but hallucination" ("Unveiling" 191). She is an image insusceptible to the processes of validation through language. For Stephen, she *is*, but does not *mean*[11]. Since she is not an active agent, a source of her own language (she is one of the "singular uneared wombs" [166]), her message has been constructed by the recipient through his interpretation of it and has no relevance to reality. The absence of continuity between mother and son suggests that the mother cannot become a ghost for him, an articulate entity set apart from the contingencies of the body. While the death of the mother renders her simply silent, the ghost of the father (also codified as part of the Trinity) is language without body. As Colin MacCabe observes, following Lacan, the "*Name of the Father* . . . is *the* name without a bearer" (49). In this sense, the ghost, as Stephen sees it in *Hamlet* and fails to see it in his mother, emerges as a pure carrier of heritage: "What is a ghost? Stephen said with tingling energy. One who has faded into impalpability through death, through absence, through change of manners" (154). Ghosts are malleable, free from death and life, and adaptable through language to the needs of the living. In other words, the ghost shares the qualities of the father figures, as defined by Harkness, who have the "ability to be manipulated" ("Storytellers " 73). The ghost is a profoundly

masculine construct. It does not need the continuity of a physical body but can make the body more stable by negating its biological contingencies:

> As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies, Stephen said, from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image. And as the mole on my right breast is where it was when I was born, though all my body has been woven of new stuff time after time, so through the ghost of the unquiet father the image of the unliving son looks forth. (159-60)

The "unquiet father"[12] is the paternal heritage through voice. By diminishing the biological necessities of historical continuity, language makes the body virtual and versatile, so that now the self can become anything, or anyone: "Am I a father? If I were?" (171). Stephen's query can even turn back the historical sequence of inheritance. The continuity based on the voice, the ghost of the father, no longer requires the death of the mother, and can very well do without memory in the interchangeable kaleidoscope of identities.

That is why Stephen (who is pressured by his students to tell a "ghoststory" [21], foreshadowing his interpretation of Hamlet as a ghoststory [154][13]--as a story primarily about a ghost) can integrate various ghosts, linked over time and space, life and death, reality and fiction, into an articulate structure of meaning: "He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father" (15)[14]. Father and son are interchangeable because consubstantial, so either of them can be the ghost of the other: "Well: if the father who has not a son be not a father can the son who has not a father be a son?" (171). The ghost has the ambiguous role of keeping historical memory intact,

while at the same time violating the normal historical sequence, according to which the ghost should not re-appear among the living. As James McMichael points out, the linear historical narrative is upset by the irreverence and flexibility of language; because language "foretells an end to the tyrannical sequence of the generations, Shakespeare is at once his own grandfather, father, and son" ("Stephen" 95). Thus the father figure appears as pure form susceptible to the associations of linguistic manipulation, but insusceptible to the entropic loss inherent in all biological creation:

> But, because loss is his [the dead king Hamlet's] gain, he passes on towards eternity in undiminished personality, untaught by the wisdom he has written or by the laws he has revealed. His beaver is up. He is a ghost, a shadow now, the wind by Elsinore's rocks or what you will, the sea's voice, a voice heard only in the heart of him who is the substance of his shadow, the son consubstantial with the father. (162)

The voice knows no substance and therefore no loss. He can continue "undiminished" over time because, in a way, the ghost is pure form without meaning: he is continuously speaking but can speak indiscriminately of anything: "*Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction. Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son?" (170). The son is a copy of the father and, like the father, he is fiction: "He [the son] is a new male: his growth is the father's decline, his youth his father's envy, his friend his father's enemy" (170). The overthrowing of the father (or what would be the historical need to, as Sheldon Brivic puts it, "de-sire" [81] the father), also must be done by means of the voice, as it happens in Hamlet: "The soul has been

before stricken mortally, a poison poured in the porch of a sleeping ear" (*Joyce's* 161). Similarly, the failure of the artist comes about when he has lost his voice, which is his non-biological means of creating[15]: "They list. And in the porches of their ears I pour. . . . I am tired of my voice, the voice of Essau" (161, 174). And later, "No voice. I am a most finished artist" (422). This, of course, is a phrase that could suggest "accomplished" artist, which would be an artist who does not need words in order to create, an artist of the caliber of God or the mother herself[16]. God, for example, realizes his will in the physical nature of things without having to communicate it to them from the outside; at one point, Stephen seems a little disappointed that God does not operate through language, which would ensure intelligibility: "I never could read His handwriting except his criminal thumbprint on the haddock" (458). The fingerprints of the divine in the substance of living organisms consist of . . . the living organisms, and they are not available for further interpretation, just like the mother figure is not a hieroglyph to be "read." The creation done by God does not require a transition from the physical to the intelligible, from the macrocosm of the world to the microcosm of the mind. But in the case of Stephen, the distance between the two is vast and therefore words are indispensable to bridge it. That is why, as Jean Kimball points out, Stephen's "obsession with the female power of creation in the flesh is superseded by the preeminent creative power of the male artist" ("Freud" 68). The "female" creation is god-like in its rejection of language, and Stephen has no choice but to deny this power, a power which threatens his own existence. In the words of David White, "[t]he possibility that language can become 'dead' strikes Stephen more deeply . . . because language has become for him . . . reality" (83).

In the process of its interpretation through language, the physical world becomes distorted. In "*Ulysses* as Ghoststory," Shari Benstock says of the ghost world of Stephen that "Stephen's 'other' world is marked by its misuse of the imagination" (410). But it would be more accurate to say "use" rather than "misuse"; in a very significant way, all use of the imagination is misuse, because it distorts reality. As pure voice, the ghost is also false to life: "Sounds are impostures, Stephen said after a pause of some little time, like names. Cicero, Podmore. Napoleon, Mr Goodbody. Jesus, Mr Doyle. Shakespeares were as common as Murphies. What's in a name?" (509). The name as a language which cheats on its owner, since it claims to position its owner purely within language, is also the paternal name which gives more reality to Christ than the reality of his being born from the mother's body. And to the extent to which the name "Christ" means somebody who is born of woman, it seeks to incorporate *both* sides of Christ's existence–the earthly and the divine. In this sense, his divine side (his name) includes his earthly side, even though the reverse is not true. If Christ is the ultimate symbolic figure, then the child is the opposite–a being who is not yet into the sense-making business, and so does not yet attempt to transcend the world. The name is something the child encounters with incomprehension: "What's in a name? That is what we ask ourselves in childhood when we write the name we are told is ours" (172). But as the son grows up, he goes through a sequence of stages: "Child, man, effigy" (117), which appears in the section significantly entitled "From the Fathers." The general movement is from a child and his reluctance to adopt a name as a faithful representation, to an "effigy," a word which designates a portrait or other means of representation, with various degrees of negative connotations and often specifically used in the *absence* of the physical object it

represents, in order to evoke or enact its *presence*. In other words, the effigy is a substitute for the man. The effigy is another ghost. And the distance between the sign and the body is no longer problematic for the ghost, who is fully aligned with the sign and rejects the body. The ghost is pure thought, as described by Stephen: "Thought is the thought of thought. Tranquil brightness. The soul is in a manner all that is: the soul is the form of forms. Tranquility sudden, vast, candescent: form of forms" (21). Unlike Platonic forms, this one cannot be traced back to visible reality until it hooks up with a twice-removed object. In a way, Stephen's criterion of life is precisely this thought free of content. As Jeri Johnson points out, Stephen "seeks to purge or erase the materiality of the mother's body and his own material origins and replace them with a genealogy of the father as (non-material) origin of writing" (214-15). In this process, he negates both life and death, since the form he is looking for is free of content and can cross freely from one to the other, communicating itself across both through a ghostly messenger.

The mother, on the other hand, can be only one thing, self-identical and never multiple. She does not speak. Thus at one point Bloom demands language from woman in general: "Speak, you! Are you struck dumb? You are the link between nations and generation. Speak, woman, sacred lifegiver!" (488). She has given life, and that is not enough. Stephen has similarly embarked on a quest for something more, something other than the mother herself--the mother's speech. When Mulligan calls Stephen a "shade of Kinch the elder! Japhet in search of a father" (15), this is a reminder that what Stephen is actually looking for in the mother is . . . a father, or a ghost with speech. Thus the mother, silent even when alive, is superceded by the father figure, speaking even when dead. The

un-ghostly mother visions haunt Stephen with tactile, olfactory, and visual attributes but always mute or silent or, redundantly, both:

> In a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, bent over him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wetted ashes.
>
> Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down. (9)

In his vision, Stephen provides the "ghostcandle," trying to see the mother in the light of a ghost, a messenger, an advisor, a bearer of language. But she can be described, as by Ewa Ziarek in a different context, as an "insubordinate ghost" (66), untypical because unhelpful in the making of sense. Her groans, though loud, are inarticulate, and she seeks contact through her eyes and body but not through words.

The mother is left at the mercy of language, and language can pretend to be both life and death. Thus Stephen envisions himself as the drowned man he hears about: "The man that was drowned. A sail veering about the blank bay waiting for a swollen bundle to bob up, roll over to the sun a puffy face, saltwhite. Here I am" (18). The declaration of physical presence by language is flawed in that it belies the absence of the body and disregards the fact of death. "He" and "I" become interchangeable and false, and if the "I" is false, then it can be a replica of anything--it can be *con*substantial with anything, even with its own death. The "I" has been conned out of substance. On the other hand, the mother is the one whose

body refuses to be integrated into the consubstantiality[17] of everything else. She appears as a burden of inflexible physical facts which cannot be presented as anything other than what they are--raw and cruel, which means that they cannot be presented at all. Even when these physical givens are syntactically integrated into metaphorical passages; thus, for example, they resist Stephen's attempts to link them to the mythology of the sea[18]:

> Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had been upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes. Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him. The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting. (5)

The mother as the protectress of the sea and growth and plenty completely misses the truth about the mother as a wasted body of disintegrating substance, singular, un-resurrected in the body of another. The sea-mother (or Ireland as a mother figure) is as removed from the decay of the body as the grammatical categories used to describe it: "*Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive" (23). Conversely, the real mother is not in possession of grammatical properties of any kind. She is described as "silent"and "mute," incapable of language, unable to transform what she is and how she is dying into anything less cruel or more meaningful than it is. She is like the woman "who was no better than she should be" (29), who cannot escape what she is, which is to be the one blamed for all the sins of the world. In the words

of Mr Deasy,

> We have committed many errors and many sins. A woman brought sin into the world. For a woman who was no better than she should be, Helen, the runaway wife of Menelaus, ten years the greeks made war on Troy. A faithless wife first brought the strangers to our shore here, MacMurrough's wife and her leman, O'Rourke, prince of Breffni. A woman too brought Parnell low. Many errors, many failures but not the one sin. (29)

The difference between the "many" errors and the "one" sin is the difference between the vagrant spirit and the grounded matter, the accidental twists of language and the primeval flaw of the mother's body[19]. And what is sin except the inability of language to articulate a repentance commensurate with the crime, to invoke words consubstantial with mercy? The woman's sin is one of silence that cannot be atoned for, since atonement has to be a cry for help, an audible reaching out from the self towards God, and that gesture must involve the objectivity of sound waves, the shapes of words, made sacred by their ability to leave the body and connect with the spirit.

It is as if Stephen refrains from leaving the realm of virtual values and entering the more definite sphere of physical objects, which he strives to keep at arm's length. Even money as an object, outside of transactions, is incomprehensible to him--when Mr Deasy offers him the image of money saved and stored, and suggests that Stephen buy one of those machines for storing coins and keeping them in order, Stephen finds it difficult to imagine money as an object with a physical reality: "Mine [the machine] would be often empty" (25), he replies. As much as this attitude puts him safely beyond emotions like greed and

fetishism, it also prevents him from building a stable notion of things as valuable or enduring in themselves, without the thought of what they could be exchanged for. He is in a position of constant transcendence in relation to things, and the objects and people around him assume the characteristics of parts of speech, always illuminated in the background by what other objects and people they stand for. Thus Stephen carries in his mind a list of people whose personalities take the shapes of debts and payments, persons equivalent to coins: "Mulligan, nine pounds, three pairs of socks, one pair brogues, ties. Curran, ten guineas. McCann, one guinea. Fred Ryan, two shillings. Temple, two lunches. Russell, one guinea, Cousins, ten shillings, Bob Reynolds, half a guinea, Koehler, three guineas, Mrs MacKernan, five week's board. The lump [of money] I have is useless" (25-26). The names of these people are as arbitrary in themselves as the monetary values attached to each--neither has any real substance to it, and Stephen can recognize that. The different designations are interchangeable and never adequate in their singular forms, outside of the matrix of language. In the same bold and daring move which allows Stephen to entertain profane thoughts of the mother as a decaying body, he proposes the presumption that, even though he is physically detached from the mother and incommensurate with her existence, perhaps he can be a symbol for her. When Mulligan apologizes for his unwitting offense to Stephen's mother, Stephen's response is at first glance puzzling:

> --I am not thinking of the offense to my mother.
>
> --Of what then? Buck Mulligan asked.
>
> --Of the offense to me, Stephen answered. (8)

At first quite odd, this remark reveals another side of the homage Stephen pays to the virtual

and symbolic in his life. We see how Stephen is prepared to assume that his mother can stand for him, and he for her, that the two are interchangeable, that she is not the overwhelming, alien, non-linguistic presence that threatens Stephen's imaginary universe, but can be assimilated under the aegis of random substitution, just like any other object in Stephen's field of vision. The mother, if she is to be located in the world after her death, must assume an objective symbolic value beyond any physical, inherent, and unverifiable connection with her son.

As nothing is what it seems, or nothing is simply single unto itself, undividable, self-identical, or unequivocal, Stephen is caught up in an economy of language in which input and output are never equal, all equivalencies are tentative, illusory, and soon disrupted. Consequently he is always in debt--what he does is never equivalent to what is expected of him; he cannot join Mr Deasy in his proud statement of adequate expenditure, of full atonement, of complete refund from the taker to the giver: "I paid my way. I never borrowed a shilling in my life. Can you feel that? I owe nothing. Can you?" (25). But any notion that what he gives is equal to what he has taken, that what he has become is commensurable with the material he was made from, falls under suspicion in the mind of Stephen. He can no longer believe that repentance is equal to atonement, that words are as powerful as deeds, that things as physical entities have more reality than the symbols of them. Things are never passed down from generation to generation through time without loss, unless they come in the message of an insubstantial ghost.

All of this comes to show the inaccuracy with which things replicate their original function, as if they are reflected in a cracked mirror, which is one of Stephen's favorite

images of decay. The mirror can be generally regarded as an image of containment, of protected space within a frame from which the reflection cannot escape. The mirror reflection has been described by James Fernandez as "identical but reversed" (32); in other words, although it may appear upside down, its surface is supposed to remain intact, not split by a crack. But here this image is broken into nomadic pieces of inadequacy scattered throughout the narrative, so that the novel, becomes, just like *A Portrait*, "a collection of incomplete and imperfect reflections" (Menagham 253). Thus, Stephen's life is not associated with a parody of a single hero's adventures, even though the larger framework of the novel makes a vague attempt to impose a mythological structure over the series of fragmentary thoughts and random associations that take place in the minds of Stephen and Bloom. The reflection of the mythological is flawed and partial; the mirror is from the first lines of the novel associated with the unwieldy and antagonistic image of the razor (3), an image of violence that will not necessarily be contained within the safety zone of the reflection but might branch out into real life and escape the categories of mythical parallels altogether.

If taken to symbolize a succession through time, a reflection of generation into a generation, of ancestry into posterity, the cracked mirror becomes an image of decay which points to a degeneration all the more powerful for not being static and singular but dynamic and plural, a repetitive failure of replication of ancient heroism over time, a heroism which cannot be duplicated:

> We don't want any of your medieval abstrusiosities. Would you do what he did? A boat would be near, a lifebuoy. Naturlich, put there for you. Would

you or would you not? . . . The truth, spit it out. I would want to. I would try. I am not a strong swimmer. . . . If I had land under my feet. I want his life still to be his, mine to be mine. A drowning man. His human eyes scream to me out of horror of his death. I . . . With him together down. . . . I could not save her. Waters: bitter death: lost. (38)

The essence of heroism is the sacrifice of the self to atone, requite, pay for another's death to prevent it. But in Stephen's system of values, which has resulted from the absence and rejection of the mother as a stable center, such an equivalence of lives is not possible. The image of the drowned man merges with the image of the mother who has become lost and unredeemable for Stephen, who, as Beryl Schlossman points out, "is faced with unredeemable origins" (88). In other words, he has nothing of value which can be exchanged for the mother to buy her back. He is no longer a part of her, and prefers to keep his life to himself. He feels that he could have fallen "together" with her but not for her or instead of her. The equation will not hold. Her life is not worth his own. They belong to two incompatible semiotic systems; they form meanings in different ways; they are not two of a kind, but of two different kinds.

The problem of how he can relate to the mother or form a memory of her continues to haunt Stephen, as he sees himself in the role of a "changeling" (38)[20] in relation to previous generations. Brandon Kershner oberves that Stephen as a "changeling . . . feels radically disconnected from his natural family" (284). But even more than that, it is as if what he has inherited has been intended for another, someone with a more solid physical connection with the family, as opposed to a literary one. Stephen has taken the place of a son by a *coup d'etat*

of the imagination. Thus the word of resentment Stephen apparently directs at Mulligan can also be applied to himself: "Usurper" (19). And unlike the traditional scenario, in which the child is stolen by the fairies, or in any case separated from his family through an agency other than his own, Stephen appears to be the thief of his own childhood, removing *himself* from the circle of the natural and voluntarily choosing the imaginary. As Robert Kiely speculates, "Stephen wonders whether he prefers language to the realities it supposedly reflects" (21). And this question can also be phrased in terms of his choice between the natural family, comprised of related persons, and the imaginary family, narcissistically structured around Stephen's own projections of and ideas about these same people. He chooses the only family that is really a matter of choice: as Jane Vogel remarks, Stephen moves towards "a family refounded on the idea of consubstantial (generic) as opposed to accidental (genetic) relatedness" (109). But the non-accidental heritage is also the mis-communicated one within a flawed and historically non-linear tradition. The linear one is navel-grounded, physically verifiable. As Jeri Johnson observes, "Stephen's logic is clear: maternity, clearly verifiable as fact through the senses, and therefore linked to the body, birth, and empirical knowledge, is certitude; paternity, impossible to prove, and linked therefore to mentality, rationality, and the imagination, is incertitude" (209). Stephen, therefore, remains trapped in a world of disconnected, impossible heritage which cannot ensure navel continuity. In fact, such a world, instead of continuity or history, has a multiplicity of beginnings. In the words of Beryl Schlossman, "Stephen's thoughts turn repeatedly and obsessively to beginnings, their visible signatures, and the Edenville of creation" (87), and further: "'Beginning' is all over *Ulysses*. It is an inscription, a theme, a principle of style, and a key to mystery" (94). But

this is a series of beginnings which has anti-historic freedom and the forgetfulness of an artistic attempt to re-boot all of creation *ex nihilo*.

The "misbirth with a trailing navelcord" (32) implies a useless and disconnected umbilical tie, which is associated with "creation from nothing" (32)[21] and is therefore a birth incapable of forming a connection with its preceding parentage. What logically follows is the "misdeath" of an unmourned mother, whose graphically dysfunctional body can find no place in language. It is through language that heritage is established, but Stephen cannot acknowledge the continuity of memory. He envisions himself not as the product of natural birth, with the physical connection this implies, but as somehow carried over to life by a mother figure in the shape of a ghost:

> Wombed in sin darkness I was too, made not begotten. By them, the man with my voice and my eyes and a ghostwoman with ashes on her breath. They clasped and sundered, did the coupler's will. From before the ages He willed me and now may not will me away or ever. A lex eterna stays about him. Is that then the divine substance wherein Father and Son are consubstantial? (32)

The absolute continuity comes from "the man with [Stephen's] voice"--from paternal language. The ghost is always the voice, and the voice is the heritage cleansed from the body of the mother[22]: "You're your father's son. I know the voice" (36). The voice is the only thing which is infinitely reproducible, but it produces a biological "misbirth" which transforms the mother into a paternal ghost and gives her powers of creation beyond biological life itself; birth becomes a matter of will, of thought. And Stephen's fear is that thought cannot produce life, but only more thought: "You behold in me, Stephen said with

grim displeasure, a horrible example of free thought" (17). The attempt to re-cast the mother figure in the acceptable, durable guise of a ghost has rendered the son ghostly too. As an artist[23], he aspires to "be the false mother–to presume to create new life through words" (Kiely 55). His impersonation of the mother seeks to do more than reproduce more and more language–its aim is to be a writing that "could generate the people themselves" (McMichael, "Stephen" 100).[24]

Not only the artistic production of people, but even the production of artistic, elegiac memorials for them, turns out to be impossible. Thus, the question Michael Murphy asks is, "What must Stephen, an Irishman, do to memorialize his mother with something as good as what the Englishman John Milton wrote for a friend [Lycidas]?" (71). Memory, as language stored and saved from time, as language which has been given substance, is impossible to Stephen, who can hold nothing back from language as the exchange of signs. The notion of storage, of keeping something outside of the exchange, of the alternation of life and death, finds its parallel in the idea of burial. Burial can be defined as the interruption of the connection between the dead body and language; if the body of the mother is interred, the act of mourning[25] would be complete, so that the son would not have to dwell on her death with melancholic[26] persistence. The past must be buried in order to be overcome. As William Fitzpatrick points out, Stephen needs to achieve "mastery over . . . the past" (124), which means that he has to solve the mother problem: "All the mothers who appear [in 'Circe'] represent the past and . . . need to be reformed and controlled by a dominant, uninvolved consciousness–that of the mature artist" (136)[27]. This control eludes Stephen. His inability to master the past is emphasized by one of the more haunting images in the novel--the

riddle[28] he gives to the children at school, the riddle whose solution is: "The fox burying his grandmother under a hollybush" (22). The words of the riddle itself paint an optimistic and humorous picture of the departure of a soul to heaven. The same riddle later connects with the presence of a dog, a mongrel, and mutates into a more grim story, in which the burial is reversed and the body is disinterred:

> His hindpaws then scattered the sand: then his forepaws dabbled and delved. Something he buried there, his grandmother. He rooted in the sand, dabbling, delving and stopped to listen to the air, scraped up the sand again with a fury of his claws, soon ceasing, a pard, a panther, got in spousebreach, vulturing the dead. (39)

The disruption of the burial episode in a violent way points to Stephen's inability to let the mother rest, to let go of her in a ceremonial reconciliation symbolized by the burial. As Jane Vogel points out, "*Ulysses* is about the failure of the consanguine family to bear its young alive and lay its dead to rest" (109). The memory of the mother cannot be even formed, since she is never seen as dead or at rest, but always in some more active process of decay, without reaching the silence of the tomb. Stephen keeps bringing her back, trying to turn her into a ghost free of body. In a way, the ghost represents an advanced form of mirroring in which the self is reproduced into the environment even in the absence of a substantial body. While a mirror image needs an original body to be reflected, the ghost is a reflection without an original, an insubstantial image perpetuated as if in a hall of mirrors, carried over time and space without remainder or damage. This permutation is possible because of Stephen's narcissistic preoccupation, which allows him to project images even where they do not exist,

even back to the origin itself. When Eyal Amiran says that Stephen "imagines reaching back to the origin through provable, scientific, material means" (778), the key word here should be "imagine," since even the origin is a projection: Amiran observes a "shift [in Stephen's] interest from the knowable and motherly chain to unapproachable paternity. Stephen does not abandon the material world but rather finds that the material will not lead beyond itself to an origin that, as the *only* 'begetter,' necessarily precedes it" (778-79). Therefore, this beginning is possible only by means of the imagination. That is why, when Sheldon Brivic observes that Stephen "seeks constantly for his author" (*Veil* 48), this can only mean that he seeks to become an author of his author, to pen his parentage.

In this sense, it is not in his power even to kill his mother in an irrevocable act, as Mulligan suggests: "The aunt thinks you killed your mother, he said. That's why she won't let me have anything to do with you" (5). But Stephen appears to have all the rightful claims to his innocence, since his means of violence would be completely inadequate to his mother's means of existence. Here I cannot agree with Patrick McCarthy's observation that "Both Stephen and his mother are destructive in their relationship to one another: Stephen 'kills' his mother who, he believes, would have killed his creative spirit" (41). Stephen cannot really do any harm to her, since he and his mother do not share either a physical or a spiritual connection–the departed has not been transformed into a symbolic object, even though she is no longer physically available either; Stephen has reached a melancholic aporia. That is why he cannot even claim a part in her murder: "Someone killed her, Stephen said gloomily" (5), and it is a someone that Stephen cannot identify with in the first person singular. He is wary not to acknowledge his own inability to interact with the mother and remains anonymous in

relation to her death. Even the connection of insult is denied him, the son who is out of touch with the mother figure. Even Mulligan, whose view of the mother is thwarted into cynicism by his disillusioned conception of the world as an object to be dissected on the surgeon's table, has more claim on the mother--he, at least, has the power to insult her, to say something relevant to her existence. That is why Mulligan is open to the idea that actions can have meanings, if not for the first person singular, at least for the persons around him: "You could have knelt down, damn it, Kinch, when your dying mother asked you, Buck Mulligan said. I'm hyperborean as much as you. But to think of your mother begging you with her last breath to kneel down and pray for her. And you refused. There is something sinister in you . . ." (5). Stephen's sinister quality is one of detachment, both from the mother and from the self, which makes Stephen contemplate the image of the cracked mirror in relation to his own inability to see a connection back through time to the mother: "Stephen bent forward and peered at the mirror held out to him, cleft by a crooked crack. Hair on end. As he and the others see me. Who *chose* this face for me?" (6) [italics mine]. It becomes impossible for him to see anyone standing behind him or preceding him in time--if he has not inherited his features from anyone but has just emerged, willed autonomous and complete in the middle of language, the mother, even though she is chronologically positioned behind him, remains invisible in the mirror--she is the crack in the mirror itself, the vanishing point in a painting where the observer looks in but nobody looks back at him. It is a situation of zero visibility and recognition on both sides.

Similarly, everything related to the death of the mother has to be collapsible back to Stephen himself in order to have any meaning--as Mulligan's involuntary insult directed to

her hits Stephen instead, so Stephen is not so much depressed by the mother's death as he is "depressed by his own voice" (7) in a recursive pattern of false causality--if he feels pain, it must be because of himself, since there is no one else around. The mother as linguistically absent makes it impossible for her to be either a recipient or the sender of a linguistic message, so Stephen's voice addresses itself. After Mulligan's comment on the mother arrives at the son as the only recipient, the next logical move is to deny the mother her role as a sender, or source, of Stephen, so that he can engage in a sort of auto-mourning, from which the mother is missing and he gets depressed "by his own voice," a self-referential emotion based on the sound of speech. The tragic shift from the body of the other to the voice of the same is a shift from the mourning of an object to the melancholia of language. In a sense, such mourning has no object, no cathexis of energy outward; the self is alone, like an actor without an audience, an avenger without crime, or a mourner without a mourned. Self-involved in language, Stephen performs an elegy without a body. Thus *Ulysses* presents an epic without a hero, and the story of a mother without the mother.

The same problem of distance from the mother is also suggested by the fact that the episode of the mother's death takes place off stage, in a parody of another ancient tradition--the presentation of tragedy as reported rather than shown on the stage. The messenger, the bearer of the news, in this case Mulligan, has no part in the violence. Neither has Stephen, since he is incapable of any interaction with the mother, even and especially at the simple literal level of physical processes. Stephen's whole existence misses the point of being derived from the existence of another[29], and he does not assume that a physical contact is possible. Therefore the mother's death, even though it is presented as a murder, is rather a

parody of one, since it has neither perpetrator nor avenger. Similarly, for Stephen time is not divided into "before" and "after" the mother's death, but is suspended in a continuous interim in which the mother continues to die forever. The clean moral model of the murder which Mulligan in his dramatic interpretation is trying to propose is distorted in the cracked mirror of the watered-down generations. The event fails to be tragic--Stephen is innocent by default; there is no murderer, no hero, and, in a very real sense, no victim, since the mother is simply and irrevocably absent, having taken her suffering with her and left Stephen alone with his indifference, to replay her death in his mind without being able to get closer to it. If no body is found (and Stephen, caught up in his linguistic maze, is ultimately unable to find the body there), the reality of the potential crime begins to fade and fails to measure up to its possible status of a crime. Furthermore, in a very real sense, the mother's death is fictional for Stephen, since he is not even there when it happens--he is present through the removed medium of art, through song and words, but not physically, just as between him and the mother there is an open door through which we do not see him pass:

> A cloud began to cover the sun slowly, wholly, shadowing the bay in deeper green. It lay beneath him, a bowl of bitter waters. Fergus' song: I sang it alone in the house, holding down the long dark cords. Her door was open: she wanted to hear my music. Silent with awe and pity I went to her bedside. She was crying in her wretched bed. For those words, Stephen: love's bitter mystery. (8)

His silence suggests that death is not an event that can be managed with language, and anything inaccessible to language is also inaccessible to Stephen.

The Aristotelian formula of purification, pity and terror, is attempted but not achieved in the "awe and pity" with which Stephen approaches the deathbed. If Aristotle's "pity" is derived from the observer's recognition of the "tragic flaw" of the hero, meaning that the suffering of the hero is undeserved, his definition of "terror" has to do with establishing a parallel between the observer and the victim, such that the two become interchangeable and the observer knows that he could easily have been a victim himself. To use Stephen's terminology, the Hellenic terror of tragedy comes from a potential consubstantiality of witness and victim. But in the case of Stephen, ironically the man with the Hellenic name, the event of death fails to become tragic, because it does not invoke terror in the observer--Stephen has no emotion to indicate that he, too, is mortal and co-implicated in death. Thus he misses this opportunity for catharsis. His thwarted attempt at moral purification has another parallel in Mulligan's more literal accusation of him: "The unclean bard makes a point of washing once a month" (13). Just as in prayer and repentance the words must leave the body, so in all processes of cleansing the self has to enact a separation from the deleterious or dangerous elements. In the same way, the success of Aristotle's method of catharsis[30] depends on an identification of the audience with the tragic character in the play, which can ensure an anti-narcissistic transfer of emotions away from the self. But in the cracked mirror of Stephen's art identification is impossible, since there is no audience--he plays his music "alone in the house," and his art is an art without audience which can relate only to the mind of its creator. Even though his mother's door is open in an invitation for him to enter, he makes no gesture to complete the connection.

Stephen is very much like the "disappointed bridge" (21), which hangs in an open

space, unable to decide on an ending for itself. The thought haunts Stephen that there might be a necessity, a direction chosen for him, as his face was chosen, from the moment of birth, and that there might be things untranslatable into language: "Time has branded them and fettered they are lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted. But can those have been possible seeing that they never were? Or was that only possible which came to pass?" (21). The suspicion of inevitability in inheritance through time threatens Stephen with the proposition that the body, as ontologically given, somehow has more reality to it than can be easily waived away by pure thought. As Gregory Castle shows, "language, as the medium of consciousness, does not substitute for a world whose sensuous materiality is forever deferred" (283). That the body is more than a ghost and cannot be dismissed by an effort of the will is disturbing for the son who lives among ghosts. For such a body he will not have a word--it has no clear articulation in the grammar of his ideas, but he suspects that the signs available to him can hide the body from his gaze. The dilemma of whether the hidden is just inarticulate or nonexistent continues to challenge Stephen's imagination:

> Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs. Limits of the diaphane. But he adds: in bodies. Then he was aware of them bodies before of them coloured. How? By knocking his sconce against them, sure. (31)

Stephen's analysis of the reality of things is not completely unbiased: if the only way to know the physical parameters of the universe is to have a body, that would make the observer an

unwieldy target for the physical processes of decay he is trying to observe. Being prepared to acknowledge the existence of the mother as a physical body means the son has the same vulnerable shell through which to experience everything non-linguistic. For Stephen, giving the mother a body means taking a body himself, and having been physically present at her death--a proposition which would implicate him in the event–a double crime, since it will also implicate him in the possibility of his own death, so that he would have physically killed not one but two people.

One of the precautions Stephen has been known to take in the event of death is to ensure himself an alibi: "Yes, used to carry punched tickets to prove an alibi if they arrested you for murder somewhere" (35). The proof that he was elsewhere is a proof that he was not there, and language, signs printed on a piece of paper or a ticket, can do just that--testify to the location of the body, speak for the body and inscribe its real-life coordinates within speech so that the body can be socially manipulated into guilt or innocence. It is no longer a question of sin as a transgression by the body; now what matters is the alibi emerging as the speech of the body defending itself. Justice weighs the testimony, which is the *representation* of bodily sin, not the sin itself[31]. And pardon is the speech of atonement accepted by the receiver, the signal that the message has reached its destination. Actions are no longer inherently good or bad, but are judged as that which they successfully argue to be. Proof is the sign of successful communication; guilt is misunderstanding. Proof is the surface expression of morality: "Justice. On the night of the seventeenth of February 1904 the prisoner was seen by two witnesses. Other fellow did it: other me. Hat, tie, overcoat, nose. Lui, c'est moi" (35). The linguistic splitting of DNA can multiply an individual into

innocent and guilty selves--the boy who kisses the mother in the evening and the boy who does not. Stephen will give the answer which exonerates him, since the semantics of justice is a larger truth[32] than the truth of the event. In the structure of the alibi, the guilt always belongs elsewhere--a structure disturbingly similar to that of the original sin, where the crime has been attributed to somebody else: "An original sin, and, like original sin, committed by another" (174). Human beings have an alibi from the moment of their birth, which marks the transition from a state of complete and unconditional presence within the body of the mother toward a more ambiguous environment where the presence or absence of the body can be hidden by language.

The doubling of the body that occurs is best illustrated by Stephen's memory / fantasy of the mother's kiss. The kiss is an act inherently founded on a structure of two: "Mouth to her kiss. No. Must be two of em. Glue them well. Mouth to her mouth's kiss" (40). Two in one, but also one reflected in a second. To the extent to which the kiss shows the confluence of two discrete entities into one indiscriminate unit, it is inarticulate and threatens to step outside language altogether: "His lips lipped and mouthed fleshless lips of air: mouth to her moomb. Oomb, allwombing tomb. His mouth moulded issuing breath, unspeeched: ooeeehah: roar of cataractic planets, globed, blazing, roaring wayawayawayawayaway. Paper. The banknotes, blast them" (40). The physical experience renders language inexact and frantic and the paper a useless and hostile object, not even a medium of meaning, but a single noun followed by a full stop. On the other hand, the ambiguity of the kiss allows it to be seen as the mirror experience of one splitting into two. Above all, the mother is not present, so that Stephen is reenacting the event alone. Following the model of the alibi, the

second possible interpretation of the kiss, the alter-kiss, represents a pattern of displacement and multiplication: "Mouth, south. Is the mouth south someway? Or the south a mouth? Must be some. South, pout, out, shout, drouth. Rhymes: two men dressed the same, looking the same, two by two" (114). The kiss now departs from the image of self-identity and ends up scattered geographically in various directions and semantically in various synonyms. The doubling escalates, and the kiss is transformed into a doubled self seeking reflection in an absent other, creating the other in his own narcissistic image. Doubling is always related to language, to riddles with ambiguous meanings. The classical symbol of the riddle, the sphinx, is also conspicuously and irreducibly double, consisting of two apparently incompatible beasts, without converging into one of them: "Sphinx. The beast that has two backs at midnight" (456). Or the worst enemy of the unequivocal. But oblivious to the dangers of doubling things in language, Stephen can only see the danger of things hidden from language.

For the discredited religious belief in creation from nothing he substitutes the heresy of the rejection of biological creation altogether. Words do not create the living or preserve the memory of the dead. Words are not even sufficient unto themselves but tend to acquire unstable mutations which are as useful to describe things as the original words. The notion of an "original" has no meaning in language. If the original is something that cannot be replicated, then all historical continuity is counterfeit in a way that deprives it of any meaningful heritage. Only the counterfeit can be exactly reproduced. It is form, a grammatical structure which can accommodate various contents and serve as the habitat of successive reproductions of content. The counterfeit is the ghost of history. The "original,"

on the other hand, would be an attribute of the mother figure as irreproducible in the son. It would lack grammar and it would involve a formless substance instead, suggesting that the original, that which does not have a synonym, is not necessarily expressed by the "right word"; in fact, it may not even use a reproducible, codified, consistent grammatical structure: "Nother dying come home father" (35). Here, the word "father" is conspicuous in its correctness, whereas the "nother" represents a unique mistake which is not encompassed by any rules of speech. Speech becomes possible only when words can be reproduced correctly an infinite number of times. Similarly, the desire of the son is to be reproduced correctly from the mother, without any loss of meaning in the process. Thus the original, irreplaceable presence of the mother can be regarded, from the point of view of language, not as the unalienable foundation of the self, but as a mistake, an accidental deviation in the self's reproduction through language, voice, and the ghost.

The role of language itself is a denial of the mother to the extent that it claims to have words for everything, that nothing is missing from language, and that the written word is a reflection of the self without remainder: "I throw this ended shadow from me, manshape ineluctable, call it back. Endless, would it be mine, form of my form? Who watches me here? Who ever anywhere will read these written words? Signs on a white field. Somewhere to someone in your flutiest voice" (40). The "ended shadow," which is the mortal body, is thrown away to be replaced by words, endless form with no content. The necessity of language to be directed to someone is another disturbing thing about words, because it suggests a physical recipient. But the people Stephen chooses to talk to are people veiled from their bodies and rendered comprehensible. The veil becomes a necessity for

language to function–or, as Brivic puts it, "a field of coded signs that seems to obstruct his [Stephen's] vision of the truth" (*Veil* 738). It also must hide the body which Stephen does not want to face: "Now where the blue hell am I bringing her beyond the veil?" (40).

While he remembers deriving tactile knowledge from the world when he was a child, encountering the bodies of shapes before being aware of their insubstantial properties such as colors, now his epistemology becomes more complicated: "The good bishop of Cloyne took the veil of the temple out of his shovel head: veil of space with coloured emblems hatched on its field. Hold hard. Coloured on a flat: yes, that's right. Flat I see, then think distance, near, far, flat I see, east, back. . . . You find my words dark" (40). Here, the order of body and mind is reversed--Stephen can see the colors first, with no shapes or objects, colors on a flat surface. It is only then that he reconstructs from them the rest of the world, including directions (east, back) and depth of perception (near, far). All dimensions are patterns in the veil, immaterial shapes on a flat surface which hides the real world from the gaze. At times, Stephen attempts an onomatopoeic grasp at the physical properties of things: "Listen: a fourworded wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, ooos. Vehement breath of waters amid seasnakes, rearing horses, rocks. In cups of rocks it slops: flop, slop, slap: bounded in barrels. And, spent, its speech ceases. It flows purling, widely flowing, floating foampool, flower unfurling" (41). The disruption of speech both as sound and as meaning, meant to give primacy to a more basic reality of things without words, is bound to fail since it needs words to express itself. Speech cannot slow down to give way to a solid world of objects. On the contrary, words cancel their objects.

Perhaps the most difficult object to get rid of through language is the dead body. In

an event parallel to the death of the mother, the drowned man haunts Stephen, who is trying to "hook" the dead body into unequivocal imagery, to make sure it is solid and really dead: "A corpse rising saltwhite from the undertow, bobbing a pace a pace a porpoise landward. There he is. Hook it quick. Pull. Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor. We have him. Easy now" (41). Although this passage apparently suggests that the body can be caught and identified with some certainty, it can barely keep the mutations of language associations contained, as in "a pace a pace a porpoise landward." Later this instability increases and the body takes on the movement of semantic life which ambiguously places the body in a series of random substitutions: "Bag of corpsegas sopping in foul brine. A quiver of minnows, fat of a spongy titbit, flash through the slits of his buttoned trouserfly. God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain. Death breathes I living breathe" (41-42). Language, which does not need the biological presence of its subject, resurrects the body and animates it, while negating its death. Death has its own sign, its word, as legitimate and grammatically mobile as that of life or the mother.

The language which shuts down the body is also the language which does not allow memory, memory defined as the burial of words, an enduring memorial no longer susceptible to the exchanges of mere communication. To preserve the past means to bury it, not to defile it by dragging it back; the sand which contains the buried treasures and where the dog is digging to find them, is the sand which has been deposited there by the tide, taken out of circulation in the sea, just as memory is words buried in the mind: "These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here. And these, the stoneheaps of dead builders, a warren of weasel rats. Hide gold there. Try it. You have some. Sands and stones. Heavy of

the past" (37). The sand deposited in safety is the place Stephen cannot reach, not being able to extricate himself from the movement of the sea (hence his fear of drowning). Language as history (storage), from which Stephen is "trying to awake" (28), is replaced in his epistemological economy by the language as exchange (debt) he cannot escape from. The notion of debt stands in opposition to the religious idea of possession: "To Caesar what is Caesar's, to God what is God's" (22). The imagery of full return, full circle from life to death, without loss, cannot hold in the real world. Only ghosts return in full. Stephen wants the total reinstatement of the mother, like the happy endings he sees in Shakespeare: "Marina, Stephen said, a child of the storm, Miranda, a wonder, Perdita, that which was lost. What was lost is given back to him" (160).

But a return like this is nonexistent in nature. Even the image of Shakespeare as a genius resents repetition, and the son, in his capacity as the father re-born, a return of the paternal voice, would be a threat to the father: "The images of other males of his blood will repel him. He will see in them grotesque attempts of nature to foretell or to repeat himself" (161). The repetition of the self is a multiplication which displaces the self into copies and replicas, making the self ubiquitous in its names and obsolete in its body; the self advertised, disseminated, but not present (as Bloom remarks, "for an advertisement you must have repetition. That's the whole secret" [265])[33]. Coming back full circle is the formula of immortality--an absolute repetition without loss. If there is no wearing out of the self over time, it is because the body has been erased from the artificial process of renewal. As James McMichael points out, Stephen "must perform the miracle of speaking into being an entire race of spiritual sons who become his sons by understanding what he has said" ("Stephen"

94). The body is nowhere to be seen. The cycle is no longer the cycle of nature but the repetition of words.

But even though Stephen is tempted to accomplish this ghostly return, he is unable to complete the circle when challenged: "Finish. You can't. [Stephen's answer:] Interval which. Is the greatest possible ellipse. Consistent with. The ultimate return. The octave. Which" (411). The octave is the absolute replay, the return of the mother as a ghost. But Stephen knows that this return would kill the mother--after all, the murderer is the one who is associated with return, since he comes back to the scene (312). The act of dragging the vision of the mother back to life can be prevented only by the burial of the mother and Stephen is not ready for that, as becomes clear from her appearance in "Circe." But Stephen's ever unfinished atonement with the mother (with its parallel in the debt to the milk woman: "We'll owe twopence, [Stephen] said" [13]), means that he has not killed her. His inability to make a ghost out of her is precisely what testifies to his innocence--he has not been able to kill the body altogether and complete the return to life which only the ghost is capable of. Stephen's debts to the past mean that the past is never at a point of equilibrium with the present, that there is always something more Stephen should have done, or something he should have avoided. His guilt reflects his debt to a past which is neither redeemed through burial, nor completely erased from memory and history, but still remaining part of the moral exchange with the present. It is this debt that makes him alternately a changeling, a usurper, or sometimes a merchant: "A merchant, Stephen said, is one who buys cheap and sells dear, jew or gentile, is he not?" (28). He has renounced full possession (such as belonging to God, which has been rejected in *A Portrait*), in favor of trading with symbols

in a continuous present which allows no peace with the past.

