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THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE OF VIRGINIA WOOLF: THE EXTERNAL WORLD IN HER NOVELS

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THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE OF VIRGINIA WOOLF:
THE EXTERNAL WORLD IN HER NOVELS

by

JANIS PAUL STEINFELD

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

The Victorian Heritage of Virginia Woolf:
The External World in Her Novels
Janis Paul Steinfeld

Woolf's Victorian background made her ambivalent towards the external world of time, place, history, society, physical phenomena, and language. The Victorian Age stressed factualism, time, and place, embracing society and rejecting individuality, emotion, and aestheticism. Woolf's father enforced these values; her mother added traditional femininity, physical beauty, and social role-playing.

Woolf's Modernist novels rebel against this heritage but also demonstrate her attraction to it. Her English novel criticism concentrates upon empirical facts, society and communication. Her novels are shaped by a dynamic of rebellion against, and return to, the external world. Time and place, especially setting, enforce this opposition. Characters rebel against society and language, discovering consciousness, self-definition, and "moments" of communication. But such ephemeral moments demand a disjunction from society allied with self-diffusion and death. Thus the characters return to civilization: the limited communication of society is all that exists in the external world. Woolf's novels structurally rebel and return to externality: her experimentation departs from traditional genres; characters are defined through social relations; her novels end with gestures of completion. Language and characters metafictionally expresses her ambivalence towards language: she distrusts its conventional limitations, but she
uses it to communicate.

Woolf's first five novels demonstrate her development towards a form expressing her ambivalence. *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* pose the themes of rebellion and return and the discovery of the inner world, but they employ traditional structures. *Jacob's Room* demonstrates the failure of traditional novels and heroes; nevertheless the narrator demonstrates the importance of society, language, and communication. *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* are mirror-images of Woolf's attitude towards externality. *Mrs. Dalloway* depicts an external culture; Clarissa vacillates between her isolated present and the communication of memory. She unifies her worlds at her party, and Woolf reiterates this unity in her own language. *To The Lighthouse* evokes an internalized, timeless milieu. Nevertheless, island and sea settings objectify opposite worlds, and Mrs. Ramsay creates her moment of communication through social conventions and language. Lily transforms that moment into art by communicating with Mr. Ramsay. Woolf's language expresses her own uncertainties about communication and the creative power of externality.
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J.P.S.
For my mother and father,

Anne and Abe Paul
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Literature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind, that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear, and save for one or two passions such as desire and greed, is null and negligible and nonexistent. On the contrary, the very opposite is true. All day, all night, the body intervenes.¹

I would give all my profound Greek to dance really well.²
CHAPTER I:

THE BACKGROUND: VICTORIANISM, EXTERNALITY, AND COMMUNICATION

Introduction

In the last twenty years or so, Virginia Woolf has taken an indisputable place as one of the masters of the Modernist novel. Her position is no longer tenuous, but it is idiosyncratic: a kind of patron saint of inner vision and consciousness, Woolf may be in some danger of floating away on her own waves. Any reader who has encountered Mrs. Ramsay's boeuf-en-daube concedes that Woolf could do a wonderful job of describing concrete, external phenomena when she chose to, but the consensus about her novels is that, ultimately, they trade the physical world for consciousness, life for a death wish, and character, plot, and setting for what Woolf called "reality."³

Certainly Woolf's unique vision of consciousness and reality, along with the language she used to communicate it, are hallmarks of her work. Certainly her literary manifesto, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," seems to deny the validity of the material world in favor of consciousness. And certainly, on the biographical side, she killed herself--unarguably an escape from life and the physical world. But a strong current of materiality also runs through Virginia Woolf's life and work. Her diary and letters illustrate that, despite her bouts of depression and insanity, she had tremendous joie de vivre. She loved the things of the world for their own sake, not just as springboards into consciousness. She was highly observant of the physical world; likewise she was attuned to the
political and social vicissitudes of her age and to the feel of English life and culture. Moreover, she seems to have existed mainly for the personal and social relationships that took up every moment not spent with her pen. Virginia Woolf was no disembodied, neurasthenic sylph, and she transmitted her strong attraction to the concrete world into everything she wrote.

In much of her literary criticism, Woolf asserts the importance of facts and things and of geography, history, and culture in the English novel. And in her own novels as well, she opposes to her inner world of consciousness an external world of physical, external, and social phenomena. I would like to explore that external world—the world of time, place, history, and society—its source, and its significance in Woolf's novels. As I will show, her Modernist explorations of consciousness are everywhere countered by these external, empirical roots in English fiction.

Most of Woolf's fiction implicitly tries to merge inner and outer realities: for her, the separation between self and other was something to be transcended in both life and art. To Woolf, individual consciousness and the universe outside consciousness constituted separate worlds—a word that I and other critics use to suggest the sense of separation she felt usually existed between internal perception and external phenomena. Her primary aim in life and in art was to transcend this separation: she wrote about "Moments of Being" and "semitransparent" states in her own life and in her characters' lives, brief "moments" in which she felt consciousness and the external world to be in complete communication. Her fiction, too, attempted to create
such moments of communication between her own consciousness and the world outside herself. But these moments of unity, she believed, were rare and ephemeral. Despite her intense desire for communication and wholeness, and despite her constant efforts toward realizing that desire, she felt that such extraordinary instances were transient flashes of insight in a life of essential disconnection.

Almost every critic at some point has recognized the separation between internal and external worlds in Woolf's novels. But the inner world of imagination, consciousness, and self has always been felt to dominate her vision. The vision emerges differently for different critics: for Harvena Richter, Woolf's novels are an "inward voyage," each a movement away from the outside world toward consciousness;\(^6\) to David Daiches, all external descriptions are "instigators of states of mind";\(^7\) for N.C. Thakur, concrete phenomena are symbols of inward states.\(^8\) Jean O. Love describes Woolf's novels as separate "worlds in consciousness" split off from external reality.\(^9\) Every critical reader since Forster has acknowledged Woolf's rich receptivity to external phenomena. But critics have always emphasized the nature of her reception rather than the phenomena she perceives. The factual world is always considered a springboard to an inner reality; it is never seen as an opposing force with equally strong attractions of its own. Dorothy Brewster uses Woolf's image of the globe as a symbol of the way that the external world becomes round and whole in consciousness.\(^10\) Both Herbert Marder and Nancy Topping Bazin define the outer/inner division as a masculine/feminine conflict; Marder concentrates on the feminine or intuitive side;\(^11\) Bazin sees both sides as merged in what Woolf called
"androgy nous vision."¹² Josephine O'Brien Schaefer identifies external phenomena as one of three distinct levels of reality in Woolf's work, but she believes that this tripartite vision fails in the last two novels.¹³ Geoffrey Hartman describes language as the external sign that attempts to reveal internal vision, but for him what is important is the void that exists between them.¹⁴ Feminist critics have examined Woolf's cultural influences and her political views, but have celebrated her concern with consciousness as a feminist "ethic of purity, pacifism, and privacy."¹⁵ Only James Naremore has recognized the extent to which the external world haunted Woolf—so much, he says, that she ran away from it to a world of self-diffusion and a wish for death. He points out the constant conflict between the forces of the physical world and consciousness, identity and selflessness, life and death. But finally, Naremore concentrates his analysis on the polarity he feels was most important to Woolf, the internal World Without a Self.¹⁶ Nowhere in Woolf, it would seem, according to her critics, does the physical, factual world exist for its own sake, separate from, and in opposition to, the internal states that it evokes.¹⁷

By exploring Woolf's conception of internal reality, critics have stressed her break with the past and have underscored her Modernity. But, as T.S. Eliot and Harold Bloom have noted, no writer's greatness is predicated entirely on his break with the past; every artist walks a tightrope between tradition and rebellion. Woolf categorized herself as a Georgian rebelling against the Edwardians; we have since broadened those conceptions into thinking of her as a Modernist rebelling against the Victorians. But there is a strong Victorian identification in her
novels, an identification manifested as a concern with the external world: a dependence upon the external factors of time, place, and history as social and cultural determinants of character and action, and, most important, a belief in the need for social communion and communication as the only defenses against the embrace of death and the terrors of the self. Thus, Woolf's novels are peopled with characters who live in English houses and stroll in English gardens, who walk streets and ride buses, who love and hate, marry and die. Her characters are always enmeshed in social relations; and so there are Austen-like parties, teas, and dinners, in which social manners manifest moral character. Although Woolf's novels seldom have traditional plots, they depend considerably upon the elements of setting, particularly time and place. Traditional time affects character and action as much as Bergsonian time does; it functions as the epochs of English history and as clock-time, which ticks away each present moment even as the mind tunnels inward. Furthermore, a strong sense of place emerges from the abundance of physical phenomena in each novel; and the social implications of place and setting actively influence character and action. Perhaps most important, all of Woolf's novels have summary endings—marriages, deaths, works of art, concluding statements—that enclose and circumscribe even the most open-ended experience. And the social imperative, the need for communication and unity among people, is the moving force behind each novel as well as the note upon which each novel ends. These characteristics, I believe, constitute the Victorian heritage in Virginia Woolf's Modernist novels. The external world of time, place, history, and society is, I will show, Woolf's personal Victorian
past transformed into the material of literature. Moreover, just as Woolf felt simultaneously attracted and repelled by the values of her own past, she expressed that ambivalence toward the external world in her fiction.

No writer except perhaps Ezra Pound considered himself as much in the vanguard of Modernism and theorized as much about the Modernist novel as Woolf. But, as is true with most rebels, her revolt was grounded in attraction: she fought as hard as she did against the conventions of the past because they pulled her back. Her personal rebellions against convention were mild and often disguised. That same ambivalence patterns her fiction: in each of her novels she posits some kind of rebellion against the world of English culture and tradition, and she ends with a return to that world, reaffirming the value of the external social order as the only means by which human beings can survive. Similarly, she departs from established novel forms, but she reaffirms the value of those forms in the traditional elements of her novels and in her emphasis on complete communication.

Woolf's dynamic of rebellion and return differs in each of her novels, and, as a consequence, each novel invests the external world with individual shape and significance. But, as I will show, everywhere in Woolf's life and work she perceived the same alliance of externality, society, and tradition, and she made these elements the point of departure for the internality and experimentation in her fiction. In her novels, the external world is always evident in the vivid sense of time and place and in the presence of society as a determinant of character. Furthermore, it is evident in the assumptions of the traditional English
novel, which underlie her experiments with form. And it is especially
evident in her endings, which, along with her unique use of language,
demonstrate her desire to communicate a traditionally unified vision.

In this study, I am considering Woolf's first five novels. These
works demonstrate her ambivalence towards the external world and her
development of a mature integration of that ambivalence into her art.
In her two early novels, form and theme are not unified. *The Voyage Out*
and *Night and Day* define physical reality and the social pressures of
the external world as impediments to freedom of consciousness and behav-
ior. But Woolf contradicts her assertion of the need for escape from
these impediments by demonstrating the importance of externality and
tradition in her formal novel structures and endings. Both novels
present heroines who wish to abandon their established social roles, but
they also, by definition, live in English society, fall in love, and
prepare to marry. And most important, despite their personal attempts
to escape, both heroines capitulate to social and novelistic tradition
by their Victorian fates of death and marriage. Thus, in Woolf's early
novels, her theme seems to conflict with her chosen form.

In her third novel, *Jacob's Room*, Woolf begins to integrate her
theme of escape from the external world with an accompanying escape from
traditional novel forms. By intentionally fragmenting her story, she
exposes the limitations of conventional plots, characters, and narrative
techniques, and demonstrates the demise of the Victorian novel. Never-
theless, along with her experiments in form, she also creates a narrator
who communicates much of what the rest of the novel lacks, and so she
again asserts the power of tradition and communication. *Jacob's Room*
begins to embody Woolf's ambivalence in a coherent way, but Jacob's story and the narrator's observations never quite merge into a unified statement.

In Woolf's first two novels, she presents ambivalent characters who wish to mediate between internal and external experience. Nevertheless, the novel structures do not take shape from the characters' two-sided experience; rather the novel structures are determined by the events of a plot which demands culmination in either death or marriage. In Jacob's Room, Woolf prefigures her future novels by creating a character who fails to participate in the structure of events placed before him. Nevertheless, the events take precedence, and Jacob's experience, too, terminates in death.

In contrast, Woolf's later novels are not structured by the events of a plot. Instead, the novels unfold according to the nature of the characters and their individual experience. Since the characters and experience continue to vacillate between internal and external worlds, that ambivalence now structures the novels. Thus Woolf integrates form and theme, reinforcing them with language, to create the unified, coherent vision that signifies her maturity as a novelist.

The formal and thematic unity that characterizes Woolf's best work begins with Mrs. Dalloway and is carried out through the rest of the novels. Although each novel has distinct qualities of form and language, all of them embody the same structural principle of ambivalence towards the external world. Among these works, I have chosen to concentrate my analysis upon Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse. For in these two novels, Woolf most clearly demonstrates her departure from
and return to externality, the dynamic through which she translates vision into form. Moreover, as I will show, these two novels view Woolf's reality from opposing poles. *Mrs. Dalloway* emphasizes external, *To The Lighthouse* internal characteristics. Examined together, they reveal two perspectives on the same reality, and they indicate the way that all of Woolf's later works, whether their emphasis is internal, as in *The Waves*, or external, as in *The Years*, communicate the same ambivalent vision. No mature novel embodies Woolf's complex universe more comprehensively or commandingly than her two major works. Their polar relationship and the single reality they formulate communicate the paradoxical concept of unity in multiplicity that lies at the heart of all the novels that follow them.

In *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*, Woolf integrates her ambivalence into the novels as a structural principle, illustrating throughout both the importance of individual consciousness and the value of externality and society. Clarissa Dalloway vacillates between the inner memory world of Bourton and the outer social world of London, and, in the end, she returns to the world of people, places, and things to create a moment of unity. Woolf underscores this unity by means of the single narrative thread that connects disparate elements into a coherent novelistic statement. Like *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To The Lighthouse* moves back and forth between its central characters' minds and their social relations. But because characters, setting, and event lean toward the abstract and symbolic, the novel seems to assert the primacy of inner experience. Nevertheless, that experience finds its expression in external reality, in social reunification and the completion of a work.
of art. And once again, Woolf reinforces that sense of completeness with her own language, which seems to emphasize isolation and lack of communication but ultimately affirms unity.

In all of her novels, Woolf questions the validity of the world outside the self, but at the end, she asserts the value of time, place, history, society, and things in themselves as the only mode of survival in life. Moreover, even in her most internalized, experimental works, the external world, and by extension, traditional novel forms, always exist as the implicit given from which to depart. The question of departure arises only because the external world exerts such undeniable influence. And this pattern characterizes Woolf's attitude towards her own art: although she constantly questioned the ability of her novels to communicate, she never stopped trying to embody in the external forms of art the substance of her personal vision.

Thus, as I will make clear, Woolf's Modernist impulses to explore consciousness and to break with traditional forms constituted her rebellion against her feeling of emphatic connection to the empirical traditions of English fiction as she herself defined them. As she matured, rather than breaking away from tradition, she integrated the opposing elements of tradition and rebellion. She came to understand her ambivalent relation to her own past and to transform it into art. Working on an early novel, she wrote, "My present feeling about this vague and dreamlike world, without love, or heart, or passion, or sex, is the only world I care about, and find interesting." Working on a late one, she wrote, "There's a good deal of gold--more than I'd thought--in externality." A study of the externality in Woolf's
novels—the physical, cultural, and social elements in her fiction—will demonstrate how solidly her work fits into the English novel tradition, which is where it belongs.

The Cultural Heritage: "Newbolt Men" and "Angels"

The opposition between internal and external worlds in Woolf's novels is only one manifestation of the sense of opposition that appears everywhere in her life and work. As David Daiches and other critics have pointed out, her work is characterized by duality: art and life, life and death, masculinity and femininity, the individual and society, among others.21 "Often," Woolf wrote, "I feel the different aspects of life bursting my mind asunder."22 This feeling of irresolution is part of the Modern temperament of her work, and underlying it, in part, as it does for so many early Moderns, is the conflict between the cultures of the two centuries during which she lived. Like the lives of Joyce, Eliot, Yeats, and Lawrence, Woolf's life spanned that remarkable gap between the Victorian and Modern ages. But for her, that span was considerably broader than it was for them, because she alone among them was born an upper-middle-class Victorian female. Reared in a nineteenth-century atmosphere of innocence, ignorance, and overprotection, she seems to have struggled continually in both her life and her work to come to terms with the influences of her past. But with her instinct for opposition and conflict, she was never able to put the past behind her with any facile gesture of rejection. Throughout her life, while she recognized the debilitating effects of Victorian society, especially
on women, she remained fascinated by it and attracted to it. Intellectually liberal, she remained socially a snob. And her novels--their subject matter, style, and development--embody the ambivalence of her struggle for liberation; they are incomplete attempts at rebellion and escape from the values of her Victorian past. The external and traditional points of reference in her novels are her literary transformation of the externality and tradition that characterized her personal past. For, as I will demonstrate, the Victorian world of Virginia Woolf’s childhood celebrated externality, factuality, and society; it subjected the needs of the individual to the needs of society, denied thought and feeling, and placed value mainly on outward appearances and empirical facts. Woolf’s fascination with individuality and consciousness asserted the importance of a part of human character that had been devalued and ignored in her childhood. Her breaking down of the traditional forms of fiction was a paradigm of the social forms she shattered when she traded the bluebloods of Kensington for the "buggers" of Bloomsbury.\textsuperscript{23} Indeed, her choice of fiction as her primary genre was itself a rebellion against the factualism of the biography, history, criticism, and philosophy her father had written and expected her to write. From childhood, Quentin Bell writes, language was Woolf’s chosen weapon.\textsuperscript{24} But although she styled herself and her sister "by nature explorers, revolutionists, reformers,"\textsuperscript{25} her own rebellion was always ambivalent, for her work retains a strong sense of Victorian values. And so, to begin with, I would like to explain exactly what those values consisted of.
"From my angle," Virginia Woolf wrote, "One approaches Bloomsbury through Hyde Park Gate." When Virginia Stephen was born in Kensington in 1882, Victorian conservatism and conformity had begun to give way to the gospel of aestheticism: Oscar Wilde, already a London celebrity, was on a lecture tour of the United States that year. But no such liberating force reached Virginia Stephen, who grew up in what she later called "a complete model of Victorian society." The temperament of the 1860's still held sway in the Stephen home, and, as Jerome Buckley and others have demonstrated, that temperament was manifested as a concern with empirical fact and its materialist implications. Materialism underlay the rise of a mercantile society; more important, it contributed to a general tenor of factualism that encouraged the denial of abstract values. "The Victorian rationalist had behind him the known and the knowable, the tangible evidence of the laboratory, the apparent and immediate drama of empirical research." For some Victorians, this consciousness translated into intellectual freedom; others felt it as spiritual loss. But whatever the consequences, the Victorian was enjoined to face facts. James Thomson's verse stated characteristically,

If we could near them with the flight unflown,
We should but find them worlds as sad as this,
Or suns all self-consuming like our own
Enringer by planet worlds as much amiss:
They wax and wane through fusion and confusion;
The spheres eternal are a grand illusion,
The empyrén is a void abyss.

The Victorian emphasis on fact found aesthetic expression in the concern with literalism in art. Architecture, for example, was characterized by massive proportion enclosing finite space, ornamented with
intricate, highly lifelike detail. Even the most imaginative forms of art bowed to the requirements of literal reality: Browning and Tennyson, among others, took pride in their mastery of sensory detail. And naturally the novel, which had grown up with empiricism and mercantilism, reached its apogee in the portrayal of the material world in fiction from Dickens to Arnold Bennett. 30

Artistic literalism also implied the denial of independent aesthetic values. Art was imitation, not imagination; it was reproduction, never to be confused with the life it represented. Its inferiority to, and separateness from, the world of fact were to be visibly demonstrated: thus a heavy frame would surround a painting, and a moralizing narrator would surround a novel. The fruits of imagination were acceptable, but only as a foil to empirical fact, never as an alternative reality or as trompe l'oeil. The puritan impulses behind the rise of mercantilism distrusted aesthetics for its own sake. In fact, when Dickens' Gradgrind forbids Sissy Jupe to walk on the flowers in a carpet in *Hard Times*, he is less a figure of fiction than might be imagined. He mirrors, for example, the real furniture critic who viewed a dining table with a carved base depicting a mother swan and hatchlings: the critic pronounced the piece of furniture unacceptable on the grounds that no mother swan would lay her eggs under a dining table. 31 Such literalism was not remarkable among a general public that attached no intrinsic value to beauty or imagination.

Nor was it remarkable that a critic would impose such strict middle-class standards on a work of art. The Victorian artist felt at one with his public, presuming the concord of an Apollonian age—the
concept of the artist as misunderstood or outcast by society prevailed in the Dionysian 
swings of Romanticism and Modernism before and after. In general the Victorian, artist or not, reacted to his age's metaphysical and class fluidities with a tremendous need for the certainties of his fellow-man. This need was particularly manifested in a tight hold on external, fixed, traditional social forms, a hold which, according to Paul Fussell, lasted far into World War I and determined much of that war's character. The artists' responsibility to society was simply a reflection of the role of every individual citizen, that of promoting the good of humanity through visible public activity. Thus Virginia Woolf described the nineteenth-century painter Benjamin Robert Haydon as "not the Shakespearean genius but the Victorian genius....Haydon took upon himself the cares of the world. He was feverishly interested in politics, in the Reform Bill, in the Trades Union Movement, in the success of the British arms." The Victorians' pride in their civilization was entirely free of irony; the Liberal Humanist concept of progress assumed the importance of community and the social fabric above all things, including the individual. Thus character was perceived as public behavior, and self-examination was considered wasteful and self-indulgent. Carlyle advised, The latest Gospel in this world is, know thy work and do it. "Know thyself": long enough has that poor "self" of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to "know" it, I believe! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual: know what thou canst work at; and work at it, like a Hercules! That will be thy better plan.

The commitment to work towards advancing civilization was engendered by a more all-encompassing conception of human progress through time and history. The Victorians' idea of progress had its basis in
their consciousness of the inexorable forward movement of time. Whether or not they were "preoccupied almost excessively" with time, it impinged sharply upon the Victorian consciousness, and references to time appear in all forms of Victorian writing. Mrs. Humphry Ward began her memoirs, "We instinctively feel, and cannot help asserting, our one advantage over the younger generation, which has so many over us--the one advantage of time!" And John Ruskin philosophized, "'Time is money;' the words tingle in my ears so that I can't go on writing....If we could thoroughly understand that time was--itself--would it not be more to the purpose? A thing of which loss or gain was absolute loss, and perfect gain...." As with all things, the significance of time was most appreciated in its public aspect: the Victorians celebrated history as social or "public time." The Victorian saw himself as actively functioning in a medium of time and history, actively influenced by the Zeitgeist, and actively moving towards betterment. The advances of the machine age were but part of the general progress through history that empirically demonstrated the superiority and development of English culture. Charles Kingsley wrote about the proliferation of the railroads,  

Exquisite motion!...the new motion of our age--the rush of the express-train, when the live iron pants and leaps and roars through the long chalk cutting; and white mounds gleam cold a moment against the sky and vanish...and far below, meadows and streams, and homesteads, with all their lazy old-world life, open for an instant, and then flee away; while awestruck, silent, choked with the mingled sense of pride and helplessness, we are swept on by that great pulse of England's life-blood, rushing down her iron veins; and dimly out of the future looms the fulfillment of our primaeval mission, to conquer and subdue the earth, and space too, and time, and all things...
Yes, great railroads, and great railroad age, who would exchange you, with all your sins, for any other time?\textsuperscript{41}

All individual accomplishment was perceived as integrated into this cultural continuum: Carlyle wrote, "The history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at the bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here."\textsuperscript{42} Great men were synonymous with their great works, and the assessment of human character was inseparable from its surrounding history and culture. Even a cursory look at mid-nineteenth-century writing reveals the extent to which biography and history were interdependent; biographies were ubiquitous, and the standard biography was conceived of as a "Life and Times." Indeed, when Carlyle gave a series of lectures to London's "fashionables," he chose as his topic On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History.\textsuperscript{43} The Victorian Age defined itself in terms of great men and their deeds, set in a medium of cultural progress.

This self-portrait of culture as Heroes and History permeated even everyday language: Paul Fussell points out, for example, the particular Englishness of the compliment, "Good show!" which underscored the fact that character and behavior were intended for public view and judgement. Such theatrical metaphors cast their influence well into World War I, with its "theatres of war."\textsuperscript{44} Similarly, game metaphors described--and prescribed--behavior in terms of team performance. In The Island Race, Sir Henry Newbolt, the enormously popular spokesman for traditional English values, brought the public-school cricket-game into the trenches:

The river of death has brimmed his banks,  
And England's far, and honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
"Play on! play on! and play the game!"45

This consciousness of behavior as public performance, coupled with the determinations of a class system that was still relatively fixed, helped to mold distinct role models for Victorian behavior. The most common, says Paul Fussell, was "what Patrick Howarth has termed homo newboltiensis, or "Newbolt Man," honorable, stoic, brave, loyal, courteous—and unesthetic, unironic, unintellectual, and completely devoid of wit."46 A notable characteristic of this Victorian public man was his distrust of emotion. Unashamed sentiment of the Dickensian sort was celebrated, but such sentimentality emphasized the public display of emotion, rather than the emotion itself. In any case, more emphasis was placed on the opposed public style, "the style of utter sang-froid, or...British Phlegm. The trick here is to affect to be utterly unflappable."47

The social roles for women were limited to one: in 1854 Coventry Patmore published The Angel in the House, a long poem epitomizing the perfect Victorian woman.48 Years later, Virginia Woolf appropriated that Angel for an essay on women and writing:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught, she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all—I need not say it—she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty—her blushes, her great grace. In those days—the last of Queen Victoria—every house had its Angel.49

In any role, in either sex, the Victorian social identity emphasized external show. The inner life and individuality were, like
aestheticism and imagination, subordinated to the requirements of an external, material culture. Indeed, Fussell shows, this general emphasis on externality in life and language lasted until the end of World War I, which became the watershed between the Victorian and Modern sensibilities, "the collision between events and the language used for over a century to celebrate the idea of progress." Thus, at the end of the war, in a poem significantly entitled "Repression of War Experience," Siegfried Sassoon attacked the outward equanimity of the Victorian hero with the ironic language of Modernist self-consciousness:

It's been proved that soldiers don't go mad
Unless they lose control of ugly thoughts
That drive them out to jabber among the trees

Now light your pipe; look, what a steady hand,
Draw a deep breath; stop thinking, count fifteen,
And you're right as rain...51

The Victorian Age, long, complex, and problematical, encompassed a great many shifts in attitude and behavior. But one quality that emerges from every analysis is a pervasive tendency towards externality—a dependence upon fact and its material demonstration, a belief in the influences of time, place, history, and progress, and an emphasis upon society and public behavior. This externality often bred conventionality at the expense of the expression of personal feeling and individual consciousness. In later years, Woolf wrote, "The pressure of society in 1900 almost forbade any natural feeling." And she connected those strictures on feeling with strictures on the language used to express them.

And so, in her first novel, The Voyage Out, when Terence Hewet says, "I want to write a novel about the things people don't say," he is
expressing Virginia Woolf's intention to rebel against what she perceived as an entire cultural complex of externality and verbal deception. But noticeably, even in her fiction, it is Terence, the man, who is strong enough to rebel; the woman, we recall, dies.

It is skating on thin ice to encapsulate the character of an entire age and then to suggest that such broad assumptions have a direct effect on an artist's work. Nevertheless, a study of Victorian conventions reveals much about Woolf's work for a particular reason: her early life could not have been more a mirror of the age. Because Woolf was the daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen, a major public figure of his day, she grew up in a Victorian fishbowl. The Stephen family celebrated the Victorian virtues: a love of factuality and a distrust of aesthetics, imagination, and emotion; a deep commitment to public morality; and a great respect for public appearances.

When Virginia Woolf wrote about her childhood many years later, she described a household remarkably like the age as a whole. Sir Leslie Stephen worshipped fact; most of his work was editorial, philosophical, critical, and biographical, and he is mainly remembered as the editor of The Dictionary of National Biography and Cornhill Magazine. Quentin Bell places Sir Leslie in a long family line of men who used language as means of action rather than aesthetically.

Their minds are formed to receive facts and when once they have a fact so clearly stated that they can take it in their hands, turn it this way and that, and scrutinize it, they are content; with facts, facts of this kind they can make useful constructions, political, juridical, and theological.54

Sir Leslie was in fact quite interested in literature, but as a
critic, not an artist. Whatever genuine intuitive or creative literary responses he had manifested as a child had been forcibly expunged: he had apparently exhibited intense emotion upon reciting poetry, his parents had considered these displays unhealthy and unmanly, and he had been forbidden to read poetry under doctor's orders. Although he retained his love of literature, he also retained that early distrust of aesthetic and emotional responses to it. He wrote a great deal of literary criticism and exercised widespread literary influence as the editor of *Cornhill*. But he considered even literary criticism slightly less than legitimate and was never completely confident of his judgments. Denis Donoghue writes, "Whatever he attempted he did well, but there was always someone who did it better. In criticism, he couldn't compete with Matthew Arnold, Henry James, or Sainte-Beuve." Woolf wrote about what she perceived as limitations in her father's literary abilities, and she connected these limitations with his conventional British education. She described

the disparity, so obvious in his books, between his critical and his creative powers. Give him a thought to analyze, the thought of Mill, Bentham, Hobbes, and he is...acute, clear, concise, an admirable model of the Cambridge analytical spirit. But give him a life, a character, and he is so crude, so elementary, so conventional, that a child with a box of coloured crayons is as subtle a portrait painter as he is.

Sir Leslie was not a cold or emotionless man, but he distrusted emotional displays. He did not believe in exposing his thoughts and feelings to the public eye and he disapproved of men who did so. Although, like his fictional counterpart Mr. Ramsay, he was morbidly sensitive and given to fits of ill temper, on the surface he appeared a man of absolute reason and equanimity. Sir Leslie kept his vicissitudes
of temper carefully concealed from all except the women of his household, whose role was to buffer his emotional outbursts so that the outside world—especially men—might never see them. And so successful were all the performers in this piece of family theatre that when Sir Leslie died, his close friend and biographer F.W. Maitland refused to believe what Woolf told him about her father’s temper.60

Sir Leslie demanded the same denial of emotion and imagination from those around him. He ridiculed any open display of imagination; his first wife called him "the cold bath" from his habit of pouring cold rationality upon imaginative schemes.61 Expecting similar sensible behavior of his children, he required that they behave with "ceremony" and "formality,"62 and he exerted particular pressure upon the women of the family, whom he considered less logical than men and thus more prone to excesses of emotion and imagination. Virginia Woolf was, like her father, oversensitive and sometimes ill-tempered, and she learned to let these qualities show only at the expense of her father's chilling disdain.

The emphasis upon public behavior became stronger as Sir Leslie's daughters grew older. They were kept at home, minimally educated, and kept in a state of almost total ignorance upon sexual matters. Although they were permitted to follow their imaginative pursuits—Vanessa her art, Virginia her literature—these were considered merely daytime female frivolities. At five p.m. they were required to drop their private endeavors for their public occupation: to be downstairs, properly dressed, ready to pour tea and be charming to the guests of their father and their half-brothers George and Gerald Duckworth. "The division in
our life was curious," Woolf wrote. "Downstairs there was pure convention: upstairs pure intellect." It is a general conception that, although kept at home, denied a formal education, and expected to behave with extreme decorum, Virginia Stephen was free to read what she wished and say what she thought about literature, since she was the daughter of a radical intellectual. It is true that the Stephen home was intellectual, that Henry James and George Meredith came often to tea. But so did Mrs. Humphry Ward. Like most Victorian thinkers, Sir Leslie felt himself in concord with his middle-class audience: The Philistine, he said, was the name which a prig gave to the rest of mankind. Although he was religiously and politically radical, his Evangelical background made him also quite morally conventional. His ideas about religion were at the service of his conscience, but his ideas about art and behavior remained at the service of society. Says Bell, "His agnosticism made him not less, but more anxious to observe the proprieties." Sir Leslie would not have compromised his beliefs in politics and religion, but art was less important to his Victorian conscience. Where aesthetics clashed with the demands of society, art must give way. For Sir Leslie, this was not mere lip service to a social requirement; as a philosopher and editor, he felt himself a guardian of public morality, even of Mrs. Grundy, if need were. He was, in fact, enough concerned with the relation of art to morals that he defined it in a Cornhill essay called "Art and Morality":

Society is not, as some people seem to fancy, an independent entity; it is simply the name for an aggregate of human
beings, each of whom can perhaps do little, but of whom each lives and moves and breathes in the atmosphere of his neighbors' opinions. Each man gives and takes. Nobody is for an instant independent of his neighbours. Anybody who helps to corrupt the social atmosphere is doing what lies in him to spread the deadliest of diseases.66

Sir Leslie had a fairly wide conception of the kinds of art that might corrupt the social atmosphere for his Cornhill readers. He disapproved of French novelists like Balzac and George Sand as "prurient and indecent...always hankering and sniffing after sensual motives."67 And the editorial changes he forced upon Thomas Hardy finally drove Hardy elsewhere. "Thou shalt not shock a young lady," [Sir Leslie] said, was the first commandment he had to enforce.68 Thus, while it is true that from the age of sixteen Virginia Stephen was allowed to roam her father's library without censorship, censorship was exercised, nevertheless, by what it would have been likely for her to find on the shelves. While literary England was celebrating The Yellow Book, while Joyce was discovering Ibsen, Virginia Stephen was reading Sir Walter Scott. And the feeling of tradition and decorum that pervades all of Woolf's work derives in part from Sir Leslie Stephen and his library.

As Katherine C. Hill has demonstrated, Sir Leslie's attitudes about literature had a strong effect on his daughter's critical writing, and, as Louise DