Virginia Woolf's views of consciousness in relation to art and life

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ABSTRACT.

Virginia Woolf is most often treated by critics as a "stream of consciousness" writer, whose main concern was to represent the varying shades of consciousness in its response to changing impressions and experience. Otherwise, her contribution is seen to lie in her experiments affecting the outward form of the novel: for example, the use of the interludes in The Waves. These presuppositions have caused critics to find many things obscure or unintelligible in her novels. Even sympathetic commentators have accused her of "haziness, vague indefinability of meaning: precisely the kind of uninterpretable symbolism which is also to be encountered in other forms of art of the same period."[1.]

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that the real basis of Virginia Woolf's novels lies in her own theories about the nature of man and his relationship to his universe: her books are intended to express her personal notions of consciousness, identity, immortality, society, the world of solid things, and of the relationship between art and life. Also, through her novels, her thought may be seen to form a coherent and developing whole. Thus the aim of this study is to show that Mrs. Woolf is a philosophical novelist, and that her works of art are essentially novels of ideas.

A recognition of the structure and unity of each of her works does in fact depend on a knowledge of these ideas. Consequently, the body of this thesis is devoted to a close analysis of her novels and other writings in order to discover the nature of her important notions, and then to determine the way in which they affect the content and literary technique of the novels. Attention has been paid to the part played by her circle of friends, the Bloomsbury Group, in forming her ideas, and reference has also been made to relevant aspects of the literary and social atmosphere of the times, and to the prominent figures - such as G.E.Moore, Bergson, Bradley, and William James - who contributed most to the current climate of ideas.

The results of this study have enabled definite conclusions to be drawn, and, I believe, have proved this approach to be successful. On the basis of this study's findings, the majority of what has been thought difficult and confusing in the novels has here been clarified, her symbols have been explained, and a new and accurate understanding of Mrs. Woolf's meaning has been made possible. Thus, in addition to its purpose of establishing its main thesis, this study may largely be considered a complete study of Virginia Woolf.

The thesis has been organized according to the separate novels, partly for the sake of clarity, and partly due to the coincidence that there are nine novels, and nine separate sections in the life-cycle of The Waves. It was hoped that the thesis itself would thus provide an additional illustration af "significant form".

1. Auerbach, Eric, Mimesis, Princeton: University Press, 1953, 551.

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S VIEWS OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN RELATION TO ART AND LIFE.

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David Bunyan.

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Contents.

ABBREVIATIONS USED.

The Voyage Out	V.O.
Night and Day	N.D.
Jacob's Room	J.R.
Mrs. Dalloway	D.
To the Lighthouse	T.L.
Orlando	O.
The Waves	W.
The Years	Y.
Between the Acts	B.A.
A Writer's Diary	Diary.

INTRODUCTION

Virginia Woolf, even to-day, is most often thought of as an "impressionist" writer. In the main she is looked upon by critics as a skilful explorer of mood and ambience, who also in her day contributed, in company with such men as Joyce, Eliot and Pound, to the literary experimentation that is seen to be an especial characteristic of the nineteen twenties. However, there is a growing feeling, evident in one or two more recent studies and articles on this novelist, that these elements alone are not adequate for a proper understanding of her work, and that important themes and theories about life, nature and the Universe form the basis for each of Mrs. Woolf's novels. Bearing this in mind, it is the aim of this study to establish the still controversial thesis that Mrs. Woolf's books are, in addition to all their other qualities, novels of ideas, and that Virginia Woolf herself is a philosophical novelist.

This analysis differs from the small number of previous works with the same aim in two ways: it attempts a closer, more detailed, and more concentrated study than any undertaken in the past. Also it tries to arrive at accurate conclusions about Mrs. Woolf's prevailing themes by making use, first and foremost, of the evidence immediately available in her writings, rather than, as has happened previously, by identifying her with any one school or by suggesting that her work is the expression of any other systematic philosophy. Nevertheless, in order even further to substantiate this study's findings, it will of course be valuable to discover whether the ideas can be compared with or related to any current in the contemporary climate of ideas, or, more usefully and significantly, to those of Virginia Woolf's immediate circle of friends, the Bloomsbury Group. In short, I hope to demonstrate that, seen as a whole, the work of this authoress may be considered both as a unique philosophy in its own right, and yet also as having a definite place in acknowledged philosophic tradition.

I of course in no way maintain that Virginia Woolf was the first to see that philosophy and literature need not be separate disciplines. For instance, in an essay in his book Hours in a Library, her father,

Sir Leslie Stephen, eminent in the nineteenth century as a man of letters, critic and biographer, wrote the following:

> Under every poetry, it has been said, there lies a philosophy. Rather it may almost be said, every poetry is a philosophy. The poet and the philosopher live in the same world and are interested in the same truths. What is the nature of man and the world in which he lives, and what, in consequence, should be our conduct? ... The difference is that the poet has intuitions, while the philosopher gives demonstrations; that the thought which in one mind is converted into emotion, is in the other resolved into logic; and that a symbolic representation of the idea is substituted for direct expression. 1.

Leslie Stephen, for whom "novels should be as it were prose saturated with poetry", 2. might have applied this equally well to the novel. From his paragraph above he went so far as to draw an evaluative principle: "a man's thoughts, whether embodied in symbols or worked out in syllogisms, are more valuable in proportion as they indicate greater philosophical insight." 3. He did, in fact, use this principle to criticize the novels of Charlotte Bronte in an essay in the same collection. 4.

His daughter, Virginia Woolf, while reacting in many ways against his attitudes and his age, as she and her circle conceived it, continued at the same time much of the broad tradition of ideas in which she had grown up. There is little in the view above which she would not have affirmed. In a letter written at the start of her most famous creative period, she states: "as age increases I do more and more believe in thought as an element in fiction." 5.

I suggest that the knowledge that Mrs. Woolf was a philosophical novelist - was an original thinker who used the novel form rather than the treatise to work out, to verify and to embody her ideas about the world, consciousness, and art - is essential for an understanding of her creative work, and has been grasped by none of her detractors and few of her critics. Joan Bennett, for example, in a standard work, says: "It

1. Hours in a Library, II, 250.
2. Op. cit., I, 20.
3. Op. cit., II, 251.
4. Op. cit., III, 1.
5. Letter Oct. 30, 1922, quoted by Dorothy Brewster, Virginia Woolf, 163.

is not then for moral precepts nor for a system of metaphysics that her reader will look - if he does so, he will look in vain." [6] Of course, I do not claim that Virginia Woolf's ability with the traditional concerns of fiction - individual and environment, individual and others - was in any way vitiated by her wish to comprehend these within the broader atmosphere of issues and exigencies which surrounds them. Rather, the mettle of her entirely artistic achievement is shown by the way in which these wider concerns and her approach to them are subsumed and given form by her art.

Of course, in identifying the novelist's art as practised by Virginia Woolf with philosophical activity in this way, we need to be clear on exactly what we mean by philosophy, and in what way it may be allied to literary method. Professor Dorothy Emmet, in her book The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking, has defined this branch of philosophy in a way which is very relevant to Virginia Woolf's method:

> metaphysics starts from the articulation of relationships, which are judged to be constitutive of an experience or experiences in a significant way. (I have tried to show what may be meant by "significance" here by considering the notion of "Importance".) A conceptual expression of such a relationship is then extended analogically as a co-ordinating idea, in terms of which further ranges of experience may be interpreted; or it may be used in making a judgment concerning the nature of "reality". I am convinced that metaphysics is in some sense an analogical way of thinking. 7.

I have included the parenthesis above to show the unity of the thought in relation to my third quotation from this source. Dorothy Emmet continues:

> Are such analogies not in the end products of the form-creating activity of the mind, constructing pictures of the world (whether we call these pictures metaphysical or theological) seen through the medium of a particular kind of experience? And if we have to concede a substantial truth in this, have we any warrant to suppose that such theories can be more than expressions of particular ways of feeling about the world which, because of some maybe personal and traditional associations, have seemed to people significant? 8.

Professor Emmet casts about to attain and isolate the precise

6. Joan Bennett: Virginia Woolf, 64
7. The Nature of Mataphysical Thinking, v.
8. Op. cit., 5-6

nature of this significance:

> Here we may take up a suggestion of Whitehead's that one characteristic of "importance" is that it imposes a "perspective". Without some judgment of "importance" we are presented with mere multiplicity of detail or at best a dead level catalogue of facts. A judgment of what is important brings form into multiplicity, whether in presenting an intellectual theme, or in the practical conduct of life ... a metaphysical theory develops a perspective, an outlook on the world in terms of some co-ordinating analogy with what is judged to be an important experience. 9.

Such a theory, Dorothy Emmet tells us, can have no direct justification, but there are criteria by which we can attempt to judge its efficacy. It must in particular be coherent within itself, comprehensive in relation to the facts it attempts to explain, and have immediacy in terms of those ideas which are most stimulating and creative in that particular age or period. [10.] A special integrity is necessary in the thinker or artist: in the moment of the act of creation of form "the thinker finds himself saying 'yes' freely with his whole being." [11.] The necessity for this form is that "Without form, nothing can be grasped; there is mere vague multiplicity of confused impressions." [12.]

Obviously, this method of philosophizing - taking some personal experience, judged to be in a special way "significant", and deriving from it a theory about the nature of all human existence - is one which could well be employed within the ordinary framework of the novel. Dorothy Emmet calls this method making an "analogy" between our experience and what might be termed the pattern of the universe. So, on this analysis, poetry and metaphysics become very close. The method that Virginia Woolf herself made use of in her fiction is, I maintain, very like the one Dorothy Emmet describes.

A number of salient terms remain after a reading of Professor Emmet's account: "experience", "relation", "significance", "form", "reality", "perspective". These terms are also those which had central importance in the aesthetic thought of the Bloomsbury circle, and in that of Virginia Woolf herself, who was a member of that circle. The

9. Op. cit., 196.
10. Op. cit., 196-198.
11. Op. cit., 198.
12. Op. cit., 200.

correspondence is not coincidental. The explanation of metaphysics which shows the relationship between all these terms, and also the indivisible kinship of metaphysics and analogy (dependant siblings: metaphor, simile, etc.) in their form-creating function, makes clear the place of these ideas in the activity of a novelist whose concern was not merely through her art to create form in art, but to create form in life.

In the novels of Virginia Woolf, then, as I shall show, metaphysics and art are united. As shall be seen, Dorothy Emmet's explanation makes it possible for us to perceive how Mrs. Woolf looked upon her writing. To her, too, the "form-creating activity of the mind" [13.] was that most important for both art and metaphysics. In an age where orthodox religion had been proved meaningless and void - she was, after all, the daughter of a famous Victorian agnostic - it was still necessary to substitute for the old-fashioned faith something firm and central which would once again give life security and meaning. She found what she sought in art and metaphysics: they were, in their different but related ways, "forms" which would once more restore "form" to life.

It is no accident that the earliest work of any length Virginia Woolf attempted, while still in her teens, was a dissertation on the nature of God - of God and of change: the conflict between the two concepts.[14.] Her most abiding preoccupation throughout her life, present even in her final novels, remained man's unceasing attempt to establish "form" out of the chaos of life. Opposing this entirely human struggle were the continuing ravages of time and change in their blind attempt to destroy all form. Civilization, knowledge, philosophy, art: all these, as I hope to demonstrate, Mrs. Woolf felt to be the results of man's most "human" need: that of striking order, form and pattern into the inhuman world about him.

The evidence here and in the books to be analyzed will show that in essence Mrs. Woolf's attitude to the writing of her novels was similar to that Professor Emmet describes in relation to metaphysics: it was, she believed, to provide form for herself - and for the sympathetic reader - in life. Since, as I have said, Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury

13. Op. cit., 5
14. A Writer's Diary, 151.

used many of the same salient terms as Professor Emmet has above, it would, of course, be enlightening here to see exactly how approximate their use of these terms is to her own. Bearing in mind, then, Dorothy Emmet's perceptive analysis of the nature of metaphysics, I shall first give an account of Virginia Woolf's attitude to "perspective" and "reality". Aspects of "significance", "experience", "relation" and "form" will be treated further on in accounts of her debt to the Bloomsbury group and to thinkers outside Britain.

It is sufficient for the moment to emphasize that for Mrs. Woolf's circle in London - the "Bloomsbury Group" - the subject of "form" was the most pervasive topic of interest in their early years as an informal society. Inspired by the Post-Impressionist painters, and in particular by their precursor Cézanne, Clive Bell led the art theoreticians among the group by first coining the phrase "significant form", which is now part of the universal vocabulary of art appreciation. Cézanne himself sought to introduce structure and form into the evanescent world of the Impressionist painters, and it would perhaps be helpful to turn momentarily to Cézanne - who also spoke of seeing the world in terms of the sphere, the cylinder, and the cone - to illustrate the connection between the concept of "perspective", which Mrs. Woolf often applied to her writing, and the notion of "form" in art:

In the words of Sir Herbert Read, for Cézanne

> the field of visual sensation has no precise limits, the elements within it are scattered or confused. So we introduce a focus and try to relate our visual sensation to this selected point. The result is what Cézanne himself called an 'abstraction', an incomplete representation of the field of vision, a 'cone', as it were, into which the objects focussed fall with a sense of order or cohesion. This is what Cézanne meant by 'a construction after nature'. 15.

This is, after all, what happens in ordinary perception. Experience as it reaches the eye is only an undifferentiated blur of sense-impressions. It has at first no discernible pattern, and thus no "meaning". Our brain gives it meaning by emphasizing one aspect and neglecting others. We focus in turn upon single aspects of what we see at a time and relegate others to the background in order to gain information about the world from

15. A Concise History of Modern Painting, London: Thames and Hudson, 1961, 18.

the sights, sounds and impressions that we receive. We also impose - as it were - a heirarchy of importance on the different things in the world about us. So it is the emphasis we place upon things, as Dorothy Emmet rightly says, which gives meaning to the "vague multiplicity of confused impressions" [16] that we perceive: the different grades of importance that we attach to things.

This perspective we impose on life - the way we range the objects we come across - is itself a sort of "form". Virginia Woolf had the kind of imagination that was continuously producing metaphors of a visual sort, and she thus tended to understand abstract concepts in terms of visual imagery. Where the concept of "form" appears in the novels, we usually find Mrs. Woolf using geometrical symbols such as a wedge, an oblong, or most often, a globe, to make her meaning more vivid. We may if we choose use the image of the "cone" or "wedge" - the shape of the lighthouse beam - to stand for this "perspective" we impose, which applies as much to our mental picture of the world as to our sight.

We have seen how metaphysics has been explained as working up from a particular pattern, experience or relation that we perceive in our own personal world to the creation of an analogical mode for all reality. By thus placing an emphasis on one aspect of reality in preference to others, these other aspects are automatically ranged behind the first according to their relatedness to it. In this way the resulting "form" gives meaning to reality as a whole as we perceive it.

But for Virginia Woolf, neither in a work of art or in a philosophy is "form" confined to the "shape" of the sculpture or the "structure" of the novel or the book of metaphysics. The perception of form may provide form for life. Rather like the lighthouse it radiates out into the rest of the reader's experience.

So, particularly for Virginia Woolf's purposes, art and metaphysics - as we have come to understand it - she felt need not be seen as separate disciplines, for they both had the same ultimate function. In fact, for her, the "form" of the novel of ideas was, in the last analysis, its most abiding "philosophy". It provided, in the end, the greatest consolation. More and more, in Mrs. Woolf's art, novel and philosophy

16. The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking, 200.

became indistinguishable. As she herself says:

> When philosophy is not consumed in a novel, when we can underline this phrase with a pencil, and cut out that exhortation with a pair of scissors and paste the whole into a system, it is safe to say there is something wrong with the philosophy or with the novel or with both. 17.

So, in our consideration here, first of all, of the aspects of "perspective", we may now turn to Virginia Woolf's own works. In her first novel, The Voyage Out (1915), one of the characters, a would-be-novelist, says: "As for the novel itself, the whole conception, the way one's seen the thing, felt about it, made it stand in relation to other things, not one in a million cares for that. And yet I sometimes wonder whether there's anything else in the whole world worth doing." 18. It is evident that Mrs. Woolf has already struck on at least the idea of emphasis, of perspective, as the principle means of establishing form in the practice of fiction. Although in 1922 this is one of her criticisms of Joyce, that she could find no centre, no "great conception", 19. - in other words no "emphasis" - she does not describe the theory in terms of "perspective" until 1925, when there is the following entry in her diary: "I think I will find some theory about fiction; I shall read six novels and start some hares. The one I have in view is about perspective." 20.

In an essay on Defoe written at about this time and published in The Common Reader, she talks about the right way to set about understanding a novelist: "Our first task, and it is often formidable enough, is to master his perspective ... in what order he ranges the large common objects upon which novelists are fated to gaze: man and men; behind them Nature; and above them that power which for convenience and brevity we may call God." 21. She points out the individual nature of perspective by comparison of the differing emphases of Scott, Jane Austen, and Peacock, despite their having lived in much the same period of literary history.

It is thus certain that Mrs. Woolf was aware of the central importance for the artist of establishing a perspective. In a generally

17. 'The Novels of George Meredith', Collected Essays I, 230.
18. V.O., 262.
19. A Writer's Diary, 50
20. Op. cit., 83
21. 'Robinson Crusoe', Collected Essays I, 70.

unfavourable assessment of E.M. Forster's achievement, published in the 1920's, she compares him with writers of "single vision": "if there is one gift more essential to a novelist than another it is the power of combination - the single vision. The success of the masterpiece seems to lie not so much in their freedom from faults - indeed we tolerate the grossest errors in them all - but in the immense persuasiveness of a mind which has completely mastered its perspective." 22.

Perspective, or "single vision", then, is the unifying factor in artistic activity: it is the individual way the author has of ordering the various elements of life. Imposing a perspective, we see, is the author's means of avoiding "a mere vague multiplicity of confused impressions". It is the author's perspective, we may in fact say, which makes coherent the fragments of experience, which moulds chaos into form, and which attempts to infuse "meaning" into art and life, by apportioning "place" to the particular aspects of what the author perceives, in relation to some central idea or intelligence. As Dorothy Emmet makes clear to us, it is also the means by which consciousness in general appropriates experience: makes it its own. But if an attempt is made from this to deduce something about the nature of "reality" - to enlarge this individual perspective to see if it may tell us something about all life - then the thinker or novelist may genuinely be said to be indulging in metaphysical speculation. This Mrs. Woolf certainly does:

> What is meant by reality? It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable - now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper lying in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun....But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates. 23.

What is "real" for one person is what achieves permanence in memory by its accord with, and its effect on, the perspective of that individual consciousness. Each person believes something to be most "real" or "true" if it fits in with, or contributes to, that person's picture of the world.

Each person, we have found, emphasizes different aspects of

22. 'The Novels of E.M. Forster', Collected Essays I, 345.
23. A Room of One's Own, 108.

experience, according to his own personality and outlook. Thus each person has an individual pattern which may or may not be related to some universal pattern. This objective 'reality', if it exists at all, is seen to be a universal form or overall pattern in our experience, of the totality of which pattern we may believe that we gain brief and unsatisfactory glimpses. But more than this it is difficult for anyone to say with certainty. At any time, we can only guess at the whole shape. We have only incomplete "moments of vision", states of consciousness, which in their vividness of apprehension provide something of the sense of permanence and security, the same sense of reality, as does the aesthetic emotion we feel in contemplation of works of immutable art. For Bloomsbury the sense of "reality" was always part of the response to the perception of "form". As Roger Fry, who, with Clive Bell, was the chief theoretician of the Bloomsbury group as regards the plastic arts, wrote of this "aesthetic emotion" which arose from the contemplation of form: "One can only say that those who experience it feel it to have a peculiar quality of 'reality'." [24].

The position of a man in search of universal pattern might be made clearer if it is likened to that of someone in a dark unfamiliar room with only a failing torch. He sees small parts of the room in fleeting moments, and from this tries to establish the shape of the whole.

Terence, the hero of The Voyage Out, is a pattern-giver. Significantly he is a potential novelist as well, in moments of realisation he has some sense of the presence of a pervading pattern:

> According to him...there was an order, a pattern which made life reasonable, or, if that word was foolish, made it of deep interest anyhow, for sometimes it seemed possible to understand why things happened as they did. Nor were people so solitary and uncommunicative as she (Rachel) believed. She should look for vanity - for vanity was a common quality ... and once linked together by one such tie she would find them not separate and formidable, but practically indistinguishable, and she would come to love them. When she found out that they were like herself. 25.

The way these two thoughts follow each other in the text indicates how related the two problems - that of determining reality and of

24. Vision and Design, 237.
25. V.O., 366.

communication - are. For the problem of determining the overall pattern of course leads to the problem of discovering the resemblance between the pattern of one person's perspective and that of another; to arriving at the overriding pattern if such exists. Communication is the common factor in all Virginia Woolf's thought: hers might even be called a philosophy about communication. Her concern is to discover the nature of consciousness in its relation to other existence, conscious or unconscious, and to art.

It is of course always a matter for conjecture to what extent the pattern, the meaning, which we perceive in the world is a correct apprehension of what is outside us, and to what extent imposed by ourselves. (M. Sartre, for example, would have a great deal to say on this score.) Of this the authoress was perfectly aware. Mrs. Woolf's world, then, is basically one where traditional explanations now have no weight, and one which appears, certainly at first, to be irrational and meaningless. Truly human activity, in this context, lies in attempting to elicit some sort of "form" out of experience, with all the limitations attendant on such an exercise. Thus the thinker's philosophical "form" requires constant recreation in response to time and experience. Virginia Woolf, to whom the conflict between "chaos" and "order", both as abstract antitheses and in actuality in the national and international worlds before the second world war, was a very real one, was fully aware of this weakness in the position of the pattern-giver.

As Bernard, again a would-be novelist, puts it in The Waves:

> But for ourselves, we resent teachers. Let a man get up and say, "Behold, this is the truth", and instantly I perceive a sandy cat filching a piece of fish in the background. Look, you have forgotten the cat, I say. So Neville, at school, in the dim chapel, raged at the sight of the doctor's crucifix. 26.

Mrs. Woolf's upbringing and convictions of course were agnostic. If God did exist, he resembled "President Kruger", he was a mindless giant labouring about the world with cudgels. 27. The only fact about the universe Virginia Woolf was sure of was the existence of the blind

26. W., 160
27. A Haunted House, 15.

recurring force we find in her conception of natural process: the impersonal universal rhythm which brings life and death and regeneration, against which the little "moth" of living individuality struggles for a while bitterly and is silenced, into which it is eventually lost (and found anew in a new life).

She was fully aware of the paradoxical nature of the experience of life: that it was too complex to be explained by the simple notion of a deity. In The Voyage Out, for example, there is the demonstration made of the rejection of the Christian answer by the heroine, and yet, as I shall show, it is out of the very sermon - delivered by an all-too-human ecclesiatic - which was the cause of her rejection, that we gain the clue which resolves the existential mystery of her own death. Similarly, Bernard, descending the stairs in The Waves, is unable to resolve two emotions which he feels: that Percival is dead, and that his son is born. [28]

Virginia Woolf, then, describes the voyage out towards comprehension of a "meaning", a mode for reality by which the experience of the actual may be explained. The characters in each of her books are occupied in this comprehension, are travellers on this voyage towards understanding. Bit by bit they piece together and attempt unsuccessfully to put into words their composite picture of the meaning of life. Their destination, though it may ostensibly be some given end (e.g.: "love") is in actuality the meaning of life. They journey to reality.

Bernard is the human counterpart of this mental journey. The phrasemaker who can never conscientiously finish a story, he at the end is given the task of a complete summing-up of the whole. I shall allow him to sum up very briefly here what has been said so far in this chapter on the subject of forming by experience a pattern for life. After a "moment of vision" caused by the news of Percival's death and the birth of his son, he draws back to his day-to-day life:

> One cannot live outside the machine for more perhaps than half an hour. Bodies, I note, already begin to look ordinary; but what is behind them differs - the perspective. 29.

2.

Virginia Stephen was born in 1882 to her father's second wife,

28. W., 130.
29. W., 132.

Julia. His first marriage, to one of Thackeray's daughters, had been ended by her death. At the time, Julia was herself a widow, and she had three children of her own. When she married Stephen, his days as a Cambridge don - ended for conscientious reasons after he had decided to become an agnostic - were by this time far behind him, and his reputation as a critic, editor, thinker - and alpinist, was steadily growing. The second Mrs. Stephen, who had been a noted beauty, painted by Burne-Jones and other Pre-Raphaelites, as a result of this had ties with the society of Little Holland House; while Leslie Stephen was an admired friend of Meredith, Hardy, and Henry James, and was at least acquainted with most of the major literary figures of his day. In consequence the young Virginia and her sister Vanessa, together with brothers Adrian and Thoby Stephen, had all the advantages of growing up in a privileged and distinguished circle of artistic and literary eminence.

There were other advantages, too: as Noel Annan has recorded,[30] the Stephen family had branches throughout the upper strata of the academic and civil professions. They were, in fact, one of the group of families, often interrelated by marriage, who formed the "intellectual aristocracy" of the highest layer of the middle class in the later part of the nineteenth century: among them the Darwins, the Stracheys, the Huxleys, the Arnolds, and, in an earlier generation, the Tennysons and the Wilberforces. Members of these families were enabled, through their intellectual and moral legacy, to feel themselves not only the equal of, but in some ways even superior to, the traditional aristocracy.

The place of the Stephens in Victorian society had been first established during the days of the "Clapham sect", originally a religious society, but which had been obliged to extend itself into the government in order to make effective its opposition to the slave trade. Although with Leslie Stephen's generation the religious ties were broken, other aspects of an internal, traditional way of life, developed over the years, were continued by him: in particular the emphasis on the worth of family life and "human relationships". Both these are evident influences on Virginia Woolf's outlook, and the feeling for the last, human relationships, was to be a major tenet in the unwritten code of the Bloomsbury group.

30. Leslie Stephen, 1-12.

Within a short number of years, however, a succession of tragic events, which had begun with the death of Leslie Stephen's first wife, and the necessity of committing the only child of this marriage, a daughter, to a mental institution, was to mar the security the family enjoyed. In 1895, when Virginia was 13, her mother died. Her half-sister Stella Duckworth ran the family until her own marriage, only to die herself shortly after the birth of her first baby. In 1902 Leslie Stephen contracted internal cancer, and unwillingly had to be nursed by his daughters until his death in 1904. Virginia herself, always of high sensitivity, had earlier suffered a period of mental illness in which she was suicidal, and during which she once attempted to leap from a window, much like her character Septimus in Mrs. Dalloway. This illness was to recur at intervals throughout her life, always at its worst after intense intellectual and creative activity - in particular after completion of her most demanding novels. It was eventually to culminate in the attack which she anticipated by drowning herself in the Ouse in the early part of the second world war. In fact, the "Hogarth Press" was originally established by Leonard Woolf, Virginia's husband, primarily as a means of distracting her during the periods of severe creative concentration which so endangered her stability. Originally set up in a dining-room, the press was later to provide the first major outlet for the work of T.S. Eliot (in particular his "Waste Land") and the poets of the thirties, and to publish the productions of such diverse talents as those of Sigmund Freud and Katherine Mansfield.

But the sad event which had the greatest effect on her in the first decade of the twentieth century, was the death from typhoid fever in 1906 of her spirited and charming elder brother, Thoby, while on holiday in Greece with the other Stephen children. The theme of promise thwarted by death was to recur for Rachel in The Voyage Out, for Jacob in Jacob's Room, and for Percival in The Waves.

But Thoby Stephen had left a heritage of sorts in London. At Cambridge, he had been a member of the exclusive Apostle's society presided over by the philosopher G.E. Moore. The society, founded in the first half of the nineteenth century, had come to stand for certain specific attitudes, as Henry Sidgwick, and earlier member, testified: it

endemicised the "spirit of the pursuit of truth with absolute devotion and unreserve by a group of intimate friends, who were perfectly frank with each other, and indulged in any amount of humorous sarcasm and playful banter... Absolute candour was the only duty." [31] Many of Thoby Stephen's friends inside the society or in its purlieus were introduced, after university days were over, at 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, where the four Stephen children had moved from their father's home at 22 Hyde Park Gate. From the friendships and meetings of friends which began there was to grow what came to be called the "Bloomsbury Group".

Among the Stephens themselves, the move from Hyde Park Gate was something of a step to freedom, especially for Virginia and Vanessa, who had felt the influence of their father's personality to be oppressive to them. As J.K. Johnstone has said: "Stephen ... by his bold thinking, helped to prepare the way for Bloomsbury. It was ironic, though in the nature of things, that Stephen's death should have been required before the way was finally clear." [32]

As the friends began to live or rent rooms in and around Bloomsbury, the real nature of the group began to emerge. Most noted among the inner circle of what Leonard Woolf has humorously called "Ur-Bloomsbury" [33] were Lytton Strachey, E.M. Forster, John Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant, Desmond MacCarthy, Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf himself, and the Stephens: Virginia, Vanessa, and Adrian. Roger Fry, an older Cantabrian, was not introduced to the group until shortly before the time of his Post-Impressionist Exhibition of 1910, when he was planning the - at least to some - epoch-making confrontation between bourgeois Britain and modern art. Virginia Woolf, in a manifesto for modern fiction, has gone so far as to say: "In or about December 1910" - the date of Fry's exhibition - "human character changed." [34] Certainly it was from about this time that Bloomsbury began to be conscious of the potential for society the future held. The mentor of the new direction in social history

31. Quoted in J.K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group, 9.
32. The Bloomsbury Group, 3.
33. Downhill All The Way, 30.
34. 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', Collected Essays I, 320.

that early Bloomsbury planned was to be the Cambridge arch-Apostle, G.E. Moore.

Lord Keynes, in the essay originally read to the group and published in his Two Memoirs, recalls the emotion both of the times and for the ideas of G.E. Moore: "the influence was not only overwhelming... it was exciting, exhilarating, the beginning of a renaissance, the opening of a new heaven on a new earth, we were forerunners of a new dispensation, we were not afraid of anything." 35. Clive Bell, before 1910, had begun a study of the era, which he planned to call The New Renaissance.

Leonard Woolf has given an account of this anticipation of a "new renaissance":

> In the decade before the 1914 war there was a political and social movement in the world, and particularly in Europe and Britain, which seemed at the time wonderfully hopeful and exciting... It was partly the feeling of relief and release as we broke out of the fog of Victorianism. The forces of reaction and barbarism were still there, but they were in retreat. They had suffered a tremendous defeat in the Dreyfus case ... it looked for a moment as if militarism, imperialism, and antisemitism were on the run. 36.

Along with the revolution in painting, there were innovations abroad on every side. These were, as Leonard Woolf comments, the days of Einstein, Rutherford, Freud, the car and the aeroplane, Shaw and Ibsenism, Diaghilev and Nijinsky.

> it was, I still believe, touch and go whether the movement towards liberty and equality - political and social - and towards civilization, which was so strong in the first decade of the 20th century, would become so strong as to carry everything before it. Its enemies saw the risk and the result was the war of 1914; they postponed the danger of our becoming civilized for at least a hundred years. But the future could not alter the fact that it was exciting to be alive in London in 1911 and that there was reason for exhilaration... For six months or more I lived in a kaleidoscopic dream ... 37.

And then came, like a chasm in a straight road, the war. But the hopes for a great age were not entirely put aside. It was hoped

35. P. 81.
36. Beginning Again, 36
37. Op. cit., 37.

that in the sphere of art at least the anticipation would be justified.[38] Virginia Woolf, writing after the war, states: "I will make one final and surpassingly rash prediction - we are trembling on the verge of one of the great ages of English literature."[39] At the base of this an important part of Bloomsbury's enthusiasm lies, as Keynes has illustrated, the philosophy of G.E. Moore.

3.

> By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasure of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects ... it is only for the sake of these things - in order that as much of them as possible at some time exist - that anyone can be justified in performing any public or private duty.[40]

It was this emphasis on the value of states of consciousness as teleological ends in themselves that had a major appeal among the facets of Moore's thought. This doctrine meant that certain states of mind were entirely valuable in themselves, and could not be used towards the attainment of some yet "higher" good, as most things in our experience may. It is here that we may find the one obvious strain in Virginia Woolf's outlook which may be traced to the spread of Moore's influence in Bloomsbury. As undergraduates the Apostles seem to have spent time in what must often enough have been specious analysis of each other's reactions. In Mrs. Woolf's work, however, her belief in the nature of consciousness as the seat of reality encouraged her interest in mental processes, and led her by analysis and introversion to highly sophisticated psychological observations. The Waves is, on a single level, the prime result of this continued study.

However, Roger Fry and Clive Bell went even further in their estimation of the value of these "states of mind". Where she could not follow the Bloomsbury art theoreticians was in their belief that the emotions of ordinary life - arising from those things which were merely "means to an end" - had no relevance for art.[41] The only appropriate emotion for art, they said, was the "aesthetic emotion" reserved for

38. See Roger Fry, Vision and Design, 17.
39. 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', Collected Essays I, 337.
40. G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica, 188-9
41. See 'Life and the Novelist', Collected Essays II, 131-6.

"ends" alone. While to them art, or rather the emotion of beauty felt in response to art, was valuable because it was useless - it could not be used for any other purpose - to Virginia Woolf Mrs. Brown - "life itself" [42.] - was the proper stuff of fiction. Certainly by "life itself" she meant - at first - much more the inner than the social life, but she saw it was only through true response to others that this inner life manifested itself.

The task that G.E. Moore set himself was much the task that ethical philosophers had tackled since the time of Plato and Aristotle: to understand the nature of the word "good". But Moore was in reaction against the Aristotelian Mill, whose thought had dominated this field in the later part of the nineteenth century. Moore planned a "scientific ethics", and claimed that previous moral philosophers had confused two questions: "what kind of things ought to exist for their own sakes?", and "what kind of actions ought we to perform?". They had thus confused the ultimate and proper aim of human activity, called "the Good" (meaning - to Moore - the most intrinsically valuable 'ends' of all), and the description "good" or "goodness" applied to actions or things.

Moore began to consider the meanings previous philosophers had given to the word "good". He found that if anything was identified with "good" (e.g. happiness) it would still be possible to ask: "Is happiness good?" which he thought ought to be impossible; and, additionally, it meant that happiness thus was not an absolute end in itself, as "the Good" should be, by definition. Taking a colour as an example, he then decided that the experience "yellow" was simple and unanalysable, and, he felt, the experience of goodness or value must be likewise simple and indefinable. So, just as the sensation of colour could not be defined in terms of light waves or nervous reactions, "good" was just itself, a particular intuition or feeling, and could not be explained in terms of anything else. It was in itself an end, in terms of which other things could be defined. So ethical judgments were really <u>synthetic</u> propositions, declaring what things or actions,and in what degree, possess this indefinable "goodness".

But in making truly ethical judgments about a <u>thing</u> one had to separate it from its "use" value as a means in everyday life. One had

42. 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', <u>Collected Essays</u> II, 337.

to intuit its merit as an end while imagining it in absolute isolation from anything else, with reason and knowledge in the background ready to compare and classify the intuition. One had - simply - to visualize it on its own on some deserted planet, and attempt to gauge how valuable it then was. There was here the added complication of the "Principle of Organic Unity": the values of a whole might differ in degree from the sum of the values of its parts: "Consciousness of a beautiful object", in isolation, for example, seemed to be more valuable than "consciousness" and "beautiful objects" considered separately in isolation. As it turns out that nothing has much worth if we isolate it from the judging consciousness, those who agree with the rest of Moore's argument must agree with his dictum above as to the nature of the Good (i.e.: the highest ends of human activity): "the most valuable things which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness". And the most valuable among states of consciousness, he supposed, were those of Love, broadly interpreted, and of perception of beauty. These were the most valuable because when they occur they represent, Fry or Bell might have said, the abstraction of their objects from the teleological means-ends process: the appreciation of their objects as [if they were] ends alone. As Moore seems to allow, we could if we wished unify his statement further by saying the highest good is beauty perceived in the material world and in others (Beauty was defined as "that of which the admiring contemplation is good in itself."). There is a sense in which the aesthetic philosophies of Roger Fry and Clive Bell were a continuation of the thought of G.E. Moore.

In making ethical judgments about actions, Moore found no self-evident rules. Provided that the individual was critically satisfied by the code of conduct generally acceptable to his society, he should obey it, and in cases where it did not apply, should rely on intuition.

There are evident dimnesses in Moore's argument: for example, to see "good" as being a "received" experience in the same way that "yellow" is, requires us to deny any conceptual content to the nature of a perception of goodness. Nevertheless, it was this system of Moore's that ministered so well to the temper of Bloomsbury in its reaction against

the utilitarian materialism of the Victorians. As so ready a critic as Wyndham Lewis [43] was quick to point out, Bloomsbury aesthetic philosophy in the hands of Clive Bell and Roger Fry was in many ways a new stage of the revolt inaugurated by Pater in the previous century.

But in transferring the new ethic from Cambridge to London, certain adaptations were made. "Knowledge" in Principia Ethica was considered a means (it was used to classify goods). By the time the Apostles planned to live according to this work, knowledge - the pursuit and contemplation of truth - was elevated to the heirarchy of ultimate ends. [44]

Keynes gives his own account of the period in Two Memoirs:

> Moore's Principia Ethica came out at the end of my first year (at Cambridge) ... of course, its effect on us, and the talk which preceded and followed it, dominated, and perhaps still dominate, everything else. We were at an age when our beliefs influenced our behaviour [45]. ... There was one chapter in the Principia [46]. of which we took not the slightest notice. We accepted Moore's religion, so to speak, and discarded his morals. Indeed, in our opinion, one of the greatest advantages of his religion was that it made morals unnecessary [47]. ... we entirely repudiated a personal liability on us to obey general rules. We claimed the right to judge every individual case on its merits ... we were, that is to say, in the strict sense of the term immoralists [48]. ...
>
> Nothing mattered except states of mind, our own and other people's of course, but chiefly our own. These states of mind were not associated with action or achievement or with consequences. They consisted in timeless, passionate states of contemplation and communion, largely unattached to 'before' and 'after' ... one's prime objects in life were love, the creation and enjoyment of aesthetic experience and the pursuit of knowledge [49]. ... We were disposed to repudiate very strongly the idea that useful knowledge could be preferable to useless knowledge [50]. ... Of these love came a long way first. [51]

Keynes, in retrospect, is able to clarify the place of this "enshrinement of the inner" in Bloomsbury reverence:

43. Men without Art, 170.
44. See quotation following.
45. Two Memoirs, 81
46. Chpt. 5.: 'Ethics in relation to conduct'. (142-182)
47. Two Memoirs, 82.
48. Op. cit., 97-8.
49. Op. cit., 83.
50. Op. cit., 87.
51. Op. cit., 83.

> I have called this faith a religion, and some sort of relation of neo-platonism it certainly was. But we should have been very angry at the time with such a suggestion. We regarded all this as entirely rational and scientific in character 52. ... Our religion was altogether unworldly - with wealth, power, popularity or success it had no concern whatever, they were thoroughly despised 53. ... It is remarkable how wholly oblivious (Moore) managed to be of the qualities of the life of action and also of the pattern of life as a whole. He was existing in a timeless ecstasy. 54.

It is clear that here a "scientific ethics" did not mean a system based on the formulation of general rules from empirically perceived instances. In Moore's mind "science" had the same meaning in its relation to the world of mind and the world of experience as "mathematics" to Plato. Keynes, who was writing in the second phase of Bloomsbury, between the wars, was able to some extent to pass judgment on their earlier enthusiasms. For him, the Principia had become, in a world driven to question values of any sort, "an added comfort, even though one cannot live to-day secure in the undisturbed individualism which was the extraordinary achievement of the early Edwardian days, not for our little lot only, but for everyone else, too." 55.

4.

Virginia Woolf, then, influenced by her friends in Bloomsbury, was a novelist to whom consciousness was the most important concern. As I have said, Mrs. Woolf never isolated herself or her art from life, but the conflict between the supreme worth of the spiritual "inner" and the prudential worth of factual "outer" was a continual preoccupation. Her art shows that she came to resolve this conflict. Her concerns remain remarkably continuous from her first novel to her last, but they do show a progressive widening of sympathy, evident not in a change of subject but a change of emphasis. Consciousness, and states of consciousness, are always at the centre, but the stress moves outwards through different

52. Op. cit., 86.
53. Op. cit., 84.
54. Op. cit., 92.
55. Op. cit., 95.

approaches: the individual consciousness in response to other individual existence (The Voyage Out in 1915, Night and Day in 1919); individual consciousness in response to nature (Jacob's Room in 1922); individual consciousness in response to external society (Mrs. Dalloway in 1925); artistic consciousness and experience (To the Lighthouse in 1927); artistic consciousness and time (Orlando in 1928); group consciousness (The Waves in 1931); and finally, consciousness as society and the world (The Years in 1937 and Between the Acts in 1941).

Virginia Woolf's method, however, was in many essentials adequately formed by the time her first novel was published in 1915, after seven years of writing. To her, December 1910, not August 1914, was the moment of true social re-orientation.

"All human relations have shifted, "she wrote. "And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature." [56] So somehow, human character had changed; men's thoughts were concentrated not on their society but on the individual in isolation: there was a new awareness, a new responsiveness to human consciousness and inner spiritual realities. But the change had gone unrecorded by the Edwardian novelists, Wells, Galsworthy and Bennett, who were sunk in "materialism". Their novels were full of descriptions of physical objects, clothes, rooms; and their books were incomplete without a physical activity (e.g.: sending a cheque to charity) rather than a spiritual one, as Mrs. Woolf felt to be appropriate to her own novels. "One line of insight would have done more", Mrs. Woolf felt, "than all those lines of description". [57] She imagines a little woman, Mrs. Brown, in a railway carriage, and decides that while Bennett and his like would describe everything there but the person herself, novelists like the Russians whom Mrs. Woolf held up as an ideal would intuit Mrs. Brown's state of soul and then universalize it, seeking "reality". The new generation, the Georgian novelists, must follow them in affirming Mrs. Brown, who "is, of course, the spirit we live by, life itself". [58]

The novelist who is interested most in the exploration of the

56. 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', Collected Essays I, 320.
57. Op. cit., 329.
58. Op. cit., 337.

human "inner life" is likely, of course, apart from experimental excursions into the psyches of dogs, madmen, or children, to restrict himself to a single category of characters: those who, by education or innate sensibility, are most able to descry in themselves, and to articulate, the fine shades of consciousness in which "reality" is most likely to be found. Henry James, debating on the novel, has said: "when the mind is imaginative - much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius - it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations." [59] This emphasis on the "inner" is one reason for lack of extensive responsive action in Virginia Woolf (an impossible barrier to certain critics who like a good yarn, especially if it has a moral). It is not because the authoress affirms Bloomsbury aestheticism that she witholds violent action; it is because such action is irrelevant - tasteless in fact - if the characters described are made sufficiently sensitive to what happens to them: "It's not catastrophes, murders, deaths, diseases, that age and kill us: it's the way people look and laugh, and run up the steps of omnibuses." [60]

5.

Roger Fry, in a passage quoted by Virginia Woolf in her biography of him, thought those men most truly alive "whose lives rise to complete self-consciousness". [61] This is to a large extent an affirmation of the value of Virginia Woolf's own method of choosing many of her characters. However, Fry continues - and here he parts company with Mrs. Woolf - "the usual assumption of a direct and decisive connection between life and art is by no means correct ... we find it no doubt open at times to influences from life, but in the main self-contained - we find the rhythmic sequences of change determined much more by its own internal forces - and by the readjustment within it of its own elements - than by external forces." [62]

Clive Bell, the originator of the doctrine of "significant form", is much less circumspect:

59. Leon Edel, The Psychological Novel, 23.
60. J.R., 28.
61. Vision and Design, 13.
62. Op. cit., 17.

> The representative (i.e. representational) element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions ... (its) significance is unrelated to the significance of life. In this world the emotions of life have no place. It is in a world with emotions of its own. 63.

He felt that the worst sort of painting was Victorian "descriptive painting" : "painting in which forms are used not as objects of emotion, but as means of suggesting emotion or conveying information." 64.

> Art is above morals, or, rather, all art is moral because ... works of art are immediate means to good. (To the highest states of mind, as he explains later). Once we have judged it ethically of the first importance and put it beyond the reach of the moralist. 65.

Following Bell, Roger Fry, having likewise separated the life of feeling and imagination from the outer life of responsive action and morality, claims that Art is "the chief organ of the imaginative life". 66.

> In actual life the normal person really only reads the labels as it were on the objects around him and troubles no further. (Earlier he gives the illustration of the man who gives the label "bull" to an advancing object and turns and runs without waiting to consider it as significant form). Almost all the things which are useful in any way put on more or less this cap of invisibility. It is only when an object exists in our lives for no other purpose than to be seen that we really look at it ... (and adopt) the artistic attitude of pure vision abstracted from necessity. 67.

Clive Bell makes the full transition from Principia Ethica to "significant form" when he makes clear that "to see objects as pure forms is to see them as ends in themselves". 68.

> ... lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colour, these aesthetically moving forms, I call 'Significant Form'. 68.

Significant form is, as we have seen, but one aspect of the same

63. Art, 37.
64. Op. cit., 29.
65. Op. cit., 32.
66. 'An Essay in Aesthetics', Vision and Design, 29.
67. Art, 59.
68. Op. cit., 23.
69. Quoted by J.K. Johnstone The Bloomsbury Group, 49.

phenomenon we encountered earlier, that of giving form and pattern to experience, and assigning "place" to the different aspects of what we see in life. In terms of Virginia Woolf's outlook, the intrinsic relationship between art, literature and metaphysics is thus clarified. They are all kinds - the same kind - of "form". Even to Bell and Fry, the aesthetic emotion itself - the response to "form" - was not restricted to the plastic arts: "if we compare in our minds responses experienced in turn in face of different works of art of the most diverse kinds - as, for instance, architectural, pictorial, musical or literary - we recognise that our state of mind in each case has been of a similar kind".[69] Roger Fry never himself expounded on the aesthetics of literature. It was left to a friend of his, Charles Mauron, whom he met on a rambling holiday through France, to clarify the place of significant form in literature:

> What analogue in literature shall we give to volume? It suffices to transfer it from the domain of space to that of spirit ... In the spatial world there remains the vast crowd of complex volumes: in the spiritual there remain the every-day realities of our soul, all forms of our inner life ... "As the painter creates a spatial being, the writer creates a psychological being". Such, I think is the hypothesis that we might admit as the basis of all literary criticism[70] ... (Such an idea) would relegate sternly to the background the documentary value of a work of literature.[71]
>
> The relations between the facts are psychological realities by the same right as the facts themselves. Our fathers called them simply situations. They have a life independent of the characters, although there is a reciprocal modifying influence between them ... The individuals in that situation are, as on a chess-board, pieces which count by reason of their relative situations ... Moments of the spirit, characters, situations and their complexes - these, it seems to me, all literature envisages.[72]
>
> (I declare) that there are psychological unities, spiritual entities, and that the poem or book ought to give us the impression that it has created one of these beings.[73]

70. Charles Mauron, The Nature of Beauty, 66-67.
71. Op. cit., 70.
72. Op. cit., 78.
73. Op. cit., 86.

So artistic form is a significant pattern or relation, which may contain meaning and yet which is its own meaning. In music, painting or literature, we are told, behind the immediate experience there may be discerned a pattern or rhythm, an overall unity which is the "form" of the work. Since literature and music, unlike painting, involve the reader's or listener's attention over a period of time, his memory plays an important part in the perception of form. This inwardly perceived "form" - Mrs. Woolf might describe it as a "globe" - which comes from our appreciation of, for instance, a piece of music, is only complete at its end. However, in all three cases, - musical, literary and pictorial - there is an inner "spiritual volume" which corresponds to what we hear, read, or see.

Roger Fry compares this with the unrolling of a long Chinese painting on a roll of silk, which can only be perceived serially. He describes the painting, and goes on to say: "Such a successive unity is of course familiar to us in literature and music... It depends on the forms being presented to us in such a sequence that each successive element is felt to have a fundamental and harmonious relation with all that preceded it." [74.] Memory completes the form.

Fry says that such a pattern strikes us with all the force of an "idea". [75.]

Virginia Woolf responded to the formal ideas of Fry and Bell and applied them in her own writing and thought, as I shall show. Her major innovations are still most commonly conceived by many to be those which affected at least the outward form of the novel. As she stated in her manifesto 'Modern Fiction': "Any method is right, every method is right, that expresses what we wish to express, if we are writers; that brings us closer to the novelist's intention if we are readers". [76.] The extent to which she applied Fry's dictum that the "idea" should impregnate the matter of the novel and be repeated down even to the individual passages of smallest relations, is shown by the excellent results yielded by her work to a very detailed analysis of her literary

74. Vision and Design, 35.
75. Op. cit., 236.
76. 'Modern Fiction', Collected Essays II, 108.

technique and structure alone.[77]

> In a work of art (says Fry) what gives us the special aesthetic pleasure is the recognition that the matter of which the work is made has been, as it were, penetrated and impregnated by an idea with which we associate ourselves. We see something akin to our spiritual being penetrating and moulding matter.[78] The fullest pleasure occurs when, having realized the general idea, ... we are able to consider the interior relation of the parts, proceeding always from larger to smaller relations, without finding any point at which the informing idea breaks down ...[79]

It cannot be maintained that one part of Bloomsbury remained totally impervious to the influence of another part: the members freely discussed their ideas among themselves and, whether they cared to admit it or not, they came to share to varying degrees in a common outlook, aesthetic and social. Nor did the influence of Bloomsbury's views by any means stop at the boundaries of Bloomsbury, especially during the twenties and thirties.[80] To demonstrate here something of the extent to which the ideas of Bell and Roger Fry influenced Virginia Woolf, consciously or unconsciously - even more than they did the other major Bloomsbury novelist, E.M. Forster - I shall quote below extracts from four of her essays alone, which more or less follow each other in Collected Essays II.

For example, we have seen above how Clive Bell has defined "significant form" as arising when "lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions." He continues: "If my theory be right, rightness of form is invariably a consequence of rightness of emotion. Right form, I suggest, is ordered and conditioned by a particular kind of emotion ..."[81] There follows a lengthy passage considering the relationship of "right form" and "right emotion". In her essay, correspondingly, Mrs. Woolf decides that in a novel "when we speak of form we mean that certain

77. See R.A. Brower, The Fields of Light.
78. My italics, to emphasize this expression of the relationship between the individual's own personal "pattern" or "reality" and the pattern of the work of art.
79. Quoted in J.K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group, 57.
80. For an example of the popularization of the idea of "significant form" in an adapted form see Herbert Read, The Meaning of Art, Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1949. Originally published in 1931.
81. Art, 66.

emotions have been placed in the right relations to each other". [82.]

Also, criticising Forster's analysis of a particular novel in his The Art of Fiction, she censures him for his ignoring "the aesthetic qualities. Pattern, as we have seen, is recognized, but savagely censured for her tendency to obscure the human features." She goes on to deliberate on the proper means to analyze the novel purely as a work of art: "How are we to take a stick and point to that tone, that relation, in the vanishing pages, as Mr. Roger Fry points with his wand at a line or colour in the picture displayed before him?" [83.]

I shall quote relevant passages at random from these essays, and invite the reader to compare what is expressed with the ideas of the Bloomsbury theoreticians given above. On the element of form in fiction Mrs. Woolf writes:

> Pride and Prejudice...has form...we have been aware of check and stimulus, of spectral architecture built up behind the animation and variety of the scene. It is a quality so precise it is not to be found either in what is said or what is done ... That this architectural quality can be possessed by a novelist, Jane Austen proves. And she proves, too, that far from chilling the interest or withdrawing the attention from the characters, it seems on the contrary to focus it and add an extra pleasure to the book, a significance. It makes it seem that here is something good in itself, quite apart from our personal feelings. (My italics). 84.
>
> (On Henry James:) we see the mind at work; we are amused by its power to make patterns; by its power to bring out relations in things ... It is a pleasure somewhat akin, perhaps, to the pleasure of mathematics or the pleasure of music ... we are not so foolish as to resent artifice in art. 85.
>
> (On Emma:) Between the sentences, apart from the story, a little shape of some kind builds itself up. 86.
>
> (On the quality novelists of merit have in common:) We feel that we are being compelled to accept an order and to arrange the elements of the novel... in certain relations at the novelist's bidding... From the first page we feel our minds trained upon a point which becomes more and more perceptible as the book proceeds and the writer brings his conception out of darkness... And then, when the book is finished, we seem

82. 'On Re-reading Novels', Collected Essays II, 129.
83. 'The Art of Fiction', Collected Essays II, 54.
84. 'Phases of Fiction', Collected Essays II, 77-8.
85. Op. cit., 82.
86. 'Anatomy of Fiction', Collected Essays II, 138.

> to see (it is strange how visual the impression is)... it shaped and symmetrical with dome and column complete... As the pages are turned, something is built up which is not the story itself. 87.

On the subject of Art and Life, however, Mrs. Woolf cannot completely agree with Bloomsbury: the novel should not, she feels, be cut off from the concerns of ordinary life. Yet as her essay 'Life and the Novelist' shows, she is very far from being the "Impressionist" and pure "stream of consciousness" writer she is ordinarily considered to be. The difficulty arises because the novelist "is faced by a problem which does not afflict the workers in any other arts to the same extent":

> Stridently, clamorously, life is forever pleading that she is the proper stuff of fiction and that the... more she catches of her the better his book will be. She does not add, however, that she is grossly impure; and that the side she flaunts uppermost is often, for the novelist, of no value whatever. 88.

The writer's task is to select and to symbolize, she concludes, in order to be free of "the swarm and confusion of life". The form of the work is where its real importance lies: "we desire synthesis. The novel, it is agreed, can follow life; it can amass details. But can it also select? Can it symbolize? Can it give us an epitome as well as an inventory?" 89.

Thus, the pattern imparted by the novelist to his novel, through his power of selecting what is important from life, is what makes his book a work of art. Yet this "pattern" has a further significance. In giving "form" to life, the novelist - if his scope is broad enough - is effectively performing the same work as the writer of a metaphysical treatise: he is bringing, as Dorothy Emmet has said, "form into multiplicity". 90.

As we shall find, it is with a similar notion of the possible function of the novel that Virginia Woolf came to make her own works the vehicle for the expression of her deeply-felt intuitions about the nature of man and of his universe.

87. Op. cit., 100-101. See also examples in her first novel alone, such as the mention of the "shape" of the Bach fugue (V.O., 61); "It's the way of saying things isn't it, not the things?" (V.O., 74); "Words...possessed of shapes like tables or chairs" (V.O.,144).
88. Op. cit., 135.
89. Ibid.
90. The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking, 196.

Terence, the novelist in The Voyage Out, tells Rachel about his fictional aims as they sit on a cliff-top at dusk. Just as almost all Mrs. Woolf's future concerns are present in some seminal way in this novel, so what Terence enunciates is a description of significant form applied to literature:

> "What I want to do in writing novels is very much what you want to do when you play the piano, I expect", he began, turning and speaking over his shoulder. "We want to find out what's behind things, don't we? - Look at the lights down there", he continued, "scattered about anyhow. Things I feel come to me like lights... I want to combine them... Have you ever seen fireworks that make figures?... I want to make figures ... Is that what you want to do? 91.

I have attempted to explain in this introduction the way in which the various activities of Bloomsbury, whether in the sphere of painting, literature, or philosophy, may all be seen as, in the end, explorations into the same overriding preoccupation: that of "form". In a sense, all Bloomsbury sought this same aim along their different paths. There can be no doubt that, even though as individuals they were probably unaware of its extent, the various members of Bloomsbury had a reciprocal influence on each other in the early, close, and formative years; and that this influence to some degree remained with them in the later period when Bloomsbury ties became less telling, and the group drifted apart.

The creation of form out of chaos and flux to illuminate "reality", and to reorder experience; the search for the primal "word" or pattern which makes vocal the dead piecemeal matter of experience: this is the voyage on which Mrs. Woolf sets out, with her first novel.

91. V.O., 266.

The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky (W., 5).

CHAPTER I

The Voyage Out (1915) includes, in some form, an indication of almost every concern that was to occupy Mrs. Woolf over a creative period of more than thirty years. Her central theme is one which might serve - if broadly intepreted - as a general description of her entire thought: it is an attempt to bring together a system of definite ideas about communication. But this is also possibly, with the exception of The Waves, her most "mystic" book.

Rachel, whose name means "innocence", is a sheltered and protected girl in her mid-twenties, whose obtuse father owns a small shipping line. Her first opportunity for adventure comes when she is allowed to accompany her aunt Helen and uncle Ridley Ambrose, a self-centred ex-don from Cambridge, on a voyage to Santa Marina, a resort in South America. Other passengers on board the Euphrosyne are the factualist bore Mr. Pepper, an M.P., Richard Dalloway, and his aristocratic wife, Clarissa. Dalloway, after attempting to convince the impressionable Rachel of the inadequacy of art in comparison with the worth of politics, when they are alone suddenly attempts to kiss her. Fortunately the Dalloways disembark before the boat leaves the old world.

Once in the house in Santa Marina, Rachel and Helen come into contact with two young men from the British holiday colony in the nearby hotel, Terence Hewet and St. John Hirst. Hewet is a novelist, and, after a picnic party on a mountain, he falls in love with Rachel; Hirst is a self-opinionated and eccentric intellectual of great ability, who cannot make up his mind between Cambridge and the Bar, and has difficulty in human relationships.

A party is made up among those at the hotel to sail upriver and visit a native settlement in the interior. Helen and Rachel go too, and it is on this trip that she and Terence admit their feeling for each other. After their return and a spell of happiness, it is discovered that Rachel has fever. Adequate medical attention arrives too late, and Rachel dies.

This outline shows the story to be conceived rather in the rambling manner of Forster, and certainly St. John Hirst resembles Stewart Ansell. But the pattern of meaning contained within and uniting The Voyage Out causes it to belie its surface impression. It has a formal unity, and also - paradoxically - cannot properly be called a tragedy, as the story alone might suggest.

Neither of the two most able commentators who have concentrated on Virginia Woolf's theme, Professor David Daiches and James Hafley, have succeeded in making a completely satisfactory synthesis of this book. What Hafley begins by saying is, on one level, correct: "The first of these voyages...serves...to suggest Rachel's voyage to an understanding of life and experience; the second, occuring shortly after ... Rachel and Terence fall in love ... coincides with Rachel's voyage to an understanding of herself." But he continues: "The tragedy here is at once Rachel's death and her inability to unite her own world with the world around her",[1] which, as I hope to show, is by no means true.

The fact is, there are three "spiritual" voyages in the almost dialectical form of this novel, roughly paralleled in the story by the sea voyage, the journey up the South American river, and finally by Rachel's sickness and death. These are: the first voyage out in which the heroine rejects the claims of the intellect and ceases to be attracted towards the external aspects of life; the voyage in, where she embraces the world of feeling and imagination; and, lastly, the voyage out in a different plane in which divisions of external and internal are transcended - by means of her death Rachel here becomes part of the greater world of nature and feeling outside herself. A sort of Greek chorus of ordinary British middle-class people interrupt and comment on the main theme. They represent the individual members of ordinary humanity - isolated and unable truly to communicate. Characteristically, much use is made here of the symbol of the globe, especially in variations such as moon, ball, bubble and rain-drop: it stands for the unity of the heroine with the world and with an ideal humankind no longer divided.

1. James Hafley, The Glass Roof, 15.

If it were to be compared to a painting, this book would most resemble, in its relation to the rest of her work, one of the jungle scenes by the "primitive" painter Henri Rousseau, among the post-Impressionists (Virginia Woolf was never an impressionist, as is often claimed). It has some of the same fantastic hot-house exoticism and grotesquerie. Despite what it loses to immaturity, romantic idealism, and the desire in a first novel to express too much at once, it shows a strong sense of organization, an awareness of technical possibilities, and gives many signs of a potentially resourceful imagination.

It must be appreciated that it is no loose sort of interpretation that Mrs. Woolf invites. Each of her themes is emphasized again and again by details in thetext, and these reappear throughout the novel in a manner which invites the reader's memory to connect them. As in all her novels, we are drawn on from stage to stage of our discovery of the book's meaning by the characters' various incomplete articulations of the central problem with which they are struggling. At a certain moment, the clarifying experience suddenly comes, for them and for us. This moment is always brief, so the reader of Mrs. Woolf's fiction must be attentive: if he is not aware both of the appearance of the final clue and of what has gone before, he is likely to miss the resolution altogether. It seems to be intended by the method that, just for this moment of climax, the problem of the novel should become our problem, and its resolution ours. We are offered an almost self-contained world of experience requiring only the active employment of our memory to complete it in the round. The "clarifying factor" in this novel, The Voyage Out, is Rachel's death.

It becomes evident that the hypothetical woman novelist of the future about whom Mrs. Woolf speaks in A Room of One's Own is in fact Mrs. Woolf herself:

> no abundance of sensation or fineness of perception would avail unless she could build up out of the fleeting and personal the lasting edifice which remains unthrown. I had siad that I would wait until she ... proved by summoning, beckoning, and getting together that she was not the skimmer of surfaces merely, but had looked beneath into the depths. Now is the time, she would say to herself at a certain moment, when without doing anything violent I

> can show the meaning of all this. And she would begin - how unmistakable that quickening is! - beckoning and summoning, and there would rise up in memory, half forgotten, perhaps quite trivial things in other chapters dropped by the way. And she would make their presence felt while someone sewed or smoked a pipe as naturally as possible, and one would feel, as she went on writing, as if one had gone to the top of the world and seen it laid out, very majestically, beneath. 2.

2.

We meet along the way in this novel - in connection with the main theme - many of the concerns we are to find in Virginia Woolf's future books in rather more developed form. We find, for example, her description of "mystic" experiences - and also her contrast of what she calls the "male" and the "female" world: on one side the "public" or "external" world of fact, which she associates with the "male" intellect; and on the other the "inner" world of womanly feeling and intuition.

The first of these - the mystic experiences - occur solely to Rachel, and to some extent help to explain her fate. She always has a sense of "unity" with the world around her when she is under the influence of these mystic feelings: she will finally become part of the natural world in reality, we are shown after her death.

Rachel thus on two occasions has this sense of her own unity with things. Shortly after the Euphrosyne sets out she is drowsing on the deck in contemplation of a globe on a deckrail, and she suddenly "seemed to enter into communion, to be delightfully expanded and combined with the spirit of the whitish boards on deck, with the spirit of the sea, with the spirit of Beethoven Op. 112, even with the spirit of poor William Cowper there at Olney. Like a ball of thistledown (her mind) kissed the sea, rose, kissed it again, and thus rising and kissing passed finally out of sight." 3. She experiences this again before the invitation to the mountain trip comes from Terence: "And life, what was that? It was only a light passing over the surface and vanishing,

2. A Room of One's Own, 92-93.
3. V.O., 35.

as in time she would vanish, though the furniture in the room would remain. Her dissolution became so complete that she could not raise her finger any more."[4] Her third "dissolution" will be the final one which accompanies her death.

It is important to keep in mind, when reading The Voyage Out, the distinction that the authoress makes between the "external" and the "inner" world. She associates the external world with the intellect, which - in absolute terms - she thinks of as an essentially "male" attribute. The proper sphere for the male intellect is the external world, because it expresses itself in physical activity and in public life - Richard Dalloway, the M.P., is its main representative in The Voyage Out. It is also because she sees the most appropriate activity of the intellect to be analysis: for her, the intellect "divides up" the outer world into its separate facts. It "draws circles" round everything, whereas Mrs. Woolf felt the world to be - in reality - indivisible. But this unity is something only "feeling" can appreciate, especially through mystic experiences like Rachel's.

Opposed to this external life, then, is the world of synthesis, of intuition and feeling, which Virginia Woolf feels to be the particular province of the "female" spirit. Her sympathy is almost entirely with this female world, which she believes to have much more "reality" than that of the male. The Voyage Out is really a satire on the male intellect and a defense of the female world of feeling; especially since it is the dividing intellect, she suggests, which prevents true communication by putting up barriers to feeling.

In some respects then we find Mrs. Woolf - surprisingly - not far off in intention from D.H. Lawrence in this her first novel. Her aim here is to demonstrate the overriding importance of powerful feeling, and to minimise the worth of the conventional and intellectual life which inhibits the expression of emotion. The sea in this book serves as a symbol for this powerful inner life, and its defendants are Terence Hewet, Helen - to some extent - and later, Rachel herself.

4. V.O., 145.

The representatives of the sterile "male" world are the politician Dalloway and - first of all - the academic, Mr. Pepper.

> A slight but perceptible wave seemed to roll beneath the floor ... "We're off!" said Mr. Pepper. 5.

As the ship sets off on the symbolic sea of life and feeling, both appropriately and ironically the boring factualist Pepper chronicles the departure. He (Pepper) is characteristically there to get things out of the sea, or to trace (going to South America) the probable course of the Odyssey. [6.] This is certainly to be Rachel's Odyssey: but Pepper is unlikely to draw up anything of worth to him out of this particular sea - the sea of feeling - for he is like a fossilized fish in a basin. [7.] "Has he ever been in love?" asks Helen, mischievously. [8.] His is the Bergsonian "intellect" which kills all it touches, which would turn into a fossil any fish it drew up out of this symbolic ocean. Both Ridley and Pepper have the masculine "intellect" which, at the first dinner, they are complacently allowed to excercise against each other, while the two women merely say "Perhaps -" [9.] and leave the table in instant communion. Ridley, however, is humanized by his obvious love of Helen. The dry Pepper soon bores him.

Leonard Woolf thought he knew who Pepper resembled in life: a certain Mr. Gibbs:

> On the nights when Mr. Gibbs came to dinner, towards 10 o'clock Leslie Stephen would start groaning and saying at intervals, quite audibly: 'O why doesn't he go; O why doesn't he go'. 10.

Ridley Ambrose exhibits the same embarrassing but - in some odd way - endearing behaviour, especially during Rachel's illness [11.], which he never fully comprehends. But Pepper shakes out his dry-as-dust facts - to us rather interesting, as they come from no biology or science with which we could be familiar - and describes white blind hairless monsters which explode when taken out of the sea, with his complete want of taste or feeling. [12.]

5. V.O., 9.
6. V.O., 14.
7. Ibid.
8. V.O., 14.
9. V.O., 11.
10. Beginning Again, 93.
11. V.O., 427
12. V.O., 18.

He represents what, later in the book, St. John Hirst, the other intellectual, might become. But, in America, Helen advises St. John not to remain in Cambridge; to go to the bar and to London. He accepts and thus acknowledges the female world of feeling.

A further attribute of the "female" mind is the ability to synthesize, to order and to make form. Like Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse and a changed Clarissa in Mrs. Dalloway she is always using her hands to make form:

> she had her embroidery frame set up on deck, with a little table by her side on which lay open a black volume of philosophy. She chose a thread from the vari-coloured tangle that lay in her lap, and sewed red into the bark of a tree or yellow into the river torrent. She was working on a great design of a tropical river running through a tropical forest, where spotted deer would eventually browse upon...pomegranates... Between the stitches she looked to one side and read a sentence about the Reality of Matter, or the Nature of Good...not far off Mr. Pepper sat cutting up roots with a penknife. 13.

While female intuition weaves out of objects, animals, and colours which would not relate in life, a form - her own imaginative world, from her own materials - male intellect analyzes: cuts dead things up like a knife. Significantly, Helen reads a book of philosophy - another sort of form - as she does so. It is interesting that the embroidery depicts an Amazonian scene very like that where Rachel contracts her fatal illness: J.K. Johnstone calls it Virginia Woolf's first device to escape "the tyranny of the time sequence". 14.

Rachel's journey to experience on the sea of feeling is essentially an inner pilgrimage. The "sea" symbolizes powerful inner feeling. In the same way the "land" which Rachel leaves behind represents the external conventional public world: from the boat we are shown first of all Britain disappearing (England itself will be used as a symbol of convention and society later in the novel) and after it the world. Civilized society passes away:

> The disease attacked other parts of the earth; Europe shrank, Africa and America shrank, until it seemed doubtful whether the ship would ever run against any of those wrinkled little

13. V.O., 30.
14. The Bloomsbury Group, 325.

> rocks again. But, on the other hand, an immense dignity had descended upon her. The sea might give her death or some unexampled joy, and none would know of it. 15.

This is as good a description of Rachel as of the boat in which she sails: partly due to her almost painful innocenee and shyness, and partly to her odd mystic experiences, Rachel has astrong sense of some kind of "reality" below the surface of human conduct. She cannot understand why people do not communicate this inner life.

> It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant, or ever talked of a feeling they felt, but that was what music was for. Reality dwelling in what one saw and felt, but did not talk about, one could accept a system in which things went round and round quite satisfactorily to other people ... Absorbed by her music she accepted her lot very complacently, blazing into indignation perhaps once a fortnight, and subsiding as she subsided now. 16.

The Euphrosyne calls at Lisbon, and two unexpected passengers come on board: Richard Dalloway, a plausible politician, and Clarissa, his featherbrained socialite wife. The Dalloways represent society, facade, proportion, convention - everything the boat has left behind. Richard Dalloway is almost as venomous a caricature as Sir William Bradshaw is in Mrs. Dalloway: conversion is likewise his goddess. Lauding politics, he begins his temptation of Rachel to the external life: "Now your artists find things in a mess, shrug their shoulders, turn aside to their visions - which I grant may be very beautiful - and leave things in a mess." [17.] As we have seen, Mrs. Woolf saw the artist's aim to be the inner resolution of just such a "mess". The Dalloway's conversation is fatuous small-talk from "the great commonplace book" [18.]: Dalloway himself thinks of conservative policy as a great lasso which caught "enormous chunks of the habitable globe"..."we've pretty nearly done it," he said; "it remains to consolidate." [19.]

He overlooks, though, the "sea" - although Clarissa wishes there were flowers on it - and also the primitive South American jungle for which the boat is bound. As we have seen, "land" is to become a

15. V.O., 29.
16. V.O., 35.
17. V.O., 45.
18. V.O., 46.
19. V.O., 53.

symbol in the book: it stands for the "outer" world of public life; correspondingly, the "sea" represents the inner world of consciousness, life, and feeling. The new couple are very much "land" figures; it is significant that Richard and Clarissa disembark before the boat turns away from the old world. What Dalloway must come to terms with and cannot is what the sea objectifies: the powerful unknown inside each person. Here the conversion of Rachel goes astray: Clarissa becomes beguiled by the mind and experience of a fantastic sailor who reads Shakespeare and Huxley: "Mrs. Dalloway had to listen to the tirade of a fanatical man. Did she realise, to begin with, what a very small part of the world the land was?" [20].

Rachel is impressionable enough to respond to Dalloway's persuasion at first. However, when he states his ideal: "Unity. Unity of aim, of dominion, of progress. The dispersion of the best ideas over the greatest area" [21] - it is evident to her that he represents conformity and convention. Rachel realizes that inner happiness really depends on individuals, not on legislation: "The attempt at communication had been a failure." 22.

Dalloway knows that the attempt at conversion is over. The psychological effect of his failure is to make him awkwardly amorous, and he is saved from indiscretion only by a fleet of passing British warships, to which he is obliged to raise his hat. A storm strikes the boat in the night, externalising through the heaped sea the upheavel of repressed feeling inside Richard: the sea is taking its revenge. Finally, he attempts to kiss Rachel when the boat lurches. "You tempt

20. V.O., 56.
21. V.O., 69.
22. V.O., 74.

me," he says. [23] So Dalloway, tempter to the outward life of fact and action, is himself tempted. He betrays convention to feeling.

Although they do not speak again before the Dalloways disembark, the kiss has been a source of revelation to the innocent Rachel.

3.

The theme of the opposition of intellect and feeling is continued in the second part of the novel, set in South America. But its treatment is extended by the appearance of two new characters who again illustrate the contrast between the two qualities: Terence Hewet, the novelist, who inhabits the world of feeling and intuition, and St. John Hirst, a Cambridge intellectual.

The first thing we hear about Hirst typifies his dilemma. In their hotel room at night, Hewet comments: "D'you think that you do make enough allowance for feelings?" [24] Without much conviction, Hirst ranges feelings in a heirarchical pyramid, by way of answer. His intellect classifies, categorizes, analyzes, and separates - it kills by isolating and typing. They begin to discuss the women (Rachel and Helen) St. John had seen outside the hotel. He immediately reduces them to type:

23. V.O., 85. It is interesting to note here that when Mr. and Mrs. Dalloway are attempting the conversion of Rachel, they recommend her to read Jane Austen - the upholder of Augustan "external" standards (Rachel thinks she is "like a tight plait" (p.62)). They offer her Persuasion, an ironic touch. Mrs. Woolf often indicates personality or relation through what her characters read. For example, in The Voyage Out we find Hirst reading Gibbon: his interest is in historical "external" fact. Significantly, Hewet chooses Meredith's Modern Love: he is the proponent of a "new" attitude to "love". Meredith's well-known lines in this volume could be a fitting adjunct to Rachel's death:

> Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;
> Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,
> And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand:

Hewet also reads Sappho: although a male, he is not opposed to the "female" world of feeling. As someone says of him: "There's something of a woman in him" (p.302).

24. V.O., 122.

"They were much like other women, I should think. They always are".

"No; that's where we differ", said Hewet. "I say everything's different. No two people are in the least the same. Take you and me now".

"So I used to think once", said Hirst. "But now they're all types. Don't take us, - take this hotel. You could draw circles round the whole lot of them, and they'd never stray outside".

("You can kill a hen by doing that"), Hewet murmured... "Are we all alone in our circle?"

..."Quite alone", said Hirst. "You try to get out, but you can't. You only make a mess of things by trying".

"I'm not a hen in a circle", said Hewet. "I'm a dove on a tree-top". ... "I flit from branch to branch". 25.

Terence is to represent feeling in this story; he is the novelist, the agent of communication. Virginia Woolf's first "artist", he has the intuitive ability to identify with other selves.

"I don't see your circles - I don't see them", Hewet continued. "I see a thing like a teetotum spinning in and out - knocking into things - dashing from side to side - collecting numbers - more and more and more, till the whole place is thick with them. Round and round they go - out there, over the rim - out of sight". 26.

By assimilating knowledge of others, he means, the "globe" of individual personality expands until its bounds are broken, and the individual is able to become one with his world. Feeling is what unites people, and enables them to communicate. It is the intellect, we learn, which sets them apart.

"The truth of it is that one never is alone, and one never is in company", he concluded.

"Meaning?" said Hirst.

"Meaning? Oh, something about bubbles - auras - what d'you call 'em? You can't see my bubble; I can't see yours; all we see of each other is a speck, like the wick in the middle of that flame. The flame goes about with us everywhere; it's not ourselves exactly, but what we feel; the world in short, or people mainly; all kinds of people".

"A nice streaky bubble yours must be!" said Hirst.

"And supposing my bubble could run into someone else's bubble -"

"And they both burst?" put in Hirst.

"Then - then - then -" pondered Hewet, as if to himself, "it would be an e-nor-mous world". 27.

25. V.O. 123.
26. V.O., 124.
27. V.O., 125.

The fusion of inner lives is what Rachel and Hewet are to accomplish together and apart: Terence attempts to accomplish it in life, through actual human relationships. She, however, will accomplish this function through death. We have an indication of the meaning of the "streaky bubble" in Virginia Woolf's essay "Street Haunting" [28]: she uses much the same image to describe the importance of intuitive imagination in ordinary life: "Into each one of us (nature) let creep instincts and desires which are utterly at variance with his main being, so that we are streaked, variegated, all of a mixture; the colours have run... is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves?"

During the picnic on the mountain, [29] Hewet offers Rachel the chance of "Bloomsbury friendship", to be characterized by absolute frankness on both sides, which she readily accepts. Hewet then parodies death through a mime, unwittingly commenting on Rachel's death - her real "voyage out". At the dance which follows some days later at the hotel, St. John makes a similar pact for communication with Helen. [30] The only reason for remaining aloof, Helen avers, is that they are "English people". The dance ends with a great circle which forms in unity and then, in the rush, symbolically gives way. [31]

4.

The second section of the book - concerned with the jungle trip to the interior, abounds with images referring to "the floor of the sea". This image is intended to symbolize the subconscious - the bottom of the powerful "sea of feeling" - where men become united with each other. In this section Rachel discovers personal love for another human being. But - as the final section will show - this proves not to be enough for her on its own. She demands a wider extension of the power to communicate.

On a cliff-top together over the sea, Rachel and Terence compare the civilization and conventionality of Britain with the wild

28. Collected Essays IV, 160-161.
29. V.O., 170.
30. V.O., 191.
31. V.O., 195.

land they see about them. The attention of the novel begins to turn inwards towards the primitive interior of the country, and the voyage in which constitutes its penultimate section: here the view was one of infinite sun-dried earth... widening and spreading away like the immense floor of the sea". [32.]

The primitive forest - the floor of the "sea of feeling" - is what all men share in common, Mrs. Woolf suggests. It is not merely the source of Rachel's romantic attachment, for here we find the seat of our power to identify with others. As the authoress has written elsewhere: "what greater delight and wonder can there be than to leave the straight lines of personality and deviate into those footpaths that lead beneath brambles and thick tree trunks into the heart of the forest where live those wild beasts, our fellow men?" [33.] It is in this "primitive" area of consciousness that the essential unity of mankind - past, present and future - lies.

The nearest parallel in fiction to the forest in The Voyage Out is of course that in Conrad's The Heart of Darkness. In fact in a description of it on p.325, we find the words "the heart of the night... the great darkness" [34.] The phrase "heart of darkness" is also used in the concluding passages both of her second novel Night and Day and of her last, Between the Acts. The forest is made to bear a similar sort of symbolic weight in this novel as in Conrad: it is that submerged area of consciousness in which, in an almost Jungian way, we all share. Rachel feels that "if one went back far enough, everything perhaps ... was in common; for the mammoths who pastured in the fields of Richmond High Street had turned into paving-stones and boxes full of ribbon, and her aunts". [35.] This is thus not only a symbolic journey inward, it is also a journey back in time.

To be at the bottom of this sea is to be in what has remained unchanged among human beings through history, "while in other parts of the world" - in the realm of intellect - "one town had risen upon the ruins of another town, and the men in the towns had become more and more

32. V.O., 249.
33. 'Street Haunting,' Collected Essays IV, 165.
34. V.O., 325.
35. V.O., 73.

articulate and unlike each other". [36] It is the masculine intellect which is responsible for the divisions grown up in the world.

The images of the ocean bed multiply. When Rachel and Terence, on the voyage upriver to the native camp, go ashore into the forest, they feel they are walking "at the bottom of the sea". [37] After they admit their love, they feel they had "dropped to the bottom of the world together". [38] When they reach the native village, Rachel and Terence hear voices as if through waves. [39] There are echoes also of the "Full fathom five thy father lies" which the unusual sailor had quoted to Mrs. Dalloway on the journey out. [40] On their return from the excursion, Rachel plays a game in which she pretends to be carried in a current about the world.

> To be flung into the sea, to be washed hither and thither, and driven about the roots of the world - the idea was incoherently delightful. [41]

So the forest represents the "female" sphere of feeling and intuition. The forest is the floor of the sea of feeling, on the surface of which Rachel journeyed out in the first section, and in it is found what Mrs. Woolf loosely terms the "love" which joins not merely man and woman but all mankind through recognition of the universality of feeling. We remember what Hewet said earlier:

> "We don't care for people because of their qualities", he tried to explain. "It's just them that we care for", - he struck a match - "just that", he said, pointing to the flames. [42]

However, the romantic turn her life has taken leaves Rachel unsatisfied: "she wanted many more things than the love of one human being - the sea, the sky ... she could not possibly want only one human being". [43] Meanwhile Hirst, the representative of the intellect, becomes converted to feeling and life; he decides to move out of Cambridge: "Love", he said

36. V.O., 323-4.
37. V.O., 331.
38. V.O., 335 & 338.
39. V.O., 346.
40. V.O., 57.
41. V.O., 365.
42. V.O., 227.
43. V.O., 370.

"It seems to me to explain everything. So, on the whole, I'm very glad that you two are going to be married". [44.] Rachel knows: "It might be love, but it was not the love of man for woman". [45.]

5.

The lovers never do marry, for the sound of the waves begins to be heard. The symbolic waves now have an ominous sound, for they are to represent the vast impersonal sea of feeling and universal consciousness with which Rachel must shortly become one. Terence hears its "low murmur" [46.] twice. The second time is as he reads poetry to Rachel in the open:

> Sabrina fair,
> Listen where thou art sitting [47.]
> Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave.

Rachel stops him; she feels ill. She goes to bed, and her fatal fever begins; she is starting her second voyage out. "The glassy, cool translucent wave was almost visible before her, curling up at the end of the bed... but by the next day all landmarks were obliterated... She was completely cut off, and unable to communicate with the rest of the world". [48.] St. John's chickens in circles and the decapitated hens at the hotel become meaningfully united in a macabre dream. [49.] The crisis of Rachel's isolation, her inability to communicate, passes.

> At last the faces went further away; she fell into a deep pool of sticky water, which eventually closed over her head. She saw nothing and hears nothing but a faint booming sound, which was the sound of the sea rolling over her head. While all her tormentors thought that she was dead, she was not dead, but curled up at the bottom of the sea. 50.

Just as the sexual significance of Dalloway's kiss did not reach Rachel when it happened, but came to her in a nightmare after the event, so now does her subconscious mind show her what has happened to her. She now begins in earnest her final "voyage out".

Rachel in her mind rises to the top of a wave, without will, but conscious of her room with transparent walls growing bigger and bigger.

44. V.O., 382.
45. V.O., 385.
46. V.O., 394.
47. V.O., 399.
48. V.O., 402-3
49. V.O., 413.
50. V.O., 416.

As she dies, Terence sits at her bedside. After a moment of recognition, she ceases to breathe. For Terence, "It was happiness... They had now what they had always wanted to have, the union which had been impossible while they lived". 51. His vision is only momentary, and grief overtakes him. Before this happens, as he goes downstairs, he notices that the moon, casting a "silver pathway upon the surface of the waves", has a halo round it.

"Why", he said... "We shall have rain to-morrow". 52.

6.

There follows the final section - the next day - in which the meaning of Rachel's death is implicitly resolved. After an evocative scene of universal "dawn", the inmates of the hotel wake, and begin to gather and talk over Rachel's death. Some joke in embarrassment, others wonder what the purpose behind life may be. A young woman has for a moment a vision of the dead girl's presence about a photograph she once handled. Then a storm breaks. Rain falls.

But clues now occur in the text which invite us to recall an earlier part of the book: just before Rachel went on the "voyage in" where she contracted her fever, she attended a church service at the hotel - and was so revolted she broke away completely from orthodox religion. There, the smug clergyman delivers a sententious sermon, but one of the images he uses is of a "drop of water" which

> detached, alone, separate from others, falling from a cloud and entering the great ocean alters, so scientists tell us, not only the immediate spot in the ocean where it falls, but all the myriad drops which together compose the great universe of waters, and by this means alters the configuration of the globe and the lives of millions of sea creatures, and finally the lives of men and woman who seek their living upon the shores - all this within the compass of a single drop of water, such as any rain shower sends in millions... we know that the fruits of the earth could not flourish without them. 53.

51. V.O., 418-9
52. V.O., 432.
53. V.O., 282.

This image above is, as we shall see, the solution to the problem of Rachel's death. All that has happened to Rachel, we are intended to conclude, is that she had ceased to be in the present: she continues to exist in a real sense in the memory of others, and in the world she has altered, and of which she has thus become part. Like the "raindrop" in the unfortunate sermon, she has contributed her individuality to all being. Consciousness, Virginia Woolf sees, exists only in the present. Yet, once again like the drop absorbed into the sea, Rachel continues to affect the present and so continues to exist in it. She is no longer confined to her personal form, but, at least for Hewet and Hirst, she becomes part of them and part of the world of natural objects. Her ideal - complete communication - is achieved. She is identified first with the moon of the night of her death, and she is identified now with the storm which concludes the book. Thus with the help of the reader's memory, the book is resolved, and the "form" is completed.

The storm - a symbol of what has happened to Rachel - provides the book with an almost operatic close. The people in the hotel are apprised of the storm by "the first heavy drop striking the pane". [54] The storm develops cataclysmic proportions, and we see the diners in brief electric flashes. After the meal, they gather in the dark below a skylight, looking upwards, and are for the moment unified. For those who are in the present, divisions are briefly abolished and communication established. But the "artificial light" is turned on: conventional barriers are immediately raised again and the diners all separate in embarrassment. Meanwhile the storm overhead is passing out to sea. Mrs. Flushing announces: "The lightning went right out over the sea, and lit up the waves and the ships far away. You can't think how wonderful the mountains looked too, with the lights on them, and the great masses of shadow. It's all over now". [55] We are reminded of Rachel's picture of human life as transitory lights across solid masses. [56]

54. V.O., 449.
55. V.O., 454.
56. V.O., 358, 145.

St. John, meanwhile, who has wandered in, wind-blown and dishevelled, sits down and begins to experience a strange feeling:

> As he sat there motionless, this feeling of relief became a feeling of profound happiness. Without any sense of disloyalty to Terence and Rachel he ceased to think about either of them. The movements and voices seemed to draw together from different parts of the room, and to combine themselves in a pattern before his eyes; he was content to sit silently watching the pattern build itself up, looking at what he hardly saw. 57.

Mrs. Woolf's own pattern is thus complete. Despite obvious and natural defects in her presentation here, due to immaturity and inexperience, many features both of the book's technical structure and of the outlook presented in it will be used in a far more mature manner in later novels.

But, it will be remembered, the pattern given in the novel is intended to reflect a larger pattern, a form which may sometimes be apprehended in life, Rachel, in a transitory "moment of vision" speculates within the book on the justification for the pattern-giving activity, and in this statement provides an adequate summing-up of her authoress's intention:

> There was the strange thing, that one did not know where one was going, or what one wanted, and followed blindly, suffering so much in secret always unprepared and amazed and knowing nothing; but one thing led to another and by degrees something had formed itself out of nothing, and so one reached at last this calm, this quiet, this certainty, and it was this process that people called living. Perhaps then, every one really knew as she knew now where they were going; and things formed themselves into a pattern not only for her, but for them, and in that pattern lay satisfaction and meaning. 58.

57. V.O., 456.
58. V.O., 384-5.

The sun rose higher ... Sharp stripes of shadow lay on the grass, and the dew dancing in the tips of the flowers and leaves made the graden like a mosaic of single sparks not yet formed into one whole (W., 20).

CHAPTER II

> all learning left behind, established now in its own beauty, the seeker is suddenly swept beyond everything by the very crest of the wave of Consciousness surging beneath, and is lifted on high, and sees, never knowing how; the vision floods the eyes with light but it is not a light that shows some other thing; the light is itself the vision. 1.

The passage was written, not by Virginia Woolf, but by Plotinus, describing the ascent of the contemplative towards the One. We have seen in the Introduction how Keynes came to think of G.E. Moore's philosophy as "some sort of relation of neo-platonism" [2.], and in A Writer's Diary the only philosophers named among Mrs. Woolf's reading are those of the ancient world, Plato above all. We know that she taught herself Greek, and frequently practised it on the Socratic dialogues.

It is part of my purpose to demonstrate that the authoress's thought may be seen to have its place in acknowledged philosophic tradition, and for this reason I have compared her theories here and elsewhere with those of contemporary and other thinkers, wherever I considered this might prove relevant or helpful. I believe that Mrs. Woolf's ideas may fairly be considered part of the idealist tradition of philosophy, which descends, of course, from Plato himself. It must be borne in mind however, that she was naturally strongly influenced at least by the Bloomsbury empirical attitude, and in addition her ideas were derived primarily from her own experience. Yet, as we shall see in Chapter VII, this experience includes something very close to "mystic" phenomena. Since it is best to be sure exactly what the mystic phenomenon involves, especially as the underlying meaning of The Voyage Out then becomes clearer, it is helpful to turn to Plotinus, who was not only the most famous "neo-platonist", but is also considered the "father" of mysticism in the Christian era.

We see that Rachel's journey inward to the centre of her own being, which enables her to make contact with all being, has an obvious parallel in Plotinus' system: it is the way advised for the pure "lover".

1. Ennead VI.7.37. My translation. See Stephen Mackenna, The Enneads of Plotinus, 204-5, and Elmer O'Brien, The Essential Plotinus, 28.
2. Two Memoirs, 86.

The prerequisite that she must recognise the limits of "male" intellect is also consistent with Plotinus, where reason brings the contemplative only to the edge of insight. In addition, as we have seen, the moments when Rachel intuitively identifies with the universe around her, moments usually associated with the symbol of the globe, have their mystic side, and are consistent with mystic experience.

In the quotation above, I have used the word "Consciousness" for Plotinus' specialized word νοῦς usually translated as "The Intelligence". As I have shown, Rachel through her death becomes an influence on, and in this way takes part in, the consciousness that remains eternally in the present. She remains "alive" by her identity with those who are still living. Consciousness, immortal, lives on in the present, it is only its individual vessels which disappear. In the Timaeus. Plato expresses this distinction [3.], in reference to the "eternal essence":

> the past and future are created species of time, which we unconsciously but wrongly transfer to the eternal essence; for we say that he "was", he "is", he "will be", but the truth is that "is" alone is properly attributed to him

Similarly, after his own "voyage in" to that part of him, free of the intellect, which he shares with all being, Plotinus' seeker fuses with the One, where he knows no movement, where he is not "in life" but "above life" and where intellect is useless, for "the Supreme is not known Intellectively" [4.] Plotinus likens this to "a living sphere teeming with variety, to a globe of faces radiant with faces all living, to a unity of souls". [5.]

This is very close to Virginia Woolf's insight, and Plotinus goes on to clarify what he means by this "unity of souls": "we are thinking of soul as simultaneously one and many, participant in the nature divided in body, but at the same time a unity by virtue of belonging to that order which suffers no division". [6.]

3. Jowett translation, section 37-38.
4. Ennead VI.7.37., Mackenna translation, 204.
5. Ennead VI.7.15., op. cit., 181-2.
6. Ennead IV.9.3., op. cit., 185.

> It must, no doubt, seem strange that my soul and that of any and everybody else should be one thing only: it might mean my feelings being felt by someone else, my goodness another's too, my desire, his desire, all our experience shared with each other and with the (one-souled) universe, so that the very universe itself would feel whatever I felt. 7.

This way of thinking is very similar in outline to that of the authoress, and is the clue to much that has been recorded as odd or obscure in Virginia Woolf. It is the explanation of Mrs. Woolf's stated identification of Septimus and Mrs. Dalloway in the later novel; it is the reason why an experience which happens to one person may become part of the consciousness of another person - as frequently happens in the novels - without any communication on the point between them. It is the reason for the much-criticized unity of tone in The Waves : the authoress is substituting tone for the "stuff of consciousness", and by this illustrating the essential unity of all being through the medium of her "own" voice. It is almost Virginia Woolf's method as a novelist - to communicate a complex system of ideas without their explicit statement in the communication itself. Even this method receives its benediction in the third Ennead: "To learn, we must not allow ideas to remain exterior to us, but fuse them until they become part of our existence". 8.

It is this sequence of ideas which will lead to the important statement in Mrs. Dalloway: "Death is an attempt to communicate". It must, however, be affirmed that Virginia Woolf's views were the result of her thinking about the nature of the world as much as of her feeling.

This immensely broad view of humanity, almost as if in reality it had a 'common soul', is part of her vision. But with Night and Day, her second novel, published in 1918 and written through the war, there is evidence of a constriction of sympathy. True communication is at first difficult, well nigh impossible, for the characters in this book. It is only in the love of individual people, set against the vast mass of humanity, that complete communication becomes even feasible. In fact, the widening of her sympathy is the most evident feature of her development

7. Ennead IV.9.3., op. cit., 154.
8. Ennead III. 8.6. O'Brien translation p.168.
9. See Chapter VII

as a novelist. The last stage is neared with The Years (1936), which at least in its conclusions is not perhaps such a pessimistic book as has often been thought. Here, as we shall see, the final resolution of the problem of living is argued out by characters at a party in isolation from one another, and yet their communal inner life is the ultimate in intuitive identification. In Between the Acts (1941) her concern goes beyond even this to a vision encompassing all humanity.

But the most important element in Plotinus which we may judge akin to Bloomsbury thought is his concept of beauty. This most famous section of the Enneads, which was such an influence on Renaissance painting, has a counterpart in the background of the Bloomsbury "New Renaissance", for Plotinus must be considered the most influential proponent of the idea of "significant form":

> All shapelessness which admits of pattern and form, as long as it does not share in reason or in Idea, continues to be ugly and foreign to thought. It is utter ugliness, an ugly thing being something that has not been entirely mastered by pattern, that is by reason, the matter not yielding at every point to formulation in accord with Idea. Where Idea enters in, it groups and arranges what from a diversity of parts is to become a unity: it makes the sum one harmonious coherence, for Idea is a unity and what it moulds must be unified as far as multiplicity may.
>
> And on what is thus compacted to unity, beauty resides, giving itself to the parts as to the whole: when it lights on some natural unity, a thing of like parts, it gives itself to the whole. For example there is the beauty craftmanship confers upon a house and in the same way upon all its parts, and there is the beauty some natural quality may give to a single stone. This is how matter becomes beautiful - through communion with The Intelligence. 10.

We are reminded of Roger Fry's explanation of aesthetic response as a recognition that the matter of a work of art has been "penetrated and impregnated by an idea". [11.] But Plotinus, continuing his first Ennead, makes a statement about form-giving which is of great value in the clarity it provides for one of Mrs. Woolf's most prevailing symbols: that of light or fire: the beam from the lighthouse.

10. Ennead 1.6.2. My translation. See Mackenna, p.81, and O'Brien, p.37.
11. See Chapter I.

> the beauty of colour is the outcome of a unification: it derives from form. Reason and Idea, as an invasion of incorporeal light, conquer the darkness inherent in matter. This is why fire is more splendid than all material bodies, for it holds the rank of Idea to all the other elements. Always struggling upwards, this finest and liveliest of bodies is very near the unembodied. It has no matter in itself, while all matter may be penetrated by it; it provides the warmth for other bodies but is never cold itself; it has colour primally, they would be colourless were it not there: thus the splendour of its light, which springs from the Idea. Bodies outside or uncertainly held by its light are not beautiful as they have not absorbed the form of colour in its fulness. In the realm of sound... the measuresin music are not arbitrary but are fixed by the Idea whose function it is to dominate matter and bring pattern into being. 12.

Likewise fire for Virginia Woolf is the light of life, it is the idea which permeates experience and gives it form. The form in turn casts its light into the world around it and orders what it illuminates.

In her second novel, Night and Day (1919), the symbol of fire is used frequently. But it is a hidden inner fire only visible to another through the medium of love. When Plotinus says "In sum, we must withdraw from all the external, pointed wholly inwards; no leaning to the outer"[13]. he is expressing much the attitude that the central characters in this novel often feel compelled to defend. But their search is for a way of overcoming the forced privacy of the inner worlds of individuals, which find no expression in ordinary social intercourse.

There is no mystery about the symbol of "night and day". It is explained explicitly in a much-quoted paragraph:

> Why, she reflected, should there be this perpetual disparity between the thought and the action, between the life of solitude and the life of society, this astonishing precipice on one side of which the soul was active and in broad daylight, on the other side of which it was contemplative and dark as night? Was it not possible to step from one to the other, erect, and without essential change? Was this not the chance he offered her - the rare and wonderful chance of friendship? 14.

12. Ennead 1.6.3. My translation. See Mackenna, p.81, and O'Brien, p.37.
13. Op. cit., Mackenna translation, p.247.
14. N. D., 358-9.

Night, the life of the imagination, is seen as opposed to Day, the active and social life. Ordinary personality is made up of these two elements, which alternately influence it rather like opposite scales of a balance, but in each person one of these in the end proves dominant.

It is ironic that Virginia Woolf was attempting to write a social comedy during the years of the war, and under the threat of mental breakdown. At any rate, it is her least appealing work, the only one in which the level of the symbolic argumentation, where what the characters represent is interesting and effective, clearly seems to overrun and vitiate the straightforward story line, where the same figures appear dull and insipid. This paradox - the characters being rounded as symbol but flat as people - may just possibly be intentional, but it tends to draw out life from the book. The hero who moons about under lampposts outside the heroine's house here at least justifies the remark that "Mrs. Woolf's romantic men are more than a vengeance for our male author's romantic women". [15] She did not again make this mistake.

There is one atrociously sentimental chapter, the twenty-ninth, where one young lady is concealed behind a curtain while the man she is in love with confesses his love for her to a friend. The lovers are united in the midst of tears and platitudes. The scene is arranged in this way because Virginia Woolf is attempting to recreate Meredith's achievement in The Egoist - the novel in which her father appeared as one of the characters - of using the structure of the comic drama in the novel. The word "egoist" recurs in differing contexts throughout the text [16] and chapter XXIX of Night and Day is roughly equivalent to chapter XL in The Egoist: "Midnight: Sir Willoughby and Laetitia, with young Crossjay under a coverlet." Some of the unsatisfactoriness of Night and Day lies in its virtually constituting a reprieve for Sir Willoughby and his "away from the world" inner life so satirised by Meredith. This is another of the drawbacks of this novel: that it represents a point of view which Mrs. Woolf herself in many ways outgrew. Katherine is given a chance Sir Willoughby Patterne was not - to transcend her egoism through reciprocal communion with another.

15. Robert Peel, 'Virginia Woolf', Criterion, 78-96.
16. N. D., See 56, 68, 216, 285, 330.

The recurring references to Shakespeare are another indication of the theatrical connotations of the novel. It is after a visit to Shakespeare's grave that Mrs. Hilbery returns to unite the pairs of parted lovers. Her daughter, Katherine, the heroine, is often likened to Rosalind in "As You Like It". This is because if we see the outer active condition of "day" as being in essence "male" and the inner imaginative hidden life of "night" as being a "female" state, then Katherine, who actively orders the everyday life of the Hilbery household, is in a "male" guise. But she is a fraud. Her practicality is mere pretence, though hardly anyone, especially her parents, suspect it until the end. She defends the "outer" [17.] and yet is always forgetting her purse or her gloves, or leaving baskets on buses. [18.] The truth is, she has an active secret "inner life", the perfection of which finds no counterpart in the world around her, but only in her hobbies of mathematics and astronomy, which she works on, unsuspected, in the privacy of her own room. The results she hides between the pages of a Greek dictionary: Athens is, for Mrs. Woolf, as Byzantium was for Yeats, the place where the private and the social were one.

The story is outwardly the "type" of the comic dramatic plot. Ralph, an industrious young lawyer from a lower middle-class family, is loved by Mary Datchet, a woman's suffragist worker. Ralph, however, meets and becomes fascinated by Katherine Hilbery, who is the granddaughter of Richard Alardyce, the Victorian poet. She is helping her mother to write the poet's biography. Ralph privately makes her his ideal. Katherine is herself engaged to be married to William Rodney, a convention-bound young man who writes rather pedantic poetic dramas.

After a time in London, the two couples holiday, unknown to each other, in Lincolnshire. They meet as a result of the vagueness (or is it coy slyness?) of Mrs. Hilbery, who loses herself and then recognises Ralph, who in turn restores her to her party. The meeting puts an end to Ralph's intention of proposing to Mary, as he realises that it is Katherine who occupies his thoughts. Mary returns to London, decides to

17. N.D., See 150.
18. N.D., 63, 138, 140, 183, 205, 352, 462.

swallow her disappointment and devotes herself to "humanity" by working for an even more grandiose (and undefined) scheme for social betterment. The engagement of Katherine and Rodney is also broken off, but Katherine, realising that nothing in life corresponds to her inner ideal of perfection, is persuaded to renew the relationship once more.

While in Lincolnshire, the Hilberys had been staying with their relatives, the Otways, also members of the "intellectual aristocracy". William Rodney is rather taken with their younger daughter, Cassandra, who is far less indifferent to his talents than the beautiful Katherine has proved. Once back in London, he and Katherine agree to preserve their engagement for the sake of appearance, but to invite Cassandra down to visit them The girl and Rodney fall in love as planned, and Katherine and Ralph are enabled to pursue their own friendship, a Bloomsbury "experiment in communication".

An aunt, a representative of convention, caricatured like her fellows Richard Dalloway and Sir William Bradshaw in other novels, neglects her preoccupation of reporting on a nephew - he has flouted accepted codes of conduct by taking a common-law wife - to spy on the couples. She informs on them to Mr. Hilbery, Katherine's father, who, accustomed to letting Katherine make the decisions, determines for once to act strongly by refusing to allow the young people to meet. Mrs. Hilbery returns from a visit to Shakespeare's grave to sort out the difficulties and unite the couples. Rodney and Cassandra become engaged, and Ralph and Katherine, after wandering about the streets of London, admit to each other that they are in love. On this note, with all four of them promised to their proper partners, the novel ends.

The comic bearing of this will be evident. Virginia Woolf may have originally conceived of her special genius as being comic. The early part of The Voyage Out, for instance, aboard a suitably named ship (Euphrosyny = merriment), is treated much as a comedy of manners. On the secondary level, however, Night and Day is once again an inquiry into the problem of communication.

A clue to its meaning may be found in Roger Fry's 'An Essay in Aesthetics' included in Vision and Design [19] and first published separately as a magazine article in 1909. There he points out a common Bloomsbury opinion that works of art, and all the productions of the imaginative life, are distinguished by their freedom from the utilitarian emotions of everyday life: they must be conceived of as ends, not as means.

> I think the artist might if he chose take a mystical attitude, and declare that the fulness and completeness of the imaginative life he leads may correspond to an existence more real and more important than any that we know of in mortal life... we should rather justify actual life by its relation to the imaginative, justify nature by its likeness to art ... the actual life may be explained and justified by its approximation, here and there, however partially and inadequately, to that freer and fuller life. 20.

This conclusion reminds us of Wilde's in "The Decay of Lying". As we have seen, Virginia Woolf, too, has spoken of the "moments of vision", when here and there, partially and inadequately, we experience life as if it conformed to art. The desire to perceive pattern, and the patterning activity itself is central to the imagination. "Art, then, is, if I am right, the chief organ of the imaginative life", [21] says Fry.

Art, being a work of "ordered form", Virginia Woolf felt, would help to bring order and pattern into the inner life of those who perceived it, as would anything ideal or perfect. To Roger Fry, as well, the work of art would not remain simply a formed product of one artist's mind, it would have a special power of communicating with those who saw it. As Fry puts it, "We feel that he (the artist) has expressed something which was latent in us all the time, but which we never realized, that he has revealed us to ourselves in revealing himself". [22]

According to the essay, the work of art, then, must contain this "purpose", this intent of communication. It must contain, Fry says, the stimulation of "variety" (change), but the first quality we demand is "order". The perception of purposeful order and variety in an object gives

19. (1920) Pelican edn. 1961, 22-39.
20. Vision and Design, 27.
21. Op. cit., 29.
22. Op. cit., 33.

us the feeling which we express by saying that it is beautiful.[23] It is arranged in such a way that "the emotional elements are elicited with an order and appropriateness altogether beyond what nature herself provides".[24]

The two central characters in Night and Day, Katherine Hilbery and Ralph Denham, are both in search of something they feel is lacking in their inner lives: an object which provides order for their lives as a whole. Ralph finds what he seeks in Katherine herself. She becomes unwittingly the centre of Ralph's imaginative life, because her beauty and elegance make her somehow "ideal" to him. She becomes the centre of his inner life, the object of his fantasies, not as her actual self, but as Ralph's romanticised conception of her.

Katherine meanwhile finds this perfection, this order that she needs, in the study of the stars and abstract mathematics. They have the same place in her imagination that she has in Ralph's: they represent the perfection round which her inner life coalesces.

To Ralph, at any rate, this "new possession" of his - the ideal Katherine - is used at first as a protection against the humdrum conventional world.[25] He treats the actual Katherine merely as a source of fuel for the life of his imaginary puppet version; "yes, but how terrible sometimes the pause between the voice of one's dreams and the voice that comes from the object of one's dreams!"[26] At times he is determined that the real Katherine should conform to his will[27] and resemble his inner ideal. At others he accepts that there is no concord between the inner life of contemplation and the outer life of action.

> Ralph had made up his mind that there was no use for what, contemptuously enough, he called dreams, in the world which we inhabit. It sometimes seemed to him that this spirit was the most valuable possession he had; he thought that by means of it he could set flowering waste tracks of the earth, cure many ills, or raise up beauty where none now existed ... His endeavour, for many years had been to control the spirit, and

23. Op. cit. 34.
24. Op. cit., 38.
25. N. D., 17-18.
26. N. D., 319. See also p. 91, p.235, p.265.
27. N. D., 57.

> at the age of twenty-nine he thought he could pride himself upon a life rigidly divided into the hours of work and those of dreams... As a matter of fact, this effort at discipline ...tinged his views with the melancholy belief that life for most people compels the excercise of the lower gifts and wastes the precious ones... 28.

"There may be nothing else", he begins to fear. "Nothing but what we imagine".[29] Ralph's despondency is really caused by the acquiescent nature of the Katherine of his fantasy. The truth is, she is a dead object, subject to his will alone. This is proved by the frequency with which he feels compelled to return to the real Katherine to give sustenance to his imagination.

Katherine's predicament, although less depressing than Ralph's, arises from the same conflict. She is forced to keep her inner life hidden, because of her social position. Society and family are the same repression, to her and to Ralph, because they disparage privacy.[30] Ralph's false outer facade and apparent self-control - paralleled by the "reality" he finds inside himself, and his romantic folly - find their counterpart in Katherine's relations to her family. She has grown up to represent practicality and externality to a family whose activity is bound up with poetic and literary pursuits. Consequently she has been placed in charge of household management. It is her job to see that "every clock ticked more or less accurately in time"[31]: to see that the individual inner time of each member of the household conforms with the social time of the whole family. Since this facade is accepted by her family, she is obliged to keep her inner imaginative life - interwoven with her love of mathematics and astronomy - a secret she reserves for expression only in her own room.

To her mother, Katherine's externality is "poetry the wrong side out"[32]: her private life is supposed to be perfectly expressed in her social attainment. Mrs. Hilbery, whose activities it is her job to regulate, is almost entirely a creature of the inner life. Her

28. N. D., 129-130.
29. N. D., 405.
30. N. D., 20.
31. N. D., 38.
32. Ibid.

interior time is innocent of self-discipline.

> Her watch, for example, was a constant source of surprise to her, and at the age of sixty-five she was still amazed at the ascendancy which rules and reasons exerted over the lives of other people. 33.

The clock imagery is used again when Katherine and her father come into conflict over the cousin who has flouted convention. "The grandfather's clock in the hall ticked in competition with the small clock on the landing". 34. Once, again, two times are in conflict: age and youth, convention and freedom.

Mrs. Hilbery lives in the past. Her own inner world is completely occupied by the times of her father, the poet Richard Alardyce, whose biography she is attempting unsuccessfully to write; she is like a wayward child, unamenable to any kind of system. She is in fact changing the actual events into a myth, as if by "a touch here and there she could set things straight which had been crooked these sixty years". 35. Life has become art in Mrs. Hilbery's mind. That what she represents - the "inner" - is of dominant value to the authoress, is shown by the way Mrs. Hilbery acts as *deus ex machina* throughout the book.

When Katherine begins to realise her love for Ralph, she "becomes" her mother; the facade falls away. Cassandra, who has set the seal on Alardyce by daring to say that he was probably "a fraud like the rest" 36. is the first one to notice this change: when Katherine forgets to help the pudding and then wanders off to look for Ralph without any gloves 37., the girl points out this new resemblance between mother and daughter.

Ralph's idealised conception of Katherine is not very different from that which her parents hold. For them she is a person "to whom every one turns" 38. After Ralph by chance catches sight of her in the Strand the whole scene "wore that curious look of order and purpose which is imparted to the most heterogeneous things when music sounds". 39. So

33. N. D., 39.
34. N.D., 108.
35. N. D., 102.
36. N. D., 455.
37. N. D., 460, 463.
38. N. D., 117.
39. N. D., 133.

Katherine, the inner Katherine, imparts order to Ralph's world.

After Katherine and William Rodney announce their engagement, Ralph feels bereft of her formative influence. Chaos descends upon him. He "made no pattern out of the sights he saw" [40]; he felt "adrift"; not one of his possessions was safe now". He felt one with the down-and-outs in the doors of public houses who saw things as being without substance, and were blown here and there by the wind. Deprived of the axis, the central pivot, he is able to discern no meaning at all in things. On the embankment at night, he sits on a bench despite "the chilly fog which obscured the farther bank and left its lights suspended upon a blank surface while inside him all bright points in his life were blotted out". The image of points of light, as we have seen in The Voyage Out, is used to indicate both impressions as they strike us, and also the separate lights of individual consciousness. The fog here separates the lights from their surroundings; their supports are no longer visible. So both individual minds and the impressions which these minds receive, as well as the relationship between the impressions, become disparate and unrelated.

> The whole mass of the world was insubstantial vapour, surrounding the solitary spark in his mind, whose burning point he could remember, for it burnt no more. He had once cherished a belief, and Katherine had embodied that belief, and she did so no longer. [41].

Beneath this of course, like the first strains of a leit-motif, is a suppressed visual image: the symbol of the lighthouse. Katherine gradually becomes identified in Ralph's mind with this symbol, for the lighthouse is, of course, that which provides order for the ships which pass at night over the chaos of the waves. Katherine represents order and civilization almost as a hereditary legacy, for when her ancestors "were not lighthouses firmly based on rock for the guidance of their generation, they were steady, serviceable candles, illuminating the ordinary chambers of daily life". [42].

40. N. D., 161-2.
41. N. D., 163.
42. N. D., 30.

Much later, Ralph, once again wandering and communing with himself at night, has a similar series of impressions, but they come to him with much greater definition. At first he has a similar sensation of impending chaos.

> But the whirl of the atmosphere alone was in Denham's mood, and what of star or blossom appeared was only as a light gleaming for a second upon heaped waves fast following each other. 43.

The light of "day" touches only momentarily the feelings of "night". When Denham sits down on a park bench to gather his thoughts, a tramp sits down next to him.

> And when the elderly man refused to listen and mumbled on, an odd image came to his mind of a lighthouse beseiged by the flying bodies of lost birds, who were dashed senseless, by the gale, against the glass. 44.

Passing on, he reaches the street in Chelsea where the Hilberys live, and looks up at the lighted room:

> Light burnt in the three long windows of the drawing-room. The space of the room behind became, in Ralph's vision, the centre of the dark, flying wilderness of the world; the justification for the welter of confusion surrounding it; the steady light which cast its beams, like those of a lighthouse, with searching composure over the trackless waste. In this little sanctuary were gathered together several different people, but their identity was dissolved in a general glory of something that might, perhaps, be called civilization; at any rate, all dryness, all safety, all that stood up above the surge and preserved a consciousness of its own, was centred in the drawing-room of the Hilberys... At length... he allowed himself to approach the figure of Katherine herself; and instantly the scene was flooded with excitement. He did not see her in the body; he seemed curiously to see her as a shape of light, the light itself; he seemed, simplified and exhausted as he was, to be like one of those lost birds fascinated by the lighthouse and held to the glass by the splendour of the blaze. 45.

Change and the eternal; flux and the enduring; for Virginia Woolf, as for Plato, life implied both extremes. But she rejected neither of them. To her, change and growth, the very stuff of life, moved as if

43. N. D., 416.
44. N. D., 418.
45. N. D., 418-419.

about an unchanging centre, which draws the particular elements of experience into its ordering pattern. Katherine, for Ralph, comes to represent this ideal, for - if love may be defined as the emotion of attraction which draws together the lover and the objects of her love, an emotion of ordering, then Katherine's influence on him is that of love. As Lily Briscoe will realize in To the Lighthouse: "Love had a thousand shapes. There might be lovers whose gift it was to choose out the elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene, or meeting of people (all now gone and separate), one of those globed compacted things over which thought lingers, and love plays". [46.]

In distinction to that of Ralph, Katherine's inner world contains not people but mathematics and the stars. When she and Ralph meet for the second time, at a party, she gazes at the night sky out of the window. When he questions her knowledge, she replies with ironic humility that she would know how to find the Pole star if she were lost. [47.] The "star" image is already being related to the need for order. On page 108 she daydreams of some magnanimous hero on a great horse, but her daydream is very closely connected with her need for mathematics. Mathematics are, in a sense, her dreams made concrete. This objectification into mathematics of her need for perfect order is of the same nature as her interest in the constellations of impersonal stars. As Katherine herself puts it on page 449, she is "in love with pure reason". Reason and love in this sense become indistinguishable, since the activity of reason is also to provide order. She comes to the conclusion that "Perhaps, Mary, our affections are the shadow of an idea. Perhaps there isn't such a thing as affection in itself..." [48.] The idea, the nature of the pattern, lies behind what and who we accept into our pattern.

All the issues which have been discussed so far, those of "order" and "the inner and the outer", are brought together in a section which is perhaps the most important in the book for the purposes of this inquiry.

46. T. L., 223.
47. N. D., 58.
48. N. D., 286.

Here, Katherine is thinking to herself as she wanders home through the streets of London, considering first the opposition of convention to the individual imagination:

> The only truth which she could discover was the truth of what she herself felt - a frail beam when compared with the broad illumination shed by the eyes of all the people who are in agreement to see together; but having rejected the visionary voices, she had no choice but to make this her guide through the dark masses which confronted her. She tried to follow her beam ... Much depended, as usual, upon the interpretation of the word love... For the more she looked into the confusion of lives which, instead of running parallel, had suddenly intersected each other, the more distinctly she seemed to convince herself that there was no other light on them than was shed by this strange illumination, and no other path save the one upon which it threw its beams. 49.

It is this notion of the nature of love that is the inner illumination Katherine provides. She goes on - in imagery which implicitly invokes the "cone" shape - to relate the patterns of mathematics and stars to the concept of significant form as expressed in the novel, inviting extension of this to embrace the metaphysical notion, the overall shape which provides human life with order.

> Her mind, passing from Mary to Denham, from William to Cassandra, and from Denham to herself - if, as she rather doubted, Denham's state of mind was connected with herself - seemed to be tracing out the lines of some symmetrical pattern, some arrangement of life, which invested, if not herself, at least the others, not only with interest, but with a kind of tragic beauty. She had a fantastic picture of them upholding splendid palaces upon their bent backs. They were the lantern-bearers, whose lights, scattered among the crowd, wove a pattern, dissolving, joining, meeting again in combination... she determined that, whatever else might be obscure, she must further the objects of Mary, Denham, William and Cassandra... If you cannot make sure of people, however, you can hold fairly fast to figures, and in some way or other her thought about such problems as she was wont to consider worked in happily with her mood as to her friends' lives. 50.

Our comparison with the ideas of Plato and Plotinus continues to help our understanding of what Mrs. Woolf is saying. For instance, in her inner world, for Katherine, "there dwelt the realities of the appearances

49. N: D:; 330-331.
50. N: D:; 332-333.

which figure in our world". [51] Deep in abstraction on one occasion she hears the voices of the others as if they came from "another world, a world antecedent to her world, a world that was the prelude, the ante-chamber to reality". [52] The world of "night" which she inhabits, the world of intuition and imagination, is conceived very like Plato's world of immutable forms, of which our actual world of change is merely the mirage. Katherine defines once and for all the permanent relation between the inner and the outer, and her conception of it, when she asks herself: "reality, was it, figures, love, truth?" 53. This then, is her understanding of the relationship between the inner world of Platonic "forms" and the outer world of change: the ideals "figures, love and truth" all help to order the changing world.

Yet change is important. A quotation from Dostoevsky recurs in Katherine's mind: "It's life that matters, nothing but life - the process of discovering - the everlasting and perpetual process, not the discovery itself at all". [54] Life is not a rest in a Platonic stasis, it is an involvement with change. It lies in the appropriation of experience into our personal order, in defiance of that final stability, death.

Mary Datchet, on page 292, expresses her fear of going about with something in her mind all her life that never changes. The same fear earlier becomes a spur to communication, when she debates with herself whether she should speak her mind or remain quiet:

> It is right, her instinct told her; right to expose oneself without reservations to other human beings ... But if she did keep something of her own? Immediately she figured an immured life, continuing for an immense period, the same feelings living for ever, neither dwindling nor changing within the ring of a thick stone wall. The imagination of this loneliness frightened her. 55.

Until the end of the novel is neared, both Ralph and Katherine are preoccupied with their inanimate ideals and automaton fantasies. But Ralph the dreamer, afraid of too much contact with the real Katherine

51. N. D., 145.
52. N. D., 373.
53. N.D., 533.
54. N. D., 132.
55. N. D., 289.

since it might tarnish the perfection of his self-made ideal of her, is shocked by his discovery after an encounter: "from the depths of his mind there rose unchecked a recognition that human nature surpasses, in its beauty, all that our wildest dreams bring us hints of". [56]

Katherine, too, in her self-obsession, causes others to comment that "life isn't altogether real to her yet". [57] She, like Ralph, has not yet experienced the communication with another which would bring reality into her inner world. It is "dialogue" with another, we may say, that brings life, another word for which might be change. Also, if communication is life, love is its precondition. She rejects Rodney in order not to compromise her ideal, and yet with Ralph, who offers true communion on this hidden ideal level, she achieves more than her vision. Change and the unchanging ideal, she eventually finds, are necessary to one another. "You've destroyed my loneliness", she is forced to tell him. [58]

We find this emphasis on the reciprocal importance of life to art elsewhere in the novel. For example, poetry is used throughout the novel as a symbol of the "inner" life; but as Mrs. Hilbery says "poetry isn't so much what we write as what we feel". [59] Life, not Art, is the most important in the last analysis. It is the life of Alardyce, the poet, which is unsuccessfully committed to paper. Like Shakespeare, he lives in the present not through his trophy room of dead effects but through his influence on the actual life of those who are now alive.

For consciousness, then, isolation must mean a kind of death. "Wherever I seat myself, I die in exile", as Mrs. Woolf reiterates in Jacob's room. [60] So Ralph, after the crisis, when Mr. Hilbery denies the four young people the right to meet in his home, begins to write a poem about Katherine, But after only a few lines he tears it up. The productions of one inner life on its own is not enough. He begins to put into words what he feels on this score.

56. N. D., 151.
57. N. D., 215.
58. N. D., 534.
59. N. D., 451.
60. J. R., 65.

> although human beings are ill-adapted for communication, still, such communion is the best we know; moreover, they make it possible for each to have access to another world independent of personal affairs, a world of law, of philosophy, or more strangely a world he had a glimpse of the other evening when together they seemed to be sharing something, creating something, an ideal - a vision flung out in advance of our actual circumstances. If this golden rim were quenched, if life were no longer circled by an illusion (but was it an illusion after all?), then it would be too dismal an affair to carry to an end. 61.

An ideal is what gives our lives order. Love, the ordering emotion, brings us via our dialogue with another to wider conceptions of order; even, possibly, to a pattern which may serve to encompass all experience. In the ordering beam of affection and communication, Ralph joins Katherine as the lighthouse.

> he saw Rodney as one of the lost birds dashed senseless against the glass; one of the flying bodies of which the air was full. But he and Katherine were alone together, aloft, splendid and luminous with a twofold radiance. 62.

Previously they have been subject to distraction from two sources. The two kinds of temptation away from true inner communication come in the persons of William Rodney and Mary Datchet. We learn early on that William, who poses as a poet, has more of the old maid in him than the poet. 63. His leaning toward convention makes him a milder version of the arch representative of the external, the spying aunt, Mrs. Milvain. 64. When Katherine breaks her engagement to him she is also rejecting what he represents. "Once set the ordinary conventions aside " 65. he exclaims. The sentence is left unfinished. Virginia Woolf would add "... and communication becomes possible".

Mary, rejected by Ralph, offers the temptation of airy idealism. Her suffragist cause - most of the book was written prior to 1918 - is constantly thwarted by events, and towards the end of the book she abandons this crusade for one even more illusory, the complete reconstruction of society.

61. N.D., 515-516.
62. N.D., 422.
63. N.D., 65.
64. N.D., See pp. 140, 259, 339, 481.
65. N.D., 463.

This is what she stands for in relation to Ralph. But in herself she is a crucial figure. The "communion" she achieves is of a much wider order than the purely personal one she has lost. Mary hardly ever reads poetry, [66.] her "room" is constantly made open to the public. [67.] In other words, her inner life has to be suppressed, especially after her love for Ralph is unrequited. But as a result, the proclivities of her imagination are sublimated towards a higher ideal, universal human order. Mary's love is to be humanity.

When she begins to realise this, she is walking in a London street, and wishes she had pencil and paper "to help her give a form to this conception". Its form is actually that - resembling a peak or a "cone" - of the ordering metaphysical theory.

> Her vision seemed to lay out the lines of her life until death in a way which satisfied her sense of harmony. It only needed a persistent effort of thought, stimulated in this way by the crowd and the noise, to climb the crest of existence and see it all laid out once and for ever. 68.

Mary - through faith as much as reason - has approached the concept of a universal pattern ordering all human life. Like Mrs. Hilbery, who identifies faith and love, and holds - looking absentmindedly at Katherine's calculations - that "we have to have faith in our vision", 69. Mary feels that belief in this, even if it be illusion, must be maintained. [70.] She becomes the equivalent of the lights of London, casting radiance on all. [71.] In a moment of vision she realizes that a conception of a universal pattern has replaced Ralph as her ideal.

> She saw to the remote spaces behind the strife of the foreground, enabled now to gaze there, since she had renounced her own demands, privileged to see the larger view, to share the vast desires and sufferings of the mass of mankind...there remained a hard reality, unimpaired by one's personal adventures, remote as the stars, unquenchable as they are. 72.

66. N. D., 135.
67. N. D., 42.
68. N. D., 272.
69. N. D., 512-3.
70. N. D., 271.
71. N. D., 44
72. N. D., 275.

Mary, undergoing "this curious transformation from the particular to the universal" while the drab little office worker Mrs. Seal makes tea, realises that she is now in part renouncing life. Involvement with the unchanging ideal in this way means turning one's back on life, although the attempt to make the actual ideal is life itself. The ambivalent sentence "it was at this exact spot on the surface of the globe that all the subterranean wires of thought and progress came together" [73] serves to indicate the centre of her new perspective, put into words by Mrs. Seal: "the cause of humanity ... It's all so simple" [74].

Meanwhile Katherine and Ralph who are to be content with a less grand but more living, more real, state, have not resolved the nature of their relationship in their own minds. It seems obvious to everyone else that they should marry (particularly William), but the problem is that when they are together they "see each other only now and then". [75] Ralph is like a fire, seen through its outer smoke: Katherine, whose mind so often visits "the snow valleys of the moon" [76] has become its counterpart. As he rises into externality, she sets into contemplation.

Finally they succeed in their experiment in communication: they experience communion of their inner lives. Katherine has her moment of vision: the identification of reality with figures, love, and truth: "It seemed to her that the immense riddle was answered; the problem had been solved; she held in her hands for one brief moment the globe which we spend our lives trying to shape, round, whole, and entire, from the confusion of chaos." [77]

Ralph has still to shape his own globe. Katherine sees him as a fire burning in the night, a source of life. He asks her what she is thinking, and she describes her image "making him feel that he had stepped... into the faintly lit vastnesses of another mind, stirring with shapes, so large, so dim, unveiling themselves only by flashes, and

73. N. D., 279.
74. N. D., 277.
75. N. D., 450.
76. N. D., 461.
77. N. D., 533.

moving away again into the darkness, engulfed by it". [78.] Their communion is complete. They are both "absorbed in the flame". [79.]

Ralph wishes to tell Mary of their engagement, but feels himself unable to enter her apartment. Yet Katherine sees the light behind the blinds shine out "like a sign of triumph" : "How they burn!" she thought, and all the darkness of London seemed set with fires, roaring upwards; but her eyes came back to Mary's window and rested there satisfied." [80.]

So the conclusions of the novel are reviewed and integrated here at its end by a subtle inclusion of the images associated with them, as in her other novels. The philosophic reference is to the existence of universal pattern: London is its symbol, and Mary is "unified with it. Thinking about her discovery, "it's all so simple", Katherine quoted, remembering some words of Sally Seal's. [81.] The words have been spoken not to Katherine but to Mary alone, on page 277. They marked Mary's adoption of the ideal of humanity.

Ralph himself attempts to arrive at the same conclusion as Katherine. Thinking of the other people in the novel, he pauses,

> not finding it possible to link them together in any way that should explain the queer combination which he could perceive in them, as he thought of them. They appeared to him to be more than individuals; to be made up of many different things in cohesion; he had a vision of an orderly world. 82.

Katherine senses that Ralph is searching for pattern, for something that will order the chaos of human experience.

> She felt him trying to piece together in a laborious and elementary fashion fragments of belief, unsoldered and separate, lacking the unity of phrases fashioned by the old believers. Together they groped in this difficult region, where the unfinished, the unfulfilled, the unwritten, the unreturned, came together in their ghostly way and wore the semblance of the complete and satisfactory. 83.

78. N.D., 535.
79. Ibid.
80. N.D., 536.
81. N.D., 536-7.
82. N.D., 536.
83. N.D., 537.

Communication of the inner established, Katherine and Ralph are joined in "night". The novel ends: [84]

> From the heart of his darkness he spoke his thanksgiving; from a region as far, as hidden, she answered him. On a June night the nightingales sing, they answer each other across the plain; they are heard under the window among the trees in the garden...
>
> "Good night", he breathed. "Good night", she murmured back to him.

84. N. D., 538.

As they splashed and drew back they left a black rim of twigs and cork on the shore and straws and sticks of wood, as if some light shallop had foundered and burst its sides and the sailor had swum to land and bounded up the cliff and left his frail cargo to be washed ashore. (W., 53)

CHAPTER III.

Jacob's Room was published by the Hogarth Press in 1922. At the time the gap in kind between Virginia Woolf's first novel and her third caused something of a stir. The differences arise mainly from experimentation with technique, and from a new maturity of outlook: where Night and Day was bulky, overwritten, and, on the philosophic plane, attempted to include too much for the story's weight, Jacob's Room, a mere 168 pages[1.], is Virginia Woolf's first masterpiece. Form and content become inseparable. Jacob's Room is certainly experimental. At the same time, the new departure in the technique of fiction is not as radical as may at once appear: firstly, the gap between the books is bridged by a collection of short stories, each representing a significant technical innovation; secondly, many people did not - and do not - realise that Mrs. Woolf's first two novels attempt very much that is new. The novelty of her third book could not be ignored.

The most obvious peculiarity discovered by critics of Jacob's Room was that its hero is missing. This was - and is - most often pointed out as a sign of failure. Dorothy M. Hoare writes: "On the whole Jacob's Room gives the impression of a delicate and intricate spider's web from which the middle ... has been torn away".[2.] We get this impression because we see Jacob Flanders only through the different streams of consciousness of a multitude of characters, the perceptions of each one coloured by their own personality and circumstances. Some of the people are Jacob's intimate friends, others never even meet him, but perhaps merely brush past a friend of his in the street. At the outer edge of this expanding ripple of awareness of Jacob lie his books, his possessions, his boots. To add to the rest, there is even a rather distracted pseudo-narrator who intervenes above this chorus from time to time to herself speculate upon Jacob's nature. His life from childhood to his death in the early stages of the 1914 war is recorded in this way.

1. Penguin edition (1965).
2. Introduction to To the Lighthouse, Everyman edn. (1964), vi.

We do not enter Jacob's mind at all except near the end of the book, the episode of the trip to Greece. This episode constitutes a climax of a kind, accentuated by an objective symbol, the Parthenon; but the underplayed, Forster-like tone of the novel throughout belies climaxes. Virginia Woolf is replacing the masculine cuneiform novel with the globe-shaped feminine form. In the first, various straight lines of development ascend to intersect at the high point of the book, and the plot unfolds at a regular pace, to conform with an objective standard of time. In the second, we find balance of the parts and no real "plot" to speak while chronological time is disrupted. Mrs. Woolf is once again replacing the Hebraic linear time of regular progression with the pagan time of Greek antiquity.[3.]

We note that Jacob, who represents, on one level, the past and outmoded Edwardian generation, is a Hebrew name. It is surprising that more critics have not realised that Jacob's absence is intentional, considering the import of his name, Jacob Flanders. Jacob means 'supplanter': as the biblical Esau says of his brothers: "Is he not aptly named? He has supplanted me in my father's affection". But it is Jacob, who, at the end of the novel, has been supplanted. By what else but by Flanders fields, as his name implies? Jacob, killed in action, is indistinguishable from the solid earth. He has been replaced by objects.

The book is ambiguous in that it intentionally permits several different but mutually related interpretations. Virginia Woolf herself supplies one of these in her diary:

3. It has been pointed out to me that in his book Mimesis(Princeton,1953,73ff.) Eric Auerbach has an opposite interpretation of the role of time in Christian and Greek thought. This interpretation is inaccurate: the outline idea of linear evolution enters Western thought through Judeo-Christianity, in the concept of humanity progressing towards an eventual "day of judgment" and union with God. Previously the Greeks (and the Hindu) had thought of time as being cyclical: witness Plato's universal "great wheel" revolving once every 72,000 years, and the Ekpyrosis and Apokastasis of the Stoics and Epicureans: the swallowing-up and regurgitation of the universe by divine fire. In contrast, St. Augustine somewhere says of the Greeks: "Their circles are laid flat". The linear view prevails until the time of Nietzsche who proclaimed the "Death of God", and resurrected cyclical time as his "eternal recurrence". Nietzsche was a Professor of Greek.

> People, like Arnold Bennett, say I can't create, or didn't in Jacob's Room, characters that survive. My answer is... the old argument that character is dissipated into shreds now; the old post-Dostoievsky argument. 4.

Personality, as a term, is meaningless, because people have ceased to be simple enough as entities to fit into any category implied by it. As the novel goes on to show, to the authoress "self" is diffused, it is indistinguishable from the objects with which it is associated.

Broadly speaking, there often seem to most observers to be two opposed poles of opinion governing people's attitudes towards one belief and another, evident, especially to-day, in politics, literature and society. We seem to find on one hand the belief that man is first and foremost an individual, and on the other the notion that man's real nature is communal. Virginia Woolf, great individualist that she was, yet held an idea of a communal identity, a communal survival. Jacob, the missing pebble, continues to exist in the ripples he sets up in the stream of consciousness of other individuals. Unlike Sartre, for this novelist Heaven, if it exists, not Hell, lies in "other people", despite their pettinesses and inadequacies.

So Jacob's Room is about the identity of an individual in place and time: in relation to his environment (where is he?), in relation to others (how far is he other people, how far himself?), and in relation to the past ("We start transparent, and then the cloud thickens. All history backs our pane of glass. To escape is vain." (p.47)) Jacob conducts a search for his separate identity, a negation of other people, other ideas, which culminates in his trip to Greece. The novel is a chronicle of his failure. He is his objects. Jacob is his room. In so far as he survives, he survives through them.

There is yet another level of interpretation, suggested by certain passages in the novel. Just as Shakespeare was the literary correlative of the action in Night and Day, so Jacob's literary correlative in this novel is Byron, who, like Jacob - and Thoby Stephen - met with the critical events of his active life in Greece. All three died early and abroad. But since Jacob died in 1914, he may be considered

4. A Writer's Diary, 57.

as an Edwardian, a contemporary of Arnold Bennett, and we remember that the writers of this era were dismissed as "materialists" in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown", a manifesto first read in 1924. [5] They would describe their character's room but leave his soul untouched. Byron, too, appears in Mrs. Woolf's Diary (pp. 2-3) with some of the disapproval appropriate to a materialist among poets: he has all the external "male virtues" (p.2). So on a preliminary level, Jacob's Room can be read as a tragic satire on a generation which is represented to its post-war heirs only by the material objects which survive it. [6] Jacob's death thus admits of two completely opposed interpretations, both of which are intended.

Although this study would become overlong if I dwelt on Virginia Woolf's technical achievements, and they will only be treated here as they affect the main theme, they represent an almost endless source of productive alalysis. Almost every rhythm, every device and every reference has reverberations which in accordance with the doctrine of significant form either reflect or contribute to the whole. Roger Fry held that even the brushstrokes of a painting ought to take part in the "idea" behind the work. Virginia Woolf has expressed this dictum through the medium of words.

She had earlier "found her feet" as regards her technique with a series of experimental short stories, most of them republished in A Haunted House (1944). [7] Some in this collection are only sketches, and all of them are of slight intrinsic worth, with the single exception of a later story, 'The Shooting Party' [8], which is unique within her oeuvre and in its manner anticipates "theatre of the absurd" by at least twenty years. It resembles the recent play Barnstaple by James Saunders both in style and theme: the atrophy of the aristocracy. However, several of these stories are valuable not merely as an indication of particular technical developments but also of certain important prevailing thematic strains. 'Kew Gardens' [9] is an attempt to unify a short story

5. See Introduction.
6. References to Byron in the text: J.R., 19, 74 ff (71 ff), 92 (88)
7. Page numbers refer to 1947 edn.
8. Op. cit., 52-59.
9. Op. cit., 28-34.

both spatially and temporally simply by the use of transitions, which relate in time to the movements of a central object, a snail in a flowerbed. 'Mark on the Wall' [10] does the same thing on an internal plane: daydreams and digressions involving the past and the future spring from, and smoothly return to, a mysterious and puzzling object on a wall. In the end it is identified: another snail. 'An Unwritten Novel' [11] also involves daydreams and speculations - about the character of a little old lady sitting opposite in a railway carriage - which finally also prove completely unfounded.

There are certain preoccupations here: with the use of the transition, which bridges related characteristics of people and things, and so makes unnecessary the conventional forward movement of the plot in time; with the contingeht nature of our imaginings about people and things; and also with the interruption of the time process itself. All these subjects are related, as I shall show. They all figure to a large extent in Jacob's Room. We remember that the subject of this novel was the identity of a young man, Jacob Flanders, and that this identity was seen as being inseparable from the impression he imparts to every other person (and object) with which he comes in contact. Jacob is only completed, like Bernard in The Waves, when he is in "dialogue" with other people, other things. Since others complete him, after death Jacob continues to exist in the part of him which remains with them. So consciousness is not in isolated atoms, there are no real dividing lines, and all is a homogeneous whole. The transition is surely the ideal device to underline this connection between all things.

Virginia Woolf felt that there was no fixed or rounded "character", such as Thackeray and Dickens portrayed. To her, these writers created one-dimensional caricatures instead of people. Real identity was so mysterious, intangible and diverse it was by nature inexpressible and indescribable; it could only be intuited. So if we are given changing aspects of Jacob from every angle but his own, the various images of him should coalesce, rather as if we had put on stereoscopic spectacles, and the true personality should be experienced

10. Op. cit., 35-42.
11. Op. cit., 12-23.

in depth, almost apart from the story, as no words alone could express it. This is what happens in Jacob's Room.

The authoress describes something near to this when she talks about the correct reaction to the work of poets, in an essay published in 1930:

> We grasp what is beyond their surface meaning, gather instinctively this, that, and the other - a sound, a colour, here a stress, there a pause - which the poet, knowing words to be meagre in comparison with ideas, has strewn about his page to evoke, when collected, a state of mind which neither words can express nor the reason explain. 12.

Virginia Woolf is once again really talking about her own technique, and she uses just this arrangement many times in Jacob's Room where the emotional effect of juxtapositions such as she describes is far greater and more varied than would seem possible from the component paragraphs or phrases themselves. It is also the pattern of the book as a whole, where, instead of a "form" or a philosophic quantity we are at the end to be left with a different kind of "globe": a conviction of the identity of another, Jacob himself.

This idea of catching "personality" without describing it, creating it invisibly between those things which are associated with it - rather like an electric burst across a gap between poles - may come partly from the influence of Bergson's philosophy. Clive Bell and Roger Fry had both read him, Adrian Stephen's wife Karin had written a book on this contemporary French thinker [13.], and his ideas were certainly "in the air" at the time. Bergson argues that the intellect, which can only generalise and classify, must "kill" anything it touches before it can understand it. Anything living, especially human emotion, human personality, which is individual and unique, can only be known intuitively. Similarly, we "feel" Jacob, rather than know him: our discriminating intuitions are essential for a true impression of a personality. As Virginia Woolf repeats twice in Jacob's Room: "It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done". [14.]

12. 'On Being Ill', Collected Essays IV, 200.
13. Karin Stephen, The Misuse of Mind (1922).
14. J. R., 29 (28), 154 (146).

I shall continue quoting from the passage where the last quotation reappears, in order to illustrate the novelist's use of the transition:

> So we are driven back to see what the other side means - the men in clubs and Cabinets - when they say that character-drawing is a frivolous fireside art, a matter of pins and needles, exquisite outlines enclosing vacancy, flourishes, and mere scrawls.
>
> The battleships ray out over the North Sea, keeping their stations accurately apart. At a given signal all the guns are trained on a target which ... flames into splinters. With equal nonchalance a dozen young men in the prime of life descent with composed faces into the depths of the sea; and there impassively (though with perfect mastery of machinery) suffocate uncomplainingly together. 15.

Coming immediately after a passage which describes society gossiping about Jacob's personality, there is what we first take to be a Homeric metaphor for the activity of these character-mongers who surround their victim like battleships. Then comes the bitterly witty picture of divers descending acquiescently to their deaths, and we realize that Mrs. Woolf has chosen this way to announce that the 1914 war has broken out. The use of such transitions is basic to the technical discoveries made by Virginia Woolf in the short stories prior to 1920. This is indicated by the following entry in her diary, written on January 26 of that year, as the first conception of Jacob's Room came to her:

> this afternoon arrived at some idea of a new form for a new novel. Suppose one thing should open out of another - as in an unwritten novel - only not for 10 pages but 200 or so - doesn't that give the looseness and lightness I want; doesn't that get closer and yet keep form and speed, and enclose everything, everything? ... Mark on the Wall, K.G. (Kew Gardens) and Unwritten Novel taking hands and dancing in unity ... I see immense possibilities in the form I hit upon more or less by chance two weeks ago. I suppose the danger is the damned egotistical self; which ruins Joyce and Richardson to my mind. 16.

15. J. R., 155 (147).
16. A Writer's Diary, 23.

2.

A fourth short story which is essential to an understanding of Jacob's Room is 'Solid Objects' [17]. In fact, Virginia Woolf's ideas about "solid objects" are at the centre of Jacob's Room, and continue to be found in her other novels. It is part of the aim of this study to show what parallels exist between Virginia Woolf's notions and those in her current climate of ideas; hence this aspect of Jacob's Room will also lead us presently to a further discussion of "significant form" and to make reference to the psychological theories of William James. I shall in fact make the notion of the solid object not only the main subject of this section but of this chapter, as it needs some explanation.

The plot of the short story I have mentioned concerns a young man on the threshold of a promising career in politics. On the way to a vital meeting his attention is caught by a small weathered fragment of some material lying in the grass behind a railing. Fascinated, he spends time retrieving it and so misses his appointment. Delighted with this one, he begins over the weeks to look out for others, and in time the possession of these little pebbles or pieces of china or glass becomes an obsession for him. Due to the spell these strange objects exert, he soon loses all his friends and his chance of a career. The story ends with him alone in his room existing in a wordless reverie, slowly being immured among the growing piles of solid things.

Here we meet for the first time the notion of "solid objects"; we find both the term and the ideas associated with it throughout Virginia Woolf's fiction. Solid things had an importance for Virginia Woolf which far outweighs their apparent significance. As we shall discover, they are connected with her notions of immortality.

The notion of permanence in solidity, of immortality through the monumental, is of course a standard romantic notion, with origins as far back as ancient Egypt. Keats, as a particular example, expresses it in such poems as "Ode to a Grecian Urn" and "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles".

17. A Haunted House, 69-75.

Possibly, we ourselves are meant to refer mentally to the last poem in "Night and Day" [18] and Jacob's Room" [19], for the Marbles appear in both. In Jacob's Room Fanny Elmer sits contemplating them, and identifies Jacob with the Ulysses: like the Odyssey this is a chronicle of a journey which reaches its last climax in Greece. Jacob's Room, however, is a deliberate anti-epic, for its hero is missing.

The "solid objects" are meant to express this feeling of permanence, but they involve more than this. We cannot fully appreciate all aspects of their meaning without returning once more to the idea of significant form.

Clive Bell published his revolutionary book, Art, in 1913. He had been writing it (under the title of The New Renaissance) prior to his first meeting with Roger Fry in a railway carriage in 1910. [20] It is the first enunciation of the new method of art interpretation which revolved around the "aesthetic emotion", the response to "significant form". There is no doubt that Clive Bell was as important an influence on the development of Virginia's thought in the early years as Roger Fry was to become later. This importance has not been fully acknowledged by other critics, but as Bell himself writes: "I had known her since she was a girl of twenty, and in the years between my marriage to her sister in 1907 and her marriage to Leonard Woolf in 1912 I was to some extent her literary confidant". [21] During these years, both Art and The Voyage Out were being written. The discussions which took place regularly are likely to have been some of the most formative of Virginia Woolf's career.

We have already seen in the introduction, how, to Roger Fry and Clive Bell, there was only one kind of aesthetic emotion, properly speaking, and this resulted from the appreciation of form. To see an object artistically - for example, a cup - we should ignore its function of holding tea or of conveying drink. We should then see it simply as a shape: in G.E. Moore's terminology, as an "end" rather than a "means". The emotion that came from perceiving the balance and harmony of the shape - the object-in-itself - was called the response to "significant form".

18. N.D., 80.
19. J. R., 107 (102)
20. Clive Bell, Old Friends (1956), 79.
21. Op. cit., 93.

Despite his background of Bloomsbury empiricism, there might appear something of the zeal of the mystic in Clive Bell's descriptions of this emotion, especially when he uses sentences like "those who achieve ecstasy are those who have freed themselves from the arrogance of humanity." (Art, 73). He concedes that "universal rhythm" is an adequate substitute for "significant relations of form" [22.] and that what the perceiver gains from a work of art is "a sense of reality". [23.] The task of the artist is to express the particular emotion he feels for "reality" through form. So the response to "significant form" and the sense of "reality" are identical. [24.]

> Instead of recognising its accidental and conditioned importance, we become aware of its essential reality, of the God in everything, of the universal in the particular, of the all-pervading rhythm... that which lies behind the appearance of all things - that which gives to all things their individual significance, their ultimate reality. And if a more or less unconscious apprehension of this latent reality of material things be, indeed, the cause of that strange emotion, the passion to express which is the inspiration of many artists, it seems reasonable to suppose that those who, unaided by material objects, experience the same emotion have come by another road to the same country. 25.

I have treated the meaning of the word "reality" as it was used by Bloomsbury and Virginia Woolf in my introduction. In Art, when Clive Bell says that "the significance of the thing in itself is the significance of Reality." [26.], he thus seems to conceive of this Reality or Being almost as able to be intuited through the form which defines the unique thing.

Clive Bell's distinction between "significant form" and "beauty" is the aspect of his book with which we are most concerned in this chapter, since it brings us to the subject of "solid objects".

> what I call material beauty (e.g. the wing of a butterfly) does not move us in at all the same way as a work of art moves us. It is beautiful form, but it is not significant form ... significant form conveys to us an emotion felt

22. Art, 29.
23. Op. cit., 67.
24. Ibid.
25. Op. cit., 73.
26. Op. cit., 58.

> by its creator and ... beauty conveys nothing ... The contemplation of natural objects is often the immediate cause of the artist's emotion ... Can it be that for the artist material beauty is somehow significant - that is, capable of provoking aesthetic emotion? ... Does he feel something behind it as we imagine that we feel something behind the forms of a work of art? 27.

Mrs. Woolf herself responded to solid things, we find, much like her character in 'Solid Objects', (See the 'worshipping solidity' passage: Note 49) we rember that she found "reality" now "in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper..., now in a daffodil in the sun... whatever it touches it fixes and makes permanent". (Intr., 9, Note 23). Significantly, also, it is the material, tactile, qualities in things which most appealed to her aesthetic sense. Clive Bell himself wrote forty years later, trying to describe her individual aesthetic taste, that "her sense of visual values revealed itself most clearly, and characteristically, in a feeling for textures and the relations of textures." 28.

If we bring Clive Bell's insight on the nature of artistic appreciation, which were the common property of Bloomsbury, to bear on Virginia Woolf's short story, we are provided with an explanation of the mysterious attraction that the solid objects exert. It seems most likely that Virginia Woolf's seeker after solid objects of the short story must have been fascinated by these isolated fragments of material because he had begun to see with the artist's vision: he felt the emotion of significant form for aesthetic objects seen not in art but in life. He began, thus, to sense the ordering reality that lies behind particular things. The authoress expresses this insight in self-satiric terms, as she often does. In an age of doubt she preserves the distance satire gives her, in order to view objectively and critically anything which pretends to universality.

To return once more to "significant form", it is of course questionable whether a theory which lays so much accent on matter, on solidity, on the formalistic factors, and which leaves out almost all of personality and experience, can be thought of as a completely

27. Op. cit., 57.
28. Old Friends (1956), 113.

satisfactory explanation of art. It becomes clear that by the time Clive Bell wrote the book I have quoted from above, Old Friends, he had given up his advocacy of the theory's universal application. On page 72 he admits that significant form is only one factor which a work of art must contain, and he mildly rebukes Roger Fry for his determination to evolve one theory for all art, and his resulting frustration when the theory would not contain all the facts. This assessment of Fry, incidentally, is completely opposed to Virginia Woolf's own.

It has sometimes been suggested that Roger Fry unwittingly "stood for" the portrait of Jacob. This seems to me rather doubtful, although a late mention of "solid objects" does occur in Virginia Woolf's biography of him. She speaks of his fine and subtle argument which "grazes so many solid objects in its passage that it acquires solidity". [29] And of his quality of self-forgetfulness: "This lack of interest in the central figure... so increasingly interested in everything outside itself ... had its charm."[30] The picture suggested, of the missing central figure, whose consciousness gains definition through the external objects with which it is in contact, could of course be a perfect description of the hero of Jacob's Room.

In a passage written in 1919 and included in Vision and Design, Roger Fry talks about "significant form" and the man of unspoiled vision:

> Even the grown man keeps something of his unbiological, disinterested vision with regard to a few things. He still looks at flowers, and does not merely see them. He also keeps objects which have some marked peculiarity of appearance which catches his eye. These may be natural, like precious stones, fossils, incrustations and the like; or they may be manufactured. 31.

3.

Virginia Woolf held from the first that at least the work of literary art, which was her province, should be made up of the stuff of human feeling and experience. [32] But in the end what mattered about a book was its form. She had rather a particular conception of exactly what this

29. Roger Fry (1940), 258-9.
30. Op. cit., 290.
31. Op.cit., 46.
32. See the start of 'Life and the Novelist', Collected Essays II, 131-6.

"form" was. It did not consist in a precise apportioning of space or an interrelated construction of parts. It was not, in so many words, a "technical" matter at all. She criticised Percy Lubbock's explanation in The Craft of Fiction on this basis: "When we speak of form we mean that certain emotions have been placed in the right relations to each other". 33.

We have seen in earlier chapters how it is possible to think of the completed "form" or "pattern" of the metaphysical hypothesis as a "globe" we experience only at the end of the book. For Virginia Woolf, it is the same thing to say that we experience the form of the book itself in the same way, not so much while reading, but, as an emotional "globe" when we finish the last page. In fact, book, emotional form and philosophy are identical in a good work, so that " 'the book itself' is not form which you see, but emotion which you feel, and the more intense the writer's feeling the more exact without slip or chink its expression in words." 34.

E.M. Forster, the other Bloomsbury novelist, had a similar conception of form in fiction, which he outlined in Aspects of the Novel in 1927. He draws an analogy with music 35., where in a symphony one is conscious of the overall form, of the shape of the entire work, which we only experience once the orchestra has stopped playing. For this form he substitutes the term "rhythm": for us there are overtones here of Clive Bell's use of the same word.

Within this overall shape or rhythm, Forster sees, there is a smaller repetitive one: the "little rhythm", the themal phrase repeated from time to time within the music. This has several functions, and as a device may be applied as successfully to fiction as to music. Forster gives an example of its use in Proust's major sequence of novels, where a short phrase from a musical composition by Vinteuil, a little-known provincial organist, turns up from time to time throughout the story.

33. 'On Re-Reading Novels', Collected Essays II, 129.
34. Op. cit., 126.
35. Pelican edn. (1966), 165.

Forster himself suggests some of the functions of this "little rhythm": "its power has gone towards stitching Proust's book together from the inside, and towards the establishment of beauty and the ravishing of the reader's memory" [36]. It is decorative, and cohesive both in structure and in time, for the repetition will bring back by association the context in which it previously occurred. I have shown how Virginia Woolf was using this technique from the time of the composition of The Voyage Out (1915) onwards.

There is a considerable difference between Forster's attitude to form and Virginia Woolf's. He had a temperamental inclination towards freedom and looseness and a rambling structure, whereas she, in conformity with Roger Fry's principles, wanted a hard, rounded, completely self-contained aesthetic object. Consequently she demanded and achieved far more from the technical device of the "little rhythm" than Forster did. It serves, for instance, to stimulate the reader's memory, involving him in the "mind" and "life" of the book itself. His memory is helped to give full and vital dimension to the moment by its presence. Also, this device emphasizes the strands by which we appreciate what Forster calls the significant rhythm of the whole; by which we analyze what has gone before into the separate formal relations which will eventually, when we have finished reading, coalesce into the total meaningful shape of the novel as a unity. The "little rhythm" in this way anticipates the whole. Another function of the "little rhythm" is in its capacity to gather meaning as the book progresses. Gathering meaning from its context, when it reappears it may clarify something in a character's personality or motive, or in the unfolding of the theme. Alternatively, it may serve as a link between passages of a similar or dissimilar nature, or be a portent of something yet to come. By gathering dramatic rather than thematic overtones from the context it may become itself an instrument of feeling. It may serve to show breaks in action or stages or moments of particular significance in the internal evolution of the novel's form. It might indicate, rather as an opera or ballet, the return of some feeling or presence with which it has been associated. It might on its return contrast ironically

36. Op. cit., 168.

with its context or take on the function of a metaphor in relation to what is being described: by multiple repetition, collecting new connotations each time it appears the little rhythm may come to exist on a new level and take on the function of an analogy to its immediate environment. R.A. Brower in The Fields of Light [37.] makes this claim for the repetitions in Mrs. Dalloway.

It is evident that Virginia Woolf has found here a device of great subtlety, which works for her rather like a brush, quietly laying thin layers of colour one on top of the other. Almost without realising it, the recurrence of certain phrases or images - most commonly her favourites: lighthouse, waves, moths, lamps - gain atmosphere by their repetition in a novel, until they possess all the weight of symbols. They are used often, as in Jacob's Room (where we meet the lighthouse on the first page), without the symbolic image directly "standing for" anything accountable. But when it appears again and again in different contexts, it indicates, first of all, its special place in the authoress's own private universe, and, through being repeated, it begins to have associations for us as well. Rather like the "solid objects", the images establish their "place" within the pattern the individual imposes on his world, and they derive their life as symbols from him. They gain emotional meaning. What happens is what Mrs. Woolf admires in De Quincey: "The emotion is never stated; it is suggested and brought slowly by repeated images before us until it stays, in all its complexity, complete." [38.] Meanwhile, Virginia Woolf has achieved the sort of symbol she felt was lacking in Forster's repertoire; the sort of symbol which comes from "single vision": [39.] "It has not ceased to be itself by becoming something else." [40.]

37. Pp. 123-137.
38. 'De Quincey's Autobiography', Collected Essays IV, 2.
39. See Introduction.
40. 'The Novels of E.M. Forster', Collected Essays I, 346.

4.

Solid objects have the same sort of "double life". They have been "collected" by someone, and they thus become especially meaningful for him. They have their own place in the pattern he imposes on the world, and thus they take part in his consciousness. When the consciousness itself is removed, as in Jacob's case, by death, the objects in a way continue to retain some of the life with which they have been infused. But in the meantime they exist on two planes: as themselves, and as their "meaning" to their collector, who sees them spun round with the threads of old associations and emotions. James, on the final journey to the lighthouse, is suddenly confronted with two lighthouses: one the image in his imagination, the other the real object before him. After a moment of conflict, he realises that both are real, both have existence. [41.] In the same way, the solid objects become "interiorised" through familiarity, and are transfigured in the process. They take on the life of their perceiver. This "double life" is mentioned by the artist, Lily, in To the Lighthouse:

> One wanted, she thought, sipping her brush deliberately, to be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, "It's a miracle, it's an ecstasy". 42.

This problem of the relationship between the actuality and the image, between the inner and the outer, night and day, continues to be one of Virginia Woolf's main preoccupations.

> "Long years -" he sighs. "Again you found me." "Here", she murmurs, "sleeping; in the garden reading; laughing, rolling apples in the loft. Here we left our treasure -". Stooping, their light lifts the lids upon my eyes. "Safe! Safe! Safe!" The pulse of the house beats wildly. Waking, I cry "Oh, is this your buried treasure? The light in the heart". 43.

This is from another of the short stories, 'A Haunted House'. The man and woman are ghosts. When alive, they became part of the house through their close association with it, and this of them remains even though they are long since dead. As presences, as memories, they hover

41. T. L., 288 (215).
42. T. L., 309 (234).
43. A Haunted House, 2.

over the sleeping but living woman on the bed. The incident was suggested by the fact that Asheham house, near Lewes, where the Woolfs lived, was said to have ghosts of its own. Appropriately, if a house (or room) on occasions may be said to retain the personality of its owner as Mrs. Woolf believed it did, some people have associated such a quality with the homes of Virginia Woolf herself. David Garnett, who visited her at Asheham, has described this.

> Places explain people... They become impregnated with the spirit of those who have lived and been happy in them. For a full understanding of Virginia ... Asheham would greatly help. But the clue is almost gone - it is more a memory than a reality and in common with all the houses which Virginia made her own, there was a suggestion in it of a timeless, underwater world. 44.

Leonard Woolf has expressed a similar feeling about previous owners of other houses in which the Woolfs lived. He mentions "a quiet continuity of people living... One became a part of history". 45. Orlando's house, based on the Sackville home, Knole, becomes a point of reference for a similar continuity through history. The highly evocative description of the living room in 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass' 46. is another example of this. Virginia Woolf, in an essay on 'The Supernatural in Fiction', explains that there are "supernatural" relationships man can have with solid things: "Such a sense... may lead to a quickened perception of the relations existing between men and plants, or houses and their inhabitants, or any one of those innumerable alliances which somehow or other we spin between ourselves and other objects in our passage". 47.

Jacob has a similar, although unconscious, relationship with his rooms. All of them come to express his personality. Like the solid-objects - the ram's skull on the beach, the shoes - they take on life of a sort by their association with him.

Solid objects, though, have more importance than this to Mrs. Woolf. When her characters experience in imagination a kinship ...

44. The Flowers of the Forest (1955), 103.
45. Downhill All the Way (1967), 15-16.
46. A Haunted House, 76-77.
47. Collected Essays I, 296.

with material things, they are often provided with the sense of "reality" mentioned by Clive Bell, a sense of the permanence and security inherent in their solidity. Many of Virginia Woolf's characters experience a parallel feeling of oneness with material things, a kind of relief from the flux of human impermanence, change, birth and death. Mrs. Ramsay, looking across the bay at the light in To the Lighthouse [48]; feels something like this: "It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to things, inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt that they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at the long steady light) as for oneself." Identification with solid objects becomes Virginia Woolf's first way of escaping from the relentless pressures of existence into a world outside human time. She gives an extended description of what must be her own experience in the story 'The Mark on the Wall':

> waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours. That is what one wants to be sure of ... wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow ... without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers ... I like to think of the tree itself: first the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap ... a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling, all night long. 49.

Earlier, I showed how Clive Bell had added to the content of the word "reality" as it was understood by Bloomsbury. For Virginia Woolf, too, as I shall show, solid objects possessed this quality of "reality". Clive Bell has after all said that such form gives "a sense of reality". [50].

Rhoda, in The Waves, tormented by the agony of social confrontation, by the impermanence of life, paradoxically seeks death as her private answer. For to die is to become a solid object, to partake of the permanence of what is material. Rhoda's trouble is that she sees

48. T. L., 101 (74).
49. A Haunted House, 42.
50. Art, 58.

the contingency of all human decision. She doubts and trembles while others thump the table and pontificate. When they say "yes" or "no" emphatically, she sees "the wild thorn tree shake its shadow in the desert", [51] a symbol both of her own mind-state and of the solid object where help lies: a simple tree standing alone in the desert, negating simply by its existence the gratuitous affirmations and passionate denials of mankind. It endures apart from affirmation and denial or the need for it.

Apprehending emotionally the universal behind the particular is an experience of an almost "mystic" nature. In a restrained and very private inclusion in her diary, Virginia Woolf records her introspective journey, very like Rachel's:

> That is one of the experiences I have had here in some Augusts; and got then to a consciousness of what I call "reality": a thing I see before me: something abstract; but residing in the downs or sky; beside which nothing matters; in which I shall rest and continue to exist. Reality I call it. And I fancy sometimes this is the most necessary thing to me: that which I seek. But who knows - once one takes a pen and writes? How difficult not to go making "reality" this and that, whereas it is one thing. Now perhaps this is my gift: this is perhaps what distinguishes me from other people: I think it may be rare to have so acute a sense of something like that - but again, who knows? I would like to express it too. 52.

This quality that certain solid objects have - of suggesting the universal - is part of the "double life" we have seen them to lead. In the essay on Forster already mentioned, she contrasts his kind of unprepared symbolism with that of Ibsen: "A room is to him a room, a writing table a writing table, and a waste-paper basket a waste-paper basket. At the same time the paraphernalia of reality have at certain moments to become the veil through which we see infinity." [53] The symbol in literature must become for ordinary people the counterpart of the mystic's "vision".

It is strange how diverse previous critics have been in their attempts to say what Virginia Woolf meant by "reality". Their

51. W., 77 (91).
52. A Writer's Diary, 132 (September 10th, 1928).
53. Collected Essays I, 346.

pronouncements vary from "pure subjectivism" (David Daiches) to Ruth Gruber's opinion that the authoress's femininity impelled her to refine masculine generalisations into particularities, and so see reality now "in a scrap of newspaper", now "in a flower". [54] Bernard Blackstone has probably approached nearest Mrs. Woolf's true meaning by means of a reference to Taoism. He writes: "Attachments are shed, reality grows. And with reality the sense of freedom, of unlimited possibilities. Life, in other words, consists not in doing but in being; and being means the sinking down into darkness." [55] It is on this plane of darkness - Rachel's undercurrent world, below time and the "irrelevancy" of distinguishing personality, that communication with others and with things becomes possible. And yet, if we remember the part played by the solid object, the snail, in 'The Mark on the Wall' we can also say that consciousness of solid objects is the only time when the mind is wholly in the present: in touch with reality.

5.

Another common set of misapprehensions has grown up around what is perhaps the most quoted piece of non-fiction written by Mrs. Woolf. It is the famous section from her manifesto 'Modern Fiction", composed in April 1919. She begins by criticising the "materialists", Wells, Galsworthy, and Bennett. She then continues:

> Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this'. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impression - trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer... could write what he chose,... there would be no plot... in the accepted style... Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying

54. Virginia Woolf, 78.
55. Virginia Woolf: A Commentary, 107.

> this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration and complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? 56.

Joan Bennet [57.] takes this to mean that a novel should have only the form memory imposes. Lord David Cecil is among those who believe that it implies that everything should be employed as art: all images, impressions. He accuses her of lighting some new gig-lamps of her own.[58.] Of course, it means nothing of the sort. Her subsequent sentence about recording the atoms "in the order in which they fall" is her impression of James Joyce's technique, about which she is writing, not her own. The description above is meant to convey a picture of "luminous" consciousness radiating outwards from a concentrated centre: a globe of light, rather like a lighthouse. The "myriad impressions" are ordered around the glowing core according to "the moment of importance": the "emphasis", the analogy, the "perspective". What she is asking for is a new form for the novel: not the masculine form of linear time, but the feminine form, globular, extending in ever-widening circles, like consciousness itself, from the centre of the luminous halo to the outer fringe of matter, or - in terms of Jacob's Room - the solid objects. It is this model of the activity of the mind, rather like widening ripples set up by a stone dropped in a pool, extending outwards to the bank, that we must bear in mind when reading Jacob's Room. Jacob's conscious life begins with a ram's skull on a beach, and ends with a pair of boots. Between these, Jacob's identity is experienced with differing degrees of clarity, at second hand. Only the radial core of the luminous halo is missing - Jacob himself - and this we have to supply by ourselves.

It should be noted that the quotation above is the source of Virginia Woolf's reputation as an "impressionist", which she never was. She remained, like her circle, a convinced "post-impressionist". Her building blocks were solid ones.

So, as we discussed in the "Introduction" to this study, selection, not undifferentiated stream of experience, is what is called for in the novel. "The writer's task is to take one thing and let it

56. Collected Essays II, 106.
57. Virginia Woolf, 13.
58. Poets and Story-tellers, 161.

stand for twenty ... only so is the reader relieved of the swarm and confusion of life and branded effectively with the particular aspect which the writer wishes him to see." [59] As Roger Fry makes clear in Vision and Design [60] it is the perception of hitherto unperceived relations between things that distinguishes creative imagination.

The image of consciousness as an expanding circle is not a new one. Plotinus says: "Every soul that knows its history is aware, also, that its movement, unthwarted, is not that of an outgoing line; its natural course may be likened to that in which a circle turns not upon some external but upon its own centre, the point to which it owes its rise." [61]

6.

Virginia Woolf, then, was not purely a stream of consciousness writer. While the first experiments in this technique were being made, she, as we have seen in Night and Day, had already gone beyond it in an effort to determine what the nature of the relationship between the inner life of consciousness and the outer world was. The term "stream of consciousness" was coined by William James, and this psychologist represented, with Bergson and Freud, a great source of ideas to Mrs. Woolf's generation of writers and thinkers. Yet, despite his contribution of the phrase, James's own views of consciousness were imbued with the idea not of unrelated impressions but of a homogeneous relationship:

> Every definite image in the mind is steeped and dyed in the free water that flows round it. With it goes the sense of its relations, near and remote, the dying echo of whence it came to us, the dawning sense of whither it is to lead. The significance, the value of the image is all in this halo or penumbra that surrounds and escorts it, - or rather that is fused into one with it... leaving it, it is true, an image of the same thing it was before, but making it an image of that thing newly taken and understood. 62.

For James, this saturation of the image is paralleled by a saturation of the moment. What this single second contains, possesses

59. Collected Essays II, 135.
60. P.25.
61. The Enneads, Ennead vi.9.8, Mackenna translation, 1954, 8.
62. The Principles of Psychology I, 255.

not only a relationship with every other happening in every other place, but also relates to all the past and all the future, however negligible this relation may appear. Time is not broken into pieces, he finds. It passes from past to future and owes something of its present nature to each. With these conceptions it is no wonder that William James so welcomed Bergson's philosophy, since his "stream of consciousness" and Bergson's "élan vital" thus have a lot in common.[63.]

To William James likewise, then, consciousness is homogeneous: "Consciousness ... does not appear to itself chopped up in bits ... it is nothing jointed; it flows ... In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life."[64.] The sentence in James's italics contains the first mention of this well-known term. It will be readily appreciated that multiple stream of consciousness technique in the novel, implying our ability to enter others' minds, entails implicitly the acceptance of a particular outlook on life on the part of its practitioner. Virginia Woolf may be said to have laid the philosophic basis for the psychological novel.

A number of commentators have suggested that the influence of William James on Virginia Woolf would be an interesting subject for research, without pausing to carry it out themselves. I have considered parallel ideas in his thought here, as they provide an enlightening point of reference for much of Mrs. Woolf's own thought.

63. James Hafley's main thesis in The Glass Roof is that Mrs. Woolf's ideas show the influence of Bergson. While letters from Leonard Woolf both to James Hafley and myself cast doubt on this thesis, it is at least interesting to compare extracts from Bergson's Creative Evolution with Virginia Woolf's famous manifesto. For example talks of intuition being frustrated when "consciousness found itself so restricted by its envelope" (p.182). However, "Intelligence remains the luminous nucleus" (p.177). I shall return to the subject of Hafley's thesis in Chapter VI.

64. The Principles of Psychology I, 239.

For instance, we may find parallels with Mrs. Woolf's notions expressed in Jacob's Room, and elsewhere, when we read that James feels that "thought may, but need not, in knowing, discriminate between its object and itself". We are reminded of Mrs. Ramsay looking out at the lighthouse beam, thinking of the solid objects. He quotes in support someone's experience waking from anaesthesia: "at the beginning of coming to, one has at a certain moment a vague, limitless, infinite feeling - a sense of existence in general without the least trace of a distinction between the me and the not-me". [65] Like Jacob, who becomes his objects, it is "clear that between what a man calls me and what he simply calls mine the line is difficult to draw ... In its widest possible sense, however, a man's self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his". (James's italics). [66]

7.

We thus see considerable likeness between aspects of the thought of William James and certain important ideas in Virginia Woolf's work. The comparison, of course, proves nothing of itself. Although critics such as Walter Allen and David Daiches have speculated on the influence of James on Mrs. Woolf, there is no direct evidence at hand to confirm this. What is helpful is the knowledge that ideas similar to Mrs. Woolf's own were present in the contemporary "climate of ideas", and that, in drawing the conclusions she did, she was by no means a lone voice.

So in this book we trace the course of the life of Jacob Flanders. In the biblical story, Rachel was the wife of Jacob, and this is in its own way a record of Jacob's individual "Voyage Out" - towards his moment of realisation in Greece, and his death in Flanders. The enemy in the novel is time, and the search on which Jacob is sent by his creator is for a means of overcoming time. He finds permanence in solidity: he survives through solid objects.

65. Op. cit., 273.
66. Op. cit., 291.

We meet Jacob as a small child on holiday at the seaside with his brother and widowed mother, and we watch him growing up, collecting moths in the woods at night. He goes to Cambridge, asserts his independence, and during a vacation sails to Cornwall with a friend whose sister, Clara Durrant, falls in love with him. After going down from Cambridge, he takes a flat in London and settles down to live on his small private income. He has an affair with a painter's model, Florinda, and another with a young woman-about-town, Fanny Elmer. The one leaves him for another man, the other is rejected by him. Finally Jacob sets off on a trip to Greece, via Paris, where he associates with the left bank bohemian community, and meets several painters. Once in Greece he falls in love with a married woman, Sandra Wentworth Williams, who in many ways brings him insight about life. Their flirtation culminates in a climb to the Parthenon at night. The holiday over, they go their separate ways, and Jacob returns to London. The war breaks out and we hear that Jacob has been killed in action. In the last scene of the novel, Bonamy, his homosexual Cambridge friend, and his mother, Betty Flanders, sort out his belongings in his room. Mrs. Flanders finds a pair of shoes and takes them to show Bonamy. With these shoes in the foreground the novel ends.

Jacob's Room, like most of Virginia Woolf's mature novels, represents an "assault" on time. This is the unifying factor, for the whole book is a study of how personal identity imposes itself on time and so overcomes it. The development of the narrative itself reflects this concern with time, by means of numerous devices which interrupt what would be the normal linear progress of the traditional novel. Examples are: the anticipation of events and their presentation out of their natural sequence, the repetition of past happenings, and the compression of long periods of time into a brief summarised motion: for instance the ageing of the cat on page 20.

A good example of the time device is the repetition of the scene of Jacob in the woods at night, after catching the moth drawn by his lamp: "The tree had fallen, though it was a windless night, and the lantern, stood upon the ground, had lit up the still green leaves and dead beech leaves... A toad was there. And the red underwing had

circled round the light and flashed and gone". [67] Some pages later, Jacob is nineteen and at Cambridge. King's College chapel is described by the metaphor of the lantern. Then comes a description in the narrative of a lantern in a forest, with insects and small creatures crawling up to it from every side. They "blindly tap as if for admittance, one large toad being the most besotted of any and shouldering his way through the rest... A tree - a tree has fallen, a sort of death in the forest". [68] In the context we may draw a parallel between this scene and Jacob's situation. Jacob himself, his consciousness, has become the lantern. The insects resemble the host of people who make up his life, while he himself has been replaced by an object: his lamp. The falling of the tree reminds us of the moth incident. Then, on page 123, we find the following reference: "Perhaps the Purple Emperor is feasting, as Morris says, upon a mass of putrid carrion at the base of an oak tree". This repetition serves both as a "little rhythm" and a means of carrying us forward and backwards in time by stimulating our memories.

The association of the capture of the moth and the fallen tree is interesting, because this illustrates one of Virginia Woolf's devices for achieving permanence in memory for an image, as she hoped to illustrate the permanence that consciousness achieves in life by similar means. She hopes to stimulate memory by an association of two completely different things, just as Jacob achieves permanence through his association with solid objects. In an essay, "The Sun and the Fish", [69] she talks about this capacity of the "morganatic" marriage of sights. For instance, she finds that she herself has somehow subconsciously allied Queen Victoria with a yellow camel: "Mont Blanc, the Taj Mahal, sights which we travelled and toiled to see, fade and perish... because they failed to find the right mate. On our deathbeds we shall see nothing more majestic than a cat on a wall or an old woman in a sun-bonnet. This is because they, as images, have formed the right associations."

67. J. R., 21 (20).
68. J. R., 30 (29).
69. Collected Essays IV, 178.

Mr. Floyd, Jacob's tutor, is the subject of other examples of time-devices. Before he is introduced into the story we have a passing reference to a certain Rev. Jaspar Floyd who contributed Roman relics to a museum. He is, we later guess, Mr. Floyd's father, which provides us with some of this character's background if we care to connect the two names. [70.] Again, on pages 19 and 20, we follow Mr. Floyd's subsequent history in a short flight into the future. There we gain a glimpse of Jacob as an adult, for Mr. Floyd, we see, will recognise him one day in Piccadilly, but feel too self-conscious to stop him. On pages 173-4, near the end of the book, the actual encounter occurs, in the course of the narrative.

These devices represent in many ways a sort of "anti-biography": a refusal to chronicle lives by a roster of dates and place-names. Orlando will become Virginia Woolf's satire on the sort of biography that is dismissed here; meanwhile, characteristically, we learn almost accidentally of Jacob's growing up. We first become aware of Jacob's existence when we hear Archer calling "Ja-cob!" [71.] Similarly, we realise that Johny has been added to the family when we hear him calling "Ar-cher! Ja-cob!" on page 17. It is only by details like these that we are apprised of the passage of time, not by any external standard. It is the second chapter where these devices are most apparent. The chapter ends on an ironic note: the introduction, finally, of a "historic" reference, complete with date and place-name: "Jacob Flanders, therefore, went up to Cambridge in October, 1906". [72.]

I have already discussed the "female" nature of this discontinuous, subjective, counterpointed progression, as compared with the straightforward "masculine" linear standard of objective time, which would be used in the novels of for instance, Bennett and Galsworthy, and against which Mrs. Woolf was reacting. There is something of a female bias in the book, largely introduced by the narrator - character in asides like "who shall deny that in these respects every woman is nicer than any man?" [73.] We see Betty as Virginia Woolf's "type" of femininity,

70. J. R., 17, 18 (16).
71. J. R., 6-7 (6).
72. J. R., 27 (27).
73. J. R., 9 (9).

smoothing, rounding, protecting. Like Helen in The Voyage Out who sews philosophy and life into her embroidery, and like Mrs. Ramsay with her knitting, Betty orders and patterns existence in a male world.

> John kept trotting up and slapping down in her lap grass or dead leaves which he called 'tea', and she arranged them methodically but absent-mindedly, laying the flowery heads of the grasses together, thinking how Archer had been awake last night; the church clock was ten or thirteen minutes fast; she wished she could buy Garfit's acre. 74.

Betty, like the authoress, compresses past, present, and future into the moment through the activity of her ordering: an essentially "female" activity. When Mr. Floyd asks her to marry him, her refusal, paralleled by the omen of the three geese being chased in a straight line, is more a reaction against his male potentiality for domination than against his red hair. 75. Mr. Floyd having long departed about his career, Mrs. Flanders has his cat gelded, and from this gains a strange sort of satisfaction. 76. Male influence is banished in this attempt to achieve in the novel what Mrs. Woolf advocated in A Room of One's Own: a truly feminine medium for feminine experience. 77.

The time-devices mirror another notion, too. As we saw also in William James, though we may experience the present moment, we can never isolate it, because it is compounded both of what has been and of what will be as much of what is. So the history in which we share and our personal past are always in our present in so far as they survive. Our future, too, is potential in what is here and now. This led Virginia Woolf to the conception of human existence as an enduring present. History recorded only external facts, dates, and changes in fashion rather than any change in human nature. Human nature - "life itself" - was where real importance lay, not in externals. So to her, the rush hour in Oxford Street was at least as significant in terms of human emotion as the barbarian invasion of Rome, and Jacob's journey by sea as important, similarly, as Magellan's. In fact these events partook of the nature of the historic ones. Jacob, in different moods

74. J. R., 17 (17).
75. J. R., 19 (18).
76. J. R., 20 (20).
77. A Room of One's Own, Penguin (1965), 87.

and to different people, was Byron, Alceste, Ulysses, and Julian the Apostate. [78] Jacob, like everyone else, is part of a tradition which makes weighty each moment.

> To see the hordes crossing Waterloo bridge to catch the non-stop to Surbiton one might think that reason impelled them. No, no. It is the drums and trumpets. Only, should you turn aside into one of those little bays on Waterloo Bridge to think the matter over, it will probably seem to you all a muddle - all a mystery ... The wind has blown up the waves ... St. Paul's swells white above the fretted, pointed or oblong buildings beside it. But what century have we reached? That old man has been crossing the Bridge these six hundred years ... It seems as if we marched to the sound of music; perhaps the wind and the river; perhaps these same drums and trumpets - the ecstasy and hubbub of the soul. [79]

This - the existence of the past in the present - will be the main theme of Orlando: in fact on page 16 we find a preparatory miniature of the later book, where the dress on a young lady on a seaside pier re-forms itself into all the various shapes of nineteenth-century fashion. The waves of the past, of process, beating on the beach will become an undercurrent metaphor in The Waves. To Jacob, too, all the past is present. An imaginary Socrates and Plato welcome him into Athens, [80] and a real and rather dirty Greek named Aristotle serves him in a hotel. [81] Yet "merely to see the flash and thrust of limbs engaged in the conduct of daily life is better than the old pageant of armies drawn out in battle array upon the plain". [82]

In fact, history may even be oppressive, for "When a child begins to read history one marvels, sorrowfully, to hear him spell out in his new voice the ancient words". [83] The influence of the past, what is learnt, can be restricting, because not only does it destroy the naturalness of the child's vision, but it reinforces identity, and so banishes freedom: the freedom to be anyone. Like the men on the bus in the rush hour who each "had his past shut up in him like the leaves of a book", [84] one becomes the sum of what one has been, and one's past presents a barrier to communication, because everyone's past is different. Communication, to be ideal, should be on the level of the present. Time

78. J. R., 44 (45).
79. J. R., 111-112 (107).
80. J. R., 75 (72).
81. J. R., 137 (131).
82. J. R., 163 (155).
83. P. 97 (93).

and transience separate us all: this is the "sorrow" at the heart of beauty:

> It is brewed by the earth itself. It comes from the houses on the coast. We start transparent, and then the cloud thickens. All history backs our pane of glass. To escape is vain. 85.

Art is the only thing that "saves" us from history. Once among the characters of a book, we are freed from the restrictions of our own personality. Contemplating painting or sculpture, we elude for a moment the ends-means process: considering something as an end in itself, temporarily we escape time, the "oppression of eternity." 86.

Virginia Woolf has expressed her distaste for the necessity for taking on a personality in an important passage:

> In short, the observer is choked with observations. Only to prevent us being submerged by chaos, nature and society between them have arranged a system of classification which is simplicity itself; stalls, boxes, amphitheatre, gallery. The moulds are filled nightly. There is no need to distinguish details. But the difficulty remains - one has to choose. For though I have no wish to be Queen of England - or only for a moment - I would willingly sit beside her... And then, doffing one's own headpiece, how strange to assume for a moment some one's - anyone's ... to refer while Brangaena sings to the fragments of Sophocles, or see in a flash, as the shepherd piped his tune, bridges and aqueducts. But no - we must choose. Never was there a harsher necessity! or one which entails greater pain. More certain disaster; for wherever I seat myself, I die in exile. Whittaker in his lodging-house; Lady Charles in the Manor. 87.

A pattern on which Jacob's Room depends is the image of the degrees of consciousness, their distance from the centre of the "luminous halo": stalls, boxes, amphitheatre, gallery. Rather like radiating ripples on a pool, the mind extends through the people it knows well, to the people with whom it is merely acquanted, and finally to its possessions: the dead matter with which it has associations. Consequently, as people get farther from us, they tend to become more like objects. We find this with the passengers on the rush hour buses: some are known merely as

85. J.R., 47 (46).
86. J.R., 160 (152).
87. J.R., 67-8 (65).

names, while "passengers going the opposite way could read nothing at all - save 'a man with a red moustache', 'a young man in grey smoking a pipe'." [88] Betty Flanders' attention is sometimes prone to wander out and become enmeshed with the consciousness of other people, as on page 16. Significantly, this section ends with the description of clothes, and on several occasions clothes stand for the people who wear them, as in a description of Jacob at a service in King's College chapel. [89] Mr. Floyd, the tutor, in moving to another district passes out of the Flanders' centre of consciousness and becomes an object: "They were all alive, that is to say, while poor Mr. Floyd was becoming Principal of Maresfield House." [90] Betty, looking out over the view from the Roman fortress on page 16, sees "numbers of sponge-bag trousers ... stretched in rows." They are really people lying down on the grass. "In a different way, we are prepared for Jacob's death, and his final identification with solid objects, through the ironies in the statement: "For he had grown to be a man, and was about to be immersed in things" - as the chambermaid, emptying the bric-a-brac from his pockets, is aware. [91]

Nearer to the source of light, which is Jacob's consciousness, than the objects, are the other people through whom we see Jacob, and the narrator who finds it so difficult to interpret "songs without words". [92] Each person alike alters and adds to the identity of the central character, for "Nobody sees anyone as he is ... They see a whole - they see all sorts of things - they see themselves." [93] In the same way, when we see Jacob through the eyes of Richard Bonamy "there remains something over which can never be conveyed to a second person save by Jacob himself. Moreover, part of this is not Jacob but Richard Bonamy - the room; the market carts; the hour; the very moment of history. Then consider the effect of sex - how between man and woman it hangs wavy, tremulous, so that here's a valley, there's a peak, when in truth, perhaps, all's as flat as my hand." [94] Yet somehow behind these varied

88. J. R., 63 (61).
89. J. R., 30-31 (30)
90. J. R., 20 (20).
91. J. R., 138 (131).
92. J. R., 96 (92).
93. J. R., 29 (28).
94. J. R., 71 (69).

opinions and impressions of a particular identity, we intuit something definite and real: "why are we yet surprised in the window corner by a sudden vision that the young man in the chair is of all things in the world the most real, the most solid, the best known to us - why indeed? For the moment after we know nothing about him." [95.]

Jacob establishes his identity in the world not only by his influence on the lives of other people but by his association with solid objects. The sheep's jaw he picks up on the beach as a child, [96.] the beetles and butterflies collected by John and Jacob, [97.] his relationship with his room, [98.] the statues of the Erechtheum, [99.] the fields too thick with stones to be ploughed, [100.] all these have the kind of relationship with Jacob which Virginia Woolf called "supernatural": "to feel the earth spin; to have - positively - a rush of friendship for stones and grasses, as if humanity were over, and as for men and women, let them go hang." [101.] The trouble is, men and women qualify us, they make us into one thing or another by our reaction to them, but there is "something absolute in us which despises qualification. It is this which is twisted and teased in society." [102.] Solid objects allow us our freedom to be what we will. They do not impose identity on us. Also they provide us with another freedom, away from the cycle of birth and decay. The child Jacob, rushing frightened along a beach believes he sees his comforting nanny sitting a little way ahead of him. When he comes nearer she has become a rock. [103.] Then, on page 50, rounding the Scilly Isles with Timmy Durrant, Jacob is cynically inspired to sing: "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in thee." The safety and security provided by both nurse and rock are similar. But in addition, the solid object provides a release from time.

95. J. R., 176 (168).
96. J. R., 8 (8).
97. J. R., 21 (20).
98. J. R., 37 (36).
99. J. R., 150 (143).
100. J. R., 143 (136).
101. J. R., 140 (133).
102. J. R., 143 (136).
103. J. R., 8 (8).

Most of these concerns come together in a section describing Betty Flanders and her woman friend on the Roman hill at night, [104] looking out over the moor. Her experience there roughly parallels Jacob's at the Acropolis. Looking for a brooch, she picks up a pebble.

> Did the bones stir, or the rusty swords? Was Mrs. Flanders's two-penny-halfpenny brooch for ever part of the rich accumulation? and if all the ghosts flocked thick and rubbed shoulders with Mrs. Flanders in the circle, would she not have seemed perfectly in her place, a live English matron, growing stout?

As the clock strikes, we realise that the past is in the present, and we can see Betty as being part of a homogeneous humanity, all of whom live in the present through their cumulative effect on the present. Behind this we have the moor, rather like Forster's Marabar caves, accepting everything; it is the "reality" behind the particulars. The moors absorb the present moment, the striking of the clock, and in doing so seem to show the absurdity of time. Voices from the tombstones read out the names inscribed there, Bertha Ruck, Tom Gage, " - so the measured voice goes on down to the marble scroll, as though it could impose itself upon time and the open air." Below the superfluous clock, "Often, even at night, the church seems full of people ... Plaint and belief and elegy, despair and triumph, but for the most part good sense and jolly indifference, go trampling out of the windows any time these five hundred years." Betty Flanders and Mrs. Jarvis begin to walk home.

> But their voices floated for a little above the camp. The moonlight destroyed nothing. The moor accepted everything. Tom Gage cries aloud so long as his tombstone endures. The Roman skeletons are in safe keeping. Betty Flanders' darning needles are safe too and her garnet brooch. And sometimes at midday, in the sunshine, the moor seems to hoard these little treasures, like a nurse. But at midnight when no one speaks or gallops, and the thorn tree is perfectly still, it would be foolish to vex the moor with questions - what? and why?
>
> The church clock, however, strikes twelve.

We remember Jacob, who sailed past <u>the</u> land's end. [105] The moors are like solid waves, which introduce, as always in Virginia Woolf,

104. <u>J. R.</u>, 131-133 (125-127).
105. <u>J. R.</u>, 47-48 (46).

the sea symbol of our submerged history, rising to appear as particular entities, individual people, for a time and then subsiding back into the timeless sea of universal consciousness. Clara Durrant, who loves Jacob, also admires the moors.

> Clara's moors were fine enough. The Phoenicians slept under their piled grey rocks; the chimneys of the old mines pointed starkly; early moths blurred the heather-bells; cartwheels could be heard grinding on the road far beneath; and the suck and sighing of the waves sounded gently, persistently, for ever. 106.

It is not generally appreciated how similar in construction each of Virginia Woolf's novels are. In all the works we have considered there has been a period when the characters vacillate, a period of contradictory feeling, before the final climax, the resolution, is reached. Virginia Woolf by this means emphasizes the contradictory nature of human personality, in each of the books, but these sections have led to much confusion and misinterpretation among her critics. Once again, the climax of this book, the visit to Greece, is similarly heralded by a vacillation of feeling on Jacob's part. But once he finds himself in that country, these feelings resolve themselves: it takes his affair with Sandra Wentworth Williams, a married woman, to bring home to him the "meaning" of its history, and the importance of this for him.

Sandra herself, however, lives for the moment. She is always "in the present", and looks back on her life as a succession of such moments: "the eternal drudge and drone, now bursting into fiery flame like these brief balls of yellow among green leaves (she was looking at orange trees); kisses on lips that are to die". [107.] Sandra presents no barriers to Jacob, she leaves him unqualified, for as far as life is concerned, she is "sensitive to every side of it". [108.] Through her, Jacob finds his real identity, in the freedom her personality allows him: "He was surprised ... how much more can be said than one thought; how open one can be with a woman; and how little he had known himself before". [109.] He falls in love with her.

106. J. R., 174-5 (166).
107. J. R., 152 (145).
108. Ibid.
109. J. R., 146 (139).

The climax of their relationship comes with the climb of the Acropolis by night. It raises itself above the town "like a large immobile wave with the yellow columns of the Parthenon firmly planted upon it".

> The extreme definiteness with which they stand, now a brilliant white, again yellow, and in some lights, red, imposes ideas of durability of the emergence through the earth of some spiritual energy elsewhere dissipated in elegant trifles. But this durability exists quite independently of our admiration ... if you consider how it has stood out all night, for centuries, you begin to connect the blaze (at midday the glare is dazzling, and the frieze almost invisible) with the idea that perhaps it is beauty alone that is immortal. 110.

It must be evident that here we have a substitute for the lighthouse symbol. As in Night and Day, the moment of spiritual union between the lovers is allied with this associated image. The Parthenon, like the lighthouse, is a solid object. It stands for the endurance of the moment in time, and for permanence through history. It represents the timeless present moment, and the past contained in the present. St. Paul's cathedral, in the earlier part of the book, fulfilled this function in London, for here there is "For ever requiem - repose". 111. In the wider historical context of Greece, Jacob's search is ended, his resolution as a person achieved.

We hear of Jacob's death in Flanders. The final chapter of the novel (p. 176 (167-8)) contains a number of earlier passages repeated verbatim. The description of Jacob's room in London occurs for the second time, even to the ram's skull carved above the doorway (p.69). An account of Jacob's room in Cambridge is imperceptibly included: the flowers in the jar, the shifting curtain, the wicker armchair creaking although nobody sits there (p. 37 (36).) Bonamy, standing at the window, sees what Jacob has on two occasions seen there: Pickford's van swinging down the street (p. 62 (60), p.115 (110) and the omnibuses locked together at Mudie's corner (p. 63 (61).). Finally Bonamy repeats Archer's cry in the first chapter: "Jacob! Jacob!" (p.6.). The use of the "little rhythm"

110. J. R., 147-8 (141).
111. J. R., 64 (62).

is to "round the globe", to bring home the notion Mrs. Woolf has of our communal immortality, and our existence-in-others, and of life captured in its effects: the past existing in the present. The window becomes a symbol of the reciprocal movement between the subjective and the objective world. Finally, Betty Flanders comes forward with something in her hands. "What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?" she asks. She holds out a pair of Jacob's old shoes: solid objects.

They swept and soared sharply in flights high into the air, twittering short, sharp notes ... Now and again their songs ran together in swift scales like the interlacings of a mountain stream whose waters, meeting, foam and then mix, and hasten quicker and quicker down the same channel, brushing the same broad leaves. But there is a rock; they sever. (W., 78-9)

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Dalloway followed Jacob's Room in 1925. In many ways it is a counterpart of the earlier book: it presents an eloquent and varied illustration, rather than a development, of the thought which we found there. There are two important new elements, however. In this work, "Society" enters the picture, and Virginia Woolf's notions of personality and immortality are seen in opposition to the environment which confronts them. In addition, whereas Jacob was "missing", here our central figure is very firmly with us. In fact, Clarissa Dalloway is the raison d'etre of the book itself.

In previous chapters we have seen how the last sentence of each novel provides a clue to the story's meaning: for example, the "good night" at the end of Night and Day, and the boots which rounded off Jacob's Room. We find that Mrs. Dalloway ends with: "For there she was". Hence it is fair to suppose that in her new novel this is the authoress's first concern: by placing us in the mind of a human being from mid-morning to late evening of a single day, to present us with a sense of that personality whole, like the experience of Jacob we gained externally from her previous novel. As with Jacob, we see her through the minds and impressions of a number of other people, but here Clarissa's own stream of consciousness is the core of the book. It is mainly through her own awareness that we come to know her. So while Mrs. Dalloway may not extend our knowledge of Virginia Woolf's theories, it represents a gain in our sense of the "humanity" of her characters.

The psychological insight and sensitivity to atmosphere which characterize this excursion into the mind of the heroine will be appreciated by anyone reading the novel, and it would be superfluous to expatiate on them here. But they are not the whole book. Through the use of transitions, like the aeroplane which writes "toffee" in the sky and so allows us to hop from one spectator to another without a break, events move smoothly one out of the other. So smoothly, in fact, that we tend to forget the total design, and are rather surprised when Mrs. Woolf records in her diary: "I think the design is more remarkable than

in any of my books". (October 15th, 1923). [1] "The design is so queer and masterful. I'm always having to wrench my substance to fit it". (June 19th, 1923). [2] Our appreciation of the design depends upon our understanding of the novel's implicit meaning, and it is these two necessary elements that I intend to pursue in my present chapter.

The theme of the book is the total isolation inside two people of their private soul from their public face. In each person the gap between the two is so great as to produce virtually a double identity. It is society which, by demanding the public persona, is to blame for the discrepancy. One of these people breaks out of the "straightjacket" society imposes, paradoxically, by means of madness and suicide. The other remains imprisoned but alive, and we are left wondering which event is the greater tragedy.

Before I can trace this in detail, I feel it is important to understand in what ways the new book follows closely on the last. First of all, we do not have to go far into Mrs. Dalloway before we find open support for the interpretation I have given of Jacob's Room. It is as if the need to convey her private meaning, to make explicit what had to be explored for in the last novel, and the emphasis placed by critics on the technique of Jacob's Room, have impelled her into frankness here about her theme. But it is conveyed as part of Clarissa's own reaction to the world:

> Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being a part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. 3.

1. A Writer's Diary, 61.
2. Op. cit., 58.
3. D., 11-12 (11-12).

This description of survival through others, survival through solid objects, is also extremely helpful in the understanding of the present novel. However, in as recent a study as A.D. Moody's he takes this passage as evidence of Clarissa's superficiality, its intention apparently being to show her as "something of an animated mirror." [4] This misreading later leads him to identify Clarissa and Sir William Bradshaw!

The part quoted above is associated first of all with an image, that of throwing a shilling into the Serpentine, and also with the first lines of the song from Act IV of Cymbeline: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun." Both these tags recur throughout the book as "little rhythms". [5] They enter and re-enter the mind not only of Mrs. Dalloway, but of Septimus, the madman who commits suicide. The intention is quite plain. Mrs. Woolf is referring to the image discussed in the last chapter, that of consciousness as a ripple, extending through other minds to other objects. It becomes a symbol of identity, of communication, of "life" after death. We need "fear no more", firstly because life "is all" [6]: it is the only thing we shall know, consequently it is everything to us; and secondly because our "ripple" survives in others. Far from being annihilation, "Death was an attempt to communicate". [7] To understand the significance of this book, we must bear in mind both this notion, and its associated image of the widening ripples, as we read further.

There is another explicit description of this, coming as one of Peter Walsh's memories. This time it is elaborated to express the main concept behind the themes of the two books. At the same time it points to her theory's danger, its compensatory features:

> Clarissa had a theory in those days - they had heaps of theories, always theories, as young people have. It was to explain the feeling they had of dissatisfaction, not knowing people, not being known. For how could they know each other? You met every day; then not for six months, or years. It was unsatisfactory, they agreed,

4. Virginia Woolf, 20.
5. D., 11 (11), 202 (203), 12 (12), 45 (45), 154 (154).
6. D., 13.
7. D., 202 (204).

> how little one knew people. But she said, sitting on the bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, she felt herself everywhere; not 'here, here, here'; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. So that to know her, or anyone, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter - even trees, or barns. It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her scepticism), that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places, after death. Perhaps - perhaps. 8.

Both Peter Walsh and Clarissa (Sally Seton as well) have the sense of the presence of other people when they remember them or think about them. They experience this sense of "existence in others" even with living people who are absent.

With Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf became at once more open and more elusive. It is no wonder that she could write in her diary, immediately after the book's completion, that "I feel rather more fully relieved of my meaning than usual - whether this will stand when I re-read is doubtful." (October 17th, 1924). 9. There is evidence that in life she remained personally elusive about her views despite these inclusions, for on the rare occasions when she was tempted to express views like these in life, they apparently came as a surprise even to those nearest to her. Vita Sackville-West, for some years a close friend and the original of Orlando, wrote in her obituary of Virginia about an unexpected discussion of immortality during a thunderstorm, which opened to her a new facet of Virginia's personality. It is tempting to speculate that her opinions then were much like Clarissa's here. 10.

Such a theory as Clarissa's is of course possible only to someone with a concept of a "homogeneous" universe, one with all its parts in relation. A world-picture like this held wide currency before Moore,

8. D., 167-8 (168-9).
9. A Writer's Diary, 68.
10. 'Virginia Woolf', Horizon, III, May 1941, 318.

Russell and Wittgenstein radically altered British philosophy, and that it did so was largely due to the influence not only of William James, but of F.H. Bradley, the philosopher who was so important to T.S. Eliot's development. The fact of relation itself was of greater significance for Virginia Woolf than it was for Bradley, and I am not suggesting that his influence was more than that he contributed to the climate of ideas in which she shared. Nevertheless it is interesting to note that with a similar world-picture they came to some similar conclusions. Bradley held that anything that involved 'relations' was unreal. Consequently he was able to conclude that every separate thing we perceive in the world, even the "self", is unreal: it is only "appearance". "Reality" or the "Absolute", on the other hand, was composed of the entire universe in a state of unity, with no one thing separable from anything else. We will find Mrs. Woolf expressing a similar insight quite clearly in her novels. She and Bradley seem, too, to have chosen similar images to symbolize their ideas. His image of consciousness in time, for example, was as follows. He imagined to begin with that we human beings were poised over a stream:

> Right under our faces is a bright illumined spot on the water, which ceaselessly widens and narrows its area, and shows us what passes away on the current. And this spot that is light is our now, our present. We may go still further ... We have not only an illuminated place, and the rest of the stream in total darkness. There is a paler light which, both up and down stream, is shed on what comes before and after our now. And this paler light is the offspring of the present. 11.

Then again, Bradley was an opponent of solipsism, and an advocate of the communication of ideas. He felt that it was unfortunate that "I cannot spread out my window until all is transparent, and all windows disappear". [12.] The symbol of the window, both as a barrier to communication, and again as the link between the "room" of one person and the outside world, we have seen in use in Jacob's Room (p.176), and it becomes important in Mrs. Dalloway. Clarissa, inwardly raging at the twin threat to the privacy of the soul, the freedom of the inner life of imagination, presented by love and religion, goes to the window and sees

11. Principles of Logic, 54-55.
12. Appearance and Reality, 253.

the old lady in the house opposite climbing upstairs to bed. The old lady herself is a symbol: a symbol of human dignity, and of the hidden human identity which moves towards death: "love and religion would destroy that whatever it was, the privacy of the soul. The odious Kilman would destroy it. Yet it was a sight that made her want to cry". Neither religion nor love can solve the supreme mystery: "here was one room; there another." [13.]

I have been discussing the similarities between this novel and Jacob's Room: the room symbol has been used in all her novels to represent the individual inner world. In The Voyage Out Rachel is persistently asked by the hotel guests to "come and see my room"; Alardyce's little room in Night and Day brings a past identity into the present; the title of Jacob's Room has a double ambiguity. Similarly, in Mrs. Dalloway this image refers to the hidden inner life, threatened by the three agents of society and conformity: love, conversion, and mediocrity.

As Septimus, the madman, goes to commit suicide, he sees an old man coming down the staircase opposite, [14.] the counterpart of Clarissa's old lady. Some time later, during her party, Clarissa hears of the suicide, and goes for a moment into a private room to accommodate herself to the news. Once more she sees the little old lady going to bed, and realises that "Death is an attempt to communicate". [15.] We are moved to ask if the lady's name is not Mrs. Brown: the individual soul, life itself.

So the theme of Mrs. Dalloway is once again "night and day", "the inner and the outer": the conflict between the private life of imagination and contemplation and the public life of society. More than that, it is about the opposition of the private and public identity. We find that the freedom of the spiritual life has one overriding enemy, or rather, two, but each threatens in the same way: it adores to see its face stamped on the face of others. The enemies are Proportion and Conversion, twin sisters. Possession would perhaps be an apt addition

13. D., 140-141.
14. D., 164 (165).
15. D., 202 (204).

to the family, for it is through bourgeois mediocrity, religion, and love that the trio manifest themselves in the world. Sir William Bradshaw the psychiatrist, Miss Kilman the frustrated evangelist, and Peter Walsh, the old flame returned from India (who plays ominously with his penknife), are their three agents in this novel. Bradshaw is possibly the worst of the three, for his attempt to shut away in an asylum Septimus, the shell-shocked ex-volunteer returned from the war, is directly responsible for the latter's suicide. Proportion is Sir William's panacea, administered in the name of society:

> Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade child-birth, penalized despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion - his, if they were men, Lady Bradshaw's if they were women (she embroidered, knitted, spent four nights out of seven at home with her son) 16.

"Society" is not necessarily opposed to individual identity. The novelist is careful to fix the time of the book, and it is a particular society in a particular era that she is criticizing. There are other strands in the novel, and in isolating first this, the main theme, and deciding what we are to understand from it, it is important to see to what extent Virginia Woolf identified with Clarissa and Septimus, and to what degree she was critical of them, for we have it on her own authority that the two are "the same person". 17. We find that they each have one flaw in their character: Septimus is aware of his. It becomes his "crime", for which in his madness he believes human nature, "the brute with the blood-red nostrils", 18. is sentencing him: it is "that he could not feel". 19. Once you stumble, "human nature is on you", he cries.

Clarissa, likewise, while her response to life is full, also shows on some occasions a strange lack of feeling. She realises that she is missing "something central which permeated". 20. She sleeps in a separate room. The friends of her girlhood, Peter Walsh and Sally Seton, contrast with her. They felt "more deeply, more passionately, every year". 21.

16. D., 110.
17. "Introduction", Mrs. Dalloway, Modern Library edn., N.Y., 1928, vi.
18. D., 102, p. 162 (163).
19. D., 96.
20. D., 36.
21. D., 212 (214).

The blame for this absence of sympathy is placed squarely on the shoulders of society, Pound's "old bitch gone in the teeth", responsible for the First World War. We learn that Clarissa has recently suffered "an illness"; there is no such euphemism for the source of Septimus's lack: it was in the war, where his best friend Evans died, that he lost the ability to feel. He married his wife, the Italian girl Rezia, as a desperate reaction against this growing emotional sterility. His madness is the price he pays.

Clarissa, the society hostess, the wife of the conservative M.P., may also blame post-war British society as the root cause of her personal failing. She, like Richardson's Clarissa, is in a sense imprisoned - but in herself. Her lack of "something central" is due to the existence of two identities in her, and the dichotomy between them. Her private inner life, which she protects even from the demands of love, forms one of these selves. When Peter Walsh returns from India, "She made to hide her dress, like a virgin protecting chastity, protecting privacy". [22.] The freedom of her private identity she seeks to preserve. Her other self is her public persona, her public function, Mrs. Richard Dalloway, "the perfect hostess" [23.] as Peter had once called her.

> But how often this body she wore..., this body, with all its capacities seemed nothing - nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown, there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway. [24.]

In her public life she is forced to give up the infinite possibilities of personality and become something fixed. Other people, attracted by her stability, revolve round her at parties like boats round a lighthouse: she "forms" their lives on these evenings rather as if she is the centre of a diamond or a cone:

22. D., p.45.
23. D., p. 69.
24. D., p. 13.

> That was herself - pointed; dart-like; definite. That was herself when some effort, some call on her to be herself, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how imcompatible 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, a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives, a refuge for the lonely to come to, perhaps, she... had tried to be the same always, never showing a sign of all the other sides of her. 25.

At the same time she realizes that like herself, the parties, "these semblances, these triumphs ... had a hollowness; at arm's length they were, not in the heart". [26.] The metaphor for this "missing centre", a counterpart of her own failing, is provided when the Bradshaws enter the party which is the climax of the novel and report Septimus's suicide. "Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death she thought." [27.]

So this is Clarissa's tragedy, the "double life" she leads: her "outer" self is not an expression of her "inner reality. She is imprisoned; she is, as it were, an object: her outward self has been crystallized into the hard surface of society. But, paradoxically, this is necessary if she is to retain her inner freedom, and to preserve her distance from the society which is hostile to her true nature. The demands of feeling, too, would be the sort of bridge she seeks to avoid between her inner self and the world. Paradoxically again, the props provided by her position in society, it is implied, are the only reason she is not insane as Septimus is. In the original draft of the novel (See Mrs. Woolf's Introduction to the Modern Library edition) he did not in fact appear, and Clarissa herself was to commit suicide at the height of the party.

Nevertheless, Virginia Woolf did approve of a great deal of both Septimus and her heroine, who is a far cry from the shallow socialite we first met aboard the Euphrosyne in <u>The Voyage Out</u>. Perhaps it would be best, first of all, to examine the close relationship between the

25. <u>D.</u>, 42.
26. <u>D.</u>, 192 (193).
27. <u>D.</u>, 201 (203).

authoress and the war-shocked poet, Septimus. In her diary she records the struggle she had over the descriptions of insanity, necessitating the entry into the mind of a madman: "Of course the mad part tries me so much, makes my mind squirt so badly that I can hardly face spending the next weeks at it". (June 19th 1923). [28] These pages taxed her because they drew, painfully, on her own experience.

We learn from Leonard Woolf that Virginia herself suffered four breakdowns during her life: a minor one in childhood, a major one after her mother's death in 1895, another in 1914 and a fourth in 1940.

> In the manic stage she was extremely excited; the mind raced; she talked volubly and, at the height of the attack, incoherently; she had delusions and heard voices, for instance she told me that in her second attack she heard the birds in the garden outside her window talking Greek; she was violent with the nurses. In her third attack, which began in 1914, this stage lasted for several months and ended by her falling into a coma for two days. During the depressive stage all her thoughts and emotions were the exact opposite of what they had been in the manic stage. She was in the depths of melancholia and despair; she scarcely spoke; refused to eat ... refused to believe that she was ill and insisted that her condition was due to her own guilt; at the height of this stage she tried to commit suicide, in the 1895 attack by jumping out of a window, in 1915 by taking an overdose of veronal; in 1941 she drowned herself in the river Ouse. 29.

The similarity of this to Rachel's "mystic" fever in The Voyage Out and to the madness of Septimus need not be emphasized. On page 28 of Mrs. Dalloway, for example, we are inside the mind of the madman:

> Men must not cut down trees. There is a God. (He noted such revelations on the backs of envelopes.) Change the world. No one kills from hatred. Make it known (he wrote it down). He waited. He listened. A sparrow perched on the railing opposite chirped Septimus, Septimus, four or five times over and went on, drawing its notes out, to sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words how there is no crime and, joined by another sparrow, they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death.
>
> There was his hand; there the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings! 30.

28. A Writer's Diary, 57.
29. Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, 76.
30. D., 28.

The passage is redolent with private symbolism, and, it will be readily appreciated, is a nightmare-view of Virginia Woolf's own private "message". I shall leave the interested reader to go through the quotation in search of references which associate Septimus with the authoress and her vision, and go on to record another interesting parallel between her own life and that of her character.

Leonard Woolf describes how during Virginia's illness they visited three famous Harley Street doctors and secured three different diagnoses. They ignored all, and she "recovered from three fatal and incurable diseases". At their last interview "the great Dr. Saintsbury, as he shook Virginia's hand, said to her 'Equanimity - equanimity - practise equanimity, Mrs. Woolf' ... I felt he might just as usefully have said: 'A normal temperature - ninety-eight point four - practise a normal temperature, Mrs. Woolf.' " [31]. Surely here is the origin of Sir William Bradshaw's "Proportion".

The reason for the inclusion of the Septimus theme in the novel, and for the authoress's identification of the two main characters, which has so puzzled critics, is that Septimus is representative of Clarissa's inner life. His sensitivity, his insights, are the same as hers, but they are distorted by his delirium. He is an illustration of what would happen to Clarissa were she to drop her "mask": her social front. Septimus <u>is</u> the inner Clarissa.

I shall quote from another fragment of Septimus's ravings: he is once again seated in the park, observing the world about him. The reader will see at once that the picture given is of the Bradley-like "homogeneous" universe, gone haywire:

> But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded. All taken together meant the birth of a new religion - [32].

31. <u>Downhill All the Way</u>, 30.
32. <u>D.</u>, 26.

Not merely for "society", for people like M. Sartre, of course, a vision like Mrs. Woolf's is in any case its own kind of madness, an attempt to find order by imposing onesself on an irrational world.

I have considered the relationship of the authoress to Septimus. In understanding fully how she thought of Clarissa, it is vital to see how she related Clarissa to the main theme. Naturally enough, the authoress's conception of this book expanded in the writing. Perhaps the best way to follow this is through the insertions in the diary while it was being written.

> Friday, June 23rd, 1922: If they say this (Jacob's Room) is all a clever experiment, I shall produce Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street as the finished product.
> Saturday, October 14th: Mrs. Dalloway has branched into a book, and I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide: the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side - something like that... and to be more close to the fact than Jacob: but I think Jacob was a necessary step, for me, in working free.
> Monday, June 4th, 1923: I want to bring in the despicableness of people like Ott. (Lady Ottoline Morrell) I want to give the slipperiness of the soul. I have been too tolerant often. The truth is people scarcely care for each other. They have this insane instinct for life. But they never become attached to anything outside themselves...
> Tuesday, June 19th: In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticise the social system, and to show it at work at its most intense. 33.

The social element is inseparable from another element, time. In August and October 1924 she records the discovery of two technical innovations which gave great impetus to her progress. Both are "time devices", and are already potentially present in the method she used in Mark on the Wall, the short story written in 1917 (as Leonard Woolf rightly emphasizes, before she had read Proust, Joyce or Richardson). The first device she describes as the digging out of "beautiful caves behind my characters... the idea is that the caves shall connect and each comes to daylight at the present moment". 34. She means by this the movement in her characters' minds from awareness of the world about them to their own thoughts, ruminations, and memories, and then back again to the present. Sometimes actuality intrudes only briefly, between brackets.

33. A Writer's Diary, 46, 52, 55, 57.
34. Op. cit., 60.

By using this flowing method she hoped to render faithfully the activity of consciousness.

The other device she calls her "tunneling process": "It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunneling process, by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it". [35.] An example of this in the novel is the minor incident at Bourton nearly thirty years before, when Hugh Whitbread kissed Sally Seton in the smoking-room. This memory, so out of key with the present-day personality of Hugh, a conservative and pompous toady, is returned to several times in the course of the novel, each time with a different twist to it. When Clarissa first thinks of it, it surprises us as a deviation from Hugh's accepted creed, and as such it prejudices our view of him. Gradually the incident is filled out for us, until at the party which closes the book we learn that the reason he had kissed her was to punish her for saying that women should have votes. [36.] Memory plays tricks, as well. One of Sally's misdemeanours at Bourton was to leave a book belonging to Clarissa's father out on the verandah in the rain, as we learn from Clarissa early on. When she recalls this momentarily at the party [37.], in her mind it is in the punt that the book has been left. Again, all her life the heroine has hero-worshipped Sally, and has been physically attracted to her, because of her outrageous liveliness at Bourton. This vitality itself gains a new dimension when, at the party, Sally admits to herself that going to Bourton had "kept her sane, she believed, so unhappy had she been at home". [38.] The novel abounds in sharp human observations like these, which add to one another to give depth of field to our view. The past "grows" for us in company with the present, so that the book stands as an emblem of Virginia Woolf's attitude to time: the "past in the present". Accompanying her heroine for a few hours of a single day, we trace out in the same time her whole past history.

All in all, Mrs. Woolf both identifies with her character and criticizes her. But her faults are the direct result of her society.

35. Op. cit., 61.
36. D., 199 (201).
37. D., 199 (200).
38. D., 207 (208).

Included in the diary is Strachey's understandable comment on Clarissa: "he thinks ... that I alternately laught at her and cover her, very remarkably, with myself". 39.

What has been established about the theme may be summarised in terms of "time". Clock time, the "outer time", is the common time of society. It forms a common area of contact for different people with different individual inner times. In this novel the ever-present clock comes to symbolise a society that in its brutish ignorance and its herd-like conformism seeks to impose its own time as the "norm": by misunderstanding the nature of the internal it seeks superstitiously to exclude all temporality it cannot comprehend.

> 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. 40.

This is the outer time of the masculine "slicing" intellect, the hoarder of dead facts. But more, if one's right to include one's internal duration in the passage of time of society may be a definition of one's freedom, Mrs. Dalloway is a novel about freedom. "Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged...", and if the original conflict in life is, as Bergson says it is, between activity and matter, then one's total freedom is gained - only in death. For if matter is what limits activity; if form resists essence, then only in total identification with matter can one achieve one's total freedom. The original title (Diary, 57) for the work was The Hours, and in it on nearly twenty occasions, clocks strike. Almost always they are accompanied by the "rhythm": "the leaden circles dissolved in the air". This reference to the "ripple" image represents, first of all, the reverberations of the moment in time, and, by extension, the reverberations of the individual consciousness in life, in the minds of others. Yet the more the self is "in life" in the truly human sense, the more one is limited, the more one realises one's limitation. Jinny in The Waves is "full of life" but is not "in life".

39. A Writer's Diary, 78.
40. D., 113.

Her life is the body's. Her activity, like Percival's is almost unimpeded. She is likened to an animal. Only in death, according to Virginia Woolf, are we "other", can we communicate, are we completely free. As Mrs. Dalloway is a novel about freedom, it is a novel about death.

Mrs. Dalloway's life is a succession of "moments". Here we come closer to what Mrs. Woolf meant by what she called her "moments of vision": "a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed".[41] The nature of a "moment of vision" is very like that of the solid artistic object distilled subconsciously by the artist from the fragmented impressions of her day (See The Moment, 109). The essence of this "moment" is a coming together, a crystallization, an ordering. Only temporary in life, like the beat of the lighthouse beam, the characteristics of the moment may - in ideal terms - be made eternal in art. The moment comes upon Clarissa, "collecting the whole of her at one point" [42]. For Peter Walsh, too, it starts with the "drip, drip of one impression after another down into that cellar where they stood deep, dark, and no-one would ever know ... really, it took one's breath away, these moments; there coming to him by the pillar-box opposite the British Museum one of them, a moment, in which things came together; this ambulance; and life and death".[43]

The "momentary" nature of Mrs. Dalloway makes unrepresentative and too definite any attempt to chronicle a distinct plot for it as such. There are, however, certain central facts. We are with Clarissa Dalloway, the middle-aged wife of a conservative M.P., from the time of her shopping trip in Bond Street in mid-morning until the end of her party the same evening. During the course of the day two friends from her youth appear unexpectedly: Peter Walsh, an old flame, who has been in India, and Sally Seton, with whom Clarissa was once also "in love". At the same time, her teenage daughter Elizabeth loses her illusions about a spinster evangelist, a Miss Kilman, who seeks to convert her to religion. Mrs. Dalloway twice comes near people of importance; once in Bond Street, where a mysterious official car with its blinds drawn causes a stir (the "Proime Minister's kyar", someone says); and again at the party where the Prime Minister

41. D., 36.
42. D., 42.
43. D., 167 (168).

does appear in person just for a few minutes.

Parallel to this set of events runs a second, that in which the insane ex-serviceman, Septimus, and his Italian wife Lucrezia, are involved. One would think the two histories would be completely separate, isolated as they are by class, place, and tragedy. But there are numerous connections between them: the car of the mysterious dignitary, the aeroplane writing "toffee" in the sky, a chance meeting with Peter Walsh in the park, the ambulance carrying Septimus's body, and the appearance of the Bradshaws at Clarissa's party. There are more connections than these: those of common experiences, thoughts, and imagery. Septimus's peregrinations about London come to an end in the consulting-room of Sir William Bradshaw, the Harley Street psychiatrist. Like his own doctor Holmes, Sir William is completely cut off from understanding, and makes arrangements for Septimus to go to a mental home. Back in their own room, Septimus has a moment of sanity. Then Holmes appears, and Septimus leaps down from his window on to the area railings.

In the same way as the plot may be summarised in terms of time, it may also be explained in terms of the double life of objects or "the inner and the outer". In my last chapter, I related Virginia Woolf's use of symbolism to this double life the object leads: its existence as itself, and its associations for others. What she wanted her use of symbols to resemble was the "symbolic power" of Aeschylus: "By the bold and running use of metaphor he will amplify and give us, not the thing itself, but the reverberation and reflection which, taken into his mind, the thing had made; close enough to the original to illustrate it, remote enough to heighten, enlarge and make splendid".[44]

Virginia Woolf has used the present novel to explore this difference between content and meaning. Mrs. Dalloway's own dilemma, that her outward pose does not express her inner reality, is parodied by the two other group-symbols, the mysterious car and the prime minister himself. The car, which has such an enormous effect as it passes, blinds drawn, through London, is really something comic, because no-one ever sees who or what is inside it - it may only be a royal chambermaid

44. 'On Not Knowing Greek', Collected Essays I, 7-8.

delivering a message or a poodle being taken to the trimmer - and when it passes through the gates into Buckingham Palace the crowd who have gathered to cheer it all have their attention diverted by the aeroplane at the crucial moment, and fail to do so.[45] Another comic touch is added on the appearance of the revered prime minister himself at Clarissa's party. He, too, is all symbol, all exterior: an object not expressing its content.

> One couldn't laugh at him. He looked so ordinary. You might have stood him behind a counter and bought biscuits - poor chap all rigged up in gold lace... they all knew, felt to the marrow of their bones, this majesty passing; this symbol of what they stood for, English society.[46]

On the first page, in memory we meet Peter Walsh and know where he stands: "I prefer men to cauliflowers", he says. He prefers the substance to the object, the symbol. Miss Kilman, Clarissa's enemy, seeks, as her name suggests. to reduce the infinite possibility of human personality to one thing: she seeks to make men into objects. It is not her Clarissa hates but "the idea of her": "one of these spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants".[47]

They are hateful for one reason: they judge. Society delivers judgment. It decides what it considers right and what it considers wrong, and imposes its communal beliefs on its individual members. In criticising social morality, Mrs. Dalloway is unique because it brings us close to Virginia Woolf's own attitude to morality. Rezia, Septimus's wife, becomes her mouthpiece here, and gains greatly in dignity and personal stature by doing so. Holmes, Bradshaw and Co. were "men who made ten thousand a year and talked of proportion; who differed in their verdicts (for Holmes said one thing, Bradshaw another), yet judges they were; who mixed the vision and the sideboard; saw nothing clear, yet ruled, yet inflicted. Over them she triumphed".[48]

The truth is what Septimus himself proclaims it to be in his delirium: that there is no crime. "Why seek truths and deliver messages",

45. D., 24.
46. D., 189 (190).
47. D., 15.
48. D., 163 (164).

he asks himself, "when Rezia sat sticking pins into the front of her dress, and Mrs. Peters was in Hull?" [49] Morality is superfluous. Existence is enough. Life, Bond Street, "That is all", [50] Clarissa says to herself, and the only sins are sins against life: the desire to turn people into objects. This Clarissa refuses to do: "She would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or were that". [51] This is why Clarissa hates not Kilman the person but Kilman the "idea": through her conversion she has allowed herself to become one thing. In other words, she has made herself an object. It is because they have sensed that Mrs. Woolf holds these views that the critics who keep "measuring-rods up their sleeves" have rejected her work as lacking moral feeling and social responsibility. They have accused her of "aestheticism", but it is not because of her feeling for art but because of her feeling for humanity that Mrs. Woolf holds her opinions. In Mrs. Dalloway society and humanity become opposed.

Here we have another connection - perhaps the most important - between Mrs. Dalloway and Jacob's Room. The earlier work centred round the notion of "solid objects"; this novel examines critically those who confuse "the vision and the sideboard": those people who become objects. Also it examines, as with the car, the Prime Minister, the unknown woman Peter follows, and Clarissa herself, the associations with which we surround such objects.

The thematic coherence of Mrs. Dalloway becomes evident only if it is remembered that it is part of what I have called a philosophy about communication: communication is Virginia Woolf's main concern. Septimus, once again:

> So there was a man outside; Evans presumably; and the roses, which Rezia said were half dead, had been picked by him in the fields of Greece. Communication is health; communication is happiness. Communication, he muttered. 52.

Here is the heart of the tragedy of Clarissa and Septimus. Imprisoned inside her social facade, her public role, isolated from the encroachment of a philistine society, but also from love, Clarissa has

49. D., 157 (158).
50. D., 13.
51. D., 10.
52. D., 103-104.

lost the ability to communicate. She has become so used to fleeing, that she has lost sympathetic touch with her pursuers. Similarly; Septimus is cut off from other people by his lack of feeling, far more evidently: this is where his madness comes from. "That was the doom pronounced in Milan when he came into the room and saw them cutting out buckram shapes with their scissors; to be alone for ever". 53. Pathetically, when he is in front of Bradshaw's desk, he is tempted to present his "message": "Buf if he confessed? If he communicated? Would they let him off then, Holmes, Bradshaw?" 54. For both of them, the theme moves forward to Mrs. Dalloway's realisation in the anteroom. "Death was an attempt to communicate". 55.

The unity of the book is also maintained through the prose. As a single example, there is the correspondence between the much-quoted scene where Mrs. Dalloway is sewing her green dress and the state of Septimus, some hundred pages later, shortly before his death. In the earlier passage, Clarissa likens her sewing to the motion of waves.

> her needle, drawing the silk smoothly to her gentle pause, collected the green folds together and attached them very lightly to the belt. So on a summer's day waves collect, overbalance and fall; and the whole world seems to be saying 'that is all' more and more ponderously, until even the heart in the body which lies in the sun on the beach says too, that is all. Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects, lets fall. And the body alone listens to the passing bee; the wave breaking; the dog barking, far away barking and barking. 56.

Like Rachel in The Voyage Out, Septimus feels himself "floating on the top of the waves, while far away on shore he heard dogs barking and barking far away. Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more". 57.

The extended metaphor in the passage above works successfully because it is related to Virginia Woolf's special imagery and preoccupations. But this pseudo-Homeric ornamentation does not always succeed. I find

53. D., 160.
54. D., 109.
55. D., 202 (204).
56. D., 44-45. R.A. Brower in The Fields of Light makes a detailed study of the novel's metaphoric structure.
57. D., 154.

this is one of the flaws in Mrs. Dalloway: when Mrs. Woolf's imagery is uninspired, it draws copiously upon the most trite sources of Romantic stock imagery. For this reason (to use her own method) her essays may often leave one with a feeling something like the travel effects of a rapid and undulating scenic railway. Mrs. Dalloway suffers from the periodic straining of her poetic faculty.

The other drawback of the book she was aware of herself and recorded this of her heroine in her diary: "I think some distate for her persisted. Yet, again, that was true to my feeling for Kitty and one must dislike people in art without it mattering, unless indeed it is true that certain characters detract from the importance of what happens to them". [58.] It is due to an equivocality in the reactions of many readers to Clarissa herself that they become less amenable than Mrs. Woolf intended to the heroine's point of view.

So far we have understood this book as being about the predicament of a particular person at a particular time. But there is a further element which gives it some degree of universality. This is that both Clarissa and Septimus must be thought of as artists.

When we first meet Clarissa, we find that her reaction to life is much like that of the artist: "Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so; making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh". [59.] We learn that she is part of the procession of public life, since her ancestors were courtiers in the time of the Georges. Thus, that night she too was going to celebrate life within this tradition, she was going to "kindle and illuminate" [60.] by giving her party. For Clarissa, her party is her personal work of art. It is "her gift. Nothing else had she of the slightest importance; could not think, write, even play the piano." [61.] Clarissa collects and orders people into an artistic "form" much as a novelist does with her characters.

58. A Writer's Diary, 79.
59. D., 6.
60. D., 7.
61. D., 135.

> Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; someone up in Bayswater; somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence ... 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? 62.

This is in curious contrast to the Clarissa who feels "alone for ever" and who had "gone up into the tower alone and left them blackberrying in the sun" 63.: the introspective, isolated Clarissa.

Septimus, too, is an artist. He once wrote poetry, and is sometimes described as a Christ-figure.64. Like Clarissa he has "moments", but they strike him with an almost horrific force, as on the occasion he sees a representation of the metaphysical forming pattern on the blinds of the dignitary's car: "upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything into one centre before his eyes ... terrified him."65. He, too, makes a "form", which corresponds to Clarissa's "party", shortly before his suicide: he decorates Mrs. Peter's hat for Rezia: "Never had he done anything which made him feel so proud. It was so real, it was so substantial, Mrs. Peter's hat." 66.

So this is not merely the alienation of the individual, it is also a parable of the alienation of the artist within his society.

Septimus climbs onto the windowsill of his Bloomsbury flat; finds "the sun hot"; "Only human beings?" he asks himself. This simple question can be read with several variations of meaning, it will be found, all of them significant. Then he throws himself to his death on the area railings ("railings" which once obscured the "ghost" of his dead friend Evans) with the symbolic words "I'll give it you!" 67.

At the party, Peter Walsh, watching Clarissa, is moved to think that she looks as if she must in a moment leave the world altogether; "being on the very verge and rim of things, and take her leave." 68. She goes for a moment into the ante-room where she can be alone, and in fact her time in there - in a way her Gethsemane - is so connected by

62. D. 135 (134-135).
63. D., 57 (53).
64. D., 29.
65. D., 18.
66. D., 159.
67. D., 164 (165).
68. D., 191 (192).

imagery with Septimus's suicide that it in fact forms the counterpart for this suicide in her own life. But Mrs. Dalloway returns from the room, the Messiah-figure, Septimus, resurrected in her. He lives on in her. Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus are, as Virginia Woolf has told us, "one and the same person".

Clarissa's moment in the room is sufficiently intricate and vital to the book to warrant examination. First of all, Clarissa recalls the image of throwing a shilling into the Serpentine - the widening ripples of individual consciousness in others - and she realizes that Septimus, too, had "thrown it away".

> A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death.
>
> But this young man had killed himself - had he plunged holding his treasure? "If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy", she had said to herself once, coming down, in white. 69.

Like Richardson's Clarissa, Mrs. Dalloway is alone in a male-dominated external, conventional, 'public' environment. The counterpart of the brothel in her own life is the world of society and politics; her other self, Septimus, is "raped" by that society, yet like herself and Richardson's heroine, somehow remains superior to it all; and thus gains the victory, because of what he retains. However, in the immediate circumstances of the novel, the treasure, the form, Mrs. Peter's hat, is what Mrs. Dalloway is referring to, the counterpart of the gift of the party in her own life.

> the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him - the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. But she must go back. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room. 70.

69. D., 202-203 (204)
70. D., 204-205 (206).

She goes back now to "assemble", to create. She goes back, too, to other people: Sally and Peter. The sentence "For there she was" which closes the book, refers not only to herself, but to her "place": her position, her society.

The sun had risen to its full height. It was no longer half seen and guessed at, from hints and gleams (W., 105).

CHAPTER V.

None of Virginia Woolf's other novels has the freedom of To The Lighthouse. Mrs. Dalloway and the books which preceded it are self-consciously experimental, and sometimes our attention is attracted more by the technical novelties than by the purposes they serve. Here the technical ease which the authoress has achieved over the years enables her to endow an immensely complex artistic whole with great lucidity and singleness. For my own part, I endorse Professor Blackstone's assessment:

> By cutting out almost entirely the element of plot Virginia Woolf has made possible for herself an unparalleled depth of psychological description. There is no more living character in fiction that Mrs. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, Charles Tansley and the rest, down to Mrs. McNab, are all given in the round; there are no two-dimensional characters. And with all this, there are the riches of thought, the exploration of points of view and the consideration of ultimate issues, which never ... detach themselves from the living framework of the book. To read any ordinary novel after reading To the Lighthouse is to feel oneself turning from the light of day into the world of puppets and paste-board. 1.

To the Lighthouse, published in 1927, is so precisely sculptured that it must be close to meriting the description of - in an exact sense of the word - the most "perfect" novel in English. In so far as this quality can be assessed at all, Jane Austen's works are its only counterpart in technical perfection. Yet it is its fluidity which especially distinguishes this novel from the others. On February 23rd, 1926, Virginia Woolf notes that "I am now writing as fast and freely as I have written in the whole of my life; more so - 20 times more so - than any novel yet ... I now invent theories that fertility and fluency are the things". 2.

Some critics feel that the fluency, clarity, and compactness result from its being set on an island: this gives it the sort of aesthetic isolation Roger Fry required in the artistic object. J.K. Johnstone very pertinently comments that "the spatial relations... do

1. Virginia Woolf: A Commentary, 128-9.
2. A Writer's Diary, 85.

not depend in the least upon outside reference: the window, ... the town, the bay, and the lighthouse exist within the novel in the way that the streets and parks of the West End do not exist in Mrs. Dalloway." [3.] In the earlier novel, Virginia Woolf attempted to achieve timelessness and visual immediacy by evoking places familiar in any age. Here the action and landmarks are so exactly "placed" within a circumscribed area - the island - that they acquire a solid imaginative existence, instead of a merely derivative one. Whatever these various factors contribute, To the Lighthouse is Virginia Woolf's most important achievement.

This compactness - everything being contained within the universe of this novel, and dependent on nothing outside it - is a direct result of Roger Fry's aesthetic theories. It is no wonder that here is such an example of perfection, when the special creative method used might itself be called "practising perfection": the "every part in some way reflecting the whole" of Roger Fry.

> Every work of art which one enjoys with complete aesthetic apprehension becomes for the time being the spirit's universe. No conscious reference to anything outside the work of art is relevant; we are absorbed and englobed within it. But in the interior of a great building this spiritual isolation is happily symbolized and as it were incarnated by our being physically shut off from all other life. It is as though when one looked at a picture one could enter into its space corporally as well as ideally. [4.]

Within this circumscribed globe, of course, all objects live a "double life": they gain special associations for the characters and for us by their "place" in the novel's universe. This is part of the mystery of the lighthouse: it has different meanings for different people in the book. But like Mrs. Ramsay whom one needed "fifty pairs of eyes" to see round, [5.] behind this diversity the lighthouse yet has a single essence, the nature of which will shortly be explored. It is this method of symbolism which has helped to confound critics, who have been consistently inadequate in their attempts to attribute a meaning to the book's central image.

3. The Bloomsbury Group, 348.
4. Roger Fry, quoted in J.K. Johnstone's The Bloomsbury Group, 47-8.
5. T. L., 303 (224; 229).

The elusiveness of the lighthouse - its meaning has never been correctly defined - is strange in view of the novel's simplicity of purpose. In one of the most recent studies, that of Josephine Schaefer, she writes that "The fact that Lily Briscoe is an artist has very little to do with the experience she undergoes ".[6] Misconceptions like these are rife, and it is the pursuit of the central symbol's meaning which must be the main subject of this study, for the full extent of the remarkable unity of the novel becomes unintelligible without it.

The book has an unusual structure: it is divided into three sections, "The Window", "Time Passes", "The Lighthouse". The first and the last of these together extend over a period of hours in the lives of a family, the Ramsays, and of a number of guests at their holiday home in the Hebrides. Together the parts compose a complete day: afternoon and evening in the first section, morning in the last, with the middle section apparently representing "night". However, this night is ten years long: the two main parts are separated by the first world war; and in "The Lighthouse" most of the people reassemble in honour of Mrs. Ramsay, who has died in the interim.

"The Window" and "The Lighthouse", as their names suggest, reflect one another. The last section refers back to the first in many ways. It is as if the spatial distance between the lighthouse in the bay and the Ramsays' living-room window has been reconstituted in terms of time. In the first part there are six guests at the holiday home: Lily Briscoe, an artist; Augustus Carmichael, an elderly man of letters who takes opium; Charles Tansley, an ambitious - and by and large unpleasant - young academic; Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley, a young couple who become engaged in the course of the afternoon; and William Bankes, a middle-aged widower, a scientist. Ramsay himself, the host, is a noted philosopher without genius, while Mrs. Ramsay is the person around whom the guests and the eight children revolve. The first section draws to an end with the company gathered at an evening meal, the candles lit.

6. Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Novels of Virginia Woolf, 133.

In the second long section Lily and Augustus Carmichael return to the island with Mr. Ramsay, and two of the children, James and Cam. The Ramsays complete a sailing trip to the lighthouse, projected by Mrs. Ramsay in the earlier part, while Lily finishes off a painting begun years before. Beneath the surface of these outwardly undramatic events, the real issues and tensions develop and resolve themselves.

This psychological method, where the outwardly conventional phrase or action is seen to set up growing ripples of implication in different minds, rather like the "leaden circles" produced by the bells in Mrs. Dalloway, has its dangers. In her diary, Virginia Woolf wonders: "don't I run the risk of falling into the flatness of N. & D.? Have I got the power needed if quiet is not to become insipid?" [7]. But a year later, on November 23rd, 1926, as she brings the novel to a close, she feels that "it is easily the best of my books: fuller than J.'s R. and less spasmodic, occupied with more interesting things than Mrs. D., and not complicated with all that desperate accompaniment of madness. It is freer and subtler, I think." [8].

Once again, her conception of the book grew in the process of writing. On May 14, 1925, she records her original idea: "This is going to be fairly short; to have father's character done complete in it; and mother's; and St. Ives; and childhood; and all the usual things I try to put in - life, death, etc." [9]. She thought the book not so much a novel as an "Elegy" and on one of its many levels it may be considered biographical: the Ramsays, like Mr. and Mrs. Ambrose in The Voyage Out, are based on Virginia's mother, Julia, and her father, Sir Leslie Stephen. The house and the lighthouse are composed out of childhood memories of Talland House in St. Ives, where the Stephens went to spend their summer holidays; the lighthouse is the Godrevey light. About this plan, too, Virginia had her doubts: "But this theme may be sentimental; father and mother and child in the garden; the death; the sail to the Lighthouse." [11].

7. A Writer's Diary, 81.
8. Op. cit., 102.
9. Op. cit., 76.
10. op. cit., 80.
11. Ibid.

In fact, To the Lighthouse is the least sentimental to the outsider of all Mrs. Woolf's books. Some consciousness of misapplied emotion does arise in her works, principally when she universalizes a particular situation, sees it as part of all life and all history, but somehow momentarily loses sight of the individuality of the unique instance at the same time: Prue Ramsay, the daughter, for example, watching Paul and Minta in love, has "some anticipation of happiness reflected in her, as if the sun of the love of men and women rose over the rim of the tablecloth, and without knowing what it was she bent towards it and greeted it." [12] To see men and women as expressing history, as acting out their universal essences, is part of Mrs. Woolf's own vision, and in this example the method works. Yet I sense that this is somehow a reduction not only of Prue, but of Paul and Minta as well. Though to be fair, here this is only a minor and transient discomfort. Also, the figure is in fact presented as part of Mrs. Ramsay's stream of consciousness, and it is her nature to see Paul and Minta more as universal essences of man and woman who must "marry, marry", than as real individuals. The flaws in this sort of idealization are successfully shown by the way Paul and Minta's marriage fails after Mrs. Ramsay's death. Does not Mrs. Ramsay after all feel that "she was on one side, and life was on another"? [13] To the Lighthouse is the least sentimental of Mrs. Woolf's books in this sense, for it is the one founded most in concrete individuality.

Many critics oppose the critical method which, like Sir Leslie Stephen's, makes use of biography in explaining aspects of a novel, and they have coined a Moore-ish term for what they dislike: "the genetic fallacy". But it is necessary to make use of what we know of the lives of Mrs. Woolf's family in considering To the Lighthouse, for, as the diary indicates, reference to the lives of the real people are intended to form one strand of the novel itself, just as the historical background and personality of Victoria Sackville-West was to form one strand of Orlando. As has already been indicated, the book is about art on one side and living on another. It is thus only appropriate that reference

12. T. L., 169-170 (126; 128).
13. T. L., 95 (69; 69).

to historical life itself should be seen to constitute one strand of To the Lighthouse. For Virginia Woolf, a life posed the same problem as art: it was to be formed, however unsuccessfully, against the haphazard nature of fate, just as literature was to be formed against the intransigence of words. As we shall see, the discovery of To the Lighthouse is that the two states, life and art, are no longer antipathetical.

Not only Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay and their relationship, but the family itself, seem based on Virginia Woolf's childhood experiences. Prue Ramsay, for example, who dies after childbirth, would appear to be modelled after her step-sister Stella Duckworth, who was married in April and died in July 1897. That the Ramsays are Mr. and Mrs. Stephen has already been mentioned. Leonard Woolf, who met Sir Leslie, has some misgivings though about the accuracy of his portrait in To the Lighthouse:

> Mr. Ramsey (sic) is a pretty good fictional portrait of Leslie Stephen - and yet there are traces of unfairness to Stephen in Ramsay. Leslie Stephen must have been in many ways an exasperating man within the family and he exasperated his daughters, particularly Vanessa. But I think they exaggerated his exactingness and sentimentality and, in memory, were habitually rather unfair to him owing to a complicated variety of the Oedipus complex. 14.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Mr. Ramsay does exhibit many of the characteristics of his counterpart in life, and these were no less unusual than they appear in fiction. For instance, as Mrs. Woolf records of her father, "both 'utter trash', as he called it, and the most sublime words of Milton and Wordsworth, stuck in his memory, and the act of walking or climbing seemed to inspire him to recite", 15. no matter where he was. He shares this eccentric habit with Mr. Ramsay. She felt that writing in To the Lighthouse about her parents somehow "laid them in her mind", the influence of these two strong personalities having persisted for her: "I believe this to be true - that I was obsessed by them both, unhealthily; and writing of them was a necessary act." Had her father lived, she felt, in 1928, "His life would have entirely ended mine". 16.

14. Sowing, 182.
15. 'Leslie Stephen', Collected Essays IV, 76-77.
16. A Writer's Diary, 138.

Mrs. Ramsay must be considered an accurate likeness of Virginia's mother. When her sister, Vanessa, read the book on its publication, she said it was "an amazing portrait of mother; a supreme portrait painter; has lived in it; found the rising of the dead almost painful." [17] It is part of the astonishing strength of this novel that it exists so convincingly on so many different levels.

Mr. Ramsay's voyage to the lighthouse in honour of his dead wife corresponds to a spiritual journey Leslie Stephen undertook in life. Quentin Bell, the authoress's nephew, has recently helped to indicate some of the issues underlying this journey. The impression handed down to him of Mrs. Stephen was that "She was, in short, a saint and because of this one cannot quite believe in her." Commenting on the resemblance between Julia's style and that of her daughter Virginia, Quentin Bell thinks "she may have transmitted something else - a whole conception of life which was to be of enormous importance to her children." This springs from the fact that the Jackson family, to which Mrs. Stephen has belonged, were interested not only in the intellect but the senses. "Cambridge lived for and by ideas ... But Julia Jackson was fimiliar with - was indeed largely brought up in - the world of Little Holland House."

> Hers was a society ... in which the habit of intellectual analysis ... on which Stephen and his friends relied, was replaced by a reliance on intuition, a delight in sensuous form and a respect for emotional candour. Stephen's children inherited both these dispositions; but sentimentally they were attracted to their mother's side of the family. They came presently to reject the previous generation as a whole; but their revolt was twofold. When Leslie Stephen died and his children moved to Bloomsbury they brought with them not only a set of intellectual ideas against which they reacted under the influence of G.E. Moore, but also a set of aesthetic ideas against which they reacted under the influence of Cézanne. It was this duality of interest which gave Bloomsbury its particular character. The Mausoleum Book is of interest ... because it reveals the force with which a remarkable personality encountered Stephen and lived on in the consciousness of the next generation. 18.

17. Op. cit., 107.
18. Quentin Bell, 'The Mausoleum Book', A Review of English Literature, VI, 1965, 17-18.

It may be the very real presence in Virginia Woolf's intellectual makeup of these two elements that enables her thought to be compared with that of a philosopher so unlike G.E. Moore, the idealist F.H. Bradley. The subject of the reference above, The Mausoleum Book itself, was a journal kept by Leslie Stephen towards the end of his life, and it was intended to be read to his children after his death. It is unpublished, and in quoting from it, I am making use of parts repeated by Desmond MacCarthy, himself a member of "inner Bloomsbury", in a lecture delivered at Cambridge in 1937. How much of Mr. Ramsay, a Mr. Ramsay who has in later life come to terms with the opposed elements of his deceased wife's personality, who has in this sense made his journey to the lighthouse, there is in this:

> I used, I must confess, and sometimes I confessed to her the truth, to exaggerate my self-humiliation in order to extract from her some of her delicious compliments... though she knew that I was "fishing for compliments", she would not find it in her heart to refuse them. Again and again she has told me that it was unworthy of me to complain of want of popular success ... This suggests to me one more remark ... Had I fully succeeded and surpassed all my contemporaries in my own line, what should I have done? I should have written a book or two which might be read by my contemporaries and perhaps by the next generation, and which would have survived so long because they expressed thoughts which were more or less common to thousands of people, many of them often a little less able than myself. Now I say, advisedly, that I do not think such an achievement as valuable as hers. 19.

2.

Strachey made his name with his uncomplimentary biographies of Victorian personalities, and Bloomsbury viewed its parents' generation with sarcasm. To Virginia Woolf, especially as she grew older, although the previous generation were so much "less complex" than the people of the "twenties", they had a kind of monumentality: they somehow, in their simple way, embodied things, human relations, as they ought to be. Although the mute questioning of deference and chivalry, of the Bank of England and the Indian Empire, of ringed fingers and lace, is present already in the minds of the young Ramsays, "to them all there was something

19. Desmond MacCarthy, Leslie Stephen, 40-42.

in this of the essence of beauty". [20] In December, 1940, Mrs. Woolf writes in her diary:

> How beautiful they were, these old people - I mean father and mother - how simple, how clear, how untroubled. I have been dipping into old letters and father's memoirs. He loved her: oh and was so candid and reasonable and transparent. How serene, and gay even, their life reads to me ... And so human - with the children and the little hum and song of the nursery ... nothing turbulent; nothing involved; no introspection. 21.

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay have something of a monumental quality about them, for this reason. Personality, even the sexes, have become confused in the thoroughly "modern" self, but in their simple way the two central figures of this book seem to live in an archetypal age: Mr. Ramsay is for Virginia Woolf the personification of masculinity; Mrs. Ramsay is the essential female.

Mrs. Woolf believed that, on the mental plane, there were characteristics that could be called essentially male, and those essentially female. Possession of a predominantly male or predominantly female mentality was a fact not necessarily determined by physical gender. She believed that the artist, especially, must stand midway between the two poles of sexuality, for it was his function, as we learn from Between the Acts, to enable people to become their opposite: to experience the full possibilities of personality through art. Literature, she felt, ought to be the freest medium of communication; it ought to allow people to escape the restrictions of their individual imposed identities and to become for the moment part of the wealth of personality which literature presents, irrespective of the boundaries of sex. Her theory of the androgeneity of the artist is the basis of her extended essay, A Room of One's Own. It finds artistic expression in the changes of sex which Orlando undergoes.

But for Virginia Woolf, her father and mother, free of the confusions into which the modern age had plunged people, somehow typified the ideal male and the ideal female. The characteristics of the male were

20. T. L., 16 (9; 7).
21. A Writer's Diary, 360.

objectivity: a respect for facts, for "truth", for the powers of the logical intellect. His was the external world, but his personality and thus the society he supported were essentially egotistical. Self-seeking meant "verticality", a competitive social structure, and this is why the thesis - to many idiosyncratic - of the later treatise Three Guineas identifies the rise of fascism with a surfeit of masculinity.

It is in her explanation of the essentially feminine psyche that Mrs. Woolf is most interesting. A woman represents subjectivity, she claims: she is secretive, intuitive, and sympathetic. Not confined to the self, she is able to extend herself to other people; where the man is politically "vertical", she is "horizontal". Representing receptivity, sensitivity and emotion rather than external action, the female mind is in far greater contact with the world and its processes of growth and decay than the male, who analyzes experience with his intellect, can hope to be. The male mind "learns", the female "knows". Analysis, a breaking-up of the universe into its separate elements, is a male characteristic, whereas creativity, form-giving, and an intuitive recognition of the indivisible "homogeneity" of the universe are female propensities.

But although Mrs. Woolf is attempting to break with the tradition of masculine "externality" in the novel, she believes, as we shall see in the next chapter, that the most fertile art can only be produced by the truly "androgynous" mind: that which combines the two elements in the most successful fusion.

Mrs. Ramsay exemplifies this. She recognizes the value not only of the female, but also of the male world. This is why she is continually exhorting people to "marry, marry". She knows that it is only in relationship between sexes that true sexual nature can be expressed and fulfilled. Part of the meaning of Mr. Ramsay's journey to the lighthouse is his recognition of the necessity for this relationship, in the inner, as well as the outer, life. In going to the lighthouse he acquiesces at last, like Leslie Stephen, to the value of the female nature, which he has in certain ways tended previously to disparage.

The six guests at the holiday house each occupy differing places on the sexual spectrum, and so help to show up the central characters in different ways. Charles Tansley, for example, disparages women's achievements; he fiercely represents the most extreme kind of masculinity. Lily Briscoe, the artist, is his opposite on the female side of the scale: she is a confirmed spinster, and experiences but suffocates pangs of physical emotion for Mrs. Ramsay. The final section, where she finishes her picture on the mainland while Mr. Ramsay sails to the lighthouse, is as much a period of struggle with sexual inadequacies for her as it is for Mr. Ramsay. The ghost-like appearance of Mrs. Ramsay on the steps, which enables her to complete the painting, marks the resolution of this struggle. This is why Lily can feel that she has overcome the inability to give Mr. Ramsay sympathy, to direct events, as Mrs. Ramsay would: "Whatever she had wanted to give him, when he left her that morning, she had given him at last." [22] This gift is all the more poignant for being made in the complete absence of its recipient. To Virginia Woolf with her vision of a related world, separations of time or place or death are all of them artificial. The reconciliation of male and female which Mrs. Ramsay stands for, is illustrated in the image in Lily's mind, "the three of them together", Mrs. Ramsay a little way in front. [23] Mrs. Ramsay is the pair "united".

Perhaps the most compact example in the book of the archetypal male-female relationship occurs early in the first section. Mrs. Ramsay and her small son James both wish to sail to the lighthouse as planned the next day, but Mr. Ramsay, with his male regard for factuality, asserts that it will rain and the journey will be impossible. Mrs. Ramsay persists in hoping it will be fine. Irritated, Ramsay shouts 'Damn you' at his wife. She is aghast at his capacity to "pursue truth with such an astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings". [24] He goes out on to the verandah and recites "Someone had blundered", through

22. T. L., 319 (236; 241).
23. T. L., 309 (229; 234).
24. T. L., 54 (38; 37).

subconscious prompting perhaps, for his is the archetypal male "blunder" - he neglects the feminine "sympathetic" values. "Outer" truth excludes the "inner". But, strangely enough, Mrs. Ramsay reacts to his insult with a certain degree of pleasure.

> Then he said, Damn you. He said, It must rain. He said, It won't rain, and instantly a Heaven of security opened before her. There was nobody she reverenced more. 25.

James, the child, however, bridles protectively, unaware of his mother's paradoxically positive sexual reaction. This serves not only as an illustration of male-female antagonism in action, but also gives an indication of the novel's psychological complexity.

James himself provides our first instance of the masculine intellect at work: we find him cutting pictures out of a magazine with scissors, while his mother imagines him playing an important part in "public affairs". [26.] Already he seems to be dividing up a united universe with his mind. On the same page we learn that Mr. Ramsay was "incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact", irrespective of whom he hurt by it. This is in direct contrast to his wife's selflessness: she is knitting for the lighthouse-keeper's boy, and is always going on errands of mercy - without fuss, as if her nature ordained it.

Charles Tansley, a disciple of Ramsay, has this same masculine temperament in an exaggerated form. He keeps himself aloof from the softening female influence. Mrs. Ramsay, try as she may, cannot help being amused by him. When she talks about "waves mountains high" he comments that "it was a little rough." [27.] There is no room for exaggeration in his precise mind. His factuality and his ambition go together: they are both kinds of isolation; one of the fact, the other of the individual. By placing such emphasis on the external forms of a competitive world he has no use for the "inner form" of art. He goes to art exhibitions and asks people to admire his tie, Mrs. Ramsay suspects. [28.]

Lily stands opposite Tansley on this spectrum. This is brought out especially at the evening meal, where she makes fun of him. He is moved to think: "Women made civilization impossible with all their 'charm',

25. T. L., 54-5 (38; 37).
26. T. L., 12 (6; 4).
27. T. L., 18 (10; 8).
28. T. L., 18 (10; 9).

all their silliness. 'No going to the lighthouse to-morrow, Mrs. Ramsay', he said asserting himself." [29.]

We are acquainted with the characteristics of femininity at an early stage, too. Mrs. Ramsay feels "she had the whole of the other sex under her protection". [30.] She has an innate awareness of the world's homogeneity, which men with their intellects disturb: even among her children, "Strife, divisions ... that they should begin so early, Mrs. Ramsay deplored." [31.] Her belief that in the house "Windows should be open, and doors shut" is merely an external symptom of her belief in receptivity and privacy. This female secretiveness (another form of chastity?) is shown in other ways: "she was silent always". [32.] To Lily, there reposed in the recesses of Mrs. Ramsay's soul "tablets bearing sacred inscriptions", which, could they be deciphered, would "teach one everything, but they would never be made public." [33.]

These separate sexual characteristics may be summarised by means of an image: if we view consciousness as a wave in the sea, the masculine part is what is visible to passing ships: the individual wave slicing alone into the air. The female part is the lower, inner part which reaches down to connect the wave with the whole sea. A recognition of the value of both is essential to a balanced personality, political state, art or marriage, so Mrs. Woolf is saying.

It is Lily and Tansley who represent female and male in isolation; Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay stand for sexuality in fusion. There is a particularly touching moment at the end of the first section, where the couple are alone together in the late evening, and intuitive messages of affection pass between them without their speaking. [34.] Yet Mrs. Ramsay is dominant, and the responsibility for the perfect ordering of the marriage rests upon her.

At the same time, Mrs. Ramsay does not negelect the value of the male intelligence, or of its majestic logical structures which in their own way provide the world with security:

29. T. L., 134 (99; 99-100).
30. T. L., 15 (8; 6).
31. T. L., 19 (11; 9).
32. T. L., 49, also 82 (33-34, also 59-60; 32-33 also p.59).
33. T. L., 82 (59-60; 59).
34. T. L., 189 (142-143; 143-144).

> she let it uphold her and sustain her, this admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence, which ran up and down, crossed this way and that, like iron girders spanning the swaying fabric, upholding the world, sothat she could trust herself to it utterly, even shut her eyes, or flicker them for a moment, as a child staring up from its pillow winks at the leaves of a tree. 35.

Yet the patterns provided by philosophy and society rest on contingencies, we feel here: it is the form given by affection and by art - the female activities - which are the surest rock. Mr. Ramsay is often troubled by the feeling that he would have made greater discoveries had he not been married; but he never rejects marriage. His admiration for a hen and her covey of little chicks, while on a walking tour as a young man, symbolised this need to William Bankes who was with him at the time. 36. Bankes recognizes that sexuality has intervened and cut off their friendship, the mere association of man and man.

There is throughout To the Lighthouse a tacit recognition of the primitiveness of all human action: a recognition that even Mr. Ramsay's sophisticated philosophy is the counterpart of the hunt, and that Mrs. Ramsay's care with the children has its origins in the primaeval swamp. Mr. Ramsay, in the famous section where he tries to reach R on the linear alphabet of mental effort, is a counterpart of all the heroes of physical exploration and adventure, as the similes which describe him show. 37. Logic, the authoress supposes, is an intensely masculine preoccupation; no less so, and requiring qualities commensurate with, Amazonian adventure and polar exploration.

This primitiveness is highlighted by the sexual symbolism which appears in To the Lighthouse for the first time, is present in Orlando, and is a prominent feature of The Waves. Mrs. Ramsay is like a "rain of energy, a column of spray": "and into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare." This is not merely obvious sexual symbolism: it is a reduction to an image of the essence, physical

35. T. L., 164 (122; 123-4).
36. T. L., 37 (25; 23).
37. T. L., 56-59 (40-41; 39).

and spiritual, of the nature of man and of woman. James, the son, senses the undercurrent biological skirmish, and antagonism rises in him against "the arid scimitar of the male, which smote mercilessly, again and again, demanding sympathy." [38] The images are repeated in James's mind during the voyage to the lighthouse, where he, too, overcomes his antagonism and identifies with his father - the sort of resolution his father makes on a different level.

We come to understand what function Mrs. Ramsay serves, not only as a representative of her sex but as an arbiter between the sexes, when she gathers the guests and her family together at the evening meal;

> She forebore to look at Mr. Tansley. Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it, and so, giving herself the little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating, as the watch begins ticking - one, two, three, one, two, three. And so on and so on she repeated. [39]

I find something of a mystery about this sequence of three, which runs through To the Lighthouse. Mrs. Ramsay, looking out of the window at the light, remembers that "there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke". [40] In what way, one asks, is Mrs. Ramsay to be identified with this last long beam? The figure three is associated with her elsewhere: in Lily Briscoe's picture, she is represented by "a purple triangle". David Daiches has discovered what he calls a colour symbolism in To the Lighthouse: [41] he claims that Mr. Ramsay is until the end of the book associated with the colours red or brown, while Lily's colour is blue. Mrs. Ramsay's colour is a mixture of the two: purple. But Daiches attaches the wrong meaning to this symbolism, influenced probably by his inaccurate interpretation of the lighthouse symbol.

38. T. L., 62 (45; 43-44).
39. T. L., 130-131 (96; 97).
40. T. L., 100 (73; 73).
41. Virginia Woolf, 85.

The likely explanation of this pattern of three is probably given by Lily, with her image of "the three of them together", Mrs. Ramsay a little in front: Mrs. Ramsay has a quality which brings together the male and the female nature, Mr. Ramsay and Lily. She reconciles the opposites of personality; advises young people to "marry, marry". After her vision, her reconciliation with Mrs. (and Mr.) Ramsay, Lily completes her picture by drawing "a line there, in the centre". [42.]

This, we may assume, with slight risk of over-interpretation, is one part of the lighthouse's meaning: it is a solid object, having a "double life". It is both simply itself, a truth symbol, and also by its association with Mrs. Ramsay it comes to be identified with her and with her function. Its three beams suggest the reconciliation of the opposites of personality, of subjectivity and objectivity, [43.] of the inner and the outer in art. Lily finds that when staying with the Ramsays she feels violently two opposite things at the same time; [44.] at the end this lesion is healed. The lighthouse, composed of both solid matter and surrounding light, is - like the bells and their "circles" in Mrs. Dalloway - both fact and impact, object and association. It shines out in the Night with the intermittent light of Day. Its light stands for the fusion of two contradictions. We may interpret this "coming together" as a kind of "love".

To put this more simply, and more convincingly: in Night and Day the light from the lighthouse sprang from the pair of united lovers; in To the Lighthouse it seems to stem from an ideal fusion of the male and female natures. The light from the lighthouse is the "love" that brings the two together. In a comparable way Paul Rayley rises up as a symbol in Lily's memory:

> Suddenly, as suddenly as a star slides in the sky, a reddish light seemed to burn in her mind, covering Paul Rayley, issuing from him. It rose like a fire sent up in token of some celebration by savages on a distant beach. [45.]

42. T. L., 320 (237; 242).
43. In a provocative essay 'The Waters of Annihilation: Double Vision in To the Lighthouse' (ELH, XXII, 1955, 61-79), Norman Friedman interprets the reciprocal relationship of window and lighthouse as pointing to a thesis-antithesis-synthesis within the novel.
44. T. L., 159 (118; 119).
45. T. L., 270 (199; 203).

3.

But this is not the only interpretation of the lighthouse symbol, nor of the nature of love. "Love had a thousand shapes", Lily Briscoe reminds herself:

> There might be lovers whose gift it was to choose out the elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene, or meeting of people (all now gone and separate), one of those globed compacted things over which thought lingers, and love plays. 46.

I have now examined two lower levels of the novel: the biographical level, and that concerning the special relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. There still remains the most important secondary level, that on which the bulk of the novel depends. This is the one which Lily hints at, the one springing from the real nature of the central image, the lighthouse itself.

Since so much wasteful speculation has surrounded the meaning of this particular landmark, I hope to be forgiven if I am especially scrupulous in my inquiry after it; but in these circumstances not to examine the subject thoroughly is to run the risk of being unconvincing. Yet once this symbol is understood, its place in the novel is sufficiently clear, and sufficiently explicit, for it to seem surprising that it has remained a mystery at all.

A good method to start with would be to see what may be learned about the lighthouse symbol from the previous novels, although this must not serve as more than general guide to Virginia Woolf's use of it in To the Lighthouse. In her first novel, The Voyage Out, there was the murmur of those who remained safely in a symbolic Britain, as they pulled the bedclothes over them, that "Thank Heaven, I'm not the man in the lighthouse!" 47. Symbolically, it seems to be the artist who is being referred to. Then again, on page 145, there is Rachel's image of life as "only a light passing over the surface and vanishing, as in time she would vanish, though the furniture of the room would remain." So here we infer that life itself is like the area where the light beam falls. In Jacob's

46. T. L., 295-6 (218-219; 223).
47. V. O., 28.

Room, where the lighthouse was openly mentioned it had no innate symbolic value, but only gathered this from its context. We remember, however, the "light shining out above Cambridge", [48] visible to the passing ships. In Night and Day, where the image appeared frequently, it stood for "civilization" (p.30, p.418), for Katherine in her guise of a centre of order and security, besieged by "lost birds" (pp. 417-419), and for the union of Katherine and Ralph, as I indicated previously.

Thus we find the lighthouse and its beam used as a symbol of the artist and of the life of consciousness (The Voyage Out), knowledge (Jacob's Room), civilization, order, and love (Night and Day). If the lighthouse is a coherent symbol, then, to generalize these findings, its characteristics are "life", which expresses its highest nature through "knowledge", "civilization", and "art". This manner of expression is a kind of "love". This is as yet perhaps not precise enough to afford us much illumination into To the Lighthouse, and we shall go deeper into the evidence presently, in order to determine the common factor between these things. In the meantime, there is a further consideration, given us by Mrs. Ivemey in the short story 'The Searchlight': "The light', she added, gathering her things about her, 'only falls here and there.'"

Bearing all these clues in mind, and also that other image of "light": the "luminous halo" of consciousness, we may now take up Mrs. Ivemey's hint, and start with an examination of Virginia Woolf's "moments of vision". The phrase "moments of vision" comes from Hardy; however, we might say that the nearest counterpart of these 'moments' in contemporary fiction are Joyce's "epiphanies". The lighthouse beam, which "only falls here and there" [50] becomes a symbol for these moments.

Help in tackling the meaning of this notion of the "moments of vision" comes from a description of something similar in a source which must undoubtedly have been influential, even if at second-hand, in the shaping of Virginia Woolf's own vision. As Walter Allen notes of the "luminous halo" passage, it "echoes closely both in its point of view and in its language the passage in William James's Principles of Psychology

48. J. R., 29 (29).
49. Virginia Woolf, A Haunted House, 106.
50. A Haunted House, 106.

in which the phrase "stream of consciousness", is first used", [51.]
There is also something of her own rhythm in this following extract from The Principles of Psychology by William James:[52.]

> Once more take a look at the brain. We believe the brain to be an organ whose internal equilibrium is always in a state of change, - the change affecting every part. The pulses of change are doubtless more violent in one place than in another, their rhythm more rapid at this time than at that. As in a kaleidoscope revolving at a uniform rate, although the figures are always rearranging themselves, there are instants during which the transformation seems minute and interstitial and almost absent, followed by others when it shoots with magical rapidity, relatively stable forms thus alternating with forms we should not distinguish if seen again: so in the brain the perpetual rearrangement must result in some forms of tension lingering relatively long, whilst others simply come and pass. But if consciousness corresponds to the fact of rearrangement itself, why, if the rearrangement stop not, should the consciousness ever cease?

Medially, Roger Fry in Vision and Design continues this train of ideas:

> Almost any turn of the kaleidoscope of nature may set up in the artist this detached and impassioned vision; the chaotic and accidental conjunction of forms and colours begins to crystallize into a harmony; and as this harmony becomes clear to the artist, his actual vision becomes distorted by the emphasis of the rhythm which has been set up within him ... In such creative vision the objects as such tend to disappear, to lose their separate unities, and to take their places as so many bits in the whole mosaic of vision. 53.

In Virginia Woolf's novels, likewise, the characteristic of the moment of vision is a sudden "crystallization", a drawing-together about a centre, a brief perception of order in the flux and flow of impressions. Peter Walsh in Mrs. Dalloway experiences "one of them, a moment, in which things came together" [54.] as he stands by a pillar-box; to the crazed Septimus it was a terrifying "drawing-together of everything into one centre before his eyes". [55.] To James, the child, on the first page of To the Lighthouse, "even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallize and transfix the moment".

51. Walter Allen, Tradition and Dream, 27.
52. P. 246.
53. Roger Fry, Vision and Design, (1920) 1961, p.48.
54. D., 167 (168).
55. D., 18.

It is the function of art, Virginia Woolf believes, to make permanent the "moment", to isolate this "coming together" in the chaos of life, together with the sensation of "reality" it brings, and to transform it into the artistic object. We remember Virginia Woolf's "manifesto" :

> Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions - trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old ... Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. 56.

If we return to the originator of the phrase "stream of consciousness", William James, and his belief that the mind works on the data it receives "much as a sculptor works on a block of stone" 57., we shall be brought, I believe, nearer to the meaning of the lighthouse:

> The artist notoriously selects his items, rejecting all... which do not harmonize... That unity... which gives to works of art their supremacy over works of nature, is wholly due to elimination. Any natural subject will do, if the artist has wit enough to ... suppress all merely accidental items which do not harmonize with this. 58.

We remember what Mrs. Woolf has said about the function of the novel in 'Phases of Fiction': its purpose was not to "amass details", rather, she asks "can it also select? Can it symbolize?" (Collected Essays II, 102). After the dinner party, Mrs. Ramsay steps out into the garden for a "moment": "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 ... All must be in order." 59. Anticipating our enquiry slightly, we begin to see that what Mrs. Ramsay is shaping, rather like a sculptor, is what we have called "the globe": the "crystallized" moment. She is making it into a "significant form", a work of art, and thus giving it permanence.

56. 'Modern Fiction', Collected Essays II, 106.
57. Principles of Psychology, I, 288.
58. Op. cit., 287.
59. T. L., 174 (129-130; 131).

Virginia Woolf's own creative process has been described for us both by herself, and by E.M. Forster: "She liked receiving sensations, - sights, sounds, tastes - passing them through her mind, where they encountered theories and memories... They had to be combined, arranged, emphasized here, eliminated there ... until out of the interactions, something, one thing, one, arose ... itself analagous to a sensation". [60.] Virginia Woolf describes the effect on the artist's mind of a crowded day in London: "After a hard day's work, trudging around, seeing all he can... the writer becomes - if he can - unconscious ... Then, after a pause the veil lifts; and there is the thing - the thing he wants to write about - simplified, composed." [61.] Mrs. Woolf's creative process is identical to that Mrs. Ramsay employs to shape her "moment".

The faculty of ordering and patterning human life, of giving it stability and security, Virginia Woolf saw as an intrinsically "female" activity, not to be distinguished from art itself. This patterning a "gathering together into one centre", is usually emblemised by some ordinary creative activity her heroines perform with their hands. Helen's embroidery in The Voyage Out; Katherine knitting in Night and Day; Mrs. Durrant winding wool in Jacob's Room; Mrs. Dalloway sewing her green silk dress; all these are as much evidence of the same natural faculty as Mrs. Ramsay's knitting is in To the Lighthouse.

Now we are in a position to understand unequivocally Mrs. Ramsay's function in the novel. She is an artist, and her medium is life. She provides life with security, with meaning, with significant form. Lily Briscoe, an artist in paint, recognizes this:

> That woman resolved everything into simplicity; ... she brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite ... something - this scene of the beach for example, this moment of friendship and liking - which survived, after all these years, complete, ... and it stayed in the mind almost like a work of art. 62.

60. Virginia Woolf, 7.
61. The Moment and Other Essays, London: Hogarth, 1960, 109-110.
62. T. L., 248-9 (182-183; 185).

This activity is not only a kind of art; it is also a kind of "love". Love, as we learned earlier from Lily, is a relation, not merely of people, but of things. To see the world "through the eyes of love" as Lily does [63.] is to see the world come together, Mrs. Woolf shows us. It is, in fact, to have a vision of a homogeneous universe. Looking at Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in this way, Lily sees "The sky stuck to them; the birds sang through them":

> Directly one looked up and saw them, what she called "being in love" flooded them. They became part of that unreal but penetrating and exciting universe which is the world seen through the eyes of love. The sky stuck to them; the birds sang though them. And, what was even more exciting, she felt, too... how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach. 63.

Mrs. Ramsay's activity is to give the world pattern. To Lily, this is an act of "love", just as is her painting. The ordering beam from the lighthouse, then, is "love", interpreted in this way.

I shall repeat here Lily's new description of the activity of love, given at the beginning of this section: it might "choose out the elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene, or meeting of people (all now gone and separate), one of those globed, compacted things" (p.295-6).

"Order" and "pattern" are aspects of "civilization", as well. This becomes clear if we examine the way in which Mrs. Woolf envisaged civilization when she wrote of it in abstract terms. Our instance is provided by Jinny in The Waves, as she marches along a street in triumphal procession with her fellow city-dwellers: "They are better than savages in loin-cloths, and women whose hair is dank, whose long breasts sag, with children tugging at their long breasts. These broad thoroughfares - Piccadilly South, Piccadilly North, Regent Street and the Haymarket - are sanded paths of victory driven through the jungle." [64.] Thus civilization is also tantamount to an "ordering of chaos" for Virginia Woolf, we may say.

63. T. L., 76 (55; 54).
64. W., 138 (166).

I began this purposely oblique path towards the lighthouse by determining five functions for the lighthouse from the previous novels: "love", "life", "civilization", "knowledge" and "art". It must now be clear that the connection between them is "order", "pattern". "Life" itself - as William James has stated - is an endless ordering. This activity expresses itself outwardly, first of all, in "civilization" ordered out of the primitive jungle. "Knowledge", a patterning of experience, is a precondition of civilization: the "light over Cambridge". Of course, to Mrs. Woolf, the highest expression of the ordering mind is "art".

The lighthouse, as we have seen, drawing things together, subsumes opposites. Man and woman in fusion work for order; he in the external world of politics and action; she in the inner world of art and feeling. The male's activity is the creation of "form" through civilization and philosophy; the female creates 'form' through art and love. Separate, they are full of empty ambition like Mr. Tansley, they fail to complete their pictures, like Lily Briscoe. This is the "man, woman, and child" of Virginia Woolf's original plan which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: and the meaning of the androgeneity of the artist becomes apparent.

Thus we are in a position to form our hypothesis as to the true nature of the lighthouse. So now, as Mrs. Woolf has said of the production of the work of art, "the veil lifts, and there is the thing": the most important product of the ordering process, the artistic object. It is what E.M. Forster found after her process of combination, emphasis, arrangement and elimination: "something, one thing, one, arose ... itself analagous to a sensation." Thus the lighthouse, rising above the chaos of the spray, is the artistic object as we have come to understand it in past chapters. More than that, by extension, it represents Art itself.

So Mrs. Ramsay the "artist", becomes indistinguishable from the lighthouse symbol. After her death, the lighthouse comes symbolically to take on the function she had in life. We see the relationship between Mrs. Ramsay and the lighthouse in the most meaningful and effectively written eleventh section to "The Window": Mrs. Ramsay, sitting work in hand,

feels that sometimes "she became the thing she looked at - the light, for example." 65.

> She looked up over he knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, searching as she alone could search into her mind and her heart, purifying out of existence that lie, any lie ("We are in the hands of the Lord.") She priased herself in praising that light, without vanity, for she was stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like that light. It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to things, inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself.66.

This reserved writing here freed of all lyricising, is of sincere beauty, and in its complexity requires the attention due to the most meaningful poetry. Virginia Woolf's technique has advanced to a stage which allows her to communicate simultaneously without alteration, in prose, on a multitude of levels. This piece alone is at the same time about solid objects, the reconciliation of opposites, the purification of the moment, truth and art, the forming activity, metaphysics and religion, and the identification of Mrs. Ramsay and the lighthouse.

The same unity in complexity attends her central symbol, the lighthouse itself. It fulfils all Mrs. Woolf's demands: like Yeats's "dancer", it becomes its meaning without "ceasing to be itself". 67. For instance, a lighthouse stands in the centre of the bay: it directs the course of the ships, it orders their movements in night and storm. It rises up, triumphant and solid above the chaos of the waves. Thus its nature and function are those of the work of art, and of Art itself. This nature and function are also inseparable from the activity of ordering consciousness in life. Philosophy and art, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, are two sides of the same coin.

4.

Now that we have a definition of the lighthouse symbol, it is necessary to apply this to our novel both in order to understand how it relates to the whole, and also to verify that the definition obtained is, in fact, the correct one.

65. T. L., 101 (73; 73).
66. T. L., 101 (74; 74).
67. "The Novels of E.M. Forster", Collected Essays I, 246.

I shall confine myself for the moment to a summary of the books implicit meaning, now available to us, and give justification for this summary in the final part of this chapter. Here it is important to remember that To the Lighthouse is not simply about Art, but about the conflict between Art and Time.

To Virginia Woolf, Time was the enemy. Existence in time was a fleeting, a flux, a transience; Art, in consequence, was like an anti-Heracleitean step into the river of flux and change. It was "to make of the moment something permanent": to make something solid and surviving out of the chaos of impressions that was life.

It was not merely the perhaps rather ordinary individual instances of Art, like Mr. Carmichael's poetry; these might be no more than a journalism of the life of souls. It was the thing itself, the activity or the presence behind these which was important. Mrs. Ramsay, who rarely reads books,[68] nevertheless embodies this activity.

Art is first of all a directive to life; also it is the firm central structure round which life should revolve. Thus it becomes the replacement for religion in an atheistic society. As the source of our truest understanding of what human life is, it is a stable, central structure, supplying security and meaning to life itself. It is the core of life.

Those who do not manage to recognize the importance of art, in life, or the importance of life in art, are like the wrecked ships, the drowned men, that were not able to profit by the lighthouse's presence, and sank.[69]

Because of her inner stability and her activity of transforming life into art, Mrs. Ramsay is a kind of lighthouse to those who depend on her. She means stability to them, she orders and regulates and smoothes out their lives, so that hers is the function of art.

At her death for those who knew her the central pivot is lost, and they have to find another. This is the meaning of Ramsay's journey to the symbolic lighthouse, an act performed in memory of his dead wife, a recognition of the serenity she had obtained.

68. T. L., 46 (32; 31).
69. T. L., 254, 293, 314, 315 (187, 217, 233, 234; 190, 221, 238, 239).

So Ramsay, coming to knowledge through experience and his wife's example, passes over the places where others have foundered without quoting lines identifying himself with them. He supplies his desperate needs by coming to terms with himself, and with life and art. In reaching the lighthouse, he makes one the external and the internal, the actual and the essential. This, to Virginia Woolf, supplies the meaning and purpose to life, the answer to the question asked by the watchers on the shore.

Of course, all this has to dowith an ideal, and any one human being necessarily has limitations - Mrs. Ramsay's mistakes of judgment, for example - but this serves poignantly to highlight the nature of the ideal rather than to diminish it. The lighthouse orders and patterns life, it draws things into one centre like a work of significant form. This is an exact counterpart of the "shape" of consciousness in life; but in life the beam of the lighthouse passes only intermittently, the moment of ordering, "globed and compacted", is only transitory. Time and chaos intervene, and the moment disintegrates. But in art this moment, this form, is made permanent and enduring.

In the first section of To the Lighthouse Mrs. Ramsay is dominant. Life is given form, but only for the moment, for time passes, unreason intervenes. In the last section the lighthouse is foremost. Mrs. Ramsay, the limited human human being, is resurrected in the solid object (and the activity) with which she is associated. She reappears to Lily on the step, and she reappears in the form of an ideal to Mr. Ramsay, as the lighthouse.

5.

There are two characters in To the Lighthouse, William Bankes and Augustus Carmichael, whose place I have not as yet mentioned. Although Augustus is something of a "forgotten character" in the novel - he has been rather neglected by commentators - he does serve an important function. Apart from their contribution to the action and as individuals, the two men are there because they highlight facets of Mrs. Ramsay's personality. This is true both of the sexual and the aesthetic themes. While Mr. Bankes is on the masculine side - he is a scientist, an analyst - Augustus Carmichael may be placed, paradoxically, towards the female side of the scale.

The femininity in his nature is indicated only in brief notes. We learn, for instance, that his wife has thrown him out, and that he never fully recovered from young Andrew Ramsay's death in the war. Mrs. Ramsay mentally groups him with Lily and herself: considering personality, she feels that "one after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish." [70] As Lily and he together watch the boat moving out towards the lighthouse, she remarks inwardly on the distaste for action which they both share. [71] This too, in these simplified terms, is a female characteristic.

But their main function lies in the support they give to two aspects of Mrs. Ramsay's place in the aesthetic theme. Mr. Bankes' unselfish and disinterested love for Mrs. Ramsay is a rebuke to Lily Briscoe. Lily becomes aware of this as they both watch the elder woman reading: Lily realizes that "no woman could worship another woman in the way he worshipped ... looking along his beam she added to it her different ray". [72] William Bankes is also aware of Mrs. Ramsay's aesthetic function: "the sight of her reading a fairy tale to her boy had upon him precisely the same effect as ... he felt when he had proved something absolute about the digestive system of plants, that barbarity was tamed, the reign of chaos subdued." [73]

Augustus Carmichael shares Mrs. Ramsay's picture of a universe related to each human being in all its parts. He attains to this through his opium: he is "in a grey-green somnolence which embraced them all... in a vast and benevolent lethargy of well-wishing; all the house; all the world; all the people in it". [74] This semi-mystic vision which Septimus attains in madness, and Augustus Carmichael (an aged "flower child"?) attains through opium, comes naturally to Mrs. Ramsay. She experiences it as a "wedge-shaped core of darkness" which envelopes her and makes her invisible.

70. T. L., 100 (73; 72).
71. T. L., 301 (223; 228).
72. T. L., 79 (57; 56).
73. T. L., 77 (56; 55).
74. T. L., 22 (13; 11).

> When life sank down for a moment, the range of experiences seemed limitless... she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep, but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by ... she felt herself pushing aside the thick leather curtain of a church in Rome... This core of darkness could go anywhere, for no-one saw it... There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability. Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience ... but as a wedge of darkness. Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet the stroke of the lighthouse. 75.

The shape of the light beam is sometimes described as a wedge or fan shape in other books by Virginia Woolf. Here, the wedge is of darkness, a place where the ray of light may fall, when the mask of personality is taken away. Once a person's role, the spurious identity the world imposes on him, is set aside, Mrs. Woolf is saying, then the infinite possibilities of personality are open to him. He becomes "free". Mrs. Ramsay, in this state of semi-consciousness, of close contact with reality, begins to create, to bring things together, like the lighthouse. In a similar state at the evening meal Mrs. Ramsay's mind moves through the minds of others like "a light stealing under water": "what they said was like the movement of a trout when, at the same time, one can see the ripple and the gravel, something to the right, something to the left; and the whole is held together." 76.

This notion of the world in relation which Mrs. Ramsay and Augustus share leads her on to a realisation that the nature of human existence remains unaltered by the death of individuals (we remember Mrs. Ramsay covering the skull in the children's bedroom with a shawl): "she felt that community of feeling with other people which emotion gives as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically ... it was all one stream, and chairs, tables, maps, were hers, were theirs, it did not matter whose, and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead." 77.

75. T. L., 99-100 (72-73; 73).
76. T. L., 165 (123; 124-5).
77. T. L., 175-176 (131; 132).

Finally, Augustus Carmichael is a poet, and in the last passage of the book, as Mr. Ramsay reaches the lighthouse and Lily completes her painting, the aged gentleman stands like an "old pagan God, shaggy, with weeds in his hair and the trident (it was only a French novel) in his hand." 78. A down-at-heel Neptune, he too, rises above the waves of chaos, representing art.

6.

Most of what I have said concerning Mrs. Ramsay and the aesthetic theme has taken the form of establishing a hypothesis. I shall end this chapter with the proof positive which is provided in the novel itself, wherever it occurs.

First of all, Mrs. Ramsay as the artist: after giving Mr. Ramsay the sympathy he requires, she feels "the rapture of successful creation." 79. At the end of the day, reading a sonnet, the globe of the formed work of art is deposited in her mind: "All the odds and ends of the day stuck to this magnet; her mind felt swept, felt clean. And then there it was, suddenly entire shaped in her hands, beautiful and reasonable, clear and complete; the essence sucked out of life and held rounded here - the sonnet." 80. The "globe" takes the form of the sonnet she is reading.

Yet, Mrs. Ramsay is a creator in her own right. Lily Briscoe, at work at her easel, is aware of this:

> What is the meaning of life? That was all - a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one. This, that, and the other; herself and Charles Tansley and the breaking wave; Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together; Mrs. Ramsay saying "Life stands still here"; Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent) - this was of the nature of a revelation. In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay said. "Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!" she repeated. She owed this revelation to her. 81.

78. T. L., 319 (236; 242).
79. T. L., 64 (46; 45).
80. T. L., 186-187 (139; 141).
81. T. L., 249-250 (183; 186).

For Mrs. Woolf, Art itself is the only enduring revelation, form itself the only ageless philosophy. Virginia Woolf's philosophy of communication is a philosophy of art, by the same token. "We perished each alone", Mr. Ramsay recites as he sails to the lighthouse. [82.]

So the moment of vision occurs when out of the elements of chaos things are "brought together" round a point of emphasis, and superfluity is eliminated. To make this form endure in time is the function of art. Inclusions like the following make evident the identity of the formed moment, art, and the lighthouse: Lily, remembering after ten years Charles Tansley, herself, and Mrs. Ramsay together on the beach, wonders, about this moment, "Why after all these years had that survived, ringed round, lit up, visible to the last detail, with all before it blank and all after it blank, for miles and miles?" [83.]

We are shown a complete creation by Mrs. Ramsay: the party around the evening meal, that forms the climax to the first section. This is Mrs. Ramsay's "form", carefully engineered through her tactful making of conversation, a carefully prepared main dish, and her intuitive apprehension of everyone's needs. The event is successful, and as Mrs. Ramsay realises this, she thinks:

> Nothing need be said ... There it was all round them. It partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity; ... she... felt ... 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 ... Of such movements, she thought, the thing is made that remains for ever after. This would remain. [84.]

Gathered close around the light of the candles, it is as if they themselves are the lighthouse: "here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, waterily." [85.]

82. T. L., 257-258 (189; 191).
83. T. L., 263 (194; 197).
84. T. L., 163 (121; 113).
85. T. L., 151 (112; 113).

Once Mrs. Ramsay leaves the party, it disintegrates. People go their separate ways, the form of the moment dissolves. From here until the end of the first section, Mrs. Ramsay rests, reading poetry to herself. Even the lines she reads become significant.

> And all the lives we ever lived and all the lives to be
> Are full of trees and changing leaves. 86.

This is repeated twice in two different contexts of thought, and on each occasion it has a slightly different meaning. At first it refers to the stable form at the centre, art at the core of life, like the trunk of a tree, which remains stable in spite of time, change, and any merely particular happening. On the second occasion the trees and changing leaves become the transient emotions and events themselves. Mrs. Ramsay reminds us of her relationship with the lighthouse in another quotation: "Steer, hither steer your winged pines, all beaten Mariners." 87.

The pattern of three in To the Lighthouse is carried into the book's structure. The vacillation which usually precedes the resolution of her novels is reified here into a mediating chapter. Mrs. Ramsay dies, stability departs, and time and chaos are left to take their toll on an empty house. "Time Passes", the middle section, is an impersonal world ruled by the blind forces of growth and decay. The garden runs rampant, the waves thunder on the beach, while in the outside world war brings death and division. It signifies its presence even here, in this isolated backwater, by a stain like blood in the sea. Without human presence, there is no scale: the shawl comes away from the picture frame with a roar like an avalanche. Nature dwarfs humanity, and where we do hear news of the family, it comes briefly, in parenthesis.

Form vanishes, transience reigns, and any attempt to define life's meaning seems vain. In the house, "certain airs, detached from the body of the wind (the house was ramshackle after all) crept round corners and ventured indoors ... toying with the flap of the hanging wallpaper, asking would it hang much longer, when would it fall?"

86. T. L., 171 (127; 129).
87. T. L., 183 (137; 139).

Only at the bed, the place of love, the forces of decay become quelled: "Here one might say to those sliding lights, those fumbling airs, that breathe and bend over the bed itself, here you can neither touch nor destroy."

> It seemed now as if, touched by human penitence and all its toil, divine goodness had parted the curtain and displayed behind it, single, distinct, the hare erect; the wave falling; the boat rocking, which, did we deserve them, should be ours always. But alas, divine goodness, twitching the cord, draws the curtain; it does not please him; he covers his treasures in a drench of hail, and so breaks them, so confuses them that it seems impossible that their calm should ever return or that we should ever compose from their fragments a perfect whole or read in the littered pieces the clear words of truth. For our penitence deserves a glimpse only; our toil respite only. 88.

Then, to a house of "unrelated emotions", family and guests return. Mr. Ramsay, James and Cam set out on their symbolic sail to the lighthouse, which marks the return of form into their world. As Mr. Ramsay sets foot on the island, Lily completes her picture with the biblical cry "It is finished." 89. At the same time, Virginia Woolf completes her own pattern, her "diamond in the sand, which would render the possessor secure." 90.

Despite their differences in temperament and approach, both E.M. Forster and Virginia Woolf, the two Bloomsbury novelists, share this attitude to life and art. Surely much the same set of conceptions is at the back of Forster's mind when he "expresses his feeling and interprets the disappointing scene before him by giving it (and here form comes in) a coherence and beauty and completeness that life itself does not possess. Art, and perhaps mystic contemplation, alone, Forster says, make any meaning out of life." 91.

Some may not perhaps agree with Virginia Woolf's conception of art, or with the place she gives it. However, she is the most essentially English of all modern novelists, and her ideas do follow in the romantic tradition: J.K. Johnstone, in his book The Bloomsbury Group, from which I

88. T. L., 196-199 (144-146; 146-148).
89. T. L., 319 (236; 241).
90. T. L., 205 (151; 153).
91. J.K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group, 63.

quoted, has pointed out the close connection between the English romantic movement and Bloomsbury. There is this paradox in Bloomsbury's character, its combination of the Augustan and the Romantic, which Virginia Woolf has helped to make intelligible here.

There are criticisms which may be pointed to in To the Lighthouse. One may feel with A.D. Moody that the claims of the masculine point of view are really paid no more than lip-service, that Mr. Ramsay "seems less to complement Mrs. Ramsay's creative powers, her intuition and sympathy, than to parody them in inferior and mechanical forms," [92]. But any criticism of Virginia Woolf's mature work itself runs the risk of over-simplification, instead of pointing to the same fault in the novelist. In contrast to the quotation above, one remembers James's remark, as he and Mr. Ramsay near the lighthouse, that it and his father together symbolised "something that was always at the back of both their minds - that loneliness which was for both of them the truth about things." [93]. This picture allows considerable dignity to the masculine empirical "divided" universe. Though it is true that we must wait until The Years before the reconciliation between inner and outer is complete.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that many of the criticisms aimed at To the Lighthouse do not arise out of any discrepancy between the authoress's intention and her execution, but merely reflect the temperaments and opinions of those who criticise, or result from a misapprehension about the book's meaning. In the end, the power over words and nuance which the authoress possesses, her acute observation, her quality of turning abstract notions into what they in essence are, concrete images (to Lily, Mr. Ramsay's mind turns "flamingo evenings" into "tables" [94].), and the total unity of technique, narrative, and meaning that she achieves in To the Lighthouse, give to the description "a landmark of the imagination" a twofold cogency.

92. Virginia Woolf, 31.
93. T. L., 311 (230; 235).
94. T. L., 41 (28; 26).

The far hum in the distance seemed made of the broken tremor of fine wings dancing up and down on the horizon. (W., 118).

CHAPTER VI

The sexual theme of To the Lighthouse was the strand Virginia Woolf chose to continue developing in her next book, Orlando (1928). The wide popularity that the psychology of Freud and Jung enjoyed during the period certainly influenced her treatment of this theme, although the central idea, that of the artist as a mentally androgynous being, comes first from Coleridge, as Mrs. Woolf points out in A Room of One's Own (1928). [1.] Nevertheless, it is perhaps worth acknowledging here the contribution made by post-Freudian psychology to the shaping of a part of the authoress's vision. For instance, the accent placed by Bloomsbury on the subconscious elements in creativity, or Mrs. Woolf's insistence that it was through a descent into the subconscious that one became, as a "wedge-shaped core of darkness", part of all other things and other people, show some mark of this influence. Also, it is interesting, but no more, that Jung's notion of the mind, with its "alter ego", is close to the picture of personality presented in Between the Acts, but already implied in Orlando. In addition, when he says: "If there were to be a conscious existence after death, it would, so it seems to me, have to continue on the level of consciousness attained by humanity" [2.], he is once again painting a picture of immortality not very far from Virginia Woolf's own.

As Joseph L. Blotner points out in his article 'Mythic Patterns in To the Lighthouse' [3.], "The Window" is a female symbol, "The Lighthouse" a Freudian symbol of masculinity. Thus one may suppose from Blotner, if one wishes, that the lighthouse on the rock, reached at the end of the novel, is a compound of both edifice and lighted window, male and female. It is certainly worthy of note, in this connection, that the Hogarth Press was instrumental in bringing Freud's complete translated works to the public in the 1920's.

Orlando is, of course, a much slighter book than To the Lighthouse, and was begun in a spirit of release after that work's completion. It is a fantasy, and Orlando him/herself is a light-hearted turnabout, free from

1. P. 102.
2. C.G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, London: Collins, 1963, p.286.
3. P.M.L.A., LXXI, 1956, 547-62.

all the pressures which Virginia Woolf grappled with in her serious novels. He/she is free of history, of morality, of death, of poverty and of the restriction of place - she roams as far abroad as Turkey and contemplates a fly-by-night trip to Russia - but, most important of all, Orlando is free from the limitations of sex. She starts as a man, ends as a woman, and makes love to both sexes indiscriminately.

We follow Orlando from the time of his youth in the Elizabethan period until the book ends on the twelfth stroke of midnight, Thursday, October 11th, 1928 - the last words of the book - when she is in her mid-thirties. On the way such events take place as her romances, her miraculous change of sex, her marriage, and her attempts to write under the influence of the various spirits of the ages through which she lives.

In the diary, we learn that by October 22, 1927, Virginia Woolf had "abandoned" herself"to the pure delight of this farce":

> I am writing Orlando half in a mock style very clear and plain, so that people will understand every word. But the balance between truth and fantasy must be careful. It's based on Vita ... Knole, etc. 4.

By December 1927, looking back, she sees that it is "almost exactly in spirit, though not in actual facts, the book I planned then as an escapade; the spirit to be satiric, the structure wild." 5. Yet it is in its own way nearly as meaningful as her other books: "The truth is I expect I began it as a joke and went on with it seriously." 6. The meaning of Orlando has not escaped critics. A. A. Mendilow in his recent Time and the Novel 7. has perhaps expressed this meaning most comprehensively:

> Above all, Orlando exemplifies the principle that unites all Virginia Woolf's work; the immanence of the past in the present, the Bergsonian conception of the moment as the microcosm of life. As in her later novel Between the Acts ... the wider past of the centuries of tradition indwelling in every good work of art, and of the generations of inherited traits latent in a contemporary personality give added depth and significance in the understanding of that work of art and that personality ... In this piece of riotous fantasy, we see something akin to what, in the mechanism of dreams, Freudians call

4. A Writer's Diary, 117.
5. Op. Cit., 120.
6. Op. cit., 128.
7. 1965.

> "displacement". Various aspects of a single subject ... are dissociated and projected into separate entities (i.e., male and female, masculine and feminine, historic past and present time, past and present art), and then by the process of interpretation they are related once more and synthesized. 8.

This is possibly the best light in which to understand Orlando, as a "dissociation" not only of a personality - Vita Sackville-West's - but also of the novelist's art into its constituent elements and contradictions. The book is a testament of authorship, for it is full, much too full, of digressions on the craft and the tribulations that this profession involves. The mock, and often self-mocking, narrative style is further evidence of this concern. As A.A. Mendilow aptly states:

> The whole point of Orlando is that it presents the growth of literary taste, the creation of a poem, the changes in the "climate of opinion", the history of the family, the development of a personality, in two time planes at once. The character of Orlando is shown between the dates 1586 and 1928, growing in age from sixteen to thirty-six. We have what the biologists would call a description of ontogenetic and phylogenetic development, as a foetus progresses in the course of nine months through millions of years of evolution ... the phylogenetic time is incorporated into the ontogenetic time as one's ancestors are parts of ourselves. 9.

It will presently be necessary to say something more about the "past in the present" in Orlando. In the meantime it is best to confirm that the "ontogenetic present" involved belonged to a real person, Vita Sackville-West, wife of Sir Harold Nicholson, and inheritor of Knole, the immense ancestral home at Sevenoaks. In her book Knole and the Sackvilles [10] she had recently chronicled the history of her family and of her house, from the time of its grant to Thomas Sackville in 1586. Orlando can be seen to correspond in detail to this book, so that Orlando herself embodies the entire family history in a single person. At the same time, she is based on Vita herself, who thus enacts in her fictional guise the "unconscious" past which she has inherited - even down to a

8. Op. cit., 230-231.
9. Op. cit., 231.
10. 1922.

change in 1843 from the male line to the female line, as David Bonnell Green has pointed out in his essay 'Orlando and the Sackvilles': [11] this is, appropriately, the approximate date of Orlando's marriage. The two books correspond even to the names of the two sets of family retainers, real and fictional. The importance of this factual basis is that it provides a novel of inquiry into novels and novelists with yet another plane of reality - that of historical life. This is why Orlando is called a biography: it represents a marriage between fiction and "life".

Vita Sackville-West has herself drawn attention to the parallel:

> the idea of her book Orlando was inspired by her own strange conception of myself, my family, and Knole my family home. Such things as old families and great houses held a sort of Proustian fascination for her. Not only did she romanticise them - for she was at heart a born romantic - but they satisfied her acute sense of the continuity of history, English history in particular. 12.

This is borne out by a letter written from Virginia to Vita in October, 1927:

> But listen: suppose Orlando turns out to be Vita; and its all about you, and the lure of your mind - heart you have none - suppose there's the kind of shimmer of reality which sometimes attaches to my people as the lustre of an oyster shell. - suppose, I say, that next October someone says "There's Virginia gone and written a book about Vita", shall you mind? ... I am reading Knole and the Sackvilles. 13.

The identity of Orlando with Vita and her history makes clear certain obscurities in the writing, for instance the sudden confusion of the newly-metamorphosed heroine with the words "their future" on page 97: "Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remain, as their portraits prove, practically the same." This intrusion becomes explicable only if we see Orlando as the collective history of the Sackvilles personified in the form of their thirty-six year old descendant.

11. 'Orlando and the Sackvilles: Addendum', P.M.L.A., LXXI, 1956, 268-9.
12. 'Virginia Woolf and Orlando', The Listener, LIII, Jan. 27, 1955, 157-158.
13. Op. cit., 158.

But Vita, like Orlando, was a poet. Miss Sackville-West's best-known book of poetry was The Land [14], which consisted of the then current mixture of esotericism and Lawrence-style sensibility so successfully satirised in Cold Comfort Farm. Orlando's "poem", written over three hundred years, is called "The Oak Tree", and she attempts to bury it at the foot of a real oak tree on her estate, "a return to the land of what the land has given me". [15] The oak tree - like the tree behind the "changing leaves" in To the Lighthouse - is once again an art-form-philosophy symbol whose roots she feels "running out like ribs from a spine this way and that beneath her." [16] The inquiry into the nature of art which Orlando thus represents, and the Pirandello-like examination of levels of reality it is made to contain, quite probably received a spur to their conception from the publication of E.M. Forster's Aspects of the Novel in 1927. Mrs. Woolf read it and expressed her dislike for it as a whole, but in spite of this, the chapter on fantasy especially must have helped to give her undertaking conviction, as must the passages of quotation from Gide's Les Faux Monnayers, where a fictional author is engaged in just such an examination of levels of reality in a novel. Shown a piece of real forged money by a character, Bernard, the author-character admits he is interested, but the real thing, he says, "puts him out". [17] Orlando, writing poetry, is similarly "put out" by reality on the first pages of Virginia Woolf's novel. [18]

Forster's own assessment of Orlando is probably the fairest, although the boredom he mentions is more likely the reader's than the authoress's: "After the transformation of sex things do not go so well; the authoress seems unconvinced by her own magic and somewhat fatigued by it, and the biography finishes competently rather than brilliantly; it has been a fancy on too large a scale, and we can see her getting bored". [19] Yet despite its unevenness it does contain passages of interest and wisdom, for example this quotation: "Such is the indomitable nature of

14. London: Heinemann, 1933.
15. O., 291 (229).
16. O., 291 (228).
17. Aspects of the Novel. 107-108.
18. O., 18 (11).
19. Virginia Woolf, 15.

the spirit of the age, however, that it batters down anyone who tries to make stand against it far more effectively than those who bend its own way." [20]. But it is true that Virginia Woolf admitted to herself in her diary that it would be wrong to compare Orlando with her weightier novels: "I never got down to depths and made shapes square up, as I did in the Lighthouse" (Nov. 7, 1928). [21].

Because of the "dissociation" mentioned previously, Orlando embodies a number of Mrs. Woolf's concerns, albeit in a much less related way than in her previous novels. Her picture of personality as possessing infinite possibilities, for example, receives its apotheosis in Orlando: "she had a great variety of selves to choose from, far more than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many as a thousand." [22]. And yet all these selves are somehow compounded into the nature of the "true self", amalgamated and controlled by a Captain self, or Key self. [23]. Inner dialogue, on this reading, thus becomes a communication between the contradictions of personality, the different inner "selves": "For it is probable that when people talk aloud the selves (of which there may be more than two thousand) are conscious of dissevérment, and are trying to communicate, but when communication is established they fall silent." [24].

Thus, as the passage on page 278 (218) suggests, Orlando is not only herself but she is most of the other main characters as well. In the same way Bernard, as novelist, in The Waves is at the end inseparable from all the other men and women whose streams of consciousness make up the book: their dialogue is his own inner dialogue: "thrown up and down on the roar of other people's voices", he cannot distinguish himself from them. 25.

More interesting perhaps, is not Orlando's relation to the parts which compose her, but her relation to everything that constitutes her history. Virginia Woolf's conception of a past in the present arises, as do most of her notions, out of her picture of a world where there are

20. O., 220 (172).
21. Diary, 136.
22. O., 278 (219).
23. O., 279 (219).
24. O., 282 (222).
25. W., 198 (240).

no boundaries, where everything that exists is connected with everything else that exists. The notion of "past in the present" is really a transference of the same conception in to the plane of time - so that all events that happen now are seen to be intimately related to everything that has happened in the past or will happen in the future. So, as we learn from "Letter to a Young Poet" (1932),[26] the poet is not a lone individual, but in him "live all the poets of the past, from whom all poets in time to come will spring ... in short, an immensely ancient, complex and continuous character." From the same preconception comes the related notion, to which Virginia Woolf often gave expression, that the sort of great men, writers or political figures, so revered by the nineteenth century, were in fact little more than the salient representatives of an accumulated wave of feeling and opinion in the great mass of ordinary humanity. To these ideas about existence in time Clarissa Dalloway owes her feeling that on the present moment of that particular June morning "was the pressure of all the other mornings",[27] or Rhoda her parallel sensation in The Waves: "An immense pressure is on me. I cannot move without dislodging the weight of centuries."[28] It is this same vision of the poet's moment as a microcosm of history that William Blake expresses, in his stanza from Milton, Book I:

> Every Time less than a pulsation of the artery
> Is equal in its period & value to Six Thousand Years,
> For in this Period the Poet's Work is Done, and all the
> Great Events of Time start forth & are conceived in
> such a Period, Within a Moment, a Pulsation of the Artery.

If a single moment is so intimately related with all time, then, for Mrs. Woolf, to abstract the moment from the whole is in fact illusory, for nothing exists by itself. This is the meaning of the entry in the diary at the end of 1926 in which she is searching for a device where "time shall be utterly obliterated; future shall somehow blossom out of the past": "One incident - say the fall of a flower - might contain it. My theory being that the actual event practically does not exist - nor time either. But I don't want to force this."[29]

26. Collected Essays II, 184: This essay deserves careful attention for its relevance to Orlando.
27. D., 42.
28. W., 76 (90).
29. Diary, 102.

We see the union of past and present in Orlando's mind on the occasion when "his whole past, which seemed to him of extreme length and variety, rushed into the falling second, swelled it a dozen times its natural size, coloured it a thousand tints, and filled it with all the odds and ends in the universe." 30. Orlando's house, too, becomes a symbol of the continuity of history, of the existence of the past in the present, of the pressure of past generations of people on present existence: "Not one of these (ancestors) has left a token of himself behind him, yet all, working together with their spades and their needles, their love-making and their child-bearing have left this." 31.

Memory is the faculty which brings our past into our present, and thus provides our lives with continuity. But for an existence which is so homogeneous with the world around it, our identity seems to depend more on what we chose not to be than what we chose to be, Mrs. Woolf feels. Everything is so much everything else in a world as indivisible as she sees it to be, that to single out any one thing from the rest becomes merely spurious: "Nothing is any longer one thing". 32. This relatedness is first recognized by the subconscious, and the memory responds to it. Orlando, after an introspective scrutiny of her own subconscious, sees the world afresh in this new way:

> She looked there now, long, deeply, profoundly, and immediately the ferny path up the hill along which she was walking became not entirely a path, but partly the Serpentine, the hawthorn bushes were partly ladies and gentlemen sitting with card-cases and gold-mounted canes; the sheep were partly tall Mayfair houses; everything was partly something else, as if her mind had become a forest with glades branching here and there; things came nearer, and farther, and mingled and separated and made the strangest alliances and combinations in an incessant chequer of light and shade. 33.

This, to Virginia Woolf, is the function of metaphor: it emphasizes the intimate relationship of all things. The associations with which things become encrusted in the mind are once again a sub-conscious recognition of the indivisible nature of the world, as Orlando perceives:

30. O., 92 (70).
31. O., 98 (75).
32. O., 274 (218).
33. O., 290 (228).

> Every single thing, once he tried to dislodge it from its place in his mind, he found thus cumbered with other matter like the lump of glass which, after a year at the bottom of the sea, is grown about with bones and dragon-flies, and coins and the tresses of drowned women.
>
> "Another metaphor, by Jupiter!" he would exclaim as she said this ... Why not say simply what one means and leave it? ... "The sky is blue," he said, "the grass is green." Looking up, he saw that, on the contrary, the sky is like the veils which a thousand Madonnas have let fall from their hair ... "Upon my word," he said ... "I don't see that one's more true than another. Both are utterly false." 34.

Our understanding of this macrocosmic-microcosmic contrast, a pattern which underlies a great many aspects of Mrs. Woolf's outlook, helps us to appreciate the element which more than any other contributes to the characteristic tone of her novels. A Strachey-like revulsion against the Victorian tradition of "great men" and heroic action makes her see only the most ordinary and everyday of human experiences as truly representative of the universal essences which underly human existence. She planned at one time to write a work of almost anti-history called Lives of the Obscure. This, and her choice of "Mrs. Brown" to symbolize "the spirit we live by, life itself" 35. are both examples of this duality, which is peculiarly her own: a mixture of "the soul" and "the Waterloo Road". It belongs far more to her than it does to "the Russians", to whom she ascribes it in the "Mrs. Brown" essay: there is little of the common dross, "the Waterloo Road", about Ivanov, Raskolnikov, Bazarov, or Prince Andrew. In contrast, Orlando is Virginia Woolf's only hero.

Peter Burra, in his essay 'Virginia Woolf' 36., has recognized this pattern: "The framework of her books depends on the life of everyday, and the spirit of time: and these two - though one is a "particular" and the other a "universal" standpoint - are so interchangeable ... that it scarcely matters by which name you call them. If there is any hero in Mrs. Woolf's novels, it is the idea of Time."

34. O., 93-95 (71-72).
35. 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', Collected Essays I, 337.
36. The Nineteenth Century and After, CXV, Dec-June 1934, 115.

The last words of Orlando are the date of its completion. This alone is enough to tell us that the novel is about time - the expansion of a single homogeneous moment in the life of one personality to distinguish all the pressures, historical and psychological, that are active upon it. The pattern is provided by William James in The Principles of Psychology: "the spiritual self in us will be either the entire stream of our personal consciousness, or the present 'segment' or 'section' of that stream, according as we take a broader or narrower view - both the stream and the section being concrete existences in time, and each being a unity after its own peculiar kind." 37. It is to resolve these contradictions, the ones which gave rise to her picture of consciousness as a "luminous" centre, continuously ordering the flux and flow of impressions, that Virginia Woolf makes the following entry in her diary:

> Now is life very solid or very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on for ever; will last for ever; goes down to the bottom of the world - this moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphonous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves. Perhaps it may be that though we change, one flying after another so quick, so quick, yet we are somehow successive and continuous we human beings, and show the light through. But what is the light? I am impressed by the transitoriness of human life to such an extent that I am often saying a farewell - after dining with Roger for instance; or reckoning how many more times I shall see Nessa. 38.

Virginia Woolf had been conscious of the problem of time and flux from an early age. At sixteen she had written a long essay called 'Religio Laici', "proving that man has need of a God; but the God was described in a process of Change." 39. Her early concern never left her, and this vision is to some extent present, in a mature and more sophisticated form, in her adult work. It can be discerned in the final scene on page 293 (229) where Orlando is on the hill beneath the oak tree, from which point all England may be seen. It may be said that this tree represents to some extent the reconciliation between the "macrocosm" and the "microcosm", "all time" and "the moment". The oak tree, besides being a stability symbol like the lighthouse, is at the same time Vita's family

37. P. 296.
38. January 1929. Diary, 141.
39. December 1929. Diary, 151.

tree. Thus, like memory which gives continuity and so stability to personality (see O., 73-74 (55)), the line of continuing history and artistic tradition provides a stable centre for the developing life of the present day. This, then, could be seen to be the conclusion that the book, Orlando, draws: as there rises up before the heroine the cone of a "tent-like landscape" (O., 293 (230)), her history and her three-hundred year poem come to represent, like the lighthouse in the previous book, the permanence that is missing from life; the light that "shows through" is the permanent "form" of consciousness and art. The content of this form yet changes, like the place where the light beam falls, symbolically bringing to order for a moment the continual flow of brute time and haphazard experience. Thus, the poem "The Oak Tree" comes to have the same relationship to the central symbol of this book as Lily's painting in To the Lighthouse, for the oak tree itself with its radial roots "like ribs", parallels the lighthouse with its beam of light, moments of the recognition of order. Orlando, it might be said, is a projection of the content of To the Lighthouse onto the plane of time.

The notion of past-in-the-present which dominates Virginia Woolf's thought about time has often been cited as evidence of her debt to Bergson. James Hafley has written an influential book about Mrs. Woolf's work, The Glass Roof, on the basis of the Bergsonian theory. This theory was first propagated by Professor Floris Delattre in one of the earliest analyses of Virginia Woolf's writing, Le Roman Psychologique de Virginia Woolf, published in French during her lifetime. Despite the prevalence of the philosopher's ideas during the first quarter of the century, and the fact that Mrs. Woolf's sister-in-law, Karin Stephen, wrote a standard work on his thought, The Misuse of Mind (1922), Leonard Woolf has been instrumental in categorically denying influence on the novelist from this source. However, to be fair, it is difficult to see how someone with Mrs. Woolf's acute interest in ideas could have remained entirely ignorant of those of Bergson then under discussion, even if they thus reached her in a disseminated form. Mrs. Woolf, with her picture of a related world, would have been in addition the first to acknowledge that it is enough for ideas to be "in the air" for intelligent people eventually to be in some sense influenced by them. But in the main I think

Leonard Woolf is correct, and that such influence is minimal. If it is to be found in this novelist's work, it is there only in its effect on the apportioning of emphasis. Virginia Woolf's time philosophy is her own, but I do believe that it may in fact at the same time owe something to an earlier source which would have been even more influential, William James's Principles of Psychology. On the subject of the relation of the moment to the rest of time, James writes:

> our consciousness never shrinks to the dimension of a glow-worm spark. The knowledge of some other part of the stream, past or future, near or remote, is always mixed in with our knowledge of the present thing (James's italics) A simple sensation ... is an abstraction ... These ... lingerings of old objects, these incomings of the new ... the retrospective and the prospective sense of time ... gives that continuity of consciousness without which it could not be called a stream. 40.

The Bergsonian interpretation of Mrs. Woolf's novels has been sufficiently prevalent for it to warrant some examination here. It must be apparent to anyone who knows Bergson's theories that the conclusions about Mrs. Woolf's own thought so far established in this study bear no resemblance to those of the French philosopher, except to the extent that the "female" pole of Mrs. Woolf's personality, "the artist", shows an intrinsic dislike of logic and reason simply on their own, which is also a characteristic of Bergson's. However, this conception of "the intellect that kills" Mrs. Woolf could just as easily have arrived at from her readings in the Romantics. And it must be remembered that this is counterbalanced by her "male" aspect, "the philosopher", exponent of that other kind of "form". Winifred Holtby's evaluation of 1932 is undoubtedly in every way correct: "she does not share the Bergsonian revolt against reason ... it is from her belief, engendered, probably, during those early readings of Greek, in the validity of the intellectual approach to truth, that she has embarked upon her adventures into the re-creation of subconscious experience." 41.

However, I think it is only right to include James Hafley's opinion here and to allow the reader to make up his own mind. Hafley quotes from a letter from Leonard Woolf in which the latter writes that

40. P. 606.
41. Virginia Woolf, 22.

Mrs. Woolf never read Bergson and continues: " 'I do not think that she was influenced in the slightest degree by Bergson's ideas' ". However, James Hafley comments that with this "it is hard to agree. If she did not read Bergson himself, she almost certainly read Proust; and Bergson's ideas were so popular as to be everywhere around her at second and third hand." [42] It does not, however, appear that Virginia Woolf read Proust until 1925, after the publication of Mrs. Dalloway, and after both her treatment of time and her mature style had been fully formed. Yet there is no doubt of her reaction to the "utmost sensibility" and the "utmost tenacity" of this talent so akin to her own: "He searches out these butterfly shades to the last grain. He is as tough as catgut and as evanescent as a butterfly's bloom. And he will, I suppose, both influence me and make me out of temper with every sentence of my own." [43]

There is, however, some support for Hafley's thesis in an important passage from Leon Edel's The Psychological Novel (1955) in which he describes the intellectual atmosphere of the times:

> When Proust, Joyce, and Dorothy Richardson began to write, the influence of Freud was only beginning to be felt; and it is to Bergson, in his influence on Proust (and to some extent on Joyce), and to William James, in his account of thought experience, that we must look as the creators of the intellectual atmosphere in which the novel of subjectivity came into being. [44]

In the light of this, I think it would be best to examine what Bergson actually said in order to see how far the two outlooks coincide. Bergson's philosophy, it should be recognized, is totally opposed to Virginia Woolf's in three decisive ways. First of all, Bergson's central preoccupation is a defence of flux and change. He believed that the scientific intellect distorted the world by its proclivity for separating single incidents or objects out of the continuous flow of creation and decay. By conceiving them as eternally at rest in order to discover laws about them, the intellect thus "killed" them, so to speak. It created an artificial Zeno's paradox out of what was essentially always a movement, never a stasis. The intellect could never resolve the paradox of time: it was only on the level of intuition that the truth of movement could be

42. The Glass Roof, 174.
43. April 1925, A Writer's Diary, 72.
44. P. 28.

understood. Now, whereas Virginia Woolf would agree with Bergson on the relative merits of the intellect and intuition, yet, as we have seen here and in previous chapters, she saw indiscriminate and irrational flux as the enemy of man, which her energies were directed towards overcoming through the medium of art. To Bergson flux is consciousness. To Mrs. Woolf, consciousness is bent on overcoming flux. The two world-pictures are completely different.

Secondly, Bergson's was essentially an evolutionary view of the human spirit. He pictured the "élan vital" as a kind of rising fountain, the uppermost part of which represents human consciousness ever creating itself anew, then spraying down, outmoded, eventually to become mere dead matter as its centre moves higher and further away. In contrast, Virginia Woolf, as has been demonstrated, saw human nature not as developing, but as remaining eternally the same. Only its outward appearance altered under the influence of nothing more violent (or, to Mrs. Woolf's perspective, less violent) than taste and fashion. Orlando is an eloquent example of her vision of consciousness as an eternal present, a beach on which the tides of process and history continually lap. Of course it could be argued that both thinkers are describing the same world, but one from the objective-active and one from the subjective-passive viewpoint, yet this is just to clarify the difference, not the similarity, between them.

Thirdly, for Bergson, matter and consciousness were merely two aspects of the same thing, the first being only an "ex-tension" of the second. For Mrs. Woolf, however, the close relationship between the two is built up only through their continual association in the practice of life. She was too much a Platonist not to conceive the world first of all in rigid divisions of mind and matter.

These three basic differences between the two systems of thought help us to view in perspective the similarities of viewpoint which do exist. There is, for instance, the already-mentioned distinction between the intellect which exists for Bergson in "quasi-spatial" time, and thus perceives things as separate unities, and the intuitive subconscious beneath this, which recognizes the indivisibility of all experience.

Although this may in expression resemble Virginia Woolf's opinion, the undercurrent image to which these statements refer, however, is, as we have seen, in each case different.

There is also the emphasis laid by Bergson on the place of the past in shaping the future, and thus of what he calls "dynamic memory" in creating character:

> In reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside ... Even though we have no distinct idea of it, we feel vaguely that our past remains present to us. What are we, in fact, what is our character, if not the condensation of the history we have lived from our birth - nay, even before our birth, since we bring with us prenatal dispositions? 45.

Virginia Woolf has in Orlando a definition of human character which, if taken on its own, expresses a thought not dissimilar to that of Bergson above. Thus we have "a perfect rag-bag of odds and ends within us - a piece of policeman's trousers lying cheek by jowl with Queen Alexandra's wedding veil ... the whole assortment ... lightly stitched together by a single thread. Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that." 46.

More pursuasive in this connection, perhaps, is the likeness of some of the various images of consciousness which Bergson presents, to those of Mrs. Woolf: "A beneficient fluid bathes us", says Bergson, "whence we draw the very force to labour and to live. From this ocean of life, in which we are immersed, we are continually drawing something, and we feel that our being ... has been formed therein by a kind of local concentration." 47. This is the counterpart of Virginia Woolf's submerged sea of life, on the surface of which the waves of individual human consciousness form and dissolve - the image which forms the basis of The Waves. Bergson later uses just this simile: "From our point of view, life appears in its entirety as an immense wave which, starting from a centre, spreads outwards, and which on almost the whole of its

45. Creative Evolution, tr. A. Mitchell, 1911, 5.
46. O., 73-74 (55).
47. Creative Evolution, 191.

circumference is stopped and converted (into matter)". [48] This is not as convincing a proof of influence as may at first appear, for this image is a popular and perhaps sometimes rather crude recurrent presentation of consciousness; its latest manifestation is in the "Meditations" of the Maharishi Yogi which not long ago was enjoying a vogue. All-in-all, none of the examples of resemblance seem to me at all decisive, and it is probable that the presence of Bergson's theories helped to do no more than reinforce ideas which could just as well have been derived seminally from a number of sources.

Where I do believe a case might be made out for the presence of some clear affinity with Bergson is in the theories of significant form propagated by Roger Fry and Clive Bell. Replying in a letter to a question of mine, Leonard Woolf states: "I think there is no doubt that both Clive Bell and Roger Fry had read or at least knew about the doctrines of Bergson. I do not think that either of them were in any sense influenced by him." There is, however, something akin to the spirit of Bloomsbury aesthetics in a philosopher who, after Schopenhauer, praises the artist's "pure perception" because it does not entail merely "reading the labels" mentally affixed to things; a philosopher who seeks out the "indivisible emotion" behind the juxtaposed notes of the symphony; or the "unique and consequently inexpressible" in men and objects. [49] "An emotion may be said to be dramatic and contagious when all the harmonics in it are heard along with the fundamental note", writes Bergson in Laughter [50] (p.143), which has echoes in the similar statements to be found in the writings of Roger Fry and E.M. Forster. [51]

There is one final issue to be dealt with in connection with Orlando, that of the bi-sexuality of the artist, which quality Orlando herself quite obviously symbolizes. In the same year as the publication of this book, Mrs. Woolf brought out an extended essay on the subject of women and fiction, A Room of One's Own. Its thesis is that poverty is antipathetical to art, and that women should demand their freedom from the pressures of raising a family and earning a living if they are to work to produce art. Although the question of state patronage for the arts

48. Op. cit., 266.
49. See Ian W. Alexander, Bergson, 85-89.
50. Tr. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell, 1911.
51. E.g.. See Aspects of the Novel, 169.

is still an open one, I think that Bernard Blackstone's opinion, printed on the back of the Penguin edition (1965), that the book is "a clearing-house of ideas", is true to-day only in a negative sense. What has happened is what Mrs. Woolf notes about the essays of Mary Wollstonecraft: that they "are so true that they seem now to contain nothing new in them - their originality had become our commonplace." [52.] A Room of One's Own is valuable to-day only for its historical interest: what it tells us about contemporary life and current opinions.

However, there is a passage near the end of the book which is important because of its application to Orlando. Seeing a man and a woman enter a taxi together, Mrs. Woolf likens this to the mind:

> it ... made me also ask whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness? And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman must also have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought. 53.

It is significant that in each of Virginia Woolf's books there is at least one character whose sexual proclivities are for his or her own sex. On three occasions when this character is male, it has some resemblance to Lytton Strachey: St. John Hirst in The Voyage Out, Bonamy in Jacob's Room, and Neville in The Waves are the examples. In actual fact, Strachey once proposed marriage to Virginia, and was accepted. Unfortunately, he "realised, the very minute it was happening, that the whole thing was repulsive to me", [54.] and had, in the same breath, carefully to retract his proposal: "Her sense was amazing, and luckily it turned out that she's not in love. The result was that I was able to

52. 'Mary Wollstonecraft', Collected Essays III, 195.
53. A Room of One's Own (1928), 1965, 96-97.

manage a fairly honourable retreat." [54] After this incident, there follow such letters to Virginia as the word-picture of Strachey glowing over Rupert Brooke on the Salisbury Plain. "I am such a Bonamy", he gleefully cries on one occasion. [55]

Virginia herself sometimes toyed in her mind with the possibilities inherent in an intimate relationship with her own sex: "If one could be friendly with women", she notes once in her diary after visiting a woman friend, "what a pleasure - the relationship so secret and private compared with relations with men. Why not write about it? Truthfully?" [56] Her own adolescent infatuation for her tutoress, the sister of Walter Pater, is reproduced in the relationship of Kitty and Miss Craddock in The Years. [57] There is also the rather embarrassing short story "Moments of Being: Slater's Pins have no Points" included in the A Haunted House collection. [58] The sentence about the pins refers to a casual comment in the story. The comment gains disproportionate meaning because of the emotional significance of the situation, the attraction between a girl pupil and a music mistress. The tale is nothing more than private fantasy: "Julia blazed. Julia kindled. Out of the night she burnt like a dead white star. Julia opened her arms. Julia kissed her on the lips. Julia possessed it." There is no doubt that Julia is a remembered Clara Pater, as is shown by an entry in the diary for September, 1926, where Virginia muses about a possible book of characters, "the whole string being pulled out from some simple sentence, like Clara Pater's 'Don't you find that Barker's pins have no points to them?' " [58]

In the story projected to follow To the Lighthouse, discarded as a plan after Virginia began reading Knole and the Sackvilles, she notes: "Sapphism is to be suggested." Later, the gallant tone she uses in her letter to Vita quoted above, announcing the prospect of Orlando, shows that she had already begun to see her real-life subject with something of the light of the character around whom the fantasy is woven. This amusingly curious quality of her imagination has been remarked on by Clive

54. March 1909, to James Strachey, in Virginia Woolf, and Lytton Strachey, Letters, 32. The incident itself took place on February 17th.
55. Op. cit., 103.
56. Diary, 69.
57. Y., 67-70.
58. Pp. 89-95.
58. Diary, 99.

Bell in Old Friends.[60]

Thus Orlando, of whom we learn that "For the probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally",[61] is a representation of the adrogynous artist. Nor is she the only character in the book to exhibit vacillations of gender. The Archduchess/Archduke Harriet, and Orlando's husband, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, both alternate alarmingly in the same way as does Orlando. "'Are you positive you aren't a man?' he would ask anxiously, and she would echo, 'Can it be possible you're not a woman?' and then they would put it to the proof without more ado."[62] This is given a further ambiguity at the end by the hint that Orlando may be Shelmerdine.[63]

On pages 171-172 (133), the dual sexuality of the human mind is directly explained:

> It was a change in Orlando herself that dictated her choice of a woman's dress and of a woman's sex. And perhaps she was only expressing rather more openly than usual - openness indeed was the soul of her nature - something that happens to most people without being thus plainly expressed. For here again, we come to a dilemma. Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above.

It is this balance between the sexes in the artist's mind, Virginia Woolf feels, that enables writers to understand and to recreate convincingly both male and female characters.

There is one further stylistic ingredient in Orlando which deserves mention: Virginia Woolf's wit, which was obviously a prominent feature of her personality in life, and of which her other books do not allow us enough. Orlando's perception of the "dung-bedraggled fowl" of lust is an example:

60. P. 98.
61. O., 200 (155).
62. O., 232 (182). See also 147 (113), 163 (126).
63. O., 278 (218).

> In this case, Orlando's love began her flight towards him with her white face turned, and her smooth and lovely body outwards. Nearer and nearer she came wafting before her airs of pure delight. All of a sudden (at the sight of the Archduchess presumably) she wheeled about, turned the other way round; showed herself black, hairy, brutish and it was Lust the vulture, not Love, the bird of paradise, that flopped foully and disgustingly upon his shoulders. Hence he ran, hence he fetched the footman. 64.

I should like to end this chapter with a short quotation from Orlando, one on the subject of style and technique - especially on the communication of ideas without their explicit statement in the text - which is both a plea for indulgence as regards the mock-style of the novel - in fact as regards the whole extravaganza - and also an outline of Virginia Woolf's own method:

> And so they would go on talking or, rather, understanding, which has become the main art of speech in an age when words are growing daily so scanty in comparison with ideas that "the biscuits ran out" has to stand for kissing a Negress in the dark when one has just read Bishop Berkeley's philosophy for the tenth time. (And from this it follows that only the most profound masters of style can tell the truth, and when one meets a simple one-syllabled writer, one may conclude, without any doubt at all, that the poor man is lying.) 65.

64. O., 108 (82-83).
65. O., 233 (182).

Through all the flowers the same wave of light passed in a sudden flaunt and flash as if a fin cut the green grass of a lake. (W., 129).

CHAPTER VII.

To a great many people, The Waves (1931) marks the pinnacle of Virginia Woolf's achievement. It is undoubtedly both her subtlest and her most ambitious experiment, and, as she comments in her diary, "it was the greatest stretch of mind I ever knew". [1] At the same time, in the light of the standards which she had set up for herself in her previous works, it must be acknowledged that this book has certain defects, in spite of all its notable merits. The perfection of To The Lighthouse is unassailable, but here, where Mrs. Woolf is attempting and achieving more than she had ever managed before, she cannot entirely avoid falling prey to the risks entailed by her embitious intention. This is not as perfectly formed a work of art as the earlier accomplishment, in ways which I shall examine at the end of this chapter. Nevertheless, The Waves is both her most complex and her most advanced book. And, since To the Lighthouse is in some ways outside the mainstream of her own personal evolution, The Waves is also the novel which must be counted most characteristic of her, and thus by which she may most characteristically be judged.

Part of the brilliance of this book lies in the way in which it outpaces reason. For example, much of her imagery in all her other books responds satisfactorily to a purely intellectual analysis. But if, in The Waves, many of her images seem baffling at first, this is because they have an inner emotional integrity of their own, and do not depend solely on a reasoned combination of elements. Much more depends on the emotive significance of the words used. Bernard himself provides the model for us, for on page 135 (162) he analyzes the phrase "a fin in a waste of waters" entirely according to the associations which it has for him. Another characteristic example of this type of imagery occurs in Neville's stream of consciousness, when he is alone at night with the person he loves: "Now this room seems to me central, something scooped out of the eternal night. Outside lines twist and intersect, but round

1. A Writer's Diary, 158.

us, wrapping us about. Here we are centred." [2] This is as much attempting to symbolize in pictorial terms an emotional state as pointing to something concrete. The point is that with this novel prose takes on the function of poetry. Virginia Woolf is here attempting to give her prose the compactness and emotive power of poetic imagery, as this entry in the diary proves:

> The idea has come to me that what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say the moment is a combination of thought; sensation, the voice of the sea ... why admit anything to literature that is not poetry - by which I mean saturated? Is that not my grudge against novelists? That they select nothing? The poets succeed in simplifying: practically everything is left out. I want to put practically everything in: yet to saturate. That is what I want to do in (The Waves) ... but made transparent. [3]

But the movement "beyond reason" which The Waves represents, arises also from another influence: Virginia Woolf's mystic experiences. When she first conceived of this work, she thought of it as an "abstract mystical eyeless book". [4] The "reality" she often mentioned, and sometimes felt so close to, seemed now to take on a mystical character, for it is evident from brief notes in the diary that the metaphysical conclusions arrived at in her other novels were incapable of supplying her with permanent solace: "for after all, that is my temperament, I think, to be very little persuaded of the truth of anything - what I say, what other people say - always to follow, blindly, instinctively with a sense of leaping over a precipice - the call of - the call of - now, if I write The Moths I must come to terms with these mystical feelings." [5]

It has never been generally realized that Virginia Woolf had experience of a mystical nature, although even her earliest work The Voyage Out is alone enough to indicate this. It was a profound influence, perhaps a central one, in shaping her vision.

2. W., 128 (153).
3. Nov. 28th, 1928. Diary, 139. Perhaps it might be more precise to say above, in this connection, that Mrs. Woolf is attempting to use in prose certain effects which are normally found in poetry.
4. Diary, 137.
5. Ibid.

The characteristics of the mystic experience have been described in Chapter II, in connection with The Voyage Out: they involve a "sinking down" into the subconscious, and at the same time a strong apprehension of what is described as "reality" or "being". Also involved are a sense of personal "one-ness" coupled to a gradual loss of the "self", and a feeling of "union" with all people and all things. It is perhaps relevant to note that mystic phenomena sometimes occur as a side-effect of manic depression. 6. It is possible that this was so in Virginia Woolf's case, as the following entry in the diary suggests:

> I believe these illnesses are in my case - how shall I express it? - partly mystical. Something happens in my mind. It refuses to go on registering impressions. It shuts itself up. It becomes a chrysalis. I lie quite torpid, often with acute physical pain ... Then suddenly something springs ... I had a tremendous sense of life beginning; mixed with that emotion which is the essence of my feeling, but escapes description (I keep on making up the Hampton Court scene in The Waves ...) ... I felt the spring beginning; and Vita's life so full and flush; and all the doors opening; and this I believe is the moth shaking its wings in me ... It is no use trying to write at this stage. And I doubt if I can fill this white monster. 7.

Clive Bell (Art, 73 ff) thought that it was not unlikely that there is, as a generalization, a psychological link of some sort between the emotions of artistic creation and mystic experience. This certainly seems to some extent true in Virginia Woolf's case. The moth image - The Waves was originally to be called The Moths - appears to have a connection with this mystic sense of life in Mrs. Woolf's mind. Although the mystic experience always apparently "escapes description", the word "solemn" which recurs frequently throughout her writings, seems to be a descriptive tag for this, as well as for the related response to significant form. But here another image becomes especially important as far as the final

6. See Prof. R.C.Zaehner, Mysticism, Sacred and Profane, Oxford: O.U.P., 1957.
7. Feb. 16, 1930. Diary, 153-4.

version of The Waves is concerned, that of the "fin" which "appears above a waste of waters". [8] The phrase occurs as a "little rhythm" throughout the book, and the picture of the fin rising, rather like the lighthouse, above the waves, seems to refer to the sense of "reality" provided by mystic experience.

Mrs. Woolf first mentions this image in her diary in September, 1926:

> I wished to add some remarks to this on the mystical side of this solicitude; how it is not oneself but something in the universe that one's left with. Is it this that is frightening and exciting in the midst of my profound gloom ... One sees a fin passing far out. What image can I reach to convey what I mean? Really there is none, I think. The interesting thing is that in all my feeling and thinking I have never come up against this before. Life is, soberly and accurately, the oddest affair; has in it the essence of reality. I used to feel this as a child - couldn't step across a puddle once, for thinking how strange - what am I? etc. [9]

Five years later, as she finishes The Waves, Virginia Woolf records: "I have netted that fin in a waster of water which appeared to me over the marshes out of my window at Rodmell when I was coming to an end of To the Lighthouse." [10]

And yet it must be remembered that this element of mysticism in Virginia Woolf's life was not allowed predominance in her art. As a general rule, her intellect intervened, and she submitted all the material provided by her subconscious to the examination of her reason. As Bernard succinctly puts it in The Waves: "For I am no mystic; something always plucks at me - curiosity, envy, admiration, interest in hairdressers and the like bring me to the surface." [11] Yet, in this book, the mystic element was allowed to play its part. It is probably to communicate this feeling, without the intervention of reason, that Virginia Woolf decided to discard prepared symbolism, and to use her images "not in set pieces, as I had tried at first, coherently, but simply as images, never making them work out; only suggest. Thus I hope to have the sound of the sea and the birds, dawn and garden subconsciously present, doing there work under ground." [12]

8. W., 130 (156), 135 (162), 174 (210), 194 (234-5).
9. Diary, 101.
10. Op. cit., 169.
11. W., 199 (241).
12. Diary 169.

The image of the fin is probably used for this purpose because it represents an outward indication of something that is hidden below the surface: something beyond our understanding which yet, for the moment, brings us a sense of 'reality'. Something of this same aura of "reality" attaches to the person of Percival, the mysterious figure whom we come to know only indirectly through the minds of the six other characters. He dies in India, and yet is mysteriously present at a meeting of the six at Hampton Court many years later. He comes to represent to each one all that they are not: the possibilities that lie outside the scope of each individual identity.

It is the myth of the need for "identity", Virginia Woolf feels, that, by limiting human beings, masks them off from contact with this "reality". Like Rhoda, [13.] we too, Mrs. Woolf is saying, cannot cross our puddles until we realize that our obsession with the accidents of "self" is trivial, and that by putting aside our personality, by becoming what we are not, we open ourselves to that "reality" which it is one aim of art to express. This, as I shall hope to show in this chapter, is the meaning that The Waves is intended to convey.

2.

The symbol of the waves has been used, as we have seen, with various meanings in all of Virginia Woolf's books. We first met with the "sea of consciousness" in The Voyage Out: there the waves seemed to derive something of their meaning from the mood of the characters in the book, and thus came to represent the inescapable blind tide of fate. To Terence, hearing them in the distance, they are like the rhythm of life and death (P.394); again, on P. 399, "the breaking of the waves on the shore sounded like the repeated sigh of some exhausted creature". In Night and Day the image is used most often as a conventional symbol for heightened and quickened feelings (P.145), or of "waves of emotion" (P.263) or simply instinct (P.291).

13. W., 46 (54).

But in the main the waves are used in the books as an image of the recurring processes of life, the impersonal cycle of birth and decay. In this guise, the waves have two voices, as Mrs. Ramsay recognizes in To the Lighthouse:

> the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach ... seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again ... "I am guarding you - I am your support", but at other times ... had no such kindly meaning, but like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life... and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow - this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror. 14.

The Waves, as we have seen, was originally to be called The Moths. The moth symbol, where it occurs in Virginia Woolf's work, represents the individual struggling for a time against the forces of life and death, at last to sink down, overcome. 15. By the time she was involved in writing The Waves the image of the single wave, rising and falling back into the universal essence from which it came, seemed much more appropriate to what she wanted to express. If "our lives" is substituted for "our minutes" below, the thought is similar to that presented in Shakespeare's Sixtieth Sonnet:

> Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
> So do our minutes hasten to their end;
> Each changing place with that which goes before,
> In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
> Nativity, once in the main of light,
> Crawls to maturity ...

That Virginia Woolf identifies the lives of the six characters with waves is communicated to us by such passages as this, on P.230, where Bernard, near to death, is thinking about the six: "an impulse runs through us; we rise, we toss back a mane of white spray; we pound on the shore; we are not to be confined."

Used in this way, the image of the waves combines all the meanings so far attributed to it, for to see the children in the book as rising out of a universal essence of life, feeling, and instinct, is

14. T.L., 29-30 (18).
15. See 'The Death of the Moth', Collected Essays I, 359-361.

to understand the way in which their consciousnesses are related to the processes from which they arose.

It is this inarticulate but changing world of nature and process which is dominant in the passages of description that intervene between the human sections of the book. If we are to understand the wave symbol in the way outlined above, then in the interludes between the soliloquies of the six characters, whom we join at various important stages of their journey from childhood to death, we find an impersonal abstraction of the relationship between individual human life and history. The sun, which in the interludes travels through the course of one day, rising to a zenith and declining in sympathy with the ageing of the central figures, represents a single human life; while beneath it the waves roll continuously onto the shore, a metaphor for the continuous panorama of the whole of resurgent human existence. It is the interplay between the individual life and the being of all consciousness throughout time that lies at the core of The Waves. Bernard expresses this on P. 82 (98), in terms which bring out the relationship of man with all organic life: "My daughters shall come here in other summers; my sons shall turn new fields. Hence we are not raindrops, soon dried by the wind, we make gardens blow and forests roar; we come up differently, for ever and ever." Mrs. Woolf is attempting to write, through the medium of her own times, a representative parable for all history.

The interludes of description that break up and bridge the nine periods of soliloquy have come in for a great deal of criticism, on the grounds that they are mere decoration. Although it is true that much of the ornament they contain is unnecessary, and that they do provide Mrs. Woolf with scope for her most recessive and least admirable gifts for extended lyricising, the interludes do perform several vital functions. First, in accordance with the principles of significant form (each part reflecting the whole), these passages of description, in which human beings hardly appear, represent the solid and enduring beach, an impersonal inorganic world, across which the intermittent waves of human consciousness roll and withdraw. The central image of the book is thus mirrored in its structure, for its separate chapters

of stream of consciousness resemble the periodic waves. This certainly seems to be the authoress's intention, for she identified the soliloquies with waves, as this entry in the diary shows: she conceived the book as "a series of dramatic soliloquies. The thing is to keep them running homogeneously in and out in the rhythm of the waves". [16.]

Secondly, a central element in these interludes is a house, within a room of which the darkness is gradually dispersed as the sun rises higher, only to increase once more as the day draws to a close. This house symbolizes the theme of human "effort", the contribution to the civilizing and subduing of chaos made by each brief human life. The room exposed more and more by the rising sun is the "dwelling-place" that Rhoda finds within a symphony on P.116 (140) - "the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing" - a place made fit for human habitation by form-giving, a primary human function, the one Mrs. Woolf sees present beneath the appearances of art and civilization. Yet chaos is never fully vanquished, the shadows are never permanently abated, and there is always unresolved darkness in the room.

Thirdly, the passages of external description are necessary to balance the totally subjective stream of consciousness sections: "day" is necessary to balance "night". Despite the soliloquies, The Waves attempts to attain to the completeness of life by introducing the elements of plant, animal, and material existence in the interludes. As in life, they do not remain in their separate compartments, but are blended in a subtle manner, for images and illustrations from the interludes continually recur in the minds of the characters, despite there being no overt contact between the two. An example is provided by the birds which sing during these passages. On P.78 (93) they swoop down and crack a snail shell against a stone. Then on P.88 (105), in one of the human sections, at the meeting at which Percival is present, Bernard muses that the six "have sung like eager birds each his own song and tapped with the remorseless and savage egotism of the young our own snail-shell till it cracked". Even more than its function as a device to unite the book, this is a comment on the way in which we appropriate

16. Diary, 159.

our world: by comparing ourselves to it. Again, on P.54 (63) we see the birds plunging their beaks into the "sticky mixture" of an amorphous slug. In his summing-up at the end of the book Bernard describes Jinny, Susan and Rhoda who "dipped their beaks in sticky, viscous matter; hard, avid, remorseless". [17.] Also, in this same summing-up Bernard twice uses the image "a fin in a waste of waters" [18.] which he thought of and copied into his notebook during a much earlier trip to Rome. [19.] Yet the image first occured on P.166 (156), as part of an interlude. By means like these the fusion of the separate areas of interest in The Waves is accomplished; not explicitly, but internally, by making use of the reader's memory.

A fish image occurs also in another context, in a way which illustrates the relationship of the six to the sea from which they came. Watching the others walking back towards him in the evening light at Hampton Court, Louis sees a mental picture of fish being drawn from the sea:

> The water is broken by silver, by quivering little fish ... Life tumbles its catch upon the grass. There are figures coming towards us. Are they men or are they women? They still wear the ambiguous draperies of the flowing tide in which they have been immersed."
>
> "Now", said Rhoda, "as they pass that tree, they regain their natural size. They are only men, only women ... They become Susan and Bernard, Jinny and Neville, people we know. 20.

3.

The Waves, is Mrs. Woolf's most complex book, because all her concerns are present in it. The six characters each in their own way exemplifying one of the different issues that have been treated in previous chapters.

For example, Louis has her sense of the pressure of history upon the present. He is preoccupied with this from early childhood to old age: always he hears "the chained beast" which "stamps on the beach.

17. W., 175 (212).
18. W., 174 (210), 194 (234-5).
19. W., 134 (162).
20. W., 164 (199).

It stamps and stamps." [21.] This "rhythm" which is present in his mind at first consciousness [22.], recurs throughout his life. We learn from the interlude on P. 107 (128) that the image refers to the pounding of the sea: what Louis hears is the incessant tide of past history. Related to this is the other historical image that accompanies him, that of "women carrying red pitchers to the banks of the Nile." [23.] He first becomes aware of this scene, too, in infancy:

> Down there my eyes are the lidless eyes of a stone figure in a desert by the Nile. I see women passing red pitchers to the river; I see camels swaying and men in turbans. I hear tramplings, tremblings, stirrings round me. [24.]

This innate sense of the indissoluble relation between past and present consciousness makes Louis the most traditional member of the group. He feels as if he were always in touch with the original source of being - on the "floor" on the sea of consciousness - from which all their lives spring. He feels "my roots going down and down till they wrap themselves round some hardness at the centre." [25.] He seems "already to have lived many thousand years." [26.]

This traditionalism seems to make Louis one of the most conservative and defensive of the six. Jinny's sudden kiss on the back of his neck, as a child in the garden, sets up in him a kind of metaphysical fear which lasts throughout his life. [27.] Unlike Rhoda, he overcomes his anxiety by an act of will, combines the "two discrepancies" [28.] in him - the scholar and the man of action - and as an adult goes into business, "from chaos making order" [29.]: "I roll the dark before me, spreading commerce where there was chaos in the far parts of the world."

21. W., 41 (49). See also p. 49 (57).
22. W., 6 (7).
23. W., 69 (82). See also pp. 48 (56), 119 (143).
24. W., 8 (9).
25. W., 25 (29).
26. W., 48 (56), 118-9 (142).
27. W., 9 (10), 28 (33), 69 (82).
28. W., 38 (44).
29. W., 119 (143).

The passion for order and clarity which both Louis and Neville share leads them, on P. 27 (31), to wish, as Mrs. Ramsay does in To the Lighthouse, that the "moment could stay for ever". Louis wishes "to fix the moment in one effort of supreme endeavour." 30.

Neville, however, has an aesthetic outlook, and is essentially an intellectual. His is the dividing and analyzing intelligence, for we learn on P. 37 (43) that he admires the sort of person "whose mind falls like a chopper on a block". Yet at the same time for him it is love which is "the mystic sense of adoration which triumphed over chaos". In this passage, the person at whom this adoration is directed is hammering a mallet, and after this the image of the descending mallet accompanies Neville as a rhythm throughout the book.

For Jinny, it is her beauty which resolves chaos. Jinny's beauty functions as Mrs. Ramsay's Lighthouse does: it gives to things the order of significant form, so that "everything stood still in a pattern" 31. :

> "There is Jinny", said Susan. "She stands in the door. Everything seems stayed. The waiter stops. The diners at the table by the door look. She seems to centre everything; round her tables, lines of doors, windows, ceilings, ray themselves, like rays round the star in the middle of a smashed window-pane. She brings them to a point, to order. 32.

On P.92 (110) we are given as apt a description of Jinny - a superficial yet not wholly unadmirable character - as is possible in a paragraph:

> But my imagination is the bodies. I can imagine nothing beyond the circle cast by my own body. My body goes before me, like a lantern down a dark lane, bringing one thing after another out of darkness into a ring of light. I dazzle you; I make you believe that is all.

Jinny is a purely physical person, her activity is unimpeded, and yet her sensuality is the result of vanity, for she lacks appetite. She is both the least sensitive and the most courageous of the group,

30. W., 28 (32).
31. W., 92 (110).
32. W., 86 (103).

for she faces defiantly and without self-pity the gradual ageing of her most prized possession, her body. From the very first utterance of her consciousness, her attention is focussed on appearance, textures and colours. The "rhythm" that accompanies her is her dream of sitting "on my gilt chair, with my frock billowing round me like a flower." [33.] (On P. 87, at a dance, her wish is fulfilled). Significantly, the first thing she notices about Percival at their last meeting with him is that he has not dressed for the occasion. [34.] And yet she is sometimes the most clear-sighted of them all.

As Percival is Virginia Woolf's perfect man, Susan is her fulfilled woman. In contrast to Jinny's sensuality, Susan identifies herself with the seasons and the processes of nature:

> I shall lie like a field bearing crops in rotation; in the summer heat will dance over me; in winter I shall be cracked with the cold. But heat and cold will follow each other naturally without my willing or unwilling. My children will carry me on; their teething, their crying, their going to school and coming back will be like the waves of the sea under me. [35.]

On P. 71 (84), she imagines her lover coming: "To his one word I shall answer my one word. What has formed in me I shall give him."

All these characters, in essence, of course represent only single aspects of one complete personality. They are the "six or seven" selves, standing for "thousands" within a united personality, that the authoress talks about in Orlando. [36.] Their grouping in the Hampton Court scene is an indication of their affinity in the psyche: Susan, the completed woman, is close to Bernard, who strives towards completion through art and identification with others. Neville, the intellectual, and Jinny, are both sensualists of different kinds, both advocating "love" of different kinds. There is nowhere any clear borderline between the different personalities, and they both oppose and yet are akin to each other in a variety of different ways. Also one person for a time assumes another's ideas, and the guidelines to each character laid down

33. W., 33 (39), 100 (120).
34. W., 88 (105).
35. W., 94 (112-3).
36. O., 278 (218).

here chart no more than the most consistent characteristic of each. But on the extremities of this single mind lie Louis and Rhoda, the youngest children, the last to be deposited by the wave on the beach. Both are tormented by a variety of angst. Louis turns this into the drive behind his ambition. To Rhoda, however, it brings on the collapse of her personality.

Rhoda is typified by the following paragraph:

> One moment does not lead to another. The door opens and the tiger leaps. You did not see me come ... I am afraid of you all. I am afraid of the shock of sensation that leaps upon me, because I cannot make one moment merge in the next. To me they are all violent, all separate ... Because you have an end in view - your days and hours pass like the boughs of forest trees ... But there is no single scent, no single body for me to follow. And I have no face. I am like the foam that races over the beach ... I whirl down caverns, and flap like paper against endless corridors 37.

Rhoda stands in an important relation to Bernard, because where he tries to throw off his identity - to merge with other people, in order to reach "reality" - Rhoda is driven by her own lack of personal identity to commit suicide. I shall have more to say about this relationship between Bernard and Rhoda, and that between Bernard and Neville, in the final section of this chapter, where I shall examine the identity theme. It is this - the problem of identity - that is the central concern of this novel.

But Rhoda does have certain positive functions in The Waves. While she is the most introverted and withdrawing of the group, longing always for "pools lying on the other side of the world reflecting marble columns" where "the swallow dips her wings" 38., she is also the most mystic, the most visionary. Left alone in the classroom as a child to finish her sums, she sees the loop of the figure on the blackboard "fill with time". 39. As an adolescent, she longs to present a bunch of flowers she has picked to someone, and can find no-one to give them to. 40. Much later, on P. 117 (141), after Percival's death, she throws a bunch of violets into the waves as an offering to him. As the gesture indicates, no ordinary "human" reality will satisfy her.

On page 99 (119) we are given a picture of what Rhoda's conception of the ultimate "reality" is:

37. W., 93 (112).
38. W., 76 (90).
39. W., 15 (17).
40. W., 41 (48).

> But it is not you; it is not you; it is not you; not Percival, Susan, Jinny, Neville or Louis. When the white arm rests upon the knee it is a triangle; now it is upright - a column; now a fountain, falling. It makes no sign, it does not beckon, it does not see us. Behind it roars the sea ... There I go to replenish my emptiness, to stretch my nights and fill them fuller and fuller with dreams. And for a second even now, even here, I reach my object and say "Wander no more. All else is trial and make-believe. Here is the end"

In the same way, on P. 116 (139), attending a concert after Percival's death, Rhoda is able to penetrate to the reality behind the piece of music. This section, which has been widely misinterpreted by critics, refers to the significant form produced by the musicians, which, as their contribution to the struggle for civilization and order, provides temporary security for the listener, much as does Rhoda's abstract "reality":

> "Like" and "like" and "like" - but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing? ... There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately, they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation.
>
> The sweetness of this content overflowing runs down the walls of mind, and liberates understanding. Wander no more, I say; this is the end. The oblong has been set upon the square; the spiral is on top. We have been hauled over the shingle, down to the sea.

The sentence beginning "Wander no more ..." which is common to both extracts, indicates that the "reality" of the visionary, and the sense of "reality" provided by the work of art, are one and the same. The nature of this "reality" is an experience of contact, after being "hauled over the shingle", with the "sea" of universal being, out of which our waves of individual existence rise.

Thus Rhoda is of vital importance in The Waves in that it is left to her to communicate this fundamental insight. But despite the fact that her own private dissolution - she drowns herself in the sea - becomes, considering its meaning for her, a sort of private "triumph",

Rhoda emerges as a negative figure. Bernard considers her his "opposite" [41.] because mysticism or aestheticism alone is for him not enough. He requires the ultimate return to the world of people, and in this Bernard is given by the authoress the final say.

Rhoda's emotion of "reality" lies at the heart of the two "moments", the twin emphases of the book. [42.] The pattern of the two moments of union in To the Lighthouse, at the end of each of the major sections, recurs in The Waves. The first of these climaxes occurs when the six meet in a restaurant in London in order to say good-bye to a youthful Percival, who is leaving for India. Many years later, in middle age, they come together again at Hampton Court to commemorate the first meeting. The presence of the dead Percival is mysteriously with them once again, and with his help they achieve the mystic sense of union and permanence that they briefly felt on the original occasion. These are "moments" in Virginia Woolf's sense, for they have all the characteristics of formed works of art.

Percival, as Rhoda says above, is not himself the "reality" they seek. But he represents to them that which they need in order to reach this reality, this oneness with each other and thus with the sea of undifferentiated existence from which they come. It is only when they are gathered together in Percival's presence that they experience this sense of mystic union. In this respect Percival resembles Mrs. Ramsay: "He sat there in the centre", as Bernard says. [43.] His function in the novel is indicated for us in retrospect - by Bernard, once again:

> We saw for a moment laid out among us the body of the complete human being whom we have failed to be, but at the same time, cannot forget. All that we might have been we saw, all that we had missed, and we grudged for a moment the other's claim, as children when the cake is cut, the one cake, the only cake, watch their slice diminishing. [44.]

This is perhaps the most important clue in the book to the true nature of Percival. What he represents is all the possibilities of personality still open to each of the six, and not explored by them.

42. See W., 99 (119).
43. W., 109 (131).
44. W., 196 (238).

The mysterious figure of Percival comes to stand for their dead ideals; he completes with them a globe of "total personality", thus enabling them for the moment to throw off the limitations of individual identity, and to come in contact with the "reality", the sea of universal being, of total identity, from which as limited individuals they first came. India, to which Percival travels and where he dies - the India of E.M. Forster and Mrs. Moore - is associated with this reality, for as Rhoda says on P. 99 (119), "beyond India" is the place where this sea lies. India, like the Amazon forest in The Voyage Out, becomes a symbol of the last outpost of reason, the last, primitive stronghold, situated in fact in the subconscious, of the embryo individual. It must be evident that here, in her most elaborate achievement, Virginia Woolf is in many ways back with the Rachel of her first novel.

It is Bernard, too, who, looking at pictures in an art gallery after Percival's death, comprehends precisely Percival's significance for him: "I recover what he was to me - my opposite." [45] The same could be said of Percival by each of the group. He represents to each of them what they are not. We learn from Between the Acts that it is the function of the artist to help people to become their opposite, and so it is doubly significant that Bernard goes to an art gallery to recover the sense of Percival. As Bernard feels: "Lines and colours almost persuade me that I too can be heroic, I, who ... vacillate weakly making phrases according to my circumstances". This leads him on to a discovery, an analogy between the feeling of permanence he finds in art and his sense of the enduring existence of Percival. But at this further discovery he can only hint: "Ideas break a thousand times for once that they globe themselves entire. They break, they fall over me. 'Lines and colours they survive, therefore ...' ". [46]

Bernard's position in relation to Percival is important, because Bernard, in his function as an artist, is Percival's successor. As a person, he takes on Percival's function by being responsible for

45. W., 111 (133).
46. W., 112 (134).

the second meeting at Hampton Court. The likeness here to the structure of To the Lighthouse is striking: ostensibly Bernard, like Mr. Ramsay, is fulfilling a broken promise, a promise to visit Hampton Court with Percival. As a novelist, also, he is attempting by an act of will to attain to what the other by nature possesses. He attempts by projecting himself into other selves to actualize all possibilities open to him, and this leads him eventually to dispense altogether with the necessity of "self". But the problem posed by Bernard as novelist, and his relationship to the central "identity theme" deserves examination on its own, and for this reason will be developed in the final section of this chapter.

To return to Percival: it is Louis, appropriating briefly, in the close union of the original "moment" in the restaurant, part of Bernard's consciousness, who best expresses the nature of this "moment", and Percival's place in it:

> "It is Percival", said Louis, "sitting silent ..., who makes us aware that these attempts to say 'I am this, I am that', which we make, comming together, like separated parts of one body and soul, are false. Something has been left out from fear. Something has been altered, from vanity. We have tried to accentuate differences. From the desire to be separate we have laid stress upon our faults, and what is particular to us. But there is a chain, whirling round, round, in a steel-blue circle beneath." 47.
>
> "For one moment only", said Louis. "Before the chain breaks, before disorder returns, see us fixed, see us displayed, see us held in a vice." 48.

Appropriately, it is left to Bernard the novelist to see the relationship between this "swelling and splendid moment created by us from Percival" and the formed work of art:

> We have proved, sitting eating, sitting talking, that we can add to the treasury of moments. We are not slaves bound to suffer incessantly unrecorded petty blows on our bent backs. We are not sheep either, following a master. We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time. We too, as we put on our hats and push open the door, stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road. 49.

47. W., 98 (117).
48. W., 102 (122).
49. W., 104-5 (125).

4.

Most of the technical devices used in The Waves have been met with before in Virginia Woolf's work. However, they are employed here with the greatest subtlety. An example is her use of what E.M. Forster called the "little rhythm" - the continued recurrence of an important phrase or image - which is made to function mainly as a psychological tool in this novel. Childhood happenings of particular significance are alluded to in later life by means of this: for instance the apple tree on P. 17 (20) which Neville feels that he cannot pass. When, as an adult, he hears of Percival's death, he feels: "The sails of the world have swung round and caught me on the head ... There stands the tree which I cannot pass." [50] The moment and the image of the apple tree are punctuated for Neville by the substitute lighthouse symbol: the windmill with its sails, which, like the passing beams of the lighthouse, signify the passing of intermittent moments of order and the re-emergence of chaos. The psychological check imposed upon Neville by the unconscious remembrance of the childhood experience becomes real for us, too, because our memories partake in it. It is as if the book creates its own psychological reference which our minds also draw on, by the use of "little rhythms": as if we too are conditioned by the childhood experiences which "happen in one second and last for ever." [51]

Another subtler, more concealed example of the psychological use of the "little rhythm" is provided by Bernard at the end of the long extract quoted separately above: his phrase "unrecorded petty blows on our bent backs" sets up in our minds echoes of Louis' childhood reaction to Jinny's kiss on his neck in the garden, on P. 9 (10).

A major innovation in the principal sections is the inconspicuous use of decorative "conceits". These usually serve some technical function at the same time. For example, Jinny's first dance on P. 73 (87) is treated in the form of a ballet of manners throughout. Even her flirting is ordered as a kind of prose dance. Also, pp. 143-145 (172-174) Louis repeatedly returns to his private reading of a verse of

50. W., 107 (128).
51. W., 170 (205).

poetry, and yet each time is waylayed by his own mental digressions on his destiny. Each time, his reading gets no further than: "O western wind, when wilt thou blow/That the small rain down can rain?" These lines seem to punctuate and to comment on his musings. His train of thought at last comes round to his sexual relationship with Rhoda. At the same time he manages to finish reading the verse, which, with the addition of the last two lines, accompanies his thoughts with a loud final note of bathos:

> O Western wind, when wilt thou blow,
> That the small rain down can rain?
> Christ, that my love were in my arms,
> And I in my bed again!

A device of a different kind, enabling the authoress to compress an entire school career into one year, is her deliberate confusion on P. 47 (55) of the first day of the summer holidays with the first day after the six leave school for good. Another opportunity for ambiguity arises shortly after this, over Bernard's inability to find his ticket in the train. As Neville comments: "he is somehow to be pitied, breasting the world with half-finished phrases, having lost his ticket". [52.] In Neville's eyes, it is the "ticket" to the complete command of life that he has really lost.

The treatment, as a technical device, of Bernard's summing-up which takes up the final fifty pages of the novel deserves some comment. It represents, in fact, the complete artistic statement in the service of which Bernard has all his life been collecting phrases in his note-book, but which he has never previously managed to combine into a whole. All the notes that we have witnessed him entering into the note-book are incorporated into this summing-up. On P. 26 (30), for example, in youth, Bernard makes a note of the expression "butterfly powder". Later, after the death of Percival, he is envisaged by Rhoda as entering, an imagination, something under the heading "Phrases to be used on the death of friends." [53.] In his final summing-up, Bernard looks at his note-book for the last time before throwing it away, and reads: "under B, butterfly

52. W., 51 (60).
53. W., 114 (137).

powder, under D, ways of naming death." [54] Significantly, these are the first and last letters of Bernard's name: his journey from youth to age has been completed, as has his artistic journey.

In contrast to the soliloquies, the summing-up is treated partly in an external, objective manner, and, as is characteristic of Virginia Woolf, certain incidental details thus only become available to us at this point, contributing to the sensation of "rounding". For instance, at the meeting at Hampton Court, Rhoda makes a cryptic remark about chilblains. [55] On P. 173 (209), in Bernard's final statement, we learn for the first time that Louis has suffered all his life from chilblains. The reference Rhoda has made is explained. It is details like these that contribute most to the reality and coherence of the novel.

Something has been said in the preceding section about the treatment of the first "moment". This moment, compounded both of Percival, without whom "there is no solidity" [56], but also seemingly of such things as forests and far countries, happiness, beauty and repose, the future and the everyday [57], is perhaps the most subtly conceived passage in all Virginia Woolf's writing. In it we watch, from a vantage point inside each consciousness, the effect of communication at work within a group. During the course of this "moment", each person remains himself, but at the same time, without the reader being able to overhear what they are saying, the characters adopt ideas and attitudes from each others' minds. We are shown how sensitive to, and aware of, the substance of each others' identity each character has unconsciously become.

There do, however, seem to be certain failings. Unfortunately, part of the imagery, especially in the lyricising sections, the interludes, is none too successful. While it succeeds in conveying a sense of the impersonal and grotesque, there is often a fascination with description for its own sake. In places a tone of fevered, almost decadent languor creeps in; for example, this description of birds: "lovelily they came

54. W., 206 (250).
55. W., 158 (192).
56. W., 87 (104).
57. W., 104 (125).

descending, delicately declining". [58] This is really a "savouring", or prolongation, of an entirely artificial moment: it is the words that are dwelt upon, not what they refer to. The attempt is to convey an arabesque motion by means of sounds, but the subject does not merit the treatment. In its context, the unintended effect is thus of a retreat from reality. All the same, there is some fresh and pleasing imagery within the interludes, for example the following, which refers to light and shadow falling on a hillside: "hills smoothed into slabs as with the back of a spade had a light in them as if a warder, deep within, went from chamber to chamber carrying a green lamp." [59] But even the sentence from which this is taken is over-ornate, for it has three "as ifs" in it, each of them introducing new similes.

5.

It is possible to speculate that in conceiving The Waves, Virginia Woolf once again received some incentive from E.M. Forster's book Aspects of the Novel. At the time of the publication of To the Lighthouse, Forster writes:

> Between Sterne and James Joyce, scarcely any writer has tried either to use the facts of birth or to invent a new set of facts, and no one ... has tried to work back towards the psychology of the baby's mind and to utilize the literary wealth that must lie there. Perhaps it cannot be done. [60]

It is characteristic of Mrs. Woolf that the immensities of such a challenge should in no way deter her. As distinct from Joyce, she chose to explore the influence of the infant mind as if relayed through the adult voice of an invisible "interpreter", for The Waves records not so much the words that form in the mind, but rather seeks to express in words the emotions and nuances that accompany consciousness. In concentrating her attention on what lies "below" thought rather than on the thought itself, the authoress is providing herself with the means to express the intimate nature of a single mind - for all the "voices" in The Waves compose a whole - from birth to death.

58. W., 53 (62).
59. W., 106 (127).
60. Aspects of the Novel, 59.

There is only one notable omission in the soliloquies which deserves notice: as has often been remarked, the influence of the purely physical drives is treated only in terms of inexplicit symbolism. The accusation that Mrs. Woolf's literary prudishness has in some measure deprived The Waves is here unavoidable, since it must be admitted that this is of all her books the one which attempts most to satisfy Terence Hewet's early demand for "a novel about Silence ... the things that people don't say". [61] Though in attempting to examine the mysterious forces and processes behind human life, it must be conceded that the novelist has moved at least part of the way in this direction.

I have spoken above of The Waves as being about a single mind. This is true, but must at the same time be interpreted in an unusual way. The fact is that with this novel, Virginia Woolf is attempting to establish the prototype for a new sort of fiction: a fiction which is the antithesis of what she called the "egotistical" writing of Dorothy Richardson and Joyce. Despite all that Leopold Bloom might prove to the contrary, Virginia Woolf is not perhaps the only reader to feel that James Joyce did not, for all the comparative detachment of his method, succeed in his design to eradicate the evidence of his authorship completely from his work, so that he himself would seem to remain aloof, "paring his finger-nails". Like Mrs. Woolf, many readers may on the contrary have been left with the sense that in the final analysis one purpose of the brilliant and complex technique, however admirable, is to draw attention to its inventor, and that his early preoccupation with his single Stephen Hero remained in the later novels the centre of his concern. Obviously enough, someone with the views that we have seen Mrs. Woolf to hold, especially those referring to communication and identity, would find autobiographical fiction anathema. She has this reservation about Ulysses: "Is it due to the method that we feel neither jovial nor magnanimous, but centred in a self which, in spite of its tremor of susceptibility, never embraces or creates what is outside itself and beyond?" [62] Whether this is justified or not, it is certain that

61. V.O., 262.
62. "Modern Fiction", Collected Essays II, 108.

Virginia Woolf felt that the greatest danger to fiction lay in the "damned egotistical self; which ruins Joyce and Richarson to my mind". 63.

So with The Waves, Virginia Woolf once again attempted to match the particular method she used to her insight. Each character in her book, as has been shown, posesses a quality that we have seen to belong also to the authoress. Each character may thus be said to be an exaggeration of some aspect of the novelist's own personality. And yet at the same time, almost every one of the different figures in the book seems to be also indirectly based on someone within Mrs. Woolf's immediate circle of friends. This identification of her friends and herself, even though this would have been of private significance at the time, is intended as a deliberate indication of the human potentiality for "embracing or creating what is outside itself".

Leonard Woolf, in Beginning Again, identifies Bernard, the novelist, for us. Bernard, while being the direct representative of his creator in her function as an artist, is at the same time drawn in part from Desmond McCarthy, the brilliant talker, who was supposed in his Cambridge days to have great talent, but never later fulfilled this early promise. Leonard Woolf perceives that there "is something of Desmond in Bernard in The Waves". 64. He adds this caution, however: "But Bernard is not Desmond; none of Virginia's characters are drawn completely or photographically from life." 65.

Leonard Woolf, Thoby Stephen, Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes, and Desmond McCarthy were all at Cambridge together, as were other members of what later came to be known as the Bloomsbury Group. Of Thoby Stephen, Leonard Woolf writes in Sowing, that "His face was extraordinarily beautiful and his character was as beautiful as his face ... monolithic character ... monolithic common sense ... monumental judgments ... He had greater personal charm than anyone I have ever known, and ... he seemed, and I believe was, entirely unconscious of it." 66. It is evident that this brother of Virginia, who died in Greece when the Stephen children

63. Diary, 23.
64. Beginning Again, 141.
65. Op. cit., 143.
66. Sowing, 124.

were on holiday there, profoundly affected Leonard Woolf and the other members of the early Bloomsbury circle. Precisely the same adjective "monolithic" is used by Bernard to describe Percival on P. 59 (69) of The Waves. Leonard Woolf confirms that "There is no doubt that Percival in that book contains something of Thoby Stephen, Virginia's brother, who died of typhoid aged twenty-six in 1906." [67] Having completed her book, Mrs. Woolf contemplated dedicating it to Thoby, as the Diary shows (P.169).

The other characters, too, seem to have had their counterparts in life. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, "there is something of Lytton in Neville", [68] as Leonard Woolf tells us. Also, this description in the diary of Karin Stephen, Adrian Stephen's wife, bears a strong resemblance to what we know of Rhoda: "Karin coming in late, predacious, struggling, never amenable of comforting as, poor woman, no doubt she knows: deaf, twisted, gnarled, short, stockish, baffled, still she comes." [69] However, as far as the remaining characters are concerned, we have no direct evidence and can only speculate - is Louis a combination of various elements, some of them drawn from Maynard Keynes, others from Leonard Woolf himself, and does Jinny in any way resemble Carrington, Strachey's mistress? But speculation like this is unnecessary, for we have enough clues in our possession to guide us to Virginia Woolf's method.

In this section I have been considering the identity theme of this novel. However, it is difficult to proceed to the heart of this matter without understanding of the fact that on one level The Waves can be seen as a study in group consciousness. With the example of the Bloomsbury Group before her, Mrs. Woolf has here recorded both the evolution of a "group" identity, and also the unconscious ties that develop as a result to bind such a community. There is an entry in the diary for April, 1925, which remarks on the phenomenon of the individual personality adapting to a common "group" norm, "where people secrete an envelope which

67. Op. cit., 123.
68. Ibid.
69. Virginia Woolf's diary, May 26, 1932. Quoted by Leonard Woolf in Downhill All the Way, 150. An indication of the tone of some of those parts not included in the published diary. Virginia Woolf's severity, redeemed by the lengths of exaggeration to which it extended, is an asspect of her personality still not available to public view.

connects them and protects them from others, like myself, who am outside ... The party consciousness ... you must not break it. It is something real. You must keep it up - conspire together." [70.]

In The Waves, the "one mind" of the characters is meant to have a real existence, both in the consciousness of the authoress herself and in that of her persona Bernard. It is meant to illustrate the heart of her identity theme, her advocation of the impersonality of the artist. But by this she means something rather different from T.S. Eliot's use of the term in his Selected Essays: "What happens (to the poet) is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality". [71.] To Virginia Woolf, there is no "self-sacrifice" in impersonality; impersonality is a natural state of mind which egotism corrupts. She sees the artist as the mediator between the individual and all the personality which is outside him: impersonality is not a mysterious rite belonging to the artist alone. Her conception of impersonality advocates that the self "amplify" itself to identify with all other personality, and thus contain it.

Virginia Woolf's most comprehensive statement of her position may be gleaned from her essay 'Street Haunting'. Significantly for our understanding of The Waves, it was written in 1930. The writer is watching people in the street:

> Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enouth to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others. One could become a washerwoman, a publican, a street singer. And what greater delight and wonder can there be than to leave the straight lines of personality and deviate into those footpaths that lead beneath brambles and thick tree trunks into the heart of the forest where live those wild beasts, our fellow men? [72.]

That this conception of the possibilities open to personality is directly related to her other ideas, especially to her Bradleian notion, discussed in chapter IV, of a shared universal consciousness, need not be

70. Diary, 75.
71. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Selected Essays, 17.
72. Collected Essays IV, 165.

emphasized. Of course, if such endless numbers of footpaths are open to personality, then, Mrs. Woolf says, the fact that we apparently possess fixed ordinary selves must be merely a product of the necessities of our daily lives. It is the function of the novelist to restore us to our original world of illimitable existence, or so Mrs. Woolf believes:

> But what could be more absurd? It is, in fact, on the stroke of six; it is a winter's evening; we are walking to the Strand to buy a pencil. How, then, are we also on a balcony wearing pearls in June? What could be more absurd? Yet it is nature's folly, not ours. When she set about her chief masterpiece, the making of man, she should have thought of one thing only. Instead, turning her head, looking over her shoulder, into each one of us she let creep instincts and desires which are utterly at variance with his main being, so that we are streaked, variegated, all of a mixture; the colours have run. Is the true self this which stands on the pavement in January, or that which bends over the balcony in June? Am I here, or am I there? Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves? Circumstances compel unity; for convenience sake a man must be whole. The good citizen when he opens his door in the evening must be banker, golfer, husband, father; not a nomad wandering in the desert, a mystic staring at the sky, a debauchee in the slums of San Francisco, a soldier heading a revolution ... 73.

William James, in his Principles of Psychology, has also described this "limitation of self":

> Such different characters may conceivably at the outset of life be alike possible to a man. But to make only one of them actual, the rest must more or less be suppressed. So the seeker of his truest, strongest, deepest self must review the list carefully, and pick out the one on which to stake his salvation. 74.

The act of writing fiction, no less than that of reading it, constitutes an escape from the limitations of personal identity. The sort of authorship Virginia Woolf is defending - described in this entry in the diary for 1937 (P.285): "I think writing, my writing, is a species of

73. 'Street Haunting', Collected Essays IV, 160-1.
74. I, p.310.

mediumship. I become the person." [75.] - is the method she used in The Waves. It was first employed by her before the beginning of the twenties. A short story written before the publication of Jacob's Room, 'An Unwritten Novel'[76.], is woven around the narrator's speculation (unjustified) about a silent middle-aged lady sitting opposite her in a railway carriage. That the "mediumship" of the novelist may, as in this case, be mistaken, the authoress seems to be saying, is of no consequence as regards the finished work of art. Mrs. Woolf's efforts in this direction in life must partly explain her curious - and to some of her victims, disturbing - habit of presenting strange visitors with fictitious lives of themselves when they came to call, a habit which Clive Bell describes in Old Friends (P. 98).

There is further evidence of her notion of the medium-like impersonality of the artist in two other essays. Perhaps the most important of all as regards The Waves occurs in 'How it strikes a Contemporary' [77.] Here Mrs. Woolf arrives at the conclusion that to contain all personality is to be free from personality altogether. She says of her contemporaries: "The most sincere of them will only tell us what it is that happens to himself. They cannot make a world, because they are not free of other human beings." (P. 159). She accuses these authors of "timidly" passing about "from hand to hand and book to book only the meanest copper coins" (P. 160). Her conclusion here is that "To believe that your impressions hold good for others is to be released from the cramp and confinement of personality" (P. 159), and this, too, is the conclusion presented by The Waves.

"The art of writing", Virginia Woolf says in "Letter to a Young Poet" (1932), "can be learnt ... drastically and effectively by imagining that one is not oneself but somebody different. Can you doubt that the reason Shakespeare knew every sound and syllable in the language ... was that Hamlet, Falstaff and Cleopatra rushed him into this knowledge". [78.] It is after the trial of this identification with others that the novelist,

75. Diary, p.285.
76. A Haunted House, 12-23.
77. Collected Essays II, 133-161.
78. Collected Essays II, 193.

Bernard, is left alone at the end of The Waves. He has achieved his freedom from others by banishing the barriers that divide him from them, and for which the interludes between the soliloquies become a symbol. His summing-up is a synthesis of the whole book, and at the end of it Bernard sets aside his own identity in an attempt to enter the common sea of total communication for which he yearns, and for which his phrases are only a token.

The total meaning of this novel, despite the fact that its conclusions follow naturally on those of the novels that precede it, was sufficiently portentous for Virginia Woolf herself not to be able to grasp its whole impact at once with her conscious mind. Her statement in the diary on page 174 that "What it means I myself shan't know until I write another book. And I'm the hare, a long way ahead of the hounds my critics" (September 22nd, 1931), is a clear revelation of the part played by the subconscious in her writing. She often avowed this factor to be present in the creation of most art, in common with the rest of the Bloomsbury thinkers. At the same time, as will be shown separately in the next section, the meaning I have outlined is quite clearly displayed, in particular in Bernard's soliloquies.

The authoress appears to have become properly conscious of the intention behind the book during the following year. Its profound effect on her is demonstrated by the following extract from the diary, for October 1933, written in response to an unfavourable review:

> I wrote a sarcastic letter to the N.S. - thus procuring more raindrops. This metaphor shows how tremendously important unconsciousness is when one writes. But let me remember that fashion in literature is an inevitable thing; also that one must give and change; also that I have, at last, laid hands upon my philosophy of anonymity. My letter to the N.S. is the crude public statement of a part of it. How odd last winter's revelation was! freedom; ... I will go on adventuring, changing, opening my mind and my eyes, refusing to be stamped and stereotyped. The thing is to free one's self ... October might have been much worse without my philosophy. 79.

79. Diary, 213.

Yet is there not in all this, in spite of Mrs. Woolf's assertions to the contrary, a hint of Clive Bell's original manifesto of Bloomsbury "ivory tower" aestheticism: "those who achieve ecstasy are those who have freed themselves from the arrogance of humanity." [80.]

Naturally, Mrs. Woolf's method over-simplifies the sources of difference between personalities. But despite this, what has been said serves to illustrate her vision: that the barriers dividing personality are far from insurmountable, that the waters of consciousness are the same fluid in all of us, and that it is, Virginia Woolf senses, an intuitive identification, an act of imagination, that forms the bridge between the self and all that, she maintains, we inadequately term the not-self.

6.

Bernard is the first of the six to speak. The object which draws him to first consciousness is a ring, hanging over him "in a loop of light". [81.] Only in the final summing-up, on P. 170 (205), does Bernard recall that it was "no doubt the brass handle of a cupboard". And yet for all six of them their childhood experiences are so important and influential as to become almost symbolic: "All these things happen in one second and last for ever."

Especially significant for Bernard is the symbol of the ring, which accompanies him through life. But it is left to Louis, as a school-boy for a moment appropriating a part of Bernard's consciousness, to explain the symbol for us:

> Here on this ring of grass we have sat together, bound by the tremendous power of some inner compulsion. The trees wave, the clouds pass. The time approaches when these soliloquies shall be shared. We shall not always give out a sound like a beaten gong as one sensation strikes and then another. Children, our lives have been gongs striking; clamour and boasting; cries of despair; blows on the nape of the neck in gardens ... our ring here, sitting with our arms binding our knees, hint as some other order, and better, which makes a reason everlastingly.

80. Art, 73.
81. W., 6.

> This I see for a second, and shall try to-night to fix in words, to forge in a ring of steel. 82.

The image of the ring - thus a precognition of the essential unity of the six - appears in Bernard's mind whenever he thinks about the subject of identity. Travelling in a train carriage, Bernard observes that "Louis and Neville ... feel the presence of other people as a separating wall. But if I find myself in company with other people, words at once make smoke rings... I do not believe in separation. We are not single." 83. The ring is also present as the "steel-blue circle" which recurs several times in the thoughts of both Louis and Bernard in the course of the "moment" before Percival's departure for India. 84. The last occasion is on P. 104 (124), when Louis notes that "the circle in our blood, broken so often, so sharply, for we are so different, closed in a ring."

It is interesting that, just as Louis' counterpart in the novel, Rhoda, dissociates herself from all the others out of envy, he is always the member of the group most easily influenced by others. This we learn from the frequency with which he appropriates elements from the soliloquies of the others into his own. Bernard, incidentally, the character who most advocates identification with others, remains resolutely himself.

So the "ring" symbol stands, basically, for the union of the group, which occurs, between the other "unions" of birth and death, only explicitly during the two brief "moments": the first in the restaurant, as young adults, the second at Hampton Court, in middle age. The third and final union takes place in the mind of Bernard himself. Having assimilated the others, he, who all his life has been dependent on other people, finds himself liberated from them. It is an indication of the nature of the revelation for Bernard expressed in the summing-up (as well as of the comparative externality of the terms in which it is couched) that when the "ring", which has always been Bernard's particular property, is

82. W., 28 (33).
83. W., 69 (57).
84. See 83 (99), 97 (116), 98 (117), 102 (122).

mentioned here, it is always in the simple form of the original cupboard handle. He has moved into a world of new clarity and truth:

> I saw fields rolling in waves of colour beneath me, but now with this difference: I saw but was not seen. I walked unshadowed; I came unheralded. From me had dropped the old cloak, the old response, the hollowed hand that beats back sounds. Thin as a ghost, leaving no trace where I trod, perceiving merely, I walked alone in a new world, never trodden; brushing new flowers, unable to speak save in a child's words of one syllable, without shelter from phrases - I who have made so many; unattended, I who have always gone with my kind; solitary, I who have always had someone to share the empty grate, or the cupboard with its hanging loop of gold.
>
> "But how to describe the world seen without a self? There are no words. 85.

The summing-up, fifty pages long, stands in a singular relation to the rest of the novel. In order to understand its significance it is important to note the spiritual growth Bernard undergoes during the novel, and the fact that the matured Bernard of the summing-up has changed radically from the person he was at Cambridge. Bernard's development and his relation to the others is really the core of the novel, for his life embodies the identity theme.

The early Bernard is characterized by the following admission, made while he was at Cambridge: "The truth is that I need the stimulus of other people. Alone, over my dead fire, I tend to see the thin places in my own stories ... Some blind flaps in my eyes." 86. From childhood Bernard has shown this dependance on other people, the necessity, as a novelist, to transcend himself. On P. 11 (12), in the garden, Bernard and Susan "melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an insubstantial territory." As Neville comments on P. 31 (43), "He sees everyone with blurred edges".

Neville is, in his most characteristic moments, Bernard's opposite. He is an intellectual, first and foremost. He likes to analyze things, to see them clear and separate. Thus he is accompanied by the sort of images which we have come to associate with the dividing intellect:

85. W., 203-4 (246-7).
86. W., 58 (68).

"The big blade is an Emperor; the broken blade a Negro. I hate dangling things; I hate dampish things. I hate wandering and mixing things together." [87.] Yet even he, as an adult, reluctantly feels the influence of other personalities on his own:

> How curiously one is changed by the addition, even at a distance, of a friend. How useful an office one's friend perform when they recall us. Yet how painful to be recalled, to be mitigated, to have one's self adulterated, mixed up, become part of another. As he approaches I become not myself but Neville mixed with somebody ... Yes, it is Bernard, and it is to Bernard that I shall put the question. Who am I? 88.

The capacity of other people to create one's identity for one is among the reasons which draws Bernard to others. By analogy, it is also, in Mrs. Woolf's opinion, the criterion of the necessity of the audience to the artist. Perhaps the most comprehensive indication of Bernard's outlook is the following passage:

> But soliloquies in back streets soon pall. I need an audience. That is my downfall. That always ruffles the edge of the final statement and prevents it from forming ... To be myself (I note) I need the illumination of other people's eyes, and therefore cannot be entirely sure what is my self ... I think of people to whom I could say things: Louis, Neville, Susan, Jinny and Rhoda. With them I am many-sided. They retrieve me from darkness. We shall meet to-night, thank heaven. Thank Heaven, I need not be alone. 89.

But this desire for others is still essentially directed towards Bernard's own self. He needs others principally so that the various selves which compose him may all be fully actualised. This activity involves him in certain difficulties: "I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard." [90.] But here Bernard's ultimate aim still remains the fulfilment of his own identity. This is the paradox inherent in his development, for when he later comes to realize the worthlessness of "self", he finds that he no longer needs other people: he finds that there is nothing to separate him from them.

87. W., 14 (15).
88. W., 60 (70-1).
89. W., 83 (99).
90. W., 55 (65).

He has the capacity to identify with both sexes, for, like Orlando, "joined 'to the sensibility of a woman' (I am here quoting my own biographer) 'Bernard possessed logical sobriety of a man' ". 90. So despite his inability to complete his stories, which he can only overcome after he at last manages to forget his "self" entirely, Bernard is Virginia Woolf's "type" of the true novelist. His impossible mission is "to embrace the whole world with the arms of understanding" 91., and yet to "speak of knowledge is futile. All is experiment and adventure." 92.

At moments a feeling of loss of identity overcomes Bernard. Gradually these become more frequent, until, leaving the others after the final meeting of the group at Hampton Court, and after the experience, however transient, of total union that overtakes them for the second time, he feels that "we are slipping away. Little bits of ourselves ... I cannot keep myself together ... Here is the station, and if the train were to cut me in two, I should come together on the farther side, being one, being indivisible." 93.

Later in his summing-up, he recalls this moment, and in doing so points to the change that is taking place in him:

> The sound of the chorus came across the water and I felt leap up that old impulse, which has moved me all my life, to be thrown up and down on the roar of other people's voices, singing the same song ... But not now. No! I could not collect myself; I could not distinguish myself; I could not help letting all the things that had made me a minute ago eager, amused, jealous, vigilant and hosts of other things, into the water. I could not recover myself from that endless throwing away, dissipation, flooding forth without our willing it and rushing soundlessly away out there under the arches of the bridge ... over the roughened water to become waves in the sea - I could not recover myself from that dissipation. So we parted.
>
> Was this then, this streaming away mixed with Susan, Jinny, Neville, Rhoda, Louis, a sort of death? A new assembly of elements? Some hint of what was to come? 94.

This is the nature of Bernard's confrontation with "reality", then. His throwing-off of self at the end of his life is his own way of

90. W., 55 (65).
91. W., 82 (97).
92. W., 84 (100).
93. W., 167 (201-2).
94. W., 198 (240).

coming to terms with the sea of undifferentiated being from which the six first came.

Bernard's first discovery of his new state came as a shock to him, he tells us. He felt himself to be "A man without a self. A dead man." [95] But from this he moves towards his final position, which marks the resolution of the novel. He realizes that he now exists in the others, and they in him.

> And now ask, "Who am I?" I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know. We sat here together. But now Percival is dead, and Rhoda is dead; we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. As I talked I felt "I am you." This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome ... Here on my brow is the blow I got when Percival fell. Here on the nape of my neck is the kiss Jinny gave Louis. My eyes fill with Susan's tears. I see far away, quivering like a gold thread, the pillar Rhoda saw, and feel the rush of the wind of her flight when she leapt. 96.

As his final summing-up draws to a close, Bernard recalls bits from the interludes. These represent to him the lands which are no longer barred to him, the freedom of possibility for which he has yearned: "Light floods the room and drives shadow beyond shadow to where they hang in folds inscrutable. What does the central shadow hold? Something? Nothing? I do not know." [97] The certainty of final knowledge is always barred to man.

So Bernard, whose life has been characterized by the constant need for others, is at last able to say:

> Let me now raise my song of glory. Heaven be praised for solitude. Let me be alone. Let me cast and throw away this veil of being, this cloud that changes with the least breath, night and day, and all night and all day. 98.

So he anticipates the final permanence, near at hand, that will free him from change. But as he moves out into the street, his

95. W., 202 (245).
96. W., 205 (249).
97. W., 207 (251).
98. W., 209 (253).

extended conversation with us, the reader, at an end, he experiences a new emotion. Free at last from us, and suspecting us of indifference (he met us once on a boat to Africa), he begins strangely to feel rise in himself and in the world "the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and rise again." [99]. And thus his advance to meet Death turns into, "unvanquished and unyielding" [100], a defiant charge.

*

Inspiring a spectacle as The Waves is, the whole of life seen - not quite from the roof, but, as Bernard himself says - "from the third storey window" [101], it requires some assessment of its claims, in a way which the preceding novels do not. For the truth is that though The Waves is both the authoress's most ambitious book and perhaps the summit of her achievement, one has certain natural reservations about the claims put forward in it: those concerning the limited worth of identity, for example. Of course what she says is in its own way true, but it does not fall with the impact of the complete truth. Admittedly, Virginia Woolf herself recognizes that Bernard's viewpoint is only that of one side of human nature, the other being potentially equally valuable. There is Louis' sentence, for example, reluctantly defending "all the insanity of personal existence without which life would fall flat and die." [102]. There is also the accent placed on "effort", the effort of the individual, like the moths, battling for the ordering of chaos in the face of his inevitable death. As Bernard affirms:

> I jumped up. I said, "Fight! Fight!" I repeated. It is the effort and the struggle, it is the perpetual warfare, it is the shattering and piercing together - this is the daily battle, defeat or victory, the absorbing pursuit. 103.

We have Virginia Woolf's entry in the diary, as well, to the effect that "the theme effort, effort, dominates: not the waves: and personality: and defiance: but I am not sure of the effect artistically; because the proportions may need the intervention of the waves finally so

99. W., 211 (255).
100. W., 211 (255).
101. W., 171 (207).
102. W., 165 (199).
103. W., 191 (232).

as to make a conclusion." [104].

Despite all this, one is left with the feeling, more so than in the case of To the Lighthouse, that both sides of the question are not given their due weight, and that the fact of identity has more to be said in its favour than Mrs. Woolf allows. Of course it is not normally demanded of a novel that it should do more than dramatize one aspect of life, and leave us to make any necessary assimilation of art into what we know of life ourselves. The novels which precede To the Lighthouse have all been treated on the basis of this assumption. But after that novel and its reconciliation of opposites, it is the measure of Virginia Woolf's achievement that we should ask of her the Shakespearean quality of seeing all the facets of an issue.

It is a truism, after all, that the sense of identity is often a spur to action and "effort", that recognition of the unique identity of others - even the "separateness" itself - is very often a pleasure, and that a reasonable definition of art itself - including Mrs. Woolf's art - would be that it is in its own way a defence of a particular and unusual identity. Naturally enough, one may acknowledge that the claims of "self" require to be complemented by Virginia Woolf's "sympathetic" values, and that these may perhaps in the very last analysis be the most valuable. But one is left with the sense that Mrs. Woolf's approval is in truth given to one side without giving entirely adequate attention to the due merits of the other, and the suggested impression is that ultimately she considers personality no more than an inevitable and necessary "insanity".

Also noteworthy is Robert Peel's criticism, contained within a neglected review article written in 1933. Correctly perceiving from the text Bernard's - and Mrs. Woolf's - advocacy of the impersonality of the artist, Peel feels that "The impersonality may be considered a diffuse egoism projecting its own sensibility into the non-ego." [105]. But even this criticism, like the others, is a matter of degree rather than kind, for as we have seen, Mrs. Woolf was well aware of this possible danger.

104. Diary, 162.
105. 'Virginia Woolf', Criterion, XIII, L, Oct. 1938, pp. 78-96.

Yet if there is something slightly amiss in this book, then it is Rhoda who can be seen as posing the most telling indictment of The Waves. Bernard calls her his "opposite" [106], but one is left to wonder whether this is completely true. Rhoda shares certain affinities with Mrs. Woolf herself, just as the others do. But Rhoda's own neurosis and suicide are partly the result of her inability to resolve her identity. Bernard, we are shown, does resolve his. Yet the question remains whether there is a very great difference in essence between Rhoda's inability to find her "face" and Bernard's "throwing off" of self, despite our recognition of the different reasons for these states, and different routes by which they are reached.

I suspect also that behind Rhoda are such entries in the diary as the following, written only a few months after the book's publication:

> A saying of Leonard's comes into my mind in this season of complete insanity and boredom. "Things have gone wrong somehow." It was the night C. killed herself. (Carrington, Strachey's mistress. He had recently died.) We were walking along that silent blue street with the scaffolding. I saw all the violence and unreason crossing in the air: ourselves small; a tumult outside: something terrifying: unreason - shall I make a book out of this? It would be a way of bringing order and speed again into my world. 107.

At this point, at the turn of the thirties, entries like this one begin to increase in number in the diary. The list of their causes is long: illness, the ominous rise of fascism on the Continent, the changed atmosphere and drabness of the times, and, on a lesser level, the gradual despoliation by insensitive development of the rural England of which she was so fond. Sensitive to this, and to the deaths of some of those who had been close to her, Virginia Woolf became, as the diary shows, more frequently the victim of depression and self-isolation. Her art and her life now seem to diverge, for in the last two books, all that we have required here, in these conclusions about The Waves, was fulfilled: all the opposites are reconciled: the inner and the outer, art and life, male and female, the individual and society. And yet in spite of its optimistic conclusions, The Years communicates instead a distinct air of

106. W., 199 (241).
107. May, 1932. Diary, 181.

depression. In this respect, it is not being harsh to say that The Waves is perhaps Virginia Woolf's last totally honest book.

But, if this novel is taken on its own merits, rather than set in relation to the development of her other work, and to her life, then The Waves must be seen purely as the ambitious and inspiring achievement it undoubtedly is.

The sun was sinking. The hard stone of the day was cracked and light poured through its splinters. Red and gold shot through the waves ... Erratically rays of light flashed and wandered, like signals from sunken islands ... But the waves, as they neared the shore, were robbed of light, and fell in one long concussion, like a wall falling, a wall of grey stone, unpierced by any chink of light. (W., 147).

CHAPTER VIII.

A period of six years lies between the publication of The Waves and the appearance of Virginia Woolf's eighth novel The Years in 1937. During this time many changes had taken place in the world Bloomsbury knew well. For Virginia Woolf, as the years passed, the news of the deaths of near friends became more frequent. On the Continent, the threat of fascism was now firmly present. At home there was social and economic gloom. All this affected Mrs. Woolf: in the diary for 1932 she gives this account of her feelings at the time, six months before she started work on The Years:

> can't imagine what goes on behind faces. All is surface hard; myself only an organ that takes blows, one after another; the horror of the hard raddled faces in the flower show yesterday: the inane pointlessness of all this existence: hatred of my own brainlessness and indecision; the old treadmill feeling, of going on and on, for no reason: Lytton's death; Carrington's; a longing to speak to him; all that cut away, gone ... society; buying clothes; Rodmell spoilt, all England spoilt: terror at night of things generally wrong in the universe ... worst of all is this dejected barrenness. And my eyes hurt: and my hand trembles.
>
> A saying of Leonard's comes into my head in this season of complete inanity and boredom. "Things have gone wrong somehow." 1.

Out of this period of personal and social depression came a novel which conveys a profound sense of the pointlessness of human existence and of the impotence of human aspiration. This atmosphere the authoress communicates as much through the imagery as through the action: examples of unpleasant imagery recur again and again throughout the book. For instance, there is the claw-like hand of Colonel Pargiter, with its two missing fingers [2.], the white pock-marked face of the pervert who attempts to rape Rose [3.], the man who spits when he talks [4.], the proliferation of the red-brick villas [5.], the smelling sink which Eleanor

1. Diary, 180.
2. Y., 12.
3. Y., 28.
4. Y., 60.
5. Y., 67.

must sniff [6], and the violet-seller with the missing nose. [7] Even more oppressive are the various small but futile endeavours, doomed to frustration, which many of the characters undertake from time to time. Most poignant of these, perhaps, occurs on the occasion when the child Rose slips a bunch of violets on her mother's coffin, only to see the flowers fall off as it is carried away down the street [8], or, again, when Sara prepares roast mutton for North in the final section, and finds it underdone. [9] It is almost as if Virginia Woolf is attempting to assimilate and to resign herself to those occasions when ordinary life fails to conform to the perfection of art, by incorporating them into her own artistic creation.

On p. 205 there is almost an orgy of unpleasantness. Sara and Maggie are alone in their dingy flat, and Maggie is sewing a dress. A "little rhythm" in the book, the persistent sound of knocking, is heard in the street. It is the noise of a drunken man below, who, they guess, has lurched against the wall and been sick. The lights of the factory opposite blaze into the room. Above the sound of footsteps tapping on the pavement - another "rhythm" to denote the pedestrian ordinariness of present day life - comes the sound of someone crying "Death ...?". This almost symbolic occurence quickly becomes harsh reality, for it is the voice of a passer-by announcing the death of the king. Echoing Hamlet, Maggie expresses what she feels about their situation:

> "In time to come", she said, looking at her sister, "people, looking into this room - this cave, this little antre, scooped out of mud and dung, will hold their fingers to their noses" - she held her fingers to her nose - "and say 'Pah! They stink! " 10.

As both the imagery of this quotation and the title of the book indicate, The Years is more than just a chronicle of disgust at the ugliness of modern life. Virginia Woolf has placed an evolutionary intention at the centre of her novel: it is her purpose not to show merely the degradation of modern man, but also to indicate the possibilities

6. Y., 106.
7. Y., 253.
8. Y., 89.
9. Y., 342.
10. Y., 203.

inherent in the much brighter future to which his descendants will - hopefully - be heir. So as both the finale and the resolution of the final section will show, The Years is essentially intended to be an optimistic book.

Maggie's sewing, which she completes in the section quoted from above, is like that of Mrs. Ramsay and Helen Ambrose. It is a symbol of art and civilization. But there is a new skein: the ugliness of the modern world is accepted as part of the pattern. There will come a time, the authoress seems to say, when more civilized, better people will have dispensed with these uglinesses. But Sara, a child-being, who shells herself in dreams and refuses to grow up, cannot bring herself to accept. When she hears the knocking she calls out: "Bring up your children on a desert island where the ships only come when the moon's full!" Maggie replies ironically: "Or have none?" [11]. Maggie, maturer and wiser, realizes the necessity for continuing, for living in the real world, for the sake of the future.

Thus Sara's question at the beginning of the final section of the novel - "can we improve ourselves?" [12]. - echoes throughout the work. The evolutionary picture of man presented to us shows him to be a creature only half way along the road to civilization, still attempting to shake off the mistakes that encumber him, but with the possibility of a better world always before him. This is the central dichotomy presented in The Years: the contrast between the drab prosaic world of actuality and the ideal possible world of the imagination. Thus in this long work Virginia Woolf returns to the prime concern of her second book Night and Day - the opposition between the life of solitude and the life of society, between the external life of action and the inner life of imagination - and is able, she feels, to resolve it. As she herself records in her Diary, on P. 237, as she proceeds with the work: "The discovery of this book, it dawns upon me, is the combination of the external and the internal". She is seeking to show that man progresses by a kind of dialectic: by his continual attempt to bring together the

11. Y., 205.
12. Y., 339.

two worlds in which he lives, the actual and the ideal.

Eleanor, journeying through London, is conscious of these two worlds:

> The streets ... were horribly poor; and not only poor, she thought, but vicious. Here was the vice, the obscenity, the reality of London ... Parnell. He's dead, she said to herself, still conscious of the two worlds; one flowing in wide sweeps overhead, the other tip-tapping circumscribed upon the pavement. 13.

It is evident that even on the stylistic level, Virginia Woolf wished to combine the "inner" and the "outer" worlds in The Years. Exactly a month before recording the first plan of her new novel, Mrs. Woolf completed reading Winifred Holtby's recently published critical study of her work. [14] The study is favourable to the authoress, but Miss Holtby at one stage supposes that "the immense detailed knowledge of the material circumstances of life mastered by Thackeray or Arnold Bennett is beyond her." [15] As if accepting the challenge, and so resolving to write once again in conventional "external" fashion, Virginia Woolf notes in her diary that "there's a good deal of gold - more than I'd thought - in externality". [16]

By April 1933 (Diary, 197) she adds:

> I want to give the whole of the present society - nothing less: facts as well as vision. And to combine them both. I mean, The Waves going on simultaneously with Night and Day.

Stylistically, she combines the two worlds - facts and vision - by an adept use of syntax which allows her to compress thought and action into the same short sentence. An example is this economical description of Rose preparing to go out, which combines all these elements in one unit: "Now she had her pistol and her shot, she thought, taking her own purse from her own drawer, and enough provisions, she thought, as she hung her hat over her arm, to last a fortnight." [17]

However, the characters themselves only come to a realisation of the necessity for combining the "Campagna in the moonlight" and the

13. Y., 121.
14. Oct. 2, 1932. Diary, 190.
15. Virginia Woolf, 200-201.
16. Diary, 190.
17. Y., 26.

"Waterloo Road" [18] in the final part of the novel, entitled "Present Day". This last section is almost entirely taken up with an account of the party which all the central characters attend, and it is here, largely through the person of North, a nephew of Eleanor, who has returned from his sheep farm in Africa, that the antipathy between "night" and "day" becomes resolved.

North, going to fetch Sara to the party from her dingy apartment, tells her that the question he had recently discussed with her friend Nicholas on P.333 was "society or solitude; which is best". Later, on P. 365, he begins to read poetry to her. The lines are:

> Society is all but rude -
> To this delicious solitude ...

The reading is abruptly interrupted by the sounds of the Jew, a neighbour, who leaves hairs in the communal bath next door. Ugliness, and the world of actuality, Virginia Woolf is saying, break into the ideal world that is brought to life in the imagination by the work of art. And yet she no longer defends, as she did in Night and Day, the absolute supremacy of the "inner world", and thus - implicitly - of art as a means of escape. As the fact that the book concludes with a party should indicate, Mrs. Woolf now fully recognizes the necessity for existence in the external "social" world.

It is at the height of the party that North himself comes to this same knowledge. He is reminded, in a manner characteristic of many of Mrs. Woolf's characters, of words he has never heard. They were originally uttered by Sara more than twenty years earlier: fearing the visit of a stranger - the intrusion of "society" - she cries, on P. 177, that "This is the worst torture ... that life ..." The sentence is only completed by North 280 pages later, at the end of a private reverie in the midst of the party. This meditation begins as he contemplates a glass of wine:

> The wine was clear and still. Stillness and solitude, he thought to himself; silence and solitude ... that's the only element in which the mind is free now. [19]

18. Y., 184.
19. Y., 257.

At this point he is in the same position as Bernard, at the end of The Waves: he is drawn temporarily to Bernard's solution: that solitude is best.

But he soon feels that his private world is not satisfying on its own, and we see him moving towards a new stage: the acceptance of the external "actual" world as at least equally necessary and valuable as the "inner":

> And he was floating, and drifting, in a shallop, in a petal, down a river into silence, into solitude ... which is the worst torture, the words came back to him as if a voice had spoken them, that human beings can inflict ...
> "Wake up, North ... we want your speech!" a voice interrupted him. 20.

Sara's words from P.177 are used by North to affirm a meaning completely opposed to her own. Through North, we see life as a continuous movement from solitude to society, from experience to imagination and back to experience: "'Contrast,' he said, remembering something he had read. 'The only form of continuity,' he added at a venture." 21. Human beings progress, Virginia Woolf is therefore saying, rather like the man on P. 200 who after watching the opera by Wagner, appeared as if he was in "two worlds at once and had to draw them together." The history of civilization, she suggests, is a slow and painful process of bringing the almost intransigent actual nearer the ideal.

2.

The Years contains allusions to many of the themes current in Virginia Woolf's other books, but its central purpose is to show a family, the Pargiters, developing through three generations; and through the medium of this family to illustrate the social change which she had seen taking place during her own lifetime. More broadly, Mrs. Woolf wished her characters to embody her theories on the nature of human progress, on the scale both of the individual and of society. This is why she could record in her diary for 1932 that the novel "is first cousin to Orlando, though this cousin is of the flesh." 22.

20. Y., 457-8.
21. Y., 372.
22. Diary, 190.

The pattern of past-in-the-present recurrent in most of Virginia Woolf's work is carried on into the book's structure. This structure is itself organized in two halves: the first, dealing with the "past", covers the years from 1880 to 1918; the second, entitled "Present Day", is almost entirely given over to an account of a party in the 1930's at which all the characters are present, including members of the newest generation. Thus the last half is the "present" which arises out of the "past" of the previous section. In addition, the first part is concerned with action and description. The second is a "taking stock" of the meaning of the earlier. In this way the form of the book mirrors its dialectical intention: the movement from the "outer" to the "inner" world.

Virginia Woolf chose, as a symbol for the unsatisfactory and disappointing nature of her times, the figure of Antigone, Sophocles' heroine. This tragic character from the Greek drama reappears in various contexts throughout the book. When Edward first presents his translation of the play to his sister Sara, he cries out "my wasted youth". [23.] By the same token, Antigone herself comes to personify the unfulfilled promise of the three generations of Partigers, and thus of an entire age.

We feel the mood of this bleak age in the wind which, "revelling in sheer sterility" [24.], blows at the start of the 1908 chapter. It is symbolized also by the feet which Eleanor sees, when she looks out of the basement where she shelters during a bombing raid in 1917 [25.]: only the world "tapping circumscribed upon the pavement" seems to exist now. The age is accurately caricatured, in addition, in the game of Le Cadavre Exquis which is played at the party in the final section. The result of the game is a drawing with the head of a woman, the neck of a bird, a tiger's body and an elephant's legs. [26.] The most complacent and self-satisfied of the guests have been compared with just these creatures on earlier pages: Hugh's elephantine mediocrity [27.], Maggie's defense, like a tigress, of her family and possessions [28.]; the vulture-like

23. Y., 145.
24. Y., 157.
25. Y., 311.
26. Y., 420.
27. Y., 406.
28. Y., 409.

egotism of a young writer. [29] All these are likewise qualities of the present society. Man and society, Virginia Woolf is saying, still retain traces of their evolutionary origins, their animal forbears. The process is by no means complete.

This disillusionment of the authoress in the society about her extends even to contemporary manners. For example, she attacks the cliches and aphorisms which substitute for thought. These are compared to damp leaves by North on P. 405: "they fall and fall and cover all, he murmured to himself and looked at his aunt". [30] This is reminiscent of Bergson who holds that conventional and undigested ideas "float on the surface" of the mind "like dead leaves". [31] The image recurs towards the end of the party, on P. 446, where North is contemplating Eleanor's drink: "A thin green leaf floated on top of it." It is cliche and convention, Virginia Woolf suggests, which prohibit change and development; also it is the twin cliches of dogma and ideology which will bring Europe to war once again.

And yet all this revulsion, summed up by the quotations Peggy reads at random from a book she happens to pick up, is only one view the authoress presents of the human condition. What Peggy reads -"La médiocrité de l'univers m'étonne et me révolte ... la petitesse de toutes choses m'emplit de dégoût ... la pauvreté des êtres humains m'anéantit" [32] - must be balanced against the far more optimistic final attitude of Eleanor, the central figure. Towards the end, suddenly waking from sleep, she feels as if she had "been in another world". Someone criticizes her for talking of "other worlds".

> "But I meant this world!" "I meant, happy in this world - happy with living people." 33.

Virginia Woolf's basic humanism and her belief in the potentialities and in the future of human beings are in this novel given the final say. Her "ideal world" no longer has existence only in the individual imagination: it is capable of realization in the actual world of living people.

29. Y., 389.
30. See Y., 243.
31. Matter and Memory, 243.
32. Y., 413.
33. Y., 418.

On P. 142 Eleanor reads a quotation from a book: "the world is nothing but thought". She drifts off into a reverie, and tries to test the quotation. She feels she becomes an inanimate solid object: a tree.

> " - the sun shines through the leaves", she said, waggling her finger. She opened her eyes in order to verify the sun on the leaves and saw the actual tree standing out there in the garden.

The subject of the relationship of consciousness to its objects - the barrier between "inner" and "outer" as regards inanimate things - has already been extensively discussed in foregoing chapters - especially that on Jacob's Room - and needs no elaboration here. In this book the "solid objects" theme is once again woven into the pattern of the work. The central example is the ink-corroded miniature walrus that appears on a number of occasions.

> That solid object might survive them all. If she threw it away it would still exist somewhere or other. But she never had thrown it away because it was part of other things - her mother for example ... She drew on her blotting paper; a dot with strokes raying out around it. 34.

The reference is of course to the "double life of objects" theme discussed earlier in this study, and to the concept of a universe dominated by consciousness - a universe where each is part of the whole and there are no barriers. In The Years, in addition, this leads on to an examination of the nature of identity which resembles that in The Waves. However, in this novel the inquiry into identity is extended in two ways: it is given a social and an evolutionary dimension.

This new inquiry is initiated by Maggie and Sara, who, without contact with Eleanor, discuss the same quotation - "the world's nothing but thought" - in the course of conversation on P. 150.

> She had been thinking something of the kind ... Am I that, or am I this? Are we one, or are we separate - something of the kind.
>
> "Then what about trees and colours?" she said, turning round.
>
> "Trees and colours?" Sara repeated.
>
> "Would there be trees if we didn't see them?" said Maggie.
>
> "What's 'I'? ... 'I'..." she stopped. She did not know what she meant. She was talking nonsense.
>
> "Yes", said Sara. "What's 'I'?"

34. Y., 96.

The greatest threats to the growth of personality were, for Virginia Woolf, the isolation of the individual, and the multiplicity of the barriers to communication. The war comes in the book to symbolize the breakdown in communication which has taken place on both the national and the personal level. Sheltering in a basement during an air raid, Eleanor asks the foreigner Nicholas "About the new world ... D'you think we're going to improve?" [35]. He replies affirmatively, and attempts to show her the way in which this improvement will take place:

> "The soul - the whole being," he explained. He hollowed his hands as if to enclose a circle. "It wishes to expand, to adventure, to form - new combinations? ... Whereas now ... this is how we live, screwed up into one hard little, tight little - knot? ... Each is his own little cubicle ...

Maggie's speech makes clear that, as in The Waves and Jacob's Room, the problem posed is the relationship of the individual ego to other personalities: to what extent are they the same, and to what extent are they separable. Virginia Woolf's answer in all three books is that there is no distinct dividing line between one "self" and another, and that the human personality evolves and develops by becoming other people.

Thus, in its application to the identity theme, North's statement that "contrast" was the "only form of continuity" [36]. reminds us of Yeats's dichotomies - his "Michael Robartes" and "Owen Aherne" for example. Independently, Yeats and Virginia Woolf here agree: that individual human identity can evolve only by inwardly forming "new combinations" of its elements with those of the identities of other people. Eleanor - the redeemed and redeeming "Antigone" of the novel - recognizes this too during the party at the end. Mentally she tacitly refers back to the conversation with Nicholas given above, towards the end of a long meditation on the problem of personality - which also includes references to the "solid objects" extract previously quoted. Despite the scattered nature of these various passages, we may see by their textual dependance on one another, evident in the description of Eleanor's thoughts below, how closely Virginia Woolf intended her themes to be related:

35. Y., 319.
36. Y., 372.

> Millions of things came back to her. Atoms danced apart and massed themselves. But how did they compose what people called life ... Perhaps there's "I" at the middle of it she thought; a knot; a centre; and again she saw herself sitting at her table drawing on the blotting-paper, digging little holes from which spokes radiated ... And then they say, she thought, "We've been talking about you!" ... My life's been other people's lives, Eleanor thought - my father's; Morris's; my friends' lives; Nicholas's ... Fragments of a conversation with him came back to her. 37.

The picture of consciousness presented here seems rather like the "luminous nucleus" with its ever-changing accretions of the "myriad atoms" of experience. The important thing, Virginia Woolf stresses, is change - to become other people. Eleanor's mood above is thus to be understood in the light of her exclamation on P. 413: "It's been a perpetual discovery, my life." In her turn Peggy comes at the party to a realization of the importance for the individual personality of continual change and exploration [38], and North too privately affirms the truth of her discovery: "... To live differently ... differently".

The image for this new conception of the evolution of ordinary human personality is provided for North by a glass of wine: he thinks of the rising fountain, a Bergsonian symbol for the élan vital: the fountain is an appropriate image, for its substance, made out of the fluid around it, continues to change while its form remains the same. This is also true of personality, the authoress feels: it must continually change by assimilating all that is valuable to it in the life of the world around it.

> For him a life modelled on the jet (he was watching the bubbles rise), on the spring, on the hard, leaping fountain: another life; a different life ... why not down barriers and simplify? But a world, he thought, that was all one jelly, one mass, would be a rice pudding world ... To keep the emblems and tokens of North Pargiter - the man Maggie laughs at ... but at the same time spread out, make a new ripple in human consciousness, be the bubble and the stream, the stream and the bubble - myself and the world together - he raised his glass. 39.

37. Y., 395-6.
38. Y., 421.
39. Y., 442-3.

4.

I have attempted to show here the two different concepts of personal and thus social evolution with which The Years is concerned: the constant necessity that the individual should progress by becoming people other than himself (while outwardly remaining himself); and the continual dialectical movement from the ideal to actuality, from imagination to action. With The Years, as I have tried to demonstrate, both "inner" and "outer" states are for the first time accepted as being equally important.

Both these conclusions underly the thoughts of the characters in the party of the final section, as they try to grope towards some articulation of what they feel. The use of the party as a device is particularly appropriate, for it helps to indicate the social application of the basic themes. In her diary, Virginia Woolf describes her own method with the many characters in these final pages: "It's obvious that one person sees one thing and another another; and that one has to draw them together. Who was it who said through the unconscious one comes to the conscious, and then again to the unconscious?" 40.

It is interesting to note that in attempting with each work to find a fresh form for her vision, Mrs. Woolf was consciously following her own prescription as to the true method of change and progression. Writing of The Years, she says: "I have to some extent forced myself to break every mould and find a fresh form of being, that is of expression, for everything I feel or think. So that when it is working I get the sense of being fully energised ... I am breaking the mould made by The Waves." 41. It is evident that she appears to think of each new work also in terms of her own personal development.

Eleanor herself recognizes the necessity for continually creating out of life new and different "wholes" - moments which approach the perfection of art - with the accent now placed on the necessity for each "whole" to be different.

> Directly something got together, it broke. She had a feeling of desolation. And then you have to pick up the pieces, and make something new, something different. 42.

40. Diary, 239.
41. Op. cit., 22o.
42. Y., 423.

This third dialectic, concerning both art and life, is symbolized in the novel by the beat of the lighthouse [43.], a ship padding through the waves, or a train swinging from side to side down the track, [44.] and by the recurrent "little rhythm" of persistent knocking or hammering: in the close at Oxford, the knocking outside Maggie and Sara's flat, or the hammering of Siegfried. [45.] Eleanor, on this theme, begins to see this kind of progression as part of some larger pattern.

> Does everything then come over again a little differently? She thought. If so, is there a pattern; a theme, recurring like music; half remembered, half foreseen? ... a gigantic pattern, momentarily perceptible? The thought gave her extreme pleasure: that there was a pattern. But who makes it? Who thinks it? [46.]

The use of the device of the "little rhythm" perfectly parallels, in its effect, such a conception of history. This notion of the nature of history, and the expression of this conception given above, recalls the similar thought in T.S. Eliot's later "Four Quartets":

> I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant...
> That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or
> a lavender spray
> Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret.

The two artists are probably united here in a common debt to Bergson, Bradley and William James.

It is once again Eleanor who introduces the final phase of the book. Grouping the elements of the various conversations together, she half-consciously begins to prepare a moment of "wholeness" which will bring the various themes together and form the resolution of all that has gone before; she moves from the "actual" to the "ideal" world, and has there a glimpse of truth. What she sees is expressed in terms which still recall after all the years the philosophy of G.E. Moore: "She felt, or rather saw, not a place, but a state of being, in which there was real laughter, real happiness, and this fractured world was whole; whole and free. But how could she say it?" [47.]

43. Y., 2.
44. Y., 229.
45. Y., 72, 204, 200.
46. Y., 398.
47. Y., 420.

She drifts off to sleep, and, waking again, she is filled with happiness: "Was it because this had survived - this keen sensation (she was waking up) and the other thing, the solid object - she saw an ink-corroded walrus - had vanished? She opened her eyes wide. Here she was; alive; in this room; with living people." 48.

Nicholas again attempts to finish his speech of thanks, but his effort is as vain as that of Antigone. His speech remains as incomplete, the authoress implies, as the history of human progress. Eleanor hears incomplete sentences, too, from North and Edward. North is talking about "the chorus -" (i.e. other people). Edward is saying that if he'd had his way he would have been not a scholar but something else, unnamed: this comment on his identity Edward likewise leaves unfinished. Moved to thought partly by what she hears, Eleanor articulated the final resolution of the novel, the truth for which all the characters have been searching:

> There must be another life, she thought, sinking back into her chair, exasperated. Not in dreams; but here and now, in this room, with living people ... she was just about to grasp something that evaded her. There must be another life, here and now, she repeated. This is too short, too broken. We know nothing, even about ourselves. We're only just beginning, she thought, to understand, here and there ... She held her hands hollowed; she felt that she wanted to enclose the present moment; to make it stay; to fill it fuller and fuller, with the past, the present and the future; until it shone, whole, bright, deep with understanding. 48.

Immortality and the ideal life, she realizes, are eternally and indistinguishably part of the temporal and actual life: they are part of a universal consciousness which exists forever in the present. It is only with and in other people, living people, that one may consider that one is living truly and completely, she concludes. But the "moment" of revelation. like individual life itself, does not last:

> It's useless, she thought, opening her hands. It must drop. It must fall. And then? she thought. For her too there would be the endless night; the endless dark. She looked ahead of her as though she saw opening in front of her a very long dark tunnel ... in fact it was growing light. 49.

48. Y., 460.
49. Y., 461-2.

In the imagery Eleanor uses in this quotation, we see Night and Day at last combined.

The Years thus concludes on a note of optimism and hope. Two youngsters off the street are brought in to sing a song. They represent the future, but their song is unintelligible. It is frightening and harsh, yet Maggie and Eleanor both find it at the same time oddly beautiful.

As the sun rises the group of guests stand in the window: they represent for us the past generation looking into the future. At last, Delia thanks everyone for coming; but in the heightened terms of this final sequence, it is evident that she is thanking them simply for being.

The guests leave. Eleanor turns to Morris, and, appropriately enough in a novel examining the nature of human progress, her final words to him are: "And now?" 50.

*

Perhaps the best summary of what Virginia Woolf was trying to convey in The Years is provided by her friend E.M. Forster as he attempted to assess her character in a lecture given at Cambridge after her death:

> Though she could not be called an optimist, she had, very profoundly, the conviction that the mind is in action against matter, and is winning new footholds in the void. That anything would be accomplished by her or in her generation, she did not suppose, but the noble blood from which she sprang encouraged her to hope. 51.

50. Y., 469.
51. Virginia Woolf, 20.

Now the sun had sunk. Sky and sea were indistinguishable. (W., 167).

CHAPTER IX.

In March 1941 Virginia Woolf committed suicide by drowning herself in the River Ouse. Her body was washed out to sea. She left behind her the manuscript of a last novel, Between the Acts, which had not been finally revised at the time of her death.

The narrative of this last book is woven around the annual pageant at Pointz Hall, a country manor. Most of the village people take part in the play, which turns out to be an extended series of tableaux from English tradition and culture, devised and directed by the mysterious authoress, Miss La Trobe. The rest of the neighbourhood are invited to the performance, which is placed on its own as the centre of the book. Before it begins and in the intervals between the scenes, we follow the fortunes of a handful of equally important characters: the religious Mrs. Swithin and her atheist brother Bart, the unfaithful Giles Oliver and his romantic wife Isa, Mrs. Manresa, "the wild child of nature" [1] (almost a twentieth-century "Wife of Bath") - and William Dodges, a homosexual. These individuals - all temperamental opposites - form different groupings during the course of the play, and separate once more after its finale.

It is generally acknowledged that Between the Acts deserves to stand with To the Lighthouse and The Waves as one of Virginia Woolf's most important accomplishments. However, this last book defies an interpretation of the sort that was possible with the other novels, for it most of all fulfils Mrs. Woolf's requirement - mentioned in the Introduction to this study - that philosophy and novel be indistinguishable.[2] It is really a unified statement of the authoress's entire mature view of the nature of consciousness, civilization and tradition, conceived on a scale that is practically universal: Between the Acts attempts to comprehend everything that the authoress knows and has concluded about humanity and the universe, in some way within its pattern. The brief

1. B.A., 122.
2. "The Novels of George Meredith", Collected Essays I, 230.

moment of a rather comic and - for all its ideals - imperfect amateur theatrical, taking place at a definite point in time before the Second World War, becomes, in this book's terms, a microcosm of all history and all conscious life.

This work is thus so rounded and the parts so interdependent that it would be extremely difficult to separate out any piece from the rest. It is true that the novel may be read simply at the surface level as a comedy, and yet it takes on many further dimensions of meaning if interpreted in the light of the authoress's overall intention. In addition, there is a new and persistent element which helps to fuse the novel into a single whole: the element of humour. Between the Acts is a continuously humorous book, and all the authoress's personal pretensions and attitudes are throughout subjected to her own irony and wit. The novel both parodies itself and yet defends what it parodies; for ordinary human ideas, theories and aspirations, though commendable, are inevitably imperfect, the authoress feels. At the same time, she presents her view, for what it is worth.

This, then, is the ambition behind Between the Acts: that it should be on a deeper level a composite view, a microcosm, of all that the authoress sees to be important in the composition of past or present society. Going even further, this novel, as the following extract from the diary for 1938 makes clear, was to express the authoress's final acceptance of what may be called an almost "global" view of society as if it were itself a living unit; and, ultimately, the rejection of what she had come to hate: the egotism of human identity.

> "I" rejected: "We" substituted: to whom at the end shall there be an invocation? "We" ... the composed of many different things ... we all life, all art, all waifs and strays ... somehow unified whole - the present state of my mind? 3.

What Virginia Woolf hoped to achieve in Between the Acts was her ultimate example of the "formed" work of art, which yet contained within itself another work of art - the pageant - to typify, in terms of

3. Diary, 239.

its function, all that the artistic object ideally should be. Thus, in a self-critical attempt at the ideal, the novel tries to be what Rhoda saw in the loop of the figure on the blackboard in the early part of The Waves: something that begins to "fill with time" and "holds the world in it" [4.], that, like Rhoda, seeks to escape "the antics of the individual" by spreading "in wider and wider circles of understanding that may at last ... embrace the entire world". [5.]

This is, of course, an extremely ambitious intention, and there are certain obvious obstacles to its fulfilment. The highly robust and very nearly self-sufficient main plot yet proceeds at the service of a philosophic generalization. Consequently, its main method must be that of synechdoche: the "part" (e.g.: the "audience") representing the "whole" (us, the readers; humankind). As a result, we inevitably feel as if in certain parts the library catalogue is being substituted for the library itself. Between the Acts is intended to be a review of the entire human situation - an example of a precedent might be the way that this is sometimes claimed for The Iliad, where the pastoral content of Homer's metaphors balances the scenes of war. However, the novel can only be satisfactorily viewed as Virginia Woolf's most comprehensive and most ostensibly objective personal assessment of the nature of all the world about her.

In service of this aim, then - of making this book stand for all life - the historical pageant is, on one level, obviously enough a way of including the element of the past in a statement meant to be all-inclusive. It is a device to bring "the past" into "the present", in order to show that past and present are indistinguishable; that the past continues to exist in the present by its continuing effect on it - and is as such an example of a pattern in Mrs. Woolf's works with which we have now become familiar. But the pageant owes its inclusion not simply to its function as a "time-device" and as a dim reflection of the ideal in art: if, as Between the Acts suggests, change is illusory, is only

4. W., 15.
5. W., 158.
6. See Chapter VIII.

"fashion", and all present time is a repetition of past time in a new guise, then the temporally limited work of art may, if comprehensive enough, on a broad plane indicate the essence of all time and all experience.

Another reason for this book's aim of symbolizing the elements of all experience lies in the connection Virginia Woolf saw between art and immortality. She recognized that the prime characteristic of the immortal was that it was timeless, and yet comprehended all space and time. To this novelist, in ideal terms the same claim could be made for the perfect work of art, for it was - ideally - timeless, and yet implied the historic influences inevitably acting upon its creator. Thus it would become a receptable both of its past and - to this deterministic view - of the future, potential within it. So, for Virginia Woolf, as we shall see, the only experience of immortality available to ordinary people in everyday life lay in the contemplation of works of art. Also, since the work of art reflects society - is as much made up of society as of its creator - it is, in Mrs. Woolf's sense, the guarantor of society's immortality. Hence the importance of completeness.

So in an attempt at the greatest possible comprehensiveness, Virginia Woolf incorporates into her own work of art not only the work of art itself - epitomised by the pageant - but also its audience. The result of the synthesis of audience and art-work is the formation of a new whole: the novel itself.

This is what Between the Acts represents, seen in its place in her creative development: it is her attempt at a "final synthesis", at a generalization large enough to include society, the world and its contraries, and all she had learnt of them.

2.

One may agree with James Hafley, who contends that Mrs. Woolf does not have "a strong historical sense, though she has a strong sense of time. The scenes in the pageant catch the mannerisms, not the spirit

of the Ages they review." [7] And yet, going further, one may perceive that to this novelist all that is important about history is what it tells us about time - she makes no claim to "historical sense". Secondly, she is making precisely this point - that all that distinguishes one age from another is its mannerisms: human nature, underneath, remains the same: consciousness itself, always in the present, remains unchanged in essence. Understood in these two ways, it may be perceived that Between the Acts is filled with history, and with prehistory: with a sense of the past eternally impinging upon the present.

When the book opens, for example, Mrs. Swithin is reading an Outline of History, and imagining iguanodons and mammoths in Piccadilly Circus, "from whom, presumably ... she thought ... we descend." [8] She mentions this again on P. 38, when Isa is wondering how far they are from the sea. The waves, of course, once again represent the recurring and ever-present tides of history: they recall the primaeval and barbaric beginnings out of which human beings have evolved. Even the cows who interrupt the play on P. 165 bring the past into the work of art: "It was the primaeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment."

The element of the past is brought to the performance not only in the play, but by the audience who might answer: "Adsum; I'm here, in place of my grandfather or great-grandfather". [9] More than representing their own lineage, each person is a product of the entire history of their country, and this is like the actor on P. 94 who is able to say "England am I".

Isa in her own way becomes aware of this pressure that the past places upon her:

> "That was the burden", she mused, "laid on me in the cradle; murmured by waves; breathed by restless elm trees; crooned by singing women; what we must remember; what we would forget." 10.

Even a cracked gramaphone record reminds the audience of time:

> Tick, tick, tick the machine continued.
> "Marking time", said old Oliver beneath his breath.
> "Which don't exist for us", Lucy murmured. "We've only the present."
> "Isn't that enough?" William asked himself. Beauty - isn't

7. The Glass Roof, 372.
8. B.A., 13.
9. B.A., 92.
10. B.A., 132.

> that enough? But here Isa fidgeted ... "No, not for us, who've the future", she seemed to say. The future disturbing our present. 11.

In this way the "work of art" contains within itself not only the present, in which it exists, but also the past and the future. It also contains within itself all previous works of art, as Mrs. Manresa discovers: '"Was it an old play? Was it a new play?" No one answered."[12.]

This continuity is not only applicable to the nature of works of art. People themselves do not in essence change: present time - the present age - is only the return of past time with slight variation. The audience, chattering among themselves between the scenes, discuss this: "D'you think people change? Their clothes of course ... But ourselves - do we change?" [13.] The audience is, in one sense, always the same audience.

Why, then, is there the appearance of change? Social change, Mrs. Woolf answers, results from life's inability to attain the ideal of perfection discoverable in the present only in the perfection of form of works of art:

> ... change had to come, unless things were perfect; in which case she supposed they resisted Time. Heaven was changeless.
> ... Tick, tick, tick went the machine in the bushes.
> "The Victorians", Mrs. Swithin mused. "I don't believe" she said with her odd little smile, "That there ever were such people. Only you and me and William dressed differently." 14.

Miss La Trobe, the authoress, herself becomes aware at the end of the performance of a completely new work of art that she feels is arising out of the old: she senses that her present play contains the germ of all her future plays: "Another play always lay behind the play she had just written." [14.]

Not only the element of time, present, past and future, is brought into the novel, but geographical space as well: Mrs. Swithin, gazing into the pond, sees in the lily-pads and shadows the various continents of the world. [15.]

11. B.A., 100.
12. B.A., 130.
13. B.A., 144.
14. B.A., 203.
15. B.A., 239.

Further dimensions are introduced on the literary plane: Mrs. Woolf experiements with levels of reality. The audience are made part of the pageant of English history by the introduction of ten minutes of present time at the end, during which nothing happens: the audience, chattering among themselves, are the only actors. [16] On P. 192 real swallows fly across the back-drop and blend in with it. There is also the evident paradox that we as readers are both spectators of the play within the novel, and audience to the audience within the work of art itself. We ourselves form the third plane of reality in the novel.

3.

In addition to its aim of synthesising the major universals of experience, such as time, space, history, society, and art, into a single artistic work, Between the Acts continues the evolutionary theme that the authoress took up in The Years: the book itself represents the synthesis of a kind of dialectic Virginia Woolf saw operative in human life. In essence, this dialectic is based upon the standard Hegelian pattern of development through opposites; but Mrs. Woolf applies the same pattern to her own world of literature, to social change, and to her abiding concerns.

The diary shows the development of these ideas in her own mind. She begins, for instance, to see a contrasting pattern in the history of English letters: an age of discovery followed by an age of satire: "The age of understanding: the age of destroying - and so on." [17] Some months later, planning her new novel - Between the Acts - she deliberates on this theme: "I see that there are four? dimensions: all to be produced, in human life: and that leads to a far richer grouping and proportion. I mean: I; and not I; and the outer and the inner - no I'm too tired to say". [18]

This theme of the conflict of opposites - especially those of imagination and action, the individual and society, consciousness and the universe - has of course always been one of Virginia Woolf's preoccupations,

16. B.A., 209-210.
17. P. 247.
18. Diary, 259.

especially after To the Lighthouse, where Mrs. Ramsay comes to symbolize the synthesis that art effects: " a sort of transaction went on between them, in which she was on one side and life was on another, and she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was of her; and sometimes they parleyed (when she sat alone); there were, she remembered, great reconciliation scenes." [19.] Bernard, likewise, in The Waves, as we have seen, came to think of the shadowy Percival as his opposite: Percival represented all that was necessary to complete him. But in Between the Acts Mrs. Woolf brings these lines of her reasoning together, and presents her novel as the embodiment of the idea of the "synthesis" which yet contains all the opposites that compose it. In addition, what is especially important is that she here brings together two opposites, artist and audience, in a single work of art.

The reason for this is that Between the Acts is the culmination of her own prolonged meditation on the role of the artist in society. Virginia Woolf, as we have seen, originally felt that the life of action and the imaginative life were as entirely opposed as were society and the individual artist: this is the theme of both Night and Day and Mrs. Dalloway. More and more, however, she began to seek a reconciliation between these opposites. In her essay "Middlebrow", [20.] published during the 1930's, she divides society up into two sorts of people, each equally dependent on each other. In society, one may be either a highbrow: "the man or woman of thoroughbred intelligence who rides his mind at a gallop across country in pursuit of an idea"[21.], or a lowbrow: "a man or a woman of thoroughbred vitality who rides his body in pursuit of a living at a gallop across life." [22.] In other words, a man of thought or a man of action. Both are equally necessary to each other.

> You have only to stroll along the Strand on a wet winter's night and watch the crowds lining up to get into the movies. These lowbrows are waiting, after the day's work to ... sit in hot theatres in order to see what their lives look like. And the highbrows, of course, are the only people who can show them. Since they are the only people who do not do things, they are the only people who can see things being done ... one is the complement and other side of the other! 23.

19. T.L., 95.
20. Collected Essays II, 196-203.
21. Op. cit., 196.
22. Op. cit., 197.
23. Op. cit., 198.

Thus when Bartholomew says "Our part ... is to be the audience"[24] he is conceiving the audience as having an integral role in the play as such, and also in the play that is life. This is part of the multiple ambiguity of the book's title: Between the Acts refers to the happenings between the acts of the play; it also implies that, dialectically, life is periodically interrupted by the scenes, the "acts" of creation which reflect it; further, the title directs our attention to the periods of contemplation, imagination and artistic creation which lie between the actions of ordinary life. In this dialectical pattern "the audience" and "the play" are two complimentary parts, active and passive in turn. The mirrors which are directed at the audience at the end of the pageant on P. 216 are symbolic of this relationship: we learnt on P. 26 that books are "the mirror of the soul"; in the same way the play is the reflective representation of life. And, as the final words of the book - "the curtain rose" [25] - should indicate, we ourselves are seen, on a new level, as being both passive spectators - audience of the work of art we are reading - and actors in the pageant that is life itself, which the book reflects, and which we take part in when we put the book down.

In this manner Between the Acts reiterates over and over again the theme of the necessity for the existence of opposites and for their reconciliation. Mrs. Woolf's own classical antinomies - masculine, feminine; intellect, feeling; analysis, synthesis; society, the artist; action, imagination; night, day; granite and rainbow - all of them related, are now seen in a Bradleian way to be necessary parts of a single whole. The authoress, with time, has achieved "distance" from her subject, life; she has gained objectivity, and is now able to see that all these opposites - together with those of chaos and order, flux and form, time and the moment, life and art, audience and artist - are all subsumed into the whole: are all necessary and interdependent elements in the metaphysical unity that is life. As the old woman recites, half way through the pageant, "all's one now, summer or winter." [26]

24. B.A., 73.
25. B.A., 256.
26. B.A., 107.

The dialectic itself - and all these above oppositions - are ultimately reducible to a single pattern, as Isa, watching the pageant, seems to realise: "The plot was only there to beget emotion. There were only two emotions: love; and hate." [27] On the next page, a character cries out: '"My love! My lord!" "It was enough. Enough. Enough", Isa repeated. All else was verbiage, repetition." A little later, she adds a third emotion to the first two: " Peace was the third emotion: Love. Hate. Peace. These emotions made up the ply of human life." [28] This, then, is the dialectical pattern as Mrs. Woolf sees it: a thesis, creation, unifying, "forming"; followed by the antithesis: destruction and disintegration. After the conflict of these two opposing forces comes a brief synthesis, a momentary "peace", a momentary stasis. In the final passage of the book, Isa, alone with Giles, recalls her earlier meditation:

> Alone, enmity was bared; also love. Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night. 29.

This dialectical pattern applies to the characters of the other figures in the book, as well. For example, Bartholomew and his sister Mrs. Swithin are opposites, just as Isa and Giles are, for he is an atheist, she is religious. Bartholomew, contemplating his sister, thinks: "She was thinking, he supposed, God is peace. God is love. For she belonged to the unifiers; he to the separatists." [30]

> Fish had faith, she reasoned... But her brother would reply "That's greed." "Their beauty!" she protested. "Sex", he would say ... He would carry the torch of reason till it went out in the darkness of the cave. For herself, every morning, kneeling, she protected her vision. 31.

On P. 204, we see the nature of Lucy Swithin's "one-making", which contrasts so much with the activity of her brother's temperament. The vision, although parodied, is not unlike Virginia Woolf's own:

27. B.A., 109.
28. B.A., 111.
29. B.A., 255-6.
30. B.A., 140.
31. B.A., 24.
32. B.A., 204.

> Mrs. Swithin caressed her cross. She gazed vaguely at the view. She was off, they guessed, on a circular tour of the imagination - one-making. Sheep, cows, grass, trees, ourselves - all are one. If discordant, producing harmony - if not to us, to a gigantic ear attached to a gigantic head. And this - she was smiling benignly - the agony of the particular sheep, cow, or human being is necessary; and so - she was beaming seraphically at the gilt vane in the distance - we reach the conclusion that all is harmony could we hear it. And we shall. 32.

Both opposites, Lucy and Bart, are treated with like sympathy: both are equally valuable.

Art represents the synthesis in this dialectic of opposites. Like Mrs. Ramsay, bringing together conflicting elements, art is the permanent result of the brief moment of peace and unity in human life. The audience tacitly recognizes this as they listen to the music: "Music wakes us. Music makes us see the hidden, join the broken." 33.

But in life, a disintegration must inevitably follow: the sense of form must break. As the audience leaves at the end of the pageant, the gramophone in the bushes repeats over and over again: "Dispersed are we". As the people disappear, the turntable gradually slows to a halt:

> The gramophone gurgled Unity - Dispersity. It gurgled Un ... dis ... and ceased. 34.

4.

The dialectical theme of Between the Acts has a further, and most important dimension: its application to the problem of identity. What Virginia Woolf is attempting to show us in this novel is that, as we learned from The Waves, each person has in them the potentiality to be everyone else. It is the pressures of our everyday existence which impose on us the necessity for choosing a particular personality, she maintains. Thus each person contains untapped within themselves their opposite. Just as Bernard looked upon Percival as his opposite - all the people he was not - so in Between the Acts Mrs. Woolf sees individual man's experience as being limited by what he is not. Man, in the

32. B.A., 204.
33. B.A., 143.
34. B.A., 235.

Yeatsian manner, needed to become his "opposite" to become "everyone else": this she finds to be the ultimate aim and purpose of communication. And thus this theme of the completion by opposites is a central feature of the dialectic presented in her last novel.

Each person in the book has a hidden person within themselves: on P. 69 Bartholomew, despite his age, becomes under the influence of champagne a "benign old man"; Mrs. Manresa, equally despite her age, is a "wild child of nature". Giles dresses like a cricketer, and Isa is a repressed poet. Everyone supposes William Dodges to be an artist, and even the sheep's thigh bone on P. 55, recovered from the pool, is supposed really to be that of a lady who drowned herself for love.

But these hidden personalities are not entirely imprisoned. It is art that frees identity from the restrictions of "self", Mrs. Woolf maintains. Fiction, by causing us to identify with other characters and other lives than our own, enables us to fulfil ourselves by exercising all those different potentialities which lie dormant within our personalities. On P. 112 Mrs. Manresa feels that she is the Queen in the play; she sees Giles as the surly hero. And when the performance ends for the interval, the audience "felt - how could one put it - a little not quite here or there. As if the play had jerked the ball out of the cup; as if what I call myself were still floating unattached, and didn't settle. Not quite themselves they felt." [35]

We see exactly what this peculiar liberating function of art entails, when audience and artist confront each other during the interval, in the persons of Mrs. Swithin and Miss La Trobe:

> Their eyes met in a common effort to bring a common meaning to birth. They failed; and Mrs. Swithin, laying hold desperately of a fraction of her meaning, said: "What a small part I've had to play! But you've made me feel I could have played ... Cleopatra!"
>
> ... "I might have been - Cleopatra," Miss La Trobe repeated. "You've stirred in me my unacted part", she meant. [36]

Between the acts of life in which we take part, Mrs. Woolf means, we are passive, the audience to the work of art. In escaping action or speech we escape the need to be any one individual entity: "O Lord,

35. B.A., 175.
36. B.A., 179.

protect and preserve us from words the defilers, from words the impure! What need have we of words to remind us? Must I be Thomas, you Jane?" (P. 222). And thus in escaping personality we fulfil our personalities, since the need for distinction disappears. We lay ourselves open to acting, in spirit, any of the roles with which we are confronted.

Even the interpreter, the critic, is parodied in the person of the priest who says a few words at the conclusion. He does however, despite his pomposity, make some accurate judgments:

> To me at least it was indicated that we are members one of another. Each is part of the whole ... We act different parts; but are the same. That I leave to you. 37.

The pageant, the work of art, thus comes again to constitute a synthesis: it bridges the gap between the single "self" and all consciousness.

So the individual, for Mrs. Woolf, is not restricted to the confines of his own personality. As Mrs. Swithin explains: "'we have other lives, I think, I hope," she murmured. "We live in others, Mr ... We live in things."' 38. Thus the importance of the artist to the audience, and the audience to the artist: at least to Virginia Woolf, they are in a real sense the guarantors of each others' immortality.

5.

In Between the Acts, the poetry that continually runs through Isa's brain exhibits a discordant and disturbing element. Treated in a spirit of parody, it is not meant to be good poetry. All the imagery it contains, however, has to do with escapism and death. Meditating on the chant "Dispersed are we", Isa contemplates death by drowning, and wishes, as Rhoda in The Waves did, "That the waters should cover me":

> "There", Isa mused, "would the dead leaf fall, when the leaves fall, on the water. Should I mind not again to see may tree or nut tree? Not again to hear on the trembling spray the thrush sing, or to see, dipping and diving as if he skimmed waves in the air, the yellow woodpecker?" 39.

In March 1941, before Between the Acts was finally revised, Virginia Woolf drowned herself in the River Ouse near her home. She left the following note for her husband, Leonard Woolf:

37. B.A., 224.
38. B.A., 86.
39. B.A., 124-5.

> I feel certain that I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those horrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I hear voices and cannot concentrate on my work. I have fought against it, but cannot fight any longer. I owe all my happiness in life to you. You have been perfectly good. I cannot go on and spoil your life. 40.

With an artist who, as we have seen in this study, had so long used the symbol of the waves and of water to represent her sense of the continuance of life, of the arising of the individual from the waves and his absorption back into the sea of universal consciousness, the symbolic implications of her own act of suicide surely cannot help but suggest themselves to her readers. In dying as she did, Virginia Woolf succumbed to the pressures of her life and of her own metabolism. Yet, familiar with her symbols as we now are, it seems possible to suggest that in this last act of annihilation, she succeeded, paradoxically, in uniting her life and her art; at any rate if these are to be understood in the light of her own general conclusions about life and art. This is the apparent difference between Isa's death-wish, and Mrs. Woolf's death:

Miss La Trobe, the authoress, left alone after the conclusion of her pageant, contemplates the nature of her achievement:

> She could say to the world, You have taken my gift! Glory possessed her - for one moment. But what had she given? A cloud that melted into other clouds on the horizon. It was in the giving that the triumph was ... If they had understood her meaning, if they had known their parts; if the pearls had been real and the funds illimitable - it would have been a better gift. Now it had gone to join the others. 41.

Yet suddenly a flock of starlings attack the tree under which she stands:

> The tree became a rhapsody, a quivering cacophony, a whizz and vibrant rapture, branches, leaves, birds syllabling discordantly life, life, life, without measure. 42.

She begins to plan her next play. The preparatory conception exactly parallels the ending of the book Between the Acts, to the moment when the curtain rises upon life - the life of reader and audience.

40. James Hafley, The Glass Roof, 6.
41. B.A., 244.
42. B.A., 245.

But further on than this Miss La Trobe feels unable to go. Alone, Miss La Trobe, the authoress, having imparted her gift, takes her leave.

> It was strange that the earth, with all those flowers incandescent - the lilies, the roses, and clumps of white flowers and bushes of burning green - should still be hard. From the earth green waters seemed to rise over her. She took her voyage away from the shore, and, raising her hand, fumbled for the latch of the iron entrance gate. 43.

43. B.A., 246.

The Waves broke on the shore. (W., 211).

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