Another renounced image of the safely deposited past appears in the tower itself, from which Stephen has locked himself out: "He [Mulligan] has the key. I will not sleep there when this night comes. A shut door of a silent tower, entombing their blind bodies" (37). Even though Stephen has every right to be inside, he has deprived himself of the means to do so, first by locking the tower from the outside, and then by surrendering the key to Mulligan, thus further ensuring his alienation from the tomb-like tower, which will offer him no sanctuary "when the night comes"--no burial in death when his turn comes.

Stephen's implicit negation of death is a rejection of futility and meaninglessness, at the same time as it is a rejection of the mother, who, after her death, can exist only as dead. In a way, he wants to preserve the mother figure in a more stable medium than himself–but the idea of complete substitution of the son for the mother suggests that nothing can be preserved through time. Thus Stephen contemplates himself in his young student:

> Ugly and futile: lean neck and thick hair and a stain of ink, a snail's bed. Yet someone had loved him, borne him in her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him underfoot, a squashed boneless snail. She had loved his weak watery blood drained from her own. Was that then real? The only true thing in life? His mother's prostrate body the fiery Columbanus in holy zeal bestrode. She was no more: the trembling skeleton of a twig burnt in the fire, an odour of rosewood and wetted ashes. She had saved him from being trampled underfoot and had gone, scarcely having been. (23)

Stephen cannot confidently establish the meaning of the mother merely as a vehicle for the son to come into the world. He suspects that she must have significance on her own, but that is unavailable to him. Having taken from her the body, flesh from the flesh, he demands something more. That is why Stephen's most important and controversial question in the book, "What is the word known to all men?" (41), can find another meaning within the problem of language. It makes sense to think of him asking a question about the intelligibility of humanity--if he wants nothing to remain hidden from language, then he is trying to propose a picture of the world in which all parts of a human being are susceptible to language as the complete mirror with no crack and a full reflection with no hidden remainder. Hence, his question could be interpreted as "What is the word known to all of men?"--the word which can stand for the *whole* of men, for men made completely of words, with legs of words and livers of words, men who will never be buried in the earth, but haunt it as ghosts. Naturally, this question does not have an answer[34]--no word can be found to stand for *all* of a human being; there will always be something that remains hidden from language, something mortal and biologically fragile which the memorials of language cannot preserve. The mother responds by asking some unanswerable questions in turn: "Who saved you the night you jumped into the train at Dalkey with Paddy Lee? Who had pity for you when you were sad among the strangers?" (474). It may very well be that the answer here is "nobody," both with regard to the specific occasion, which does not happen in the novel, and in a more general sense, since Stephen, at the time we meet him, is certainly not saved and he is definitely sad and among strangers, unable to go home. And if the mother's words are meant to suggest "nobody" or "nothing," they would adequately answer Stephen's initial question

by providing an illustration of negation. Furthermore, the displaced and apparently uncoordinated dialogue going on between Stephen and his mother, in which the answer is a question and the question itself is phrased as a statement without a question mark ("Tell me the word, mother, if you know now. The word known to all men" [474]), emphasizes the extent to which he misses the point of her presence. The very fact that he seeks information from the mother distracts him from his search for the mother, who is incompatible with language in the first place. To ignore the body and "eagerly" (474) probe the mind is already taking Stephen away from the solution of his problem--the burial of the mother, an act which would negate the duality of question and answer by treating the body as finite and not linguistically reproducible.

In "Circe" Stephen's account of the episode involves two "factual" inaccuracies--he represents the mother as returning to life as a ghost, one cycle later, as it were, and he also gives her language which cannot be her own. The ghost of the mother, as created by Stephen, is defective: while Hamlet's apparition, for example, looks normal and healthy, the mother's vision displays obvious and exaggerated signs of physical decay:

> Stephens' mother, emaciated, rises stark through the floor, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word. A choir of virgins and confessors sings voicelessly. (473)

The apparition is not exactly a ghost as previously defined--the protective veil of language is

torn and the physical vulnerability reveals an incomplete recreation, a flawed representation of the body within the vision. The image retains its material substance, yet transcends it against all odds, to speak. She has come to reaffirm Stephen's guilt and demand his remorse, against which he defends himself: "They say I killed you, mother. He offended your memory. Cancer did it, not I. Destiny" (474). In a very real sense, Stephen was not there when she died--he was not in the body when the body ceased to function. On that count he is innocent, though he still looks for his crime where he cannot find it. His real violence towards the mother is in his belief that he can compensate for everything with words, that the body can be redeemed from outside itself, in language. In his vision, he makes his mother ask him for more words: "Repent, Stephen" (474). It is a matter of wishful thinking for him to believe that the words of repentance, which he can provide but which are as weak as any other words, can make a difference, appease the conscience, and bury the body. By envisioning a direct encounter between himself and her, Stephen has become even more alienated from the mother, since this encounter has to happen in speech, where a key part of the mother's body cannot be recovered. Since he has arranged this duel to take place on his turf, Stephen shows that he is still unable to venture outside of the enclosure of speech where he feels secure. Thus he interacts with his own mirror image, at a further stage of decay, perhaps, where more than his teeth will be gone, but still recognizable: "All must go through it, Stephen. More women than men in the world. You too. Time will come" (473). In effect, he has conjured his own future self as he would be years later. The image of his mother, besides being "toothless" like him, carries other male attributes, most of all the voice, which says "I am dead" (473), and which can only be a male voice. In fact, the only

such pronouncement of one's death has been known to come from the Son of God, whose substance is his name, and therefore he can be objectively descriptive of his physical body whether it is dead or alive. No such provision has been made for the mother. She cannot speak to Stephen from the point of view of the body (decayed yet animated à la Frankenstein), since the body does not speak, nor from that of pure voice, since the pure voice would not be the mother but the father.

In other words, Stephen is caught in a complex labyrinth of alibis, where the thing that he wants to make express itself can speak only as another thing, and its speech will be a lie, in the sense that every speech is a lie in relation to the body which produces it. Thus the mother can only speak as a father, and the father is consubstantial with Stephen himself, which makes every conversation between Stephen and her a narcissistic reflection of himself. Notwithstanding all the real people he meets, more reality is invested in this vision of himself than in any contact with another person: "We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love, but always meeting ourselves" (175). Even at the end of his search, and especially during the episode with the vision of the mother, Stephen is still unable to see the crack in the mirror of language, to acknowledge that some things are better left unsaid. In this sense, he falls prey to the same unsynchronized interaction with reality that he sees in Shakespeare's heroes: "He found in the world without as actual what was in his world within as possible" (175). In the same way, Stephen projects an image of the mother outside himself and then endows it with speech which diminishes it.

Being able to converse with the mother is tantamount to being unable to communicate

with her. And the absence of genuine communication means that the idea of heritage has been compromised. While the normal process of inheritance goes from the mother to the child, in this case Stephen is engaged in a reverse descent, where the mother is derived from him. The reason for this is his desire to protect her from the decay of the body. So, instead of biological creation forward, we end up with an artistic re-creation backwards, executed by the "rere regardant" Stephen (42). In search for possible alternatives to the "ineluctable" chain of events, he contemplates the literary revision of history: "Here he ponders things that were not: what Caesar would have lived to do had he believed the soothsayer: what might have been: possibilities of the possible as possible: things not known: what name Achilles bore when he lived among women" (159). Even though these "things" are not known, their names, containing all of their potential modalities, are known and make themselves manifest in language. Stephen's unwillingness to leave things as they have been, unilateral and unequivocal, frozen in the history of their lives and deaths, drives him to question memory and death. The rejection of memory comes with the suspicion of all inactive, stored language, which includes history as well, and the rejection of death takes the form of denial of the body in an attempt to create a ghost, to enact a complete return to life. And without body, death, and memory, the mother is refused a burial, and Stephen is refused a reconciliation that comes with the completion of mourning.

Notes

1. There is virtually no disagreement among critics that the father figure has a spiritual or artistic, rather than physical, presence. James McMichael calls him "the ghostly father"("Stephen" 94). And Michael Murphy prefers to emphasize the non-material properties of the father by replacing the word "father" with "fatherhood"; he observes that, "[c]ontrary to the opinion of some critics, Stephen is looking here not for a father, in Simon Dedalus or Leopold Bloom, but for fatherhood, in effect, his own. And it is not biological but artistic fatherhood that he seeks" (72). Similarly, Thomas Calvin talks about Stephen's "disavowal of the mother's ghost and the concurrent quest for 'consubstantiality' with a symbolic father whose *logos* will guarantee Stephen's self-paternity" (301). But while such statements grant the father figure his "ghostly" status, Calvin and Murphy, like many other critics, remain uncritical of the definition of the *mother* as ghost.

2. As in *Portrait*, here too the mother is not susceptible to any form of symbolization–just as she cannot function as a ghost (more on this later), so her image cannot be replaced by a more general, archetypal identification, or displaced and associated with another figure, such as a lover; in this sense, we can say that the mother's place is occupied, even though it is symbolically empty. That is why here I must disagree with John Bormanis's proposition that "Bloom becomes not only a spiritual father, but also a surrogate mother for Stephen Dedalus, displacing Stephen's mother and her nurture in the process" (593). The impossibility of having a "surrogate mother" is entirely consistent with Stephen's melancholia, where no symbolic displacement can take place.

3. Cf. Philip M. Weinstein's remark about Stephen: "No longer being himself is his greatest fear. He takes the cycle of becoming as a continuous insult. . . . In a body, he sees himself as waste, wasting, wasted" (263).

4. In "Unveiling the Textual Subject: *Helen in Egypt* and *Ulysses*," Shari Benstock talks about "the 'Proteus' chapter of *Ulysses*, [where] Stephen imagines the umbilical cord . . . as a telephone line. He rings up Edenville to speak with his first mother, Eve, the woman with no navel. He need not telephone or telegraph his own mother, however. She has already appeared to him in a dream" (182). What Benstock's hypothesis does not take into account is that, for Stephen, the appearance of the mother must be linguistically conditioned too, and that her presence must be filtered through the words of Stephen, which are narcissistically relevant only to him but not to her. In other words, his mother is not closer to him than Eve is; and the presence, through language, of both of these female figures has to do with Stephen's own language, not theirs.

5. For more on the image of the witch, or hag, see Caitriona Moloney, "The Hags of *Ulysses*: The 'Poor Old Woman,' Cathleen Ni Houlihan, and the Phallic Mother." Moloney especially pays attention to the connections between the image of the hag and Freud's theories; she points out that "Joyce's hag corresponds to the psychological concept that the child knows the mother as all-powerful in the preoedipal stage, before becoming aware that the mother

belongs to the more powerful father. . . . [In] a sense, the hag represents the child's ability to dominate or castrate the mother" (105-106). Moloney does not, however, associate the hag imagery with ambiguity but ascribes a definite negative value to it. In the case of Stephen, the witch connotations are ones connected to the woman's ambiguous status in relation to life and death, so that she cannot be addressed in language as either good or bad, or, as John Bormanis puts it, the "good breast mother" and the "bad breast mother" (604).

6. The mother figure as an ambiguous creature has often received attention from critics; Colleen Lamos also points out that this figure incorporates opposites and that "the difference that separates male and female . . . is . . . displaced onto the female who contains an *internal* self-difference that renders her undecidable" (129).

7. Madelon Sprengnether tells us, following Freud's theory on the death instinct, that "[b]ecause the desire to return to an inorganic state is first associated with the body of the mother, she, in turn, becomes identified with death" (219).

8. For a discussion of the role of the mother/woman in the trinity, see Ann Kimble Loux, "'Am I father? If I were?': A Trinitarian Analysis of the Growth of Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*." Loux argues that Joyce "seems to suggest that the Catholic trinity . . . is founded upon a specific void, the void of maternity, the female presence in creation. Excising the female from the trinity eliminates the 'incertitude,' the 'unlikelihood' of establishing paternity" (292). According to her, Joyce does include the female in the final trinity in Ulysses–Stephen, Bloom, Molly: "In this final trinity there is no question of paternity or of maternity inasmuch as the work of art can be 'only begotten' by 'only begetter,' androgynous" (295). It is possible to argue that most of the solutions proposed by critics to deal with the problems of motherhood include re-defining motherhood as in some way androgynous–which is tantamount to getting rid of motherhood as such.

9. Some critics see this problem of inheritance not as the exclusive property of the maternal figure, but pose it as a problem for the paternal figure as well, or the dimensions of Stephen's descent from the father: "in the end, he must live with being only a biological effect of his father's will, not his spiritual . . . heir" (287), Gregory Castle observes. For more on paternity, see Ellen Carol Jones, "Writing the Mystery of Himself: Paternity in *Ulysses*." *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth: Proceedings of the Ninth International Joyce Symposium*. Frankfurt, 1984. Ed. Bernard Benstock. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1988. Pp. 226-232.

10. For more on the subject of the messenger, especially on messenger figures who reverse narrative, see Robert D. Newman, "Narrative Transgression and Restoration: Hermetic Messengers in *Ulysses*." *JJQ* 29.2 (Winter 1992): 315-37.

11. Or, as Darcy O'Brian puts it, "[m]an wills, woman is" (25).

12. "[T]he ghosts are 'unquiet'" (109), Jane Vogel observes.

13. For a more detailed discussion of the role of the ghosts in *Ulysses*, see Shari Benstock, "Ulysses as Ghoststory." *JJQ* 12.4 (Summer 1975): 396-413, and Maud Ellman, "The Ghosts of Ulysses," in *James Joyce: The Artist and the Labyrinth*. Ed. Augustine Martin. London: Ryan Publishing, 1990, pp. 193-227.

14. Shakespeare is, of course, another ghost. As Scott W. Klein points out, "as a character in Stephen's lecture, Shakespeare exists only as the retrospective summation of his own creative signs" (440). This is also a chance for Hamlet himself to become a ghost, just like his father, since for Stephen "both Hamlet and *Hamlet* have become resolutely textualized, subjects for interpretation and further sign-making" (440).

15. James McMichael explains: "The authority Stephen wants for his writing is paternal not in the procreative but in the postcreative sense: for him it is only after the maternal impulse to procreate has been supplanted that there can be such a thing as an abiologically 'fathering source'–a source, that is, whose authority is absolute precisely because it alone among intelligences is no longer subject to the conditions that persons born to mothers are" ("Stephen" 88-89).

16. For more on the different kinds of creation, see Michael Murphy, "'Proteus' and Prose: Paternity or Workmanship?" He observes that "the artist does not father a work of art nor create it ex nihilo. Unlike the body, which is begotten not made by the father, and unlike the Word, which is begotten and not made by the father, the word is made rather than begotten by the author. It is fabricated by artifice, by the force of the artist's mind and hand working on the protean flux of experience with the language left him by his predecessors and his elder contemporaries; it is forged, as the young Stephen might have put it, in a smithy with material and tools. . . . [The artist] is like God making men and women [from dust or rib], not like God begetting the Word" (73).

17. That is why I cannot agree with Elliott B. Gose, in his description of the "consubstantiality of a mother goddess" (158), which he later calls "the divine principle of creativity in Joyce's world" (168). The maternal, on the contrary, always seems to stand in opposition to consubstantiality, so that once the fetal separation is over, the mother refuses to share her identity with the son, since any such sharing would be symbolic or otherwise fictional.

18. Maryann Nichols has also expressed a view which seems to confirm the discrepancy between the metaphor of the sea and the integrity and presence of the physical body: "Stephen does not live; he is an imperfect body so long as his figure hovers at the sea's edge" (5).

19. Colleen Lamos has discussed the notion of error in *Ulysses*, and she argues that the novel performs a "conceptual shift from *error* to *errancy*" (124). Lamos goes on to point out a fundamental difference in the ways in which femininity and masculinity deal with error: "While other characters make mistakes, Molly inhabits error" (121). More generally, "*Ulysses* suggests that the interpretive errancy wrought by its plethora of errors and by its

general stylistic errancy is implicated with feminine alterity[,] . . . aligning this fructive errancy with femininity" (122).

20. For a detailed discussion of Stephen's view of fatherhood in connection with hero myths and Freud's idea of the "family romance" (162), see Jean Kimball, "Family Romance and Hero Myth: A Psychoanalytic Context for the Paternity Theme in *Ulysses*."

21. Ewa Ziarek observes that "[f]or Stephen there is a sense of urgency in trying to distinguish poetic creativity from natural procreation. Yet he can articulate the difference of poetic language only by referring to the process of birth and incarnation, that is, by appropriating maternal procreation. The claim that the artist's word is independent from the servitude of the maternal flesh is announced paradoxically only in the 'post' of the 'postcreation'–in the mark of secondariness, in its coming after, and also in overcoming the involuntary procreation of the maternal body. Therefore the library cannot be a sufficient locus of artistic self-definition" (54).

22. Joyce's theme of the self-created artist is discussed by John Bormanis, who argues that Joyce was able to "imagine a scenario in which he gave birth to and nurtured his own self through the elision of the women who were so important to his life and art" (604).

23. There is some debate as to whether Stephen can be called an artist at all. Morris Beja, for example, disputes that claim, arguing that whether Stephen is an artist or not "we cannot really be sure" ("Artless" 89). In fact, he calls Stephen a "failed artist" ("Artless" 89), who is "guilt-ridden over his lack of actual artistic achievement" ("Artless" 102). Cf. Hugh Kenner's statement: "Stephen becomes not an artist, but an esthete" (qtd. in Beebe, "James Joyce" 263). See also Mark Morrison, "Stephen Dedalus and the Ghost of the Mother," where he points out that Stephen is "a poet who cannot write poetry" (345).

24. McMichael goes even further to suggest that Stephen's is "a remarkable program for the writing he hopes to do, a program that aims at nothing less than the eradication of human birth" ("Stephen" 91).

25. John S. Rickard discusses the question of memory, observing that "Bloom and Stephen cannot fully avoid and repress the past, for the spirits that plague them have their own mnemic authority and will not rest until mourning is complete" (58).

26. In *Joyce in Nighttown: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry into* Ulysses, Mark Shechner explores the parallels between Stephen and Hamlet, both of whom display "a constitutional melancholy disguised as fresh grief" (19). He goes on to remind us that "in melancholia, the content of the self-accusation may in fact be a charge against the other, the lost lover, which has been turned by guilt and narcissism against the self" (20). In other words, Stephen's guilt seems to be an internal affair of his, not real but composed of his own narcissistic emotions. For more on Hamlet as a melancholic figure, see Chapter 7 in *Shakespeare's Melancholics*, by W. I. D. Scott, Norwood, PA: Norwood Editions, 1978, pp. 73-107.

27. Fitzpatrick optimistically concludes that Stephen "finally overcome[s] the memory of his mother [and] is ready for rebirth" (137)–that is, he argues that Stephen has found a way out of his melancholy state and has completed the process of mourning. This conclusion seems problematic.

28. For more on the riddles in *Ulysses*, see Donald P. Kaczvinsky, "'The Cock Crew': An Answer to the Riddle," in *JJQ* 25.2 (Winter 1988): 265-68, as well as Patrick McCarthy, *The Riddles of Finnegans Wake*, London: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1980, pp. 41, 78-104.

29. In *Joyce in Nighttown: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry into* Ulysses, Mark Shechner offers a more detailed discussion of Stephen's narcissistic recreation of the family in his own image: "The particular mode of artistic transcendence imagined by Stephen is an oral strategy: Shakespeare overcame the world by internalizing it" (41); in the same way, "[a]s bisexual creator of his own family, he is not only free from sexuality and guilt, but, as creator of his own parents, is free of infantile helplessness and filial dependence. He is infallible" (45). However, Stephen's "internalization of the family" (46) can never be complete, simply because he indeed has had, at one point, a physical connection to the mother and knows that his own projections cannot recreate that. Cf. the observation of Mark Shechner in *Joyce's Ulysses* that "Both [Stephen and Bloom] abandon reality in favor of fantasy. . . . The idea that one can find release from guilt and threat through narcissism or the total internalization of reality and sexuality pervades the book" (46).

30. See Gerald F. Else's introduction to *Aristotle: Poetics*. Trans. Gerald F. Else. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1967. Pp. 6-7.

31. A related definition of "sin" appears in Richard Ellman's "From Daedalus to Dedalus," where he argues that Joyce learned from Yeats that "to express or fail to express one's being are the two terms of what used to be virtue and sin" (50). In other words, whether a sin has been committed becomes immaterial–the crime for the artist is now seen as a failure to be narcissistic, to transfer oneself onto the surrounding world.

32. Colin MacCabe discusses the definition of truth in Joyce: "None of the discourses which circulate in *Finnegans Wake* or *Ulysses* can master or make sense of the others . . . [and] all positions are constantly threatened with dissolution into the play of language" (14). He goes on to show how Joyce questions the traditional view of truth and proposes another: "Truth as struggle. No longer is it a question of truth as correspondence but that of *forging* of positions of judgement–the establishment of areas where correspondence is installed" (39).

33. Advertizing subjects things to a process of reification similar to the one Brandon R. Kershner observes in relation to photography, which "has become complicit in the performance of loss, its theatricalization" (273).

34. Various answers have been proposed. In "The Big Word in *Ulysses*," Richard Ellman identifies the word as "love," even though Joyce reportedly did not think much of this word. Winston Weathers reports: "Joyce himself did not like the word *love*: 'When I hear the word

"love" I feel like puking,' he once said" (33). Another reservation, expressed by Cheryl Fox, about the validity of "love" as an answer is that "love" has four letters, and nothing comes in fours in Ulysses (799); and that is one of the reasons why the word must be "yes."

Another theory is proposed by Richard J. Finneran: "despite the host of distinguished critics who have argued that 'the word known to all men' is love (or suggested other possibilities), it seems clear that death must be the answer" (574). Hugh Kenner also identifies it as "death" (129). Or, Jean Kimball suggests in "Love and Death in Ulysses: 'Word known to all men,'" it is both love *and* death (152).

Other interpretations propose a less literal solution. Thus Wilhelm Füger briefly entertains the possibility that Stephen "is not permitted to divulge the secrets of the dead to the living" (38), or that "he is really probing his mind for a word he once knew . . . but by now has forgotten or repressed for some reason?" (39), before he settles on "ultimate undecidability"(42). Further, Colin MacCabe refrains from naming the word, but describes it as "a word that will come complete with its own meaning" (129).

Robert Kiely in turn suggests that Stephen "has greeted her [the mother's] response to the question about the 'word known to all men'–the suffering Christ or *Logos*–with *Nothing*, a word and 'nothing.' He rejects incarnate order, love, the 'word made flesh,' passed on from mother to child throughout time, in favor of a word that is nothing except what language makes of it, the flesh made word" (60).

And, finally, Cheryl T. Herr argues that "such articulation [of what this universal word should be] . . . would consist not merely of a single word, but would result in a literary work not unlike *Ulysses*" (52).

CHAPTER 10: *FINNEGANS WAKE*–MOTHERHOOD AND ITS OTHER

The theme of the doubling of the mother in language, introduced in *A Portrait* and further developed in *Ulysses*, assumes a more central position, related to the motif of the fall, in *Finnegans Wake*. The fall of man is not a simple, black-and-white matter for Joyce, and he tries to make manifest its complexities and mechanisms throughout the book. Remembering, from *Ulysses*, that original sin is the sin of the other, and that the apple is a "forebitten fruit" (*FW* 303), we can see that in *Finnegans Wake* one of the most important issues is the issue of the other as an entity indispensable to all the stages of human history--the fall, the subsequent mourning, and the inevitable renewal of the cycle[1]. The necessary presence of the other(s) is a presence of renewal, suggesting that not everything is dead and that the world can be redeemed. This double image of the self which cannot carry all the universe on its own shoulders but requires, even in sin, an accomplice in the face of the other, goes a long way to subvert the narcissistic demands of mankind, makes room for language, and redefines the role of the mother.

In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce does not place motherhood in the immediate spotlight, perhaps with the exception of the final pages. However, the main foreground project of the father and the internecine sons unfolds as a series of failures, quarrels, crimes, and imperfections--in short, the fall of man and the decadence of civilization. In this context,

motherhood appears as the subversive force which qualifies all absolute claims of the human species, including victory and death. In *James Joyce and the Question of History*, James Fairhall emphasizes this role of the woman as a subversive influence: "Feminine voices, in fact, are usually aligned with the *Wake*'s deconstructive project, and function as subverters of phallocentric authority" (229). All claims on history, instead of absolute and final, appear diluted and indeterminate. Thus, for example, the doomsday brought about by the sins of civilization, the most absolute and irreversible punishment, is transformed at the end into the uncertain "Deemsday" (602) which confers a quality of doubt, of seemingness onto the notion of the "end"; the "end" now becomes a "secular phoenish" (4)--not a theological, absolute end, but a narrative end which is also a beginning, a rise from the ashes. The ambiguity of this new and qualified death is one manifestation of the maternal, which distorts the most unambiguous event in history, the most unqualified death, and in the newly-opened uncertainty offers the possibility of salvation. The attendant ambiguity in all the actions and thoughts of HCE and his sons means that history cannot consist of absolute actions (both absolute beginning and absolute end are absent from the structure of the book), but has to be recycled, renewed, and, Margot Norris tells us, the "agent of grace and redemption in *Finnegans Wake* is Anna Livia Plurabelle" (*Decentered* 64). In the process of renewal generated by the creative maternal power which is impervious to male history (the history symbolized by the town on the river), the most important message is that each action, thought, and concept must encounter the possibility of its own negation and relativity.

But the imagery of femininity not only distorts the self-identity and solidity of all human subjects and their actions; it also subverts its own concept and introduces ambiguity

and relativity through a foreign element in the very center of its meaning. Words and phrases like "amother" (125), "a mother by invention" (133), and "mother-in-lieu" (221) question any absolute notion of motherhood itself and insist on a certain alienation and displacement--the things which motherhood introduces in the otherwise self-absorbed human species which keeps looking for absolute values. Ultimately, the maternal quality is one of displacement through inheritance and denial of self-identity, one of fluid and free transformation of one entity into another. In her discussion of the "fluidity of language" (473) in *Finnegans Wake*, Marian Eide argues that this fluidity dissolves opposition, not to make it disappear, but to destabilize it, to turn it into "a transient interaction of current differences" (475), a "movement [which] does not produce homogeneity, nor does it prefer one side of the opposition to the other" (476). If this also holds for the pair of self and other, then it means that the self can never entirely incorporate the other through narcissistic internalization, but it also means that the other is never entirely cut off from the "I," that it is never a foreign body–the other enters the "I," and the "I" exits into the other. Thus the female element has the ultimate power of temptation, defined as the power which can draw people out of themselves and which implies "the linguo to melt," to transform/make relative everything in its way, to introduce the "other" into everything.

The "other" is a sign that everything is double--the story is not simply told but retold (or "retaled" [3]), and the name of Doublin, a central setting for Joyce, appears as "doublin" (3) on the very first page of the book. Doubling also occurs in the imagery of kissing which continues from its earlier versions in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*. The kiss appears here as an amorous introduction of the other--the kiss is inherently an "elsekiss" (15), a structure of

interaction in which the self is never alone and unitary: "twolips have pressed togatherthem by sweet Rush, townland of twinedlights" (15). The doubling which occurs here is apparently non-linguistic, since the mouth taking part in a kiss cannot be taking part in language at the same time. But even though the kiss seems to deny language, it does provide room for further doubling in its association with the cross: "With kiss. Kiss Criss. Cross Criss. Kiss Cross. Undo lives 'end. Slain" (11). The kiss not only engenders the "crisscross" pattern of chaotic and contradictory directions, but it is also reminiscent of the cross capitalized, the traditionally designated bridge between life and death, and, more conspicuously, the only occasion of reversible death. The possibility to "undo" the end of live which happens simultaneously with the word "slain" involves both beginning and end, and suggests that they interact in a moment of pure contact, a kiss between life and death. Unlike *Ulysses*, where the mission of salvaging an origin gives primacy to the beginning and renounces the cyclical death that is bound to occur, the *Wake* appears to be concerned with the balance of life and death, each equally important.

The word "wake" in the title itself invokes the larger pattern in which the story of the fall can only be told by another, since the death of one person can only be mourned by *another*, by the survivor: "And even if Humpty shell fall frumpty times as awkward again in the beardsboosoloom of all our grand remonstrancers there'll be iggs for the brekkers come to mourn him, sunny side up with care" (12). The "wake" is the ritual emphasizing the necessary presence of the other in mourning, to the point where, comically, in the ballad "Finnegan's Wake" the mourners, the ones who are alive, become more important than the dead who is supposed to be the main occasion for the ceremony. But here, the awakening

Finnegan becomes useless as a dead body and threatens their status as survivors:

> Micky Maloney raised his head,
>
> When a gallon of whiskey flew at him;
>
> It missed, and falling on the bed
>
> The liquor scattered over Tim [Finnegan].
>
> "och, he revives! See how he raises!"
>
> And Timothy, jumping up from bed,
>
> Sez, "Whirl your liquor around like blazes--
>
> Souls to the devil! D'ye think I'm dead?" (qtd.
>
> in Burgess, "Introduction" xx)

In fact, the healthy process of dealing with death, according to Freud, is mourning. In a sense, the wake before the funeral represents the healing process by which the survivors take center stage, while the dead recedes in the distance. As Joseph Velente points out, "[m]ourning properly culminates in introjection, a practice of symbolic substitution whereby the departed enters into the living language of the mourner's memory and desire" (31). But in the ballad, Finnegan directly refuses to be eulogized or symbolized (just as Stephen's mother did in *Ulysses*). In "'Legibly Depressed': Shame, Mourning, and Melancholia in *Finnegans Wake*," Hilary Clark tells us that art is "a work of mourning" (466). In this case, Finnegan refuses to become a work of art for the others. Instead, he prefers to come back in the flesh, and solely for himself. Thus he refuses not only symbolization through language, but also the "other," defined as the person who must perform the mourning and act as a substitute for the dead. The disruption of the mourning ritual in the story of Finnegan

suggests that the process of mourning is interrupted and is in danger of turning into melancholia, a psychological condition in which the dead one takes precedence, taking over reality instead of memory, as the ego builds up an image of the dead within itself, an image with which the ego can pretend to interact; in melancholia, what has been naturally lost is artificially found. Thus the interruption of Finnegan's wake by Finnegan himself signifies resistance to mourning and regression into narcissism and melancholy. And since the source of this resistance is Finnegan, the problem could be seen as, again, a claim on absolutism. Finnegan has fallen and died and, since this exhausts all of his options, he is not willing to accept that there is anything left, something which remains after him. It is difficult for him to believe that his fall is not the fall of everyone, that his death allows for survivors who will stay to drink and honor him, and that his end is not the end of the world. The hero of the book is a man who wants to stand for everything, to be the "homogenius man" (34) who revels in the selfsame and is threatened by the "other." The figure which embodies this absolute ownership of history and rejection of the role of the other is HCE, frequently presented as the blindly inclusive "everybody": "Here Comes Everybody. An imposing everybody he always indeed looked, constantly the same as and equal to himself and magnificently well worthy of any and all such universalisation . . . having the entirety of his house about him" (32-33). In a way, HCE is trying to synthesize a single human agent of history, "to isolate I from my multiple Mes" (410), and make this impossibly complete "I" accountable for all of creation.

The story of *Finnegans Wake* is, in a way, the story of how the categorical definition of the end of the self as the end of the world is undermined by the life that remains after

death--the message of motherhood that the death of the one is the birth of another, and the two are connected by a transition of mourning[2]. The male point of view seems to emphasize melancholy, which is a totality of control of an inclusive ego over the world around it. The ego wants to incorporate into itself the world that should be properly external to it. As Velente observes, "[i]ncorporation . . . constitutes a pathology of mourning or, rather, a symptom of a failure or avoidance of mourning. Instead of a psychic 'process' leading to the symbolic mediation and ultimate acceptance of loss, incorporation enacts an imaginary refusal of loss, a phantasmatic denial of separation" (28). In other words, melancholia is failure of symbolization[3], a failure which we see happen in the male figure of Finnegan. We also see that Finnegan performs the "refusal of loss" Velente talks about by refusing to die and be symbolized, and instead jumping back into life. In this sense, melancholia, in the face of the masculine (HCE), is on trial in *Finnegans Wake*. The whole concept of a world reduced to the ego of a single human being is on trial. In his study of narcissism and melancholy, Mark Stern explains the problem with the credibility of the melancholic model of the universe: "If I and you are the same as me, then the only contact between us will be based on the persuasiveness with which I order my universe" (181). And HCE is asked to produce evidence during the trial--evidence showing that his view of the world is the truth, not merely a narcissistic projection. But all evidence is inconclusive. As James Fairhall points out, "they cannot determine if the evidence clears or convicts him [HCE]. But the very indeterminacy of the evidence, which is all words, points to the fact of a fall" (237). Fairhall, however, neglects to mention that this same indeterminacy of the evidence also points to the fact that the fall is not all, and that it is impossible to prove a fall beyond doubt,

or to execute a fall beyond redemption.

The maternal influence, on the other hand, remains opposed to the absolutist claims of the fall and aligned with the proper mourning process, with the "morthering rue" (17). The connotations of violence reminiscent of "murder" in this phrase are also appropriate, since a figurative murder is a necessary part of the mourning which Finnegan has been denied, just as in *Ulysses* the mother is denied the healthy ritual of burial in the mind of Stephen. The need for a survivor to do the mourning is constantly challenged by the Finnegan figures in the book, who demand absolutes, such as absolute creation (which is the implicit Babylonian claim of the builder of cities, which is offensive to God not because the builder wants to reach too high, but because he wants to build from the ground, to create from nothing[4]), or absolute fall (HCE's need to establish his own guilt beyond doubt and to enact a dream trial to verify and dig up all the hidden facts). HCE wants to be "the tried friend of all creation" (35), both as a "true" friend, one who is intimately connected with the whole universe, and as a friend who is "on trial" for somebody else, for all of creation--or, in other words, the *only* guilty one to be blamed for the end of the world. HCE does not want to share his guilt. His willingness to be equal to all of creation is also manifest in passages like, "Me only, them five ones, he is equal combat" (36), where not only the deceptively balanced equation of power, but also the deliberately interchangeable pronouns reveal a desire for universality[5]. But these absolute claims are shown to be untenable. On one occasion, for example, we get the following sequence: "A pen no weightier nor a polepost. And so. And all. (Succoth.)" (13), which again reminds us that something follows "all," that there is a remainder after "everything" which is there to ensure the renewal of this "everything" in the

future. The fact that this remainder cannot be included in the simplicity of the super-inclusive "all" means that it will remain standing even when the "all" falls to its death to ensure the "rise afterfall" (78). Some critics, however, see the uniformity of internalization between beginning and end, so that the two become one. Thus Margot Norris tells us that "it has all become reconciled; dying has become being born and gestation, male has become female" ("The Last Chapter" 28). The evidence shows, however, that in *Finnegans Wake* beginning and end, birth and death chase each other through time, never really coincidental, always alternating. The "riverrun" chases itself back to a beginning, but it is the function of the maternal figure to ensure that this is someone else's beginning–someone who did not simultaneously die. Both birth and death, like the fall itself, become partial and incomplete.

Even the physical setup of Finnegan's fall suggests that the fall is not absolute--the builder falls off the wall ("the great fall of the offwall" [3]), but the wall itself, unlike its kindred structures of Babylonian workmanship, for instance, remains standing. In other words, Finnegan's fall does not involve anything other than himself. The world is still whole and stable as before. Just as the wall is a partial structure, an unfinished building, the fall from it is an unfinished fall in which the entirety of creation does not collapse. The wall, in its incompleteness, is unlike any complete structure, like a tower for example, a building which in its enclosure and overwhelming inclusiveness aspires to encompass all things "entowerly" (4). But a fall from a wall is not the end of the world, and since the world is still standing, the fall is from the beginning a partial, qualified, and subjective act, delineating distinct agents and points of view: "And they fell upong one another: and themselves they

have fallen" (15). The fall loses its power of annihilation when it has been broken down into exclusive personal pronouns, rather than a general armageddon. The variations on the point of view of the fall become especially clear in the parenthetical series which starts with "Stoop" and goes on to redefine the speaker of the fall through "please stoop," "please to stoop," and "O stoop to please!" (18-19). The transformations indicate that the recipient of the fall can vary, as well as the versions of the story of the fall. All the stories we get are in fact based on rumor, since the person who falls is not around to tell the story of his fall. As tempting as it sounds, David White's theory of a universal point of view seems untenable: "Universal flux has dissolved all real differences between individual beings" (39). But at least one kind of difference must be retained--that between the speaker and the listener, between the storyteller and the hero of the story, who would upset the process of mourning, of language, of history, if he chooses to rise from the dead and defy symbolization. And in *Finnegans Wake* the story cannot be told by the Finnegan who is its subject; instead, it is told from multiple points of view which form an uneven, meandering rumor. And rumor itself is defined in *Finnegans Wake* not as a universal utterance, but as a series of subjective alternate locations of speech, each of which is a "Here say" (18), a specific utterance grounded in a specific locus ("here") which repeats and simultaneously distorts the general story. Even the seeming universality of ALP's flow is not absolute; in "Apostrophizing the Feminine in *Finnegans Wake*," Shari Benstock points out, "[e]ither as river or woman, Anna Livia cannot be reduced to a voice: she speaks, if she speaks at all, difference(s)" (65). So even she, the mother of all, does not claim to be the voice for all, and that is how she can keep the story alive[6].

Thus the fall is not anonymous and universal but personal and partial[7]; it has a subject who has willed it. In a sense, the fall is subjective, even if salvation appears to be objective: "Phall if you but will, rise you must" (4). While the process of renewal (the rising back to life) is more powerful than the individual person, the fall, and by implication death, must be willed individually: "Broken Eggs will poursuive bitten Apples for where theirs is Will there's his Wall" (175). The connection between "will" and "wall," together with the image of the wall as an incomplete structure, suggests that the human fall can only be an individual transgression, and HCE's sin cannot possibly stand for all sin. But even when HCE is singled out as the "hero" and the others are presented as commentators or witnesses, his identity remains incomplete[8], despite all of his megalomanic claims to the contrary. He is not only incapable of being the universal man, but he cannot even be the perfect criminal. He does not even take part in his own crime. HCE's guilt, uncertainly established and inconclusively proved, is not one of participation, but one of exhibitionism, which is the reverse of voyeurism but still involves the gaze, the mirror image without tactile connection[9]. In other words, HCE himself is alienated from his own crime and transformed into an observer rather than a participant.

The imagery of the gaze begins early in the book with the description of the museum--a place of exhibition: "This the way to the museyroom. Mind your hats going in! Now yiz are in the Willingdone Museyroom. This is a Prooshinous gunn. This is a ffrinch. Tip. This is the flag of the Prooshinous, the Cap and Soracer. This is the bullet that byng the flag of the prooshinous" (8). The violence on display is inactive violence, withheld from actual battle action and surrendered to the gaze, exhibited for the pleasure of the voyeur's

eye. The guns and bullets are in a curious state of existence in which they are virtually absent as tools of war and present only as images or signifiers. The portmanteau word "museyroom" also suggests the psychological state of musing or dreaming, in which the eye cannot see clearly--the gaze is not purely directed towards the object of its vision but sees only what it wants to see. The dreamy gaze is also the gaze of the crime; as Seamus Deane puts it in his introduction to *Finnegans Wake*, "The crime, so-called, has to do with the exposure of the genitalia, male and female, to a voyeuristic gaze. The father gazes on the daughter, the daughter on the father, each on him or her self; and both are gazed on by three soldiers who represent the Earwicker children themselves" (xxviii). The crime committed by HCE is that he wants to be fully transparent "for whole the world to see" (6). The structure of the dream-book *Finnegans Wake* confirms Freud's basic definition of the dream: "A dream is the fulfillment of a wish" (*Interpretation* 155). Thus the gaze has very little to do with perception and much to do with wishful projection. The gaze is impure, in the sense that it is not entirely directed outward but focused on its own desires, which allows the possibilities of narcissism to develop rather than atrophy until a healthy object-choice replaces the ego's occupation with itself, which would be the normal course of events according to Freud (*Introductory* 416).

The dual structure of exhibitionism and voyeurism, "there being two sights for ever a picture" (*FW* 11), is the vista that opens up before the dream-mind and its melancholic gaze, which is forever concerned with its own interpretation of the picture, rather than with the object represented in it. In melancholy, the person has "withdrawn his libido from the object [and] by a process which we must call 'narcissistic identification', the object has been set up

in the ego itself, has been, as it were, projected on to the ego" (*Introductory* 427). And one of the most obvious manifestations of narcissism is sleep, the phenomenon around which *Finnegans Wake* is structured. As Margot Norris argues in "Anna Livia Plurabelle: The Dream Woman," ALP herself can be seen "as the fantasy projection of a male figure dreaming" (197). But this seems to tell us little about ALP herself, and more about HCE, since the dream is an attempt on his part to incorporate the female into himself through narcissistic identification. Freud explains how narcissism works in sleep: "The condition of sleep, too, resembles illness in implying a narcissistic withdrawal of the positions of the libido on to the subject's own self, or, more precisely, on the single wish to sleep" (*FR* 551). Thus, within the framework of the dream, we see the two main problematic psychological conditions, narcissism and melancholia, emerge as the foundation of the voyeuristic imagery. According to Freud, voyeurism is pathological when "if, instead of being preparatory to the normal sexual aim, it supplants it" (*The Freud Reader* 251). Thus the gaze, whose original function is to lead to a further, tactile development of the relationship, to an awakening of the physical senses (the dream, we must remember, is a purely psychological phenomenon divorced from immediate physical sensations), here becomes self-sufficient and complete. In *Finnegans Wake*, this is one of HCE's absolute claims of completion and categorical definition.

This exhibitionism is also an attempt on the part of HCE to redefine, through his "obseen" (68) crime, one of the most basic premises of the fall. Since the Fall is the first crime committed by man, it stands for all crime, and normally crime is founded, above all, on secrecy, as in: "you're shot, major, by an unknowable assailant (masked)" (62). The mask of

the unknown murderer is a sign of his unintelligibility, his implicit wish to keep the "crime cunundrum" (85) unsolved. The criminal is a figure of shadows, since the "invisible is invincible" (81). But the insistence of HCE to be *seen* in committing his crime, to make it a crime committed for the express reason of being seen, defies all criminal logic. Its motive appears to be different from simple transgression of the rules; the criminal who needs the gaze of the other is somebody who wants to present himself as a hero. The crime is not something to be hidden but to be broadcast on TV: "Television kills telephony in brothers' broil. Our eyes demand their turn. Let them be seen!" (52). The fully articulated spotlight whose glow HCE is looking for seeks to take away the anonymity of the crime and claim responsibility--HCE seeks to appropriate the fall for himself. The implication here is that HCE, if he succeeds, will seem to have carried out the Fall single-handedly, to be responsible for nothing less than the end of the world. The hero motif appears here in its mirror dream-image of the master-criminal motif. But the deed is still something to be honored by song and legend. Except HCE will not allow this to happen--he wants to *be* the work of art commemorating himself. It is significant that the gaze often appears in conjunction with objects traditionally erected to honor heroic deeds, statues which the whole nation must look at: "a nation wants a gaze" (43). In a way, HCE seeks to become a "manument" (25), a human relic of something past and heroic which all of creation will gaze on. His crime then consists precisely in that narcissistic need of his to be commemorated even before he has died, to be gazed at as if he is not a living person but a representation of one. Indeed, to look at monuments, even nude ones, which are representations of people is not a crime, but a real flesh and blood person must not give in to the hubris of being on display for others. In this

sense, HCE implicitly claims to establish his body as sufficient and self-enclosed, as an object which can be itself and simultaneously function as a work of art, being the thing and the symbol of the thing all at once. One possible purpose behind this impulse is to get rid of symbols themselves, to kill language, which is the real crime going on here, committed by the "wordwounder" (75). It is a crime against signification in general, and more specifically against the female language, since HCE wants to use his body and gaze instead of signs in his interaction with the female presence.

Perhaps the most important thematic difference between the images of the mother in *Ulysses* and in *Finnegans Wake* is that in the latter book the mother is not silent or hostile to language; she is a "writress" (38). Now it is "toman" (34)--from woman to man, not vice versa, that language flows, and "feminine fiction [is] stranger than the facts" (109), as she assumes man's linguistic priority, "becoming manier and manier" (298). The woman's voice sounds louder, and she appropriates the story: "Let young wimman run away with the story and let young min talk smooth behind the butteler's back. . . . And we all like marriedann because she is mercenary" (12). Now the mother, the "married Anna," is no longer the static figure that Stephen sought to preserve intact as a ghost in Ulysses; she has become an active and ambiguous linguistic presence which lacks sacred, forbidden words: "One must sell it to some one, the sacred name of love" (268). The word "mercenary" (as well as expressions like "hersell" [14]) suggests her mobility[10] in general, as well as her freedom from a rigid moral code which would have made her predictable. In fact, she has become a riddle, an "addle liddle phifie Annie" (4), where the reading of an "r" in "liddle" is suggested by the word "livers" used in the sense of "rivers" in the previous sentence. Her language is always a

riddle[11] without a straightforward answer: "Will whatever be written in lappish language . . . always seem semposed, black looking white and white guarding black, in that siamixed twoatalk used twist stern swift and jolly roger?" (66). In a maze foreshadowed as early as young Stephen's wonder in *A Portrait* as to which is the right answer, to kiss or not to kiss one's mother, white and black are two equally legitimate answers to the same question of meaning.

But even without the possibility of a right answer, the female presence is accessible only through language; in fact, as in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, it is the creative errors[12] and twists of language that bring the male narrator closer to the mother figure and to his own role as an author. In fact, the definition of the artist now requires the immersion into feminine alterity. As James Fairhall observes, "Finnegans Wake embodies Joyce's final concept of the artist's relationship to history. . . . By aligning himself with imagination and the creative-deconstructive power of language, the artist assumes a subversive, 'feminine' position, one of perpetual resistance to history" (255-56). This is also a position of "errancy," of failure to pin down meaning. Fairhall goes on to tell us that "[i]mplicitly, ALP is linked to the endless production of meanings which thwarts the phallocentric drive to pin down, define, and control" (235-36)[13]. Thus the feminine distortion which occurs during creation, or rather, in order that creation might be possible at all, frustrates HCE's narcissistic project of internalizing the world.

The notion of error or failure in writing is related from the beginning to "ruin" and from there to the female domain of "rain," as in "Anna Ruiny" and "Anna Rayiny" (7). The woman/mother, in the face of ALP, is accompanied by constant references to water, but it is

not simply the fluidity of the water and its crucial role in the formation of life that makes it significant; the water we see in the ALP imagery is in the form either of rain ("she rain, rain, rain" [21]), or of river ("riverrun" [3]). Both of these suggest falling water, the babylonian water of the Fall ("the waters of babalong" [103]). (Later Shem, the mother's alter ego, is also associated with "downpour" [174].) The running water is not only directed downwards, but also toward language from the "Livmouth" (245): "our turfbrown mummy is acoming, alphilla, beltilla, ciltilla, deltilla, running with her tidings" (194). Coming from above, where the source of the Word is located, the river carries language; in fact, this is how the rumor flows: "Drop me the sound of the findhorn's name, Mtu or Mti, somebogger was witness. And drip me why in the flenders was she frickled. And trickle me through was she marcellewaved" (204). But even though language comes from the divine Word, it ends up mixed with the dirt of the earth below, not pure and transparent in its meaning but "turfbrown." Thus the water imagery combines sin and redemption, life and death. The drops of rain–"Rain. When we sleep. Drops" (74)--are reminiscent of Finnegan, who drops dead from the wall, as well as of the nourishing rain of regeneration. The two manifestations of the water imagery (life and death), however, are not co-incidental, as some critics imply. Christine Van Boheemen, for example, wants to see embodied in ALP the universality which was earlier denied HCE: "The flow of woman is both the paternal and maternal instance of Joyce's fiction, both the self-styled source of inspiration as well as the goddess for whom the tribute is intended, origin and end" (76). It seems that, on the contrary, the mother figure is never both sender and recipient at the same time, but she re-aligns herself so that she always represents the "other" end, farthest from identification with the male self. When this self

reaches the end of the book, the flow of ALP is already rushing back to the beginning, so that it is impossible to catch up with her, to become coincidental with her, to internalize her into a melancholic reflection of the ego itself. But before the cycle can reach its always dual end/beginning, it must overcome the obstacles of HCE's trial, a male counter-force to the female river-voice of ambiguity, "due to woman formed mobile or man made static" (309).

At first glance, the outcome of the dream-trial of HCE depends to a large extent on ALP's letter, so that the mother emerges as the most important voice in the book, giving the decisive testimony. But the importance of this voice is not in its power to rule out one version of the events and sanction another; it lies, rather, in the power to preclude any decision of the authorities whatsoever. The voice of the mother figure does not emerge as an authoritative, final judgment on meaning. In fact, Colin MacCabe reminds us, "[n]one of the discourses which circulate in *Finnegans Wake* or *Ulysses* can master or make sense of the others" (14), and that includes ALP's voice too. Her purpose is to introduce ambiguity and multiplicity into the trial. The simplicity of reaching a definite decision or a sentence is complicated by the fact that language itself is in opposition to the trial--the words themselves are opposed to the sentence, in every sense of the word. The purpose of the whole dream (HCE's dream) seems to be to establish HCE's guilt, while the purpose of the letter seems to be to confuse the trial as much as possible: the letter is "to be slipped on, to be slept by, to be conned to, to be kept up" (278). As Shari Benstock points out, "[a]s the letter is carried along the pathway, it meets every possible form of resistance to delivery. Ultimately, it cannot be delivered" ("Apostrophizing" 75-76). The letter is "unreadable because never delivered" (Apostrophizing" 77). It is because it cannot reach its destination, because it can

never catch up with its addressee, that the letter serves to emphasize the impossibility of co-incidence between sender and receiver, between beginning and end, which never overlap.

When the narrator explains that "There extand by now one thousand and one stories, all told, of the same" (5), he is not very much concerned about the "same" that is the subject of the story, but with the "other" that is the story itself, told again and again, different every time. The emphasis on the evolution of the story through time comes not only from the importance of rumor in the book, but also from a sustained examination of the mutations of language through generations--the rumor of inheritance, which is not individual but tribal. Thus we get the "meandertale"(18) and "meanderthalltale" (19), which combine the multiple images of transformation, river flow, language, and primitive communication. Similarly, phrases like "my darwing" and "the assent of man" have the double significance of love in its debased form of temptation (which is the occasion of the whole dream/book and is itself related to vanity, to auto-erotic self-consciousness, and therefore to mirror imagery and narcissism), here undermined by the notion of evolution, which includes a shift in identity opposed to the stasis of the narcissistic imagery. Thus, throughout the book the instability of the human morality and victory, the two main subjects of the human tale called history, is shown through an emphasis on the evolutionary transformations of man, which lead back to the theme of regeneration and rebirth–"backtowards motherwaters" (84)--the sovereign domain of motherhood.

The language of the mother must be such as to survive all death and be reborn, not in the same self but in the other. The fundamental heterogeneity of this language sets it apart from the male word, which seeks to define and contain an unequivocal essence. As Deane

explains, "Many of the disputes in the *Wake* involve assaults on and defences of language; the most important division is that between male, patriarchal language that is always seeking to impose order on diverse materials and female language that revels in heterogeneity and ridicules authority" (xvi). The male authority in this case takes the form of censorship which seeks to limit and contain language: "To such a suggestion the one selfrespecting answer is to affirm that there are certain statements which ought not to be, and one should like to hope to be able to add, ought not to be allowed to be made" (33). The language phrasing the censorship itself is tautological and unwilling to leave the rut of the verb "to be" and its variations–unwilling to venture out of essence into predicates. Instead of the chaos that would result from multiple meanings, the authoritative language proposes a one-track signification based on exclusiveness and singularity. Thus the passage which takes place in the museum is significant in that it involves a series of definitions of objects beginning with "this is," as each item is pointed out and presented to the viewer: "This is camelry, this is floodens, this is the solphereens in action, this is their mobbily, this is panickburns" (9). And this is an attempt to make language turn into the object of its description, to become accurate. But this mimicry by which words became things[14] is not taken very seriously, and the fluidity of language is defended and reasserted by the maternal influence in the book, which forces everything to depart from itself, so that even HCE assumes "his feminisible name of multitude" (73) and is transformed into various other personalities. The female language itself can be defined as the uncensored language of the fall, and the original sin is the event which introduces the first heterogeneity into human history, the fundamental division of "before" and "after." The fall is also the reason for the existence of different points of view

and different voices: Donna Henseler observes that the "fall into finitude has given them [HCE and ALP] individual natures" (55). This is also the event that begins another kind of separation as well--signification. According to Deane, "the myth of the Fall can be understood as a fall into language" (ix), which would mean that the mother tongue is in fact the true one, that the distorted history, which is nothing more than a large-scale rumor spanning generations, is the only language faithful to the fallen nature of its human carriers. In this sense, the male language would be the one which, through its insistence on categorical accuracy and codified rules, finds itself in a position of betrayal against the very nature of language.

What is on trial in *Finnegans Wake* is the meaning of words, and the mother figure is the one who can make words appear, disappear, or evolve into their opposite meanings; she can present evidence to a male tribunal and then withhold its meaning by requiring lengthy and inconclusive interpretation. If this is the case, Deane's further analysis might be misleading: "the secondary, post-lapsarian nature of language might be the very thing the *Wake* seeks to overcome by replacing it with that putative directness of communication that preceded the Fall" (ix). He seems to advocate for the book a line of cleansing *from* language (since the cleansing *of* language is impossible), rather than immersion into it as the main creative project. And this is how Deane himself describes Shaun, living in

> the cleaner and more sanitized world of the figure who does not write but 'delivers' the letter. Shaun is, above all things, a commentator, a critic, someone who will take from the texts he re-presents the smell of desire and ordure out of which they arose . . . attempting to disinfect himself of

experiences that are both fundamental and humiliating. (xxxvi)

Shaun is somebody who would see any error of language as a disease, as in the following passage: "sigarius (sic!) vindicat urbes terrorum (sicker!)" (76). The escalation form "sic" to "sicker" designates Shaun's renunciation of language, as its intelligibility becomes problematic. It is crucial to *Finnegans Wake*, however, that language be capable of distortion and error and unintelligibility, and these apparent weaknesses must not be excluded from the definition and essence of language. Consequently, any purification would take away from its meaning, since language is by definition aligned with the low and the criminal, with the fall. As Deane puts it, "it is writing that produces criminality" (xxxiii). But where he detects a false attempt, on the part of Shaun, at ennobling human nature by amputating the vital organs of communication, he still insists that the same sanitizing obsession occupies Joyce himself, and that the book should be seen as aimed at transcending language in order to grasp a deeper, inarticulate, primordial significance which underlies it. To this end, the dream-like quality of the *Wake*, then, consists for Deane in an incoherent conglomerate of images "where the conventions of time, grammar, and plot are elided or unknown--almost in the sense that they have not yet been invented" (xi)[15]. What he seems to overlook is that it is these conventions that are doing all the inventing, and the book appears to be trying to isolate them in pure form without content, pure creation without something created.

It is easy to see that the grammar is one of the more stable structures in this work. Phrases like "to see nothing of the himples here as elsewhere" (12) are fundamentally dependent on grammatical conventions and established idiom, so that we could not easily say with Deane that such conventions are secondary and superceded by the essence of the objects

described in language, and that the real target of the book is to get to the things themselves. The importance of grammatical structure suggests that things may change but language remains, and different words can occupy the same place, just as different selves or persons will be reborn into the cycle of life and death. The individual thing is self-identical and cannot carry contradictions. But in *Finnegans Wake* language has the dream-like quality of embodying and transmitting such contradictions; the grammar can hold even incompatible and meaningless words in a structural grip of meaning in which the words are not strictly necessary. This is how we can get a prophecy that is silent, the one that Jute talks about: "as Tacitum pretells, our wrongstoryshortener" (17). The story will always be "wrong" because it does not reflect things accurately. But it is extremely important for it not to, since it must exist in a creative, maternal, "other" relation to the things themselves--it must assume an ulterior position which is not subject to the death of things. In fact, language needs to be in a mourning, not a melancholic, relation to its objects, and to be able to surpass them even while encompassing them. Thus Robert Polhemus observes that "everything is inseparable from language, that we ourselves are flesh-words of multiple meanings, and that there is no such thing as dead language" (312)--even though, we might add, there is such a thing as a dead human being. The new vital force will spring into the world from the relative and unfinished words of the mother at the end of the book, from the words that are "other" to their objects, not from the absolute decree of the Father in words that designate an absolute beginning, a creation from nothing.

The theological creation of the world puts emphasis on the words themselves and what they mean individually (not on the form of the grammatical structures), since everything

in God's creation happens for the first time. Conversely, the importance of the maternal monologue lies in its repetition of the same old story: "Can you rede . . . its world? It is the same told of all. Many. Miscegenations on miscegenations. Tieckle. They lived und laughed ant loved end left. Forsin" (18). The extent to which humans are aware of evolution, that is, of themselves as past others ("what bird has done yesterday man may do next year" [112]), is the test of their historical consciousness: evolution is in fact "the evoluation of human society and a testament of the rocks from all the dead into some of the living" (73). All life has been borrowed from another life, instead of being generated afresh.

This repetition is also true of the historical narrative, and it means that there was always a rumor coming before the story, old language followed by "new" language. The possibility of an ending is always questioned: "Can you write us a last line?" (302). Similarly, there is no blank page, no tabula rasa of pure insemination. On the other hand, we do get a description of what paper is made of, a look back at what goes into the making of the blank page itself, which is never the absolute beginning but always seen within the structure of constant evolution:

> A bone, a pebble, a ramskin; chip them, chap them, cut them up allways; leave them to terracook in the mutteringpot: and Gutenmorg with his cromagnon charter, tintingfast and great primer must once for omniboss step rubrickredd out of the wordpress else is there no virtue more in alcohoran. For that . . . is what papyr is meed of, made of, hides and hints and misses in prints. Till ye finally (though not yet endlike) meet with the acquaintance of Mister Typus, Mistress Tope and all the little typtopies. (20)

The evolutionary series of transformations from raw material to paper to words cannot locate a blank point of origin, nor foresee an end. This is not the Father's first language composed of directives; it is the mother's language which is always secondary and derived and vital, with the procreative force of the "soontobe *second* parents" (52) [italics mine]. Even though such a language cannot properly define the mother figure as a creator, it does present her as the only source of communication between generations. As Anthony Burgess points out, "the last word [in *Finnegans Wake*] is neither God's nor man's: it is woman's" ("Introduction" xxiv)[16]. While God's language is a way of creation, language as a divine fiat associated with "the christlikeness of the big cleanminded giant H. C. Earwicker" (33), it cannot be seen as a tool of genuine communication--it happens only once and precludes all response. It is not at all accidental that we get phrases like "Exexex! COMMUNICATED" (172), in which communication is exiled from the church, from the lore of the Father. (The most conspicuous character in the book who is implicitly excommunicated is the writer, Shem, who is "always blaspheming" [177]). But the ability to communicate freely, without censorship, is important, and the maternal re-birth can be seen only as exchange, a message transmitted from the ancestors to their descendants. And if male language is indeed found guilty of censoring all rumors and the inaccuracies of hearsay out of itself, it will be sentenced to life: it will "get life for it" (36), or, in the words of ALP herself, "may he live for river!" (602). The punishment is commensurate with the crime and is intended to turn the clean, uni-semantic, and mute language of "dumbnation" (68) into the redemptive mother tongue which consists of all the fallen letters that are "litter" (17).

It is not accidental that, in the old Irish ballad, Finnegan is drunk when he falls off the

wall (Burgess, "Introduction" xx), and the dreamlike intoxication is related both to the figure of the female and to garbled language: "wine width woman wordth warbling" (FW 56). Words have become signs of what Joyce elsewhere calls the "secrest of their soorcelossness" (23), and language which has lost its source, and whose creation remains a secret, is fallen language. Thus the earliest "signlore" is a gesture "pointed at an angle of thirty-two degrees" (36), and, Burgess tells us, "32 feet per second is the rate of acceleration of all falling bodies, and the number itself will remind us of the fall of Adam, Humpty Dumpty, Napoleon, Parnell, as also of HCE himself, who is all their reincarnations" ("Introduction" xiv). So the maternal language, which is one of repetition and regeneration without source, also has to be profoundly unoriginal and recycled in its continuity from beginning to end, flowing like a river, where the individual words hardly matter, as long as they are involved in the larger structure of language which will survive when they perish.

Even though language may not need words, it does need the alterity of the other. In a sense, the story needs to be foretold, and the prophecy of its occurrence will be the "other" in relation to which the story can be verified or distorted. Without this possibility to compare and connect the story would not make sense at all. Thus all events related in *Finnegans Wake* happen twice. As Deane puts it,

> From the start--if the first page can be called the start, since its opening sentence really begins on the last page--we are told that none of the events referred to have yet happened. More precisely, they have not yet happened again. . . . So it [the book] starts at the end and by its famous 'commodius vicus of recirculation' leads us into the second sentence in which history has

not yet begun to happen twice. (xxix-xxx)

The book is an "aftertale" (38), and all the stories we see are re-told, already having been passed on from generation to generation: "Countlessness of livestories have netherfallen by this plage, flick as flowflakes, litters from aloft, like a waast wizzard all of whirlworlds" (17). These are all fallen stories, recycled and rewound back to the beginning. They do not belong to the teller but have been borrowed, or rather stolen, including the famous "last word in stolentelling" (424). They belong by right to the unknown other who forever precedes us in time. In *Finnegans Wake*, the figure of the writer is the one associated with stealing and storytelling; the real criminal is not the self-proclaimed HCE who dreams of broadcasting his crime, but his son Shem the Penman (125). Robert Polhemus describes Shem as "an exile, a heretic, a bohemian, a plagiarist, a fornicator, and a fetishist who smells, shirks, refuses to get married, and has delusions of grandeur. According to Shaun, he commits all seven deadly sins and breaks each of the Ten Commandments" (296). At the same time, criminality itself becomes less condemnable and more of a creative enterprise: "Shun the Punman! . . . The letter! The litter! . . . Borrowing a word and begging the question and stealing tinder and slipping like soap" (93).

The fallen state and slippery morality of Shem aligns him with the maternal influence. As Burgess points out, "It is through Shem that we are able to approach the ALP, the living mother: she composed the letter, but Shem penned it" ("Introduction" xxii); the letter is "written of Shem [but] uttered for Alp" (420). The two of them, the mother who is the author and the son who is the writer, are accomplices in this crime of writing a book. Their figures do not coincide, but Shem can be said to represent the "other" for the mother figure

herself. The plurality of authorship and the ambiguous share of each in the composition of the letter are characteristics consistent with the image of the mother in *Finnegans Wake*; and there is nothing more appropriate than to split the mother into two characters, in order to encompass all her permutations through time and gender[17] (gender is also questioned in expressions like "all Livia's daughter-sons" [215]), and thus emphasize her significance not so much as a person belonging to one generation but as the very moment of transition between generations, the uncertain space within which the swap of son for a mother is accomplished.

That is why we can see the function of motherhood in the character of Shem as much as in that of ALP. The mother figure is not a specific person in *Finnegans Wake* ("What mother?" [187]), but can be defined as any possibility for heterogeneity and plurality, as described in the beginning of Chapter V: "In the name of Annah the Allmaziful, the Everliving, the Bringer of Plurabilities, haloed be her eve, her singtime sung, her rill be run, unhemmed as it is uneven! Her untitled mamafesta memorialising the Mosthighest has gone by many names at disjointed times" (104). That is why it is difficult for the investigators to identify the author of the letter, and so they prefer to use the more traditional and inefficient method and attribute the authorship to a single person instead of a plurality of writers, just as HCE seeks to appropriate all the crime to himself and give it the face of a single criminal:

> Closer inspection of the bordereau would reveal a multiplicity of personalities inflicted on the documents or document and some prevision of virtual crime or crimes might be made by anyone unwary enough before any suitable occasion for it or them had so far managed to happen along. In fact, under the

> closed eyes of the inspectors the traits featuring the chiaroscuro coalesce, their contraries eliminated, in one stable somebody. (107)

The idea of a stable personality and stable authorship also suggests that language can be appropriated by a specific person, so that this person will be identifiable as the possessor of his or her language, rather than as a borrower or thief of his or her words. In the ideal case for HCE and for all the male interpreters in the book, a person's language will be so intimately connected to the personality of the speaker that all words spoken or written would contain reliable clues to the identity of their author and reveal their source: "So why, pray, sign anything as long as every word, letter, penstroke, paperspace is a perfect signature of its own?" (115). In fact, the whole meaning of the word "letter" hinges on two incompatible meanings--the one of an individual sign of the alphabet which is a part of language that cannot possibly be the possession of anyone in particular, and the other of a piece of composition which "belongs" to a specific person. It is clear that the investigators seek to remove language as far away as possible from the former, indeterminate meaning: "A letters from a person to a place about a thing. And all the world's on wish to be carrying a letters" (278). This definition of "letter" aims at taking the text nearer the realm of self-identity, of authorship:

> while we in our wee free state, holding to that prestatute in our charter, may have our irremovable doubts as to the whole sense of the lot , the interpretation of any phrase in the whole, the meaning of every word of a phrase so far deciphered out of it . . . we must vaunt no idle dubiosity as to its genuine authorship and holusbolus authoritativeness. (117-18)

For the male interpreters of language, it is better to have nonsense whose source can be identified rather than have meaning without a source, meaning which has been stolen, borrowed, and carried from generation to generation--the diffuse signification ensured by motherhood, which threatens the authority of any individual life and the whole notion of identity. As the basic premise of the investigation is that there is one identifiable criminal who can be held responsible, so the analysis of the letter is based on the assumption that a single author must exist, that the document has in fact a singular and identifiable source, an assumption which stands in opposition to the fluid structure of anonymous, maternal, "sourceless" rumor of the "gossipaceous Anna Livia" (195) supporting the book as a whole.

The belief that the letter has a definite source is also the belief that it has a definite content, which will emerge after the proper interpretation of its "outer" language: "[has anyone] ever looked sufficiently longly at a quite everydaylooking stamped addressed envelope? Admittedly it is an outer husk: its face, in all its featureful perfection or imperfection, is its fortune: it exhibits only the civil or military clothing of whatever passionpallid nudity or plaguepurple nakedness may happen to tuck itself under its flap" (109). When this content is revealed, language will turn into evidence, the multiple will resolve into one, and the fiction will testify to reality. The commentators and interpreters refuse to believe that the letter could be just a gathering of signs without meaning:

> the travelling inkhorn (possibly pot), the hare and turtle pen and paper, the continually more or less intermisunderstanding minds of the anticollaborators, the as time went on as it will variously inflected, differently pronounced, otherwise spelled, changeably meaning vocable scriptsigns. No, so help me

> Petault, it is not a miseffectual whyacinthinous riot of blots and blurs and bars and balls and hoops and wriggles and juxtaposed jottings linked by spurts of speed: it only looks as like it as damn it. (118)

The instability of signification, which reaches out even to a projected instability of the physical attributes and tools of writing itself (as in "travelling inkhorn"), means that an inherent otherness has upset the straightforward flow of words, and the content has ceased to be predictable; the same word can appear in different form, spelling, or pronunciation every time, making it impossible to trace the identity of this word through time. Furthermore, this passage shows how arduous the process of interpretation really is, with its impossible claim to turn form into content, bringing all of the small and scattered squiggles together to form a unified statement. On the way to meaning, all distraction of accident and error must be eliminated, "all those red raddled obeli cayenpeppercast over the text, calling unnecessary attention to errors, omissions, repetitions and misalignments" (120). The surface chaos is dismissed as superficial and misleading; after all, "Man is temporarily wrapped in obscenity" (150), and the "real," undistorted content suspected to exist underneath is blindly endowed with the status of "the truth." The visible language, on the other hand, with all its inaccuracies and mistakes, is accused of a crime--the crime of exhibitionism, of exposing something that had better remain hidden (as in the "innocent exhibitionism of those frank yet capricious underlinings" and "that strange exotic serpentine, since so properly banished from our scripture" [121]). If we must put up with language, this censorship suggests, then language should remain secondary to the things it is trying to distort. To give it primacy and attention would be to commit a crime, to violate the things themselves.

But even the most meticulous analysis of the letter does not yield satisfactory results and clarity of conclusion. The writer, for example, could be anyone at all, and the occasion and circumstances of the writing cannot admit of any reasonably clear definition; contradictory versions are entertained, and the whole theory of the letter's origin is presented in the form of a question:

> Say, baroun lousadoor, who in hallhagal wrote the durn thing anyhow? Erect, beseated, mountback, against a partywall, below freezigrade, by the use of quill or style, with turbid or pellucid mind, accompanied or the reverse by mastication, interrupted by visit of seer to scribe or of scribe to site, atwixt two showers or atosst of a trike, rained upon or blown around, by a rightdown regular racer from the soil or by a too pained whittlewit laden with the loot of learning? (107-108)

It becomes clear that this piece of seemingly indisputable evidence will have to be verified in turn; from a fact in the investigation the letter has become the subject of it, from an answer it has been transformed by its uncertainty into a question, which gradation is not typical of a court trial. Instead of clearing all doubts, the letter itself[18] is the occasion for more ambiguity, and appears to require more interpretation than HCE's actions themselves, to involve more questions than answers. As Phillip F. Herring tells us, the "effect of ALP's letter is precisely the opposite of her intent. . . . The more ALP defends her husband in her letter, the more scandal attaches to him" (196). In other words, the more she articulates, in an effort to explain, the more there is to interpret, and the more room for mistakes opens up; more words means more ambiguities. It becomes impossible, Herring argues, to establish

even simple facts: "factual authenticity . . . too is untrustworthy" (197). What is required of language in order to become testimony is precisely the clarity of unequivocal statement which language was made to elude. Words then emerge as the tools which keep things from being self-identical and thus double them. As Shari Benstock points out in "Nightletters: Woman's Writing in the Wake,""[t]he point about letters in the *Wake* is that they are feared to exist" (227). That is, feared to exist independently of their human articulation[19].

The backward progress from answer to question associated with the letter is an example of a large-scale chronological confusion in *Finnegans Wake*, where sometimes it is not at all clear who has created whom: "Creator he has created for his creatured ones a creation" (29). A similar problem attends the word "begod" (46), which simultaneously designates the creator (God) and the "begotten" which is his creation, "occasionally recausing altereffects" (483). The result has nebulous teleology, since it is "materially effecting the cause" (76) to form a "sourcelost" circle: "for was not just this in effect which had just caused that the effect of that which it had caused to occur?" (92). The unclear status of agency around the time of the beginning of history is a result of the inaccurate rumors: "All . . . is told in hints and rumours: HCE's fall is as ancient as Adam's" (Burgess, "Introduction" xxi). This method of establishing historical accounts through language rather than fact confirms the status of "the feminine principle as genetrix of 'history'" (Fairhall 236). So much time has passed that human memory has become more creative than descriptive, and nothing is known for certain: "Thus the unfacts, did we possess them, are too imprecisely few to warrant our certitude, the evidencegivers by legpoll too untrustworthily irreperible" (57). The way an event is related can never be straightforward and the

letter/story passes through the most unlikely transformations: "Wind broke it. Wave bore it. Reed wrote of it. Syce ran with it. Hand tore it and wild went war. Hen trieved it and plight pledged peace. It was folded with cunning, sealed with crime, uptied by a harlot, undone by a child" (94). The problem with the rumor is that the ones who know the truth are not around to tell it, while the ones who tell the story are not telling the truth: "all they who heard or redelivered are now with that family of bards . . . as much no more as be they not yet now or had they then notever been" (48). It is not clear from this that humans necessarily need the foundational event of absolute birth, or in other words the unreported truth of what happened, in order to continue telling stories about it. The rumor has superceded the event that occasioned it in the first place; the multiple repetition has supplanted the singular origin, and the perpetual voice of the mother is now heard louder than the foundational decree of the Father.

In a sense, the maternal function has become, in *Finnegans Wake*, purely linguistic, transcendental, and devoid of the limited attributes of the physical body that impeded the mother's access to language in *Ulysses*. The rumor is self-sufficient and self-perpetuating; it is the mother's ghost of alterity, which has been so far (in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*) overshadowed by the father's ghost of self-identity. By marrying ALP, HCE has "transmaried himself" (50), acknowledging the imperfection of his completeness. The marriage vow to a woman is in fact a pledge to language: "My unchanging Word is sacred. The word is my Wife, to exponse and expound, to vend and to velnerate, and may the curlews crown our nuptias! Till Breath us depart! Wamen" (167). By taking this vow, sealed by the word "woman" as accurately as any word could seal any meaning, man has

relinquished his claim on self-identity, on being exhaustively and without remainder himself. Self-identity can be seen as the unfallen state of man, an impossible state once man has become a storyteller: "in this scherzarade of one's thousand one nightinesses that sword of certainty which would indentifide the body never falls" (51). The certainty of identification (and much of the book revolves around the identification of a crime and a criminal) never occurs, the body that never falls does not exist, and neither does the body that falls absolutely--as the oblique reference to Scheherazade suggests, the death of the body is constantly postponed by storytelling. In fact, we could say that man is a species that continues to fall in a "foenix culprit" (23), with multiple vicissitudes of failure and success, error and correction, guilt and redemption, but he is never absolutely fallen or unredeemably lost.

At the same time, the real "culprit" of the book, the one who does not fall absolutely and yet is never irreversibly condemned, appears to be not HCE but his son Shem. The son-writer, who is also the mother's alter ego, is described as an ambiguous, "hybrid" (169) figure of the criminal underworld of language, who is "covetous of his neighbour's word" (172). All of his so-called "possessions" are in fact borrowed, stolen, or otherwise misplaced and useless (183). Everything about him is distorted and ugly:

> Shem's bodily getup, it seems, included an adze of a skull, an eight of a larkseye, the whoel of a nose, one numb arm up a sleeve, fortytwo hairs off his uncrown, eighteen to his mock lip, a trio of barbels from his megageg chin (sowman's son), the wrong shoulder higher than the right, all ears, an artificial tongue with a natural curl, not a foot to stand on, a handful of thumbs, a blind

stomach, a deaf heart, a loose liver, two fifths of two buttocks, one gleetsteen avoirdupoider for him, a manroot of all evil. (169)

His body is dysfunctional and handicapped, and the body parts are mis-connected to the wrong adjectives, making a consistent description of the whole impossible. The significance of this inability of the body to conform to a unified function, to act as one single organism, endows Shem with the plurality of the mother; like another monster of Frankenstein, he has been composed of the mismatched parts taken from a multitude of other people. His most important quality is that he is manmade--assembled and animated by human ingenuity[20], rather than created by God as part of a harmonious universe, as a creature of pleasing proportions and harmonious shape. The discordant and tenuous unity of Shem removes him from the domain of the Gods and suggests that his ugliness is the result of the failure of man to imitate divine creation. He has not been created all at once by birthright, but gradually re-made out of the bodily leftovers from other people, recycled from previous creation in "birthwrong" (190). In this sense, he is not begotten by the father, but re-born through the mother; his birth is the repetition of the birth of another. Shem's very existence can be seen as artificial rather than natural, and the same is true of his language[21]: he has "an artificial tongue" and he writes with "synthetic ink" (185). Consequently, the speech engendered by him will have the same quality of unoriginal re-looping of meaning, "not protected by copriright" (185), which is the "rewrite" characteristic of the mother tongue. He will not be the ultimate source of his own speech; even the most remote image of Shem back in time depicts him as already fallen, already existing after something else, something which has failed: we see him "on his very first debouch at the very dawn of protohistory" (169). He has

never had a pure, unadulterated, unfallen existence, and "the whole lifelong swrine story of his entire low cornaille existence [is] abusing his deceased ancestors" (173).

Thus Shem becomes the embodiment of all crime and sin in the book, and anything he says will lie within the definition of rumor, of involuntary and evolutionary lie. Significantly, he cannot remember far enough back in time to know where his words come from: "he was in his bardic memory low" (172) and he writes in "one continuous present tense" (185-86). His alliance with the "sourcelessness" of rumor is complemented by his penchant for ambiguity. Like the mother figure ALP, he is associated with a riddle: "[he] dictited to all of his little brothron and sweestureens the first riddle of the universe: asking, when is a man not a man?" (170; also 219). The significance of this riddle lies in its attempt to define man in the uncertain terms of question ("asking"), negation ("not"), and the denial of the singular ("a man"). In this sense, the riddle is the linguistic structure diametrically opposed to the declarative statement "this is" which we find in the museum; thus Shem's question embodies the denial of all definition, of all positivity and certainty in language. Predictably, all answers to this question of the identity of man are "wrong" (170). The answer which finally wins comes from Shem himself, which *guarantees* that the answer will be wrong, but Shem takes the prize he has offered. The answer is "Sham," apparently meaning that a man is not a man when he is false. However, the one who is most false is Shem himself, who cheats his brothers and sisters of the prize by asking them a question which only he can answer, since the answer has to do with himself: "Shem was a sham and a low sham and his lowness creeped out first via foodstuffs" (170). Being both the source and the subject of the riddle, both the Sphinx and its victim, Shem falsely positions himself on

both sides of language--the mystery and the solution. That is why his mock answer to his own question is really his mock attempt to be his "other"–to embody the alterity of sender and receiver into one body, a universality which has been denied both HCE and ALP.

In the case of Shem, the "joker-artist-hero" (Polhemus 324), the attempted control over alterity is not made in earnest, but as a parody of HCE's claim on universals. Unlike HCE, Shem formulates puzzles and riddles and then leaves them unsolved. Time, for example, recycles itself back from the end which is not absolute, to a beginning which is always a repetition. The double nature of everything allows a movement from the answer to the question, from the evidence to the trial, from the effect to the cause, "cyclewheeling history" (186). In this Shem is the reflection of the mother-river, tracing her movement "backtowards motherwaters" (84). The "doubtful eggshells" (183) found among his possessions are also reminiscent of the chicken-and-egg mystery of origin which has never been solved: "The next thing is. We are once amore as babes awondering in a wold made fresh where with the hen in the storyaboot we start from scratch" (336). And the language Shem produces is as close to the beginning as to the end, as much akin to birth as to murder: "by Maistre Sheames de la Plume, some most dreadful stuff in a murderous mirorhand" (177). His words are not suited for the historical records, since they are not intended to preserve the memory of events any more than they are dedicated to its destruction. (Thus Shem is accused of "the reducing of records to ashes, the levelling of all customs by blazes" [189]). The criminal act of writing which removes one away from the essence of things functions as a mirror in which language can see its own reflection. The same holds for all criminality: the word "badbad" (179) reminds us that evil is "doubled for falling" (180), that

is, in a state of constant reflection of itself, which means that it has been divorced from any external referent--its primordial source remains invisible. The self-reflexive structure also ensures that evil can be "read" equally well forwards and backwards ("badbad"), unlike the Good, which can be an absolute cause but not an effect, primary but not secondary. Thus it is the bad that can defy chronology and, with it, perhaps even death. Like rumor itself, Shem's writing is self-perpetuating and in no hurry to be held responsible for its lack of resemblance to the truth of things. Thus Shem approaches words "with increasing lack of interest in his semantics" (173), a description which shows his profound indifference towards the accuracy of language.

In his suspicion of the purity of language, Shem is, like the fallen Finnegan from the ballad, related to wine (with his "fermented words" [184]) and women: "his Ballade Imaginaire . . . was to be dubbed Wine, Woman and Waterclocks, or How a Guy Finks and Fawkes When He Is Going Batty" (177). The way he "thinks and talks" is one with an "F"--Finnegan's way--and obviously one of distortion, cunning, and puns. The way he writes also begins with an "f" and is called "forgery": "Who can say how many pseudostylic shamiana, how few or how many of the most venerated public impostures, how very many piously forged palimpsests slipped in the first place by this morbid process from his pelagiaristic pen?" (182). It turns out that what the whole nation has taken seriously, what history has venerated--and that significantly includes the nation's monuments HCE style--may have been counterfeit, presenting a "public misappearance" (186). As far as the "low hero" (184) Shem is concerned, all of history is a forgery, an "alphybettyformed verbage" (183), an item Shem keeps among his possessions. The inventory of the objects

that can be found in his "lair" includes a messy amalgam of almost unidentifiable items, most of them tellingly modified by adjectives such as fallen, broken, upset, spilt, blasphematory, crooked, false, counterfeit, reversible, convertible, unloosed, undeleted (183), added to which are the leftover "breakages, upheavals distortions, inversions" (184). Nothing is at its place, which suggests that words perhaps do not have a specific place in relation to things; that is why Shem's book is useless in the real world: "usylessly unreadable" (179).

The whole premise of a court trial, where language will be forced to make specific statements in order to engage with and maybe even change the real world, is hostile to Shem's speech habits of indeterminacy and variety "in a selfmade world that you can't believe a word he's written in" (252). His language had better not be taken as an accurate and passive reflection of the world capable of definite articulation. Thus on one occasion he is seen "pray[ing] to the cloud Incertitude, of finding out for himself . . . whether true conciliation was forging ahead or falling back after the celestious intemperance" (178). Just as he is ignorant, or at least deliberately forgetful, of his own past, Shem is uninterested in his future, searching for its clues exactly where he would be least likely to find them. On one occasion, it seems that Shem's life will be threatened if he ever decides to deal with things themselves in their reality; if he ventures out of his proper linguistic domain, he will be reminded to return, at gunpoint: "when he found himself . . . at pointblank range blinking down the barrel of an irregular revolver of the bulldog with a purpose pattern, handled by an unknown quarreler who, supposedly, had been told off to shade and shoot shy Shem should the shit show his shiny shnout out awhile to look facts in their face" (179). Because he will not face the self-identical facts, Shem is accused of multiplicity, which is not far from the

truth, since he is, in addition to himself, also the mother figure: "you have become of twosome twiminds. . . . you have reared your disunited kingdom on the vacuum of your own most intensely doubtful soul. . . . Away with covered words. . . . That inharmonious detail, did you name it?" (188). Naturally, Shem is the one who can and will name anything, regardless of how obscene, "inharmonious," and insignificant that detail is, or how inaccurate his naming of it will be. His uncensored, "unwashed" (191) speech is threatening to his enemies, the people who are trying to figure him out and attribute specific, legally binding and legitimate words to him, and who are likely to exclaim: "Comport yourself, you inconsistency!" (192).

But Shem is an elusive presence, unlike his brother Shaun, who can appear in full: "Shaun in proper person . . . stood before me" (405); Shem, conversely, has a double, Janus nature, since he doubles as the mother figure one generation ahead. Thus we see the word "shy," previously used in relation to Shem, appear now as "twice as shy" (190). The doubling involves Shem in a process of interaction with another, and this "other" is the mother figure. In a way, Shem is the Stephen of *Finnegans Wake*[22], the one implicated in a kiss with the mother, the kiss which, found among Shem's things, brings together the two opposites--"kisses from the antipodes" (183). The kiss of the mother is the archetypal "trasgression" (189), and since Shem is the archetypal criminal, it is an appropriate crime for him to commit: "And it must be with who. Teaseforhim. Toesforhim. Tossforhim. Two. Else there is danger of. Solitude" (246). But the complexity of any act of trangression of the self suggests that it is a "changing [of] nature" (189), another form of the anti-narcissistic and reciprocal transition from the self to the other, from the same to the different. In the

dynamics of this transformation, the mother appears as an alibi for the son (and vice versa), in the sense that when he is not present (when he is dead, for example), the mother is the one who will ensure that he exists somewhere else and enables him to return to life after a generation. In a sense, she holds life in trust for her son; that is why she can be intimately involved in his life without actually living it for him, the way the two brothers Shem and Shaun (or Glugg and Chuff) are intertwined, for example: "Exchange, reverse. . . . And each was wrought with his other" (252).

It is difficult, even impossible, to obtain direct access to the other, and to the mother figure in particular; she is as elusive as language itself[23]. That is why we first hear of her story and identity through the gossiping of the washerwomen: "O tell me all about Anna Livia! I want to hear all about Anna Livia. Well, you know Anna Livia? Yes, of course, we all know Anna Livia. Tell me all. Tell me now. You'll die when you hear" (196). It is significant that her story is presented as a dialogue, a double exchange which includes *two* incomplete points of view, rather than a straightforward narrative of one: "Listen now. Are you listening? Yes, yes! Idneed I am!" (201). But the opening passage of the chapter poses an apparent paradox: on the one hand, everyone knows Anna Livia (the mother), but on the other hand, nobody knows all there is to know about her: "Describe her! Hustle along, why can't you?" (207). Since the mother has taken part in the birth of everything, she is a presence familiar to all living things, "Mother of us all" (299). However, complete knowledge of her is impossible, because she does not have a unitary identity to be known. There is always more to be learned, and this "more" is non-coincidental with the mother–the word "more" alternates with the word "mother," never the same: "Tell me moher" (198). In

order to know the second, invisible, unavailable part of the mother, one has to cross over beyond the self and into another reality; in short, one has to die[24]: "You'll die when you hear." Even the mother does not possess full knowledge of herself: "Well for her she couldn't see herself" (208). Perhaps that is why she needs her alter ego "Shem, her penmight" (212) to speak for her when the singularity of her idenity as ALP becomes insufficient; sooner or later the mother must kill even ALP, since even ALP is a mortal first person singular who will try to appropriate the fall to herself: "Thinking always if I go all goes" (627). To the extent to which she is a mortal body from whose point of view the world ends with the death of the body, ALP cannot properly be said to be a mother figure; it is her potential for signification beyond the body that makes her the maternal, recycled source of history itself.

But the mother is opposed to the normal, linear flow of life and death in another way too. The family name, which is in other people the name derived from the parents' names, in the case of ALP becomes reversible: she bears the family name "Plurabella," a word designating her numerous offspring (her other name, "Livia," also has connotations of fertility, as in "Allalivial, allalluvial!" [213]). In other words, the name has passed from the children to the mother and not vice versa. She has not been born with this name but has assumed it later: "They did well to rechristien her Pluhurabelle" (201). The re-christening again reveals the pattern of repetition associated with the maternal influence; ALP is involved in an ontological paradox, in which she has not been named before she gives birth, and then is named after her children, or rather after their multitude. That is why the emphasis on cyclical history is best expressed through the mother figure, and her name ("Livia")

becomes synonymous with that of the most thorough early historian: "And wasn't she the naughty Livvy?" (204). This question reminds us that the "naughty" definition of history as reversible in a "great cicrle" (594), rather than linear, undermines the authority of all monuments erected to commemorate heroic deeds, the latter being defined as deeds which are unique in history. The new historical model associated with the mother figure challenges the male model of HCE, in which the monuments not only are of some importance, but also suggest that everything in history has the easy visibility denied to the cyclical pattern ("Anna was, Livia is, Plurabelle's to be" [215]), some part of which is always elsewhere and not immediately present--it is submerged under the consciousness and is called death; this "other" part is naturally not transparent to the gaze. In terms of the ongoing metaphor of writing, the moment of transition between generations would correspond to the letter being sealed before it is opened or after it has been written: "Leave the letter that never begins to go find the latter that ever comes to end, written in smoke and blurred by mist and signed of solitude, sealed at night" (337). But the fact that we are not consciously aware of something does not rule out its existence: "Something happened that time I was asleep" (307). In a sense, part of the historical cycle is always asleep, until its time comes, and then it "returns; renascenent; fincarnate; still foretold around the hearthside" (596).

To insist that the gaze can access all of history, which seems to be HCE's proposition, means to claim for consciousness a totality of perception and understanding undisturbed by unknowns, as well as full possession by the self of its experiences, none of which the self wants to acknowledge borrowed from the past or detachable from itself and transmittable to the future. Possession means a fundamental denial of circularity and repetition; it implies

that the life and language of the ego die with it, and all that remains will be a monument, a token, rather than a live force transformed by death and received by the life of a future other. A history, or a tale, can belong to someone only in the sense in which one of the washerwomen can call the rumor she has borrowed from the past and is now spreading into the future "my story" (206): "as we have seen, so we have heard, what we have received, that we have transmitted" (604). The story, insofar as it is contained and immobolized in a solid, sanctioned monument, is lifeless; but insofar as it assumes mutable and repetitive variations, including the ones told in "forebidden" (11) language, it carries life with it, "like another tellmastory repeating yourself" (397). The only test of viability for life is whether it is "another," whether it is happening again. Thus at one point salvation is associated with the repetition of an event "for the twicedhecame time," as well as with a "mountain and river system" (288) which allows for the re-circulation of the elements; repetition nourishes life. As ALP puts it, "Yet is no body present here which was not there before. Only is order othered. Nought is nulled" (613). Here, "othered" appears as a synonym of "renewed," and the altering is done by the mother.

The mother figure is spread out in time and space, not as a static relic of memory, but as a vital influence of inheritance, a life force that may seem to be challenged by the description of the mother as an eternal geometric figure--a triangle defined by the centers of two circles. This pictorial representation, however, is far from hinting at a static enclosure as the shape of the maternal realm. The presence of two circles which do not overlap completely, instead of the single circle traditionally taken as a symbol of perfection, again suggests the double identity of the mother which, even though it strives to be "as sphere as

possible" (298), is impossible to define or explain in full without resorting to its "isoplural" (297) other, which will be the "sleeper awakening" (597) when the time comes. Or, in the words of ALP herself, "Why? Because, graced be Gad and all giddy gadgets, in whose words were the beginnings, there are two signs to turn to, the yest and the ist, the wright side and the wronged side, feeling aslip and wauking up, so an, so farth. . . . Hence we've lived in two worlds" (597; 619). In this sense, the geometric figure is more than one, since it implicates its opposite as well. Furthermore, it is not contained within a visible range of mathematical values: while the initials A, L, and P form one triangle, the figure is completed by another triangle, whose tip is designated by π, a mysterious number which opens up towards infinity. The view we have of the "muddy old triagonal delta [of] appia lippia pluvaville" (297) is not very transparent and its totality eludes us. That is why, when the narrator threatens: "I'll make you to see figuratleavely the whome of your eternal geomater" (296-97), we should be suspicious of this proposition of total visibility and read "whome" to mean "whole" not more than it means "whom," posing the question of the mother rather than answering it.

And this seems to be the main project of *Finnegans Wake*--to keep the mother alive as a question, and not fully comprehensible as an answer. The misleading transparency of such an answer would fall under the aegis of the narcissistic gaze which, in its wish-fulfilling totality, is capable of seeing all. The danger of seeing all, as Freud reminds us, is that there will be no need to go beyond seeing and the gaze will turn into a voyeuristic disease. In *Finnegans Wake*, this sickness is prevented by the influence of the mother and of language, both of which refuse to be tied up with a single meaning and made transparent. They

become, on the contrary, doubled, to the extent that the role of the mother is even expanded to include Shem, the writer, as her necessary "other." The importance of such displacement lies in its enabling powers of regeneration; where a hypothetical single, unified human identity would be created whole and pure, the presence of the "other" suggests that there is a part of the self which is not created afresh but has been borrowed from previous generations, ensuring the possibility of further transmission in the future, of further life. And this additional life, which is one of repetition and communication, of crime and plagiarism, is the life of the mother.

Notes

1. In *The Decentered Universe,* Margot Norris suggests that *Finnegans Wake* gives emphasis to a quality that is difficult to measure or define: "If *Portrait* may be called the book of the Son and *Ulysses* the book of the Father, then *Finnegans Wake* is surely the book of the Holy Spirit, the hypostatic bond that unites them" (28). In other words, within the scheme of father-son continuity over time, the book chooses to focus on the spaces between them, which is to say, on the spaces between generations, since it is neither the death of the father, nor the birth of the son. Thus *Finnegans Wake* is properly about what remains beyond both life and death–the "other" of the life-and-death cycle itself.

2. The mother emerges as the alternative to history, as the remainder which does not enter the cycle (just as the mourning ritual recognizes that something *has* been lost, left out). If history is the name of the father passed down through generations, it is interrupted by intervals of ahistorical hibernation; the periods of naming alternate with periods of silence. Sheldon Brivic assigns these ahistorical periods to the feminine, to the "ALP between deaths" (*Joyce's* 113). Thus we cannot simply see the feminine as a binary Other, but as an unconscious space of disruption outside of the historical alternation of rise and fall. Brivic further elaborates: "The major linguistic system in this field opposed to consciousness is the cultural construct known as woman. She is designed to contain the interplay between self and other" (*Joyce's* 81).
Other critics similarly suggest that the figure of woman is not one of two possibilities, but a third, additional one–the third term of the trinity is feminine. In "Joyce's Consubstantiality: Woman as Creator," Robert Boyle also argues that the third one in the trinity is feminine–p.126. Boyle also emphasizes ALP's role as that of the creative spirit, the Holy Ghost: ALP is designed "to give flesh to a feminine claim to superiority in creativity over the Father and the Eternal Son" (130).

3. Melancholia is also universalization, as the ego lumps itself and the world together. That is why the theory suggested by Margot Norris in "The Last Chapter of *Finnegans Wake*: Stephen Finds His Mother," seems problematic: "The last chapter of *Finnegans Wake* . . . dramatizes Stephen Dedalus' *rapprochement* with his mother, resolving logically and psychologically the conflicts that torment him both in infancy and, more painfully, in adulthood at her death" (11). In other words, Norris simultaneously suggests that the direction of *Finnegans Wake* is towards identification / internalization (which she appropriately calls "regression" [28]), and that this is a healthy solution of the problem. However, it seems more likely to argue, not that Stephen "has become her" (27), but that, on the contrary, for the first time he is ready for separation–he can let go of the projection of himself into the maternal image and let the mother figure stand on her own, as an*other*, at a safe distance from the internalizing power of the narcissistic self. Thus "the journey into the mother's body" (28) that Norris talks about does not seem to be the only, or even a likely solution; the more Stephen "is reconciled with his mother, immersing himself and disappearing mystically into the lake that is her figure, only to become part of her own regression into childhood" (28), the farther away *Finnegans Wake* would drift into the

problematic zone of narcissism and absolutism it is trying to escape from.

4. Jed Rasula, in "*Finnegans Wake* and the Character of the Letter," points out another kind of absolute beginning: "Retaining among its portmanteau disorders the trauma of starting from scratch with every letter, *Finnegans Wake* labors to return literature to letters" (526). It is again a male ambition, embodied in HCE, to create language from scratch, to build words just as a builder can erect a wall. But to make meaning work, the speaker will need the "other," a receiver, which means that the language cannot belong solely to the speaker, cannot be made up by a single human being, but must be shared. That is how the project of building words from scratch is undermined by the other, who insists on his share in meaning. That is why Hillary Clark talks about the subject of flawed signification in *Finnegans Wake*: "What is being mourned at the Wake is not only the fallen Father or a fallen humanity (HCE as Here Comes Everybody) but, more notably, fallen *language*" (461). In other words, language can never be perfectly fit for what people want to say, and it is the presence of the other that disrupts the purity of the word by introducing the necessity of an addressee, of translation, of approximation, and of misunderstanding.

5. Here I cannot agree with Suzette Henke and her definition of the role of the mother: "Losing the narcissistic focus of adolescent self-centeredness, she [ALP] slips into and out of the thousand protean shapes demanded by nurturance and sympathetic projection. As the boundaries of her ego gradually dissolve, this mother/woman begins to assume the multiple personalities of those in the realm of her care" (*James Joyce* 181). If ALP aspired to universality, to taking over the Here-Comes-Everybody megalomanic identification with everyone and everything, then she would not be very useful as a figure of redemption when that false "everything" collapses. Her role is precisely to show that "everything" is an impossible concept, that she, ALP, is the remainder that does not completely identify either with the rise and triumph of history, or with the fall and decay thereof. And it seems quite possible that this is exactly how ALP avoids the traps of narcissism; otherwise, it is not entirely clear how Henke would distinguish between the "sympathetic projection" she commends and the narcissistic projection which internalizes everything in its way.

6. As ALP is not a universal voice, neither is she losing her own voice, as Shelly Gregory seems to suggest: "The harm is woman having her son write down her thoughts because she does not know how. The harm, indicate Joyce and Kristeva, is that Mother and child cannot know themselves as one since the father tongue denies their existence. ALP merely blends into the sea . . . of language, complacently becoming a part of it, drowning in it, dying in it. . . . Lost are the beautiful thoughts never spoken, never shared, never heard, never felt, never known" (74). It is difficult to see how the mother is silenced; unlike *Ulysses*, where she is, indeed, re-created by the son as a silent image outside of language, as an Echo to a Narcissus, in *Finnegans Wake* she is linguistically far from passive. We can agree with Gregory that the mother is not one with the son, but that is only the natural growth beyond narcissism that frees her from any dependency on the son's language.

7. Here, the movement from subjectivity towards objectivity that Thomas Calvin suggests for *Finnegans Wake* seems unconvincing: "[In *Finnegans Wake*] the venue of the trial of subjectivity itself changes, from that of insular, autonomous, misjudging ego to that of the collective subject-object of history itself–There Goes Stephen, Here Comes Everybody" (302). Above all, neither the fall, nor the trial could take place without some pronoun split into self and other, and the presence of the Other must replace the objectivity of Everybody in order to allow for redemption through something which the sinning self is not part of.

8. The same observation holds for the book as a whole, which refuses to be *one*, just as its main character, HCE, is denied completeness even though he seeks precisely that–to become "Everybody." In his discussion of the structure of *Finnegans Wake*, Sam Slote suggests that the "absence of specific telos functions as a *defining* teleologics for the text" (532), and that "perhaps the fragment *incompletes* the complete" (534). The work of the Other, essential at all levels of the narrative, precludes any possibility of a unified vision of the world: "in its very excessiveness, the work unworks itself whereby it remains incomplete with itself as a definitude" (534).

9. Here we are reminded of the situation in *Ulysses*, where gaze and appearance remain more stable than any physical contact: "Although mother and son speak to each other . . . they do not touch" (Kimball, "Jung's" 486).

10. For a discussion of the fluidity of language in *Finnegans Wake*, see Marian Eide, "The Language of Flows: Fluidity, Virology, and *Finnegans Wake*," *JJQ* 34.4 (Summer 1997): 473-488.

11. For a more detailed discussion of riddles, see Patrick McCarthy, *The Riddles of* Finnegans Wake, London: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1980.

12. Here we can remember Colleen Lamos and her definition, as early as *Ulysses*, of a "conceptual shift from *error* to *errancy*" (124), an errancy which "is implicated with feminine alterity" (122).

13. This failure of precision in language is very far from Stephen's ambition in *Ulysses* to "determine once and for all what his words mean" (McMichael, "Ulysses" 105).

14. For a discussion of the status of objects and artifacts in *Finnegans Wake*, see Strother B. Purdy, "Vico's Verum-Factum and the Status of the Object in *Finnegans Wake*," where he emphasizes "man's role as artificer and the world he knows as his *factum*" (374), and the extent to which objects are seen as human creations: "Artifact, and object as artifact, thus loom large in Finnegans Wake" (372). Purdy describes a process where "an object [is] sliding into a letter, and then into another object" (374), and where all difference between the two is erased. However, the project of *Finnegans Wake* seems to be precisely to show that such a coincidence is impossible, that language is always something *other* than what we have got a hold of.

15. Not all critics agree; Barbara MacMahon, for example, does not see anything unusual in the language of the book, anything that would challenge convention: "Joyce's use of language in *Finnegans Wake*, apart from not being based on primary process operations, is neither disruptive, nor particularly modernist or uniquely literary" (321).

16. James Fairhall also observes that "both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* end in a flow of woman's words" (238).

17. Suzette Henke emphasizes the versatility of ALP and talks about her as "mother and lover of men and women" (*James Joyce* 164).

18. For a detailed discussion of ALP's letter, see Patrick A. McCarthy, 'The Last Epistle of *Finnegans Wake*," *JJQ* 27.4 (Summer 1990): 725-734.

19. In his discussion of authorship, both of text and of history in *Finnegans Wake*, Timothy S. Murphy observes that "Vico's model [underlying *Finnegans Wake*] produces history as a text; however, it is a text that is separate from its writer and reader, the historian. Conversely, his model produces the historian/reader as an entity outside the texts he writes and reads and perhaps unimplicated in them" (719). Or, we could argue, the historian/storyteller is "other" in relation to his own text.

20. Here, we can remember the question Michael Murphy asks apropos of *Ulysses*: "What else might a literary artist need in addition to manipulated grammar and an endlessly renewable vocabulary?" (75). This same emphasis on the artificiality of artistic creation becomes, in *Finnegans Wake*, transferred back to include the artificiality of the creator (Shem) himself.

21. Hilary Clark also points out his derivative nature: "Shem is a plagiarist, a 'sham'; when he writes, he does not create an original product" (463).

22. For a discussion of Shem as a Hamlet figure (another parallel to Stephen of *Ulysses*), see Vincent John Cheng, who describes Shem, like Hamlet, as an artist and "a filial figure with Oedipal designs on his father figure" (62).

23. Here, I cannot agree with Hilary Clark's observation that "beyond Wakean language in its brokenness, beyond the Father's fallen and dismembered body, we may glimpse the mother's body, the 'Thing' beyond signification (as Jacques Lacan puts it) that one seeks to recover but can never attain" (461-462).

24. As Sheldon Brivic points out, "[w]e can neither stop aiming at the maternal object nor reach it, and the closest we can come to reaching it is death" (*Joyce's* 120). And death seems to be the absolute other.

CONCLUSION

In *Death and the Mother from Dickens to Freud: Victorian Fiction and the Anxiety of Origins*, Carolyn Dever points out an "almost complete maternal absence" (xi) in the Victorian novel, an absence which forces the descendants to try to recover the mother figure and restore her primal connection to the child: "The mother's absence creates a mystery for her child to solve" (xi). For a modernism grounded in the metaphor of mourning, however, the problem of the death of the mother leads to new and unsolvable complexities. In the modernist novel, as exemplified by the works of Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, the child is not merely a victim who has been deprived of maternal presence; the modernist novel envisions the possibility that the child might also be a perpetrator in relation to that absence, since it is the child who has made the mother disappear, most often symbolically, as in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*[1], but sometimes also literally, as in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. The child's aggression aimed at the mother herself or at the memory / ghost of the mother, as in Joyce's *Ulysses*, appears to be an act of defense, in response to the mother's having "deserted" the child first, through the act of separation at birth.[2] Thus, in addition to the death of the mother, which appears to be a universal novelistic ploy even before the twentieth century, modernism seems to pose another question, that of the guilt of the child. The possibility of murdering the mother figure in order to break free is of special interest to a modernity haunted by classicism and literary tradition. As the main paradigm for art in modernism,

mourning suggests that the modern artist is not merely assuming possession of his or her rightful literary inheritance, but on the contrary, that the artist has suffered a loss because the meaning of his or her inheritance has been compromised.

At the same time, the loss of both inheritance and meaning, as it relates to the loss of the mother, appears to be necessary in order that the formation of the self may begin. As Dever points out, "Freud presents the metaphor of maternal loss as the prerequisite for adult subjectivity and 'normative' sexuality, reading all relationships of desire as repetitions of the original trauma of lost love, separation from the mother" (xii). In this sense, we can say that all normal cathexes formed by the self are evidence of a successfully completed mourning process whereby the loss of the mother figure has been accepted, and the mother has been replaced by another object, that of the erotic love interest. At the same time, the mother herself is no longer sought in the biological makeup of the self but becomes an immaterial knowledge of the existence of the mother, an ideal; the loss of the mother thus allows for the idealization of the mother in memory. As Dever observes, "The representation of maternal loss is necessary to the reciprocal emergence of the maternal ideal" (6). We can say that the function of that maternal ideal seems to be that of an elegiac construction, an object of art which signifies the substitution of mother with memory. The ideal mother does not exist[3]; she can only be remembered. The successful acceptance of memory as a valid substitute for the mother, whereby the mother herself is relinquished, lies at the heart of the psychological process of inheritance. As Dever also observes,

> [i]n order for human development to occur in an orderly fashion, the infant's primal cathexis onto the mother must be ruptured, and the mother replaced by

> alternative physical, psychological, and erotic objects. When the mother appears in psychoanalysis, then, she is destined to disappear; she is the original object of desire and of prohibition, the site of both origins and loss. (39)

One of the main problems for modernism, and especially for Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, is that the mother simply will not disappear. This lingering maternal reference leads to an incomplete or traumatic psychological development of the ego, and to a state of melancholic, symbolical recreation of the original union with the mother. Following Freud, Dever explains the pathology of melancholia: "While normal mourning is characterized by the eventual ability to recognize the loss of a loved object, and therefore to forsake the object, pathological melancholia is characterized by the desire to introject the object of loss, and therefore to punish the self for the transgressions of the loved one, thereby occupying a masochistic relationship to the event of loss itself" (41). Or, we can say, while mourning is a relation to an other, melancholia is primarily a relation to the self. That is why the loss of the mother is, in its pathological form, a loss of self.[4]

Threatened by the disappearance of its site of generation, the self needs to renounce the mother, to dissociate itself from her, and to seek its own independent symbolic expression. In short, the self needs to become an artist, to establish the myth of self-creation. While the melancholic attachment to the mother's ghost pulls the self back into a regressive dependence on an infantile need for the mother, the artistic activity will be associated with mourning and the completion / sublimation of grief through symbolization. As Gillian Beer observes, "[i]n elegy there is a repetition of mourning and an allaying of mourning. Elegy

lets go of the past, formally transferring it into language" (31).[5] A successful mourning process will be a process of the growth of the artist[6], as well as the growth of language, since language will emerge as the medium of self-creation. Karen Kaivola describes this as "[t]he project of transforming oneself into an artist who represents instead of being represented by others" (22). To be free of one's origins, rather than to claim one's inheritance, becomes a priority for modernism, which needs to establish an artistic identity for itself and give art the primacy that the world used to have. The self will seek an identity grounded in language, rather than in maternal procreation. As T. E. Apter observes, "the self, which must be self-created through memory, image and imagination, cannot survive without a language" (91). "Language," Barbara Babcock tells us, "is the most important mirror in which the self is created and reflected" (1). And the symbolic creation of the self is self-creation, unlike the physical generation, which is creation by an other. But language emerges as an essential part of the self only because the mother cannot, and only in so far as the mother is not allowed to fulfill that function.

The desire to replace the physicality of its origins with a language susceptible to manipulation and control means that the self will prefer to have been self-created, rather than mother-created.[7] Pamela Rooks observes that "[w]e human beings are not only creators of, but also the creations of, language" (21), and if the self can control the language through which it is expressed, it would be able to control its own destiny and even perhaps give itself its own meaning. "The act of creation," Pamela Transue, points out, "is an act of control" (67). This control, however, can never be transferred over to the physical self--the artist cannot control the body, only the body's representations. As Ruth Saxton points out in

relation to Lily in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, the "survival as artist is at incredible cost in that it requires the symbolic death of her body" (99).[8] It seems that the exclusion of the body by art presents a problem to the artist, and especially to Lawrence's protagonists, who live in a world of an obvious discrepancy between word and thing, civilization and nature: "This amounts to a crisis for the would-be artist: how is representation possible in a situation where speech lies, where conventions of artistic form betray, where social living deforms, where civilization renders barbarous?" (Eggert 106). To have artistic control over language does not always seem to be sufficient. It often prevents the Lawrentian protagonist from expressing himself, and especially from expressing his deepest, unconscious essence, which, in the Lawrentian universe, is the truth about himself. As Eugene Goodheart observes, "Lawrence is forever impressed with the inadequacy of the word to the task of communicating a full sense of those presences" (32).[9] The tension between the self and its inaccessible physical origin in the womb, the only site where the body of the mother was present, reflects what Scott Sanders calls "[t]he conflict between the desire to theorize, to make explicit, to articulate, and the desire to defend the inarticulate, to *be* without knowing" (193-94). But since the mother has been physically lost and cannot "be without knowing," the self can only approach her precisely through an attempt to *know* her, an approach which requires language and symbolism.

But a linguistic reconstruction of the mother, in all three authors, seems to do violence to the mother: the attempted knowledge of the mother is a knowledge of the mother's body, the actual place of origin of the self. This knowledge of the mother's body becomes problematic, not because it is forbidden, but because it is impossible. As Lawrence

observes, it is "easy to see why each man kills the thing he loves. To *know* a living thing is to kill it. You have to kill a thing to know it satisfactorily" (qtd. in Kim 438). Thus the knowledge of the self's origins is always unsatisfactory. It allows the self to create its own representation of the site of generation, but not to get closer to it. This site is no longer available outside of language.[10] "[T]he modernist problem of truth," Sandra Kemp observes, "cannot be resolved by the use of language; language is the problem's cause" (15). This is especially true of Joyce, who, according to Winston Weathers, "has given the twentieth century its most magnificent demonstration of communication failure" (27). And for Joyce, the mother figure is most intimately involved with language, so that the self's point of origin is not even sought as a physical locus. More than any other modernist writer, Joyce endows language with the power to re-create the ever elusive site of generation, whose linguistic representation is given the primacy of truth. As Katie Wales points out, "[l]anguage for Joyce is not simply a transparent medium of reality but that reality itself" (67). And just as the self will view its own generation in terms of art or artifice, the mother figure will also be replaced by artistic imagery. In the case of *Ulysses*, for example, we see that "it is he [Stephen], through memory and imagination, who brings his mother back, gives her a new birth" (Kiely 51). This linguistic project, to make the self into an artist, and the mother figure into an art object, points to a reversed causality whereby the self's artistic activity precedes and creates the mother.[11] If the mother were seen as a bodily presence, such reversal would not have been possible, and the self would have been in the position of fruitlessly trying to catch up with its origins, while physically growing away from them.

Traditionally, the mother figure has been seen almost exclusively as a body, as the

physical legacy of the self, rather than as the self's narcissistic projection. The mother figure is usually associated with the biological conditioning of natural birth and physical death. Thus Robert Kiely, for example, finds in the mother a stable reference point to the physical world, arguing that "certain characteristics of the mother-child relationship, though their meaning may be questioned, remain physically constant" (47), and that "[t]o remember the mother is to remember the flesh and man's inescapable dependence on it" (55). It would follow that the burden of inheritance is an objective, natural phenomenon, stable and physically present through the body, rather than a matter of artistic creation of memory. The mother, for Kiely, appears to be an irreducible presence whose unequivocally physical attributes cannot be denied. That is why it is so difficult to replace the lost mother figure; unlike the father or any other person, the mother is expected to be an indispensable physical given. In his discussion of *Ulysses*, for example, Kiely emphasizes the fact that "[m]ythological, literary, and theological substitutes for Stephen's weak father seem relatively easy to come by. His mother, though dead, is more difficult to replace" (51). This critical view of the necessary physicality of the mother was possibly influenced by Freud's statement, quoted by Madelon Sprengnether in *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis*, that "no one possesses more than one mother, and the relation to her is based on an event that is not open to any doubt and cannot be repeated" (1) (from Freud, *SE* II:169). What is not "open to doubt" here is precisely the body and the objective, literal connection between mother and child in the womb. In other words, both for Freud and for Kiely, the mother has a privileged and eternal connection to the biological fact of the self, and this connection holds more strongly than any linguistic or symbolic inheritance through paternity

would ever do. As Sheila MacLeod points out, the mother is "the one with whom we have our first physical relationship. . . . She is the one who first defines relationship for us and . . . defines love. As she handles our bodies, so will we handle them" (15). The self's approach to its own body will then depend on its approach to (or distance from) the mother's body, and this physical connection will define the parameters and boundaries[12] of the self. In this sense, the traditional view of the importance of the physical contact with the mother suggests not only that the mother is the agent of physical reality, but also that the physical is the only stable reality for the self, which is indispensable in the formation of identity. In *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction*, for example, Mark Hussey defines the body[13] as "the correct starting-point in an account of self" (4). If the self is seen primarily as a body, then, in order to succeed in growing out of its need for the mother, the self needs to acquire its own, independent body, to establish its physical distance and difference from the unity of the womb. That is why in "Self / Body / Other: Orality and Ontology in Lawrence," T. H. Adamowski describes the formation of identity, and even of the unconscious, in terms of a physical process. For him, the unconscious is "individual" (195), and what makes it individual is the "body" (196), because "the self is *embodied*" (196).[14] (In terms of the three authors under discussion here, Lawrence[15] seems to be the closest to this view, although even he, as we saw, problematizes the body of the self, as well as the body of the mother.)

For modernism, however, the body becomes suspect. The traditional mother figure with her solid and reliable physical presence or unambiguous physical absence has now been rendered as art, rather than as body[16], and her flesh-and-blood attributes have emerged as

insufficient and irrelevant. This departure from the body has a twofold function. On the one hand, it allows the mother to be idealized into what some critics call the "phallic mother," who "represents the phantastic figure of 'completeness' in the mind of the child; the phallic mother is the all-powerful, all-giving source of life that embodies both mother and father" (Dever 43). In order to make the mother figure seem complete, the child needs to detach her from the body and its imperfections, including death, and then recreate her through the elegiac forms of language and memory. As Dever further observes, "[r]epresentations of the maternal ideal must necessarily get past the body" (19). On the other hand, this idealization of the mother figure has served to emphasize the fact that she is inaccessible to the child once the umbilical link has been cut.

The mother has lost her original physical connection to the child-artist, and has been transformed, by the child-artist, into memories and stories.[17] And the substitution of an elegy for the mother means the substitution of the artistic self for the mother. Carolyn Dever explains this process in more detail. According to her, the mother's power is replaced with the power of symbolic representation, and therefore the mother's power is replaced with the child's power. "The child's assumption of language . . . is equivalent to his appropriation of the discourse of rejection" (46). For modernism, and especially for these three authors, the mother is often a disembodied unit of meaning which the child can manipulate through language and other symbolical codes. The child wants the mother to become a ghost.[18] If at the moment of birth the physical connection between mother and child is broken, then the mother ceases to exist as a bodily presence to the child, and assumes the ghostly dimensions of narrative. The mother, for Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, is always the narrated mother, not

because she is always literally dead and has to be remembered in stories, but because, even when physically present, she is only linguistically available to the child. Both her presence and her absence are functions of language, rather than of physical reality. The mother figure, therefore, is not immediately accessible but is always artistically recreated and aesthetically distanced.[19] As Makiko Minow-Pinkney points out, "representation is only possible at the expense of the body–both one's own body . . . and the body of the mother" (107). If the mother has become a disembodied artistic image haunting and threatening the self with the unavailability of the body (the actual site of origins), the maternal has become a narrative function through which these origins can be approached or rejected. Devoid of a body, the mother is no longer a specific person, as much as a representation of the self, a narcissistic projection. Consequently, the maternal oedipal and narcissistic pressures are now the pressures of discourse, irreducible to a specific, embodied person, and the anxieties that torment the self are no longer sexual but symbolical. While the loss of the mother has been accomplished as a physical event, the melancholic lingering of the maternal ghost is a symbolic and artistic problem for the self. The body of the mother can present a problem only in so far as it does not exist, either because of death or because of being sexually unavailable to the son. But this absence means that the self does not have to deal with the body when dealing with the problem of the mother. The self has to confront the aesthetic problem of devising a language through which one can talk about the mother.

The absence of the mother or of a maternal function threatens the self, not only because it questions the self's origins and future, but also because it implies that the self may be guilty of wishing to eliminate the mother in order to succeed her. The problem of

inheritance as murder can be traced in all three authors. In Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, for example, Rachel succeeds in deflecting death away from the ideal continuity of the maternal by appropriating death to herself; she prefers to be incomplete and renounce the maternal function, rather than admit that such incompleteness is inherent in the maternal function itself, and that different individuals must die in order for the whole process of motherhood to ensure the continuity of life. In Lawrence, the problem of guilt seems to acquire more intensity, as we see the literal act of Paul Morel giving poison to his mother in *Sons and Lovers*. As with the other two authors, in Lawrence the question of guilt is the question of agency, of trying to determine whether the self has any control over the mother figure, and, by extension, any control over its own origins. Being able to make the mother appear or disappear means being in control of the self's appearance and disappearance as well. And to make the self appear is nothing less than self-creation.

The problem of the proof of the son's agency through guilt reaches its culmination in Joyce's *Ulysses*, where Stephen makes an attempt to establish his guilt in relation to the mother figure, but is unable to do so. And here we see that the child's guilt is unreal. The child cannot murder the mother, since he or she never has access to the mother's body. In a way, guilt is the most coveted of all forms of relationship between mother and child, because it would prove beyond doubt that such a relationship still exists after the separation of birth. But the child inevitably realizes that even guilt is bound to fail, and that even this last, postmortem bond to the mother has been severed. Contrary to Karen Lawrence's claim that "[a] child never knows the identity of his father, in contrast to that of his mother" (234), we can say that the child cannot "know" even the mother. Going back to D. H. Lawrence's

observation that "[t]o *know* a living thing is to kill it. You have to kill a thing to know it satisfactorily" (qtd. in Kim 438), we can see why the child's murder of the mother is no more likely than the child's knowledge of the mother, or the knowledge of origins: language cannot alter or manipulate the physical reality of the body. That is why Madelon Sprengnether suggests that "the preoedipal mother [who is the mother associated with the point of origin of the self], like Medusa, cannot be looked at directly" (6). The self is forced to rely on its symbolic powers of language manipulation. All symbolic representations, however, fall back onto the self and only serve as projections on the outside world. Thus, the problem of the identity of the self and the self's origin has direct bearing on narcissism, as the self has to resort back to its own artistic resources in order to recreate a chronology for itself.

The purpose of such a chronology is to supplant the original function of motherhood. Motherhood here is not to be understood as the maternal role of a specific person, although occasionally specific persons do occupy that position, but more often it means the function which defines a literal or metaphorical condition of unity followed by birth / separation and the traumatic processes set in motion as a result. The self can either overcome the loss of the mother (which is in a very real sense the loss of history for the self), or it can enter a melancholic state of absorption of the outside world, seeking to incorporate all outside objects and persons into the self, thereby re-enacting the original oral dependency on the mother.[20] Narcissism is specifically related to desire for the mother, and has no such connection to the father figure, for example. As Béla Grunberger points out, "[t]he narcissistic group is constituted *in opposition* to the paternal principle (the reality principle)

and places itself under the aegis of the omnipotent Mother in a narcissistic regression which provides it with a feeling of completeness and bliss" (25). As we saw, the protagonists in these novels rarely achieve a successful reconciliation with the absence or unavailability of the mother, and usually suffer from one or more symptoms of incorporative narcissism and melancholia. Velente points out that incorporation

> constitutes a pathology of mourning or, rather, a symptom of a failure or avoidance of mourning. Instead of a psychic 'process' leading to the symbolic mediation and ultimate acceptance of loss, incorporation enacts an imaginary refusal of loss, a phantasmatic denial of separation. . . . In this inverted, highly aversive form of narcissism, which at its extreme becomes outright melancholia, the ego can neither expand upon its autoerotic interests nor extend them into the external world; it can absorb and *only* absorb, taking elements from the outer world and converting them into its own substance. The difference between the departed and any signifiers or proxies thereof is substantially abridged in the incorporative fantasy. But because this activity has a purely compensatory function, the ego can never have done with it. (28)

The self is always faced with loss, the loss of the union with the mother. In the words of Sprengnether, "the loss that precipitates the organization of a self is always implicitly the loss of a mother, whose status as present/absent problematizes her signification" (9). How the self handles this loss will depend on how successfully the self grows up. As Kiely points out, "the struggle toward manhood is inextricably woven with the struggle toward self-definition as an artist" (62). To make sense of the loss means to mourn it and convert it to a symbolic,

artistic expression.[21] It is in this sense that Hilary Clark, in "'Legibly Depressed': Shame, Mourning, and Melancholia in *Finnegans Wake*," defines art as "a work of mourning" (466). Art is then the most common way "to escape behavior rooted in narcissistic yearning for fusion" (Clayton 215). If this process is successful, it would establish the self as an autonomous personality and an artist. Kiely speaks of "the possible birth of an artist freed from a preoccupation with self" (8), implying that the artist is someone who has overcome the narcissistic impulse to incorporate, and has learned, instead, to express. According to Kiely, "Joyce, Woolf, and Lawrence were similarly struck by the need, memorably expressed by Eliot, to 'escape from personality'" (7). The way for the artist to escape the incorporative self is to escape the fusion with the mother and make the maternal enter the realm of art. If this process is not successful, if language fails, the self will continue to seek the mother figure and will fail at becoming an artist. It is significant that even though all protagonists in the novels have artistic ambition or talent, their identity as artists is constantly challenged.[22] This means that they have not unequivocally embraced language as a substitute for the mother, and are still in danger of being unable to mourn. These protagonists are often on the verge of melancholia, which explains their problematic relationship to the world around them, as well as their identity crises. Since the melancholic condition is regressive, the self seems to seek death rather than life: it seems to want to follow the disappearance of the mother with its own disappearance.[23]

Thus, Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce vigorously and relentlessly question the identity of the mother figure, her function, and her viability. The mother figure is ontologically dead / unavailable as origin for Woolf, physically dead / sexually unavailable for Lawrence, and

historically dead / unavailable as inheritance for Joyce. For Woolf, there are doubts that the mother ever existed in the past (lack of continuity), for Lawrence, that she exists in the present (lack of contemporaneity), and for Joyce, that she will be reincarnated in the future (lack of chronology). But in all three of them, motherhood emerges as problematic and ambivalent, and, if its status and authority are restored, it is only through the struggle and growth of the individual self.

Notes

1. Even though most critics regard Mrs. Ramsay's death as a symbolic event through which the child-figures in the novel (mainly Lily and Mr. Ramsay) achieve some measure of independence from the "angel in the house," at least one critic, Herbert Marder, suggests the possibility of physical aggression directed at the mother figure: "One suspects that Mr. Ramsay . . . is at least partially responsible for his wife's untimely death" (24).

2. It is in this sense that Carolyn Dever speaks of "the story of the 'maternal death' at the beginning of every life" (xiv).

3. As Dever tells us, the ideal is that of "a dead–and therefore virtuous, pure, noble, and true–mother" (xi).

4. That is why the loss of the mother in Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce is associated with regressive, narcissistic tendencies directed toward the self, rather than with open aggression toward the mother.

5. Joseph Velente explains the importance of symbolic activity in mourning: "According to Freud, we can never part with anything dear to us without somehow making it a constituent part of our identity, preferably by annexing some symbolic or specifically verbal substitute for the lost thing. Ideally, such a substitute will *both* stand in for and distinguish itself from the lost object, thus permitting separation to occur on a less traumatic basis" (27-28).

6. Not all critics would agree. In *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations*, Rachel Bowlby envisions the artist as "being placed [either] in a masculine position" (60) or "the not-yet-adult position of the child" (61). In other words, according to Bowlby, the process of becoming an artist does not coincide with the process of growing up or growing out of the mother, and in fact these two processes may be incompatible. The artist, however, appears to have, by definition, a gown-up control over language, unlike "the child's inability to describe his own condition in abstract terms" (Sklenicka 155).

7. Even though Robert Kiely argues that "the artist's ability to be 'author of himself' . . . is brought into doubt" (57), it seems that self-creation is the only way to deal with the death of the mother.

8. For a different perspective on language in Woolf, see Jane Marcus, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

9. This is especially true of the relationship between language and the unconscious. In "Lawrence, Freud, and Civilization's Discontents," Max Saunders explains that "The Lawrentian unconscious . . . is anti-ideal, anti-abstract: 'the unconscious is never an abstraction, *never to be abstracted.* It is never an ideal entity. It is always concrete.'" [Lawrence qtd. in Saunders 275; from *Fantasia and the Unconscious* 242] This is why verbalizing it presents such a problem, since language depends upon ideas and abstractions"

(276).

10. In the case of Lawrence, John Haegert finds a "nostalgic yearning for an older world of organic unity and total presence" (18), a hope that language will some day be adequate to express reality: "Lawrence never fully gave up the 'Platonic' hope of finding the permanent truth of things behind the 'appearance' of everyday existence. Nor did he relinquish completely the idea of evolving a right original language which would allow him to retrieve the unity of insight and perception" (17-18).

11. Carolyn Dever points out a similar problem in the Victorian novel: "The function of maternal absence, and even more problematically, the function of maternal return, indicate a crisis of origin that is configured as a crisis of causality" (xiii). Unlike its Victorian counterpart, however, the modernist novel presents us with an absence and a return of the mother neither of which is literal and physical. The loss of the mother can be experienced even if the mother is physically present, and the return of the mother can be enacted through language.

12. Barbara Shapiro points out that both Woolf and Lawrence write about "profound narcissistic injury and deep ambivalence toward the mother, along with attendant problems in self-cohesion and ego boundaries" (348).

13. For a more detailed discussion of the body in Woolf's fiction, see George Ella Lyon, "Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Body." [In *Virginia Woolf: Centennial Essays*. Ed. Elaine K. Ginsberg and Laura Moss Gottlieb. Troy, NY: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1983. 111-25.]

14. Baruch Hochman expresses a similar view: "This desire for disjunction and independence is rooted in the soma, below the threshold of consciousness" (147). And Eugene Goodheart speaks of "a bodily recoil from any connection which might confuse the self with another" (112).

15. Some critics even argue that the physical, the bodily reality of the self, incorporates the non-physical, and so exhausts, for Lawrence, the meaning of the self. Gary Cox, for example, says: "Lawrence proclaimed the affirmation of the physical self as a spiritual act" (175).

16. Dever hints at, even though she does not articulate it, a connection between the unavailability of the body and the inability of the ego to complete successfully the process of mourning; instead, the ego engages in "the melancholic construction of an ideal through the loss of the living object, the em*bodied* mother" (xii) [italics mine]. Thus the lack or denial of the body also marks the stage where normal grief, which is part of the necessary process of growth and inheritance, becomes pathological and turns into melancholy.

17. This is not a typical position for the mother figure. To transmit inheritance through stories or any symbolical function has traditionally been the privilege of the father figure. As

Kiely remarks, "The father's legacy is intellectual, moral, economic, legal, and, by virtue of the name, always social and public" (50). The mother's legacy, he implies, is one of the body, of the physical locus of generation. But it seems that for modernism the body of the mother emerges as secondary and problematic, because unavailable. That is why, when Kiely argues that "[Stephen's] mother's ghost is a reminder that nature can never be altogether subdued" (54), we must keep in mind the fact that the mother as a body cannot be reconciled with the mother as a ghost, and that the mother as a body is never really there. If the body cannot be "subdued," it is mainly because the body is absent.

18. Even Kiely acknowledges the fact that the mother's image, more than the mother's physical presence, is what haunts the son / daughter in the works of Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, which include "frequent meetings with the mother, especially the dead mother's spirit" (48).

19. Kiely seems to disagree here. He argues that, for Paul Morel, "The mother's physical absence represents an aesthetic deprivation" (63), and therefore that the son needs the body of the mother in order to create the art of the mother. These two states of the mother figure, however, seem to be incompatible with each other. In order for the artistic recreation of maternal memory to emerge, the child-artist needs to dispose of the physical body of the mother.

20. For more on what Nancy Chodorow calls the "primary identification (a sense of oneness)" (59) with the mother, see Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, especially "Total Dependence and the Narcissistic Relation to Reality," pp. 58-62, and "Preoedipal Mother-Son Relationships," pp. 104-108.

21. Even though Kiely insists that "there is no escape–even through art–from the mother's claim on her son" (57).

22. Some critics call Mrs. Ramsay's art "craft," and others raise the question whether Stephen Dedalus is a real artist or merely an observer and connoisseur of art. Similar objections have been raised in relation to Paul Morel, whose painting has no significant place in the novel.

23. Shernaz Mollinger points out that both Hawthorne and Lawrence had "extreme responses to their mothers' deaths [and] . . . reacted as if they had, in fact, lost part of themselves, and both of them almost died too very soon after their mothers did" (84). For Woolf, see Roberta Rubenstein, "Fixing the Past: Yearning and Nostalgia in Woolf and Lessing," especially the sections "Mother," pp. 26-32, and "Reconciliation with Loss" (28). For more on Joyce and his mother, see Mark Shechner, *Joyce in Nighttown*, especially pp. 227-52.

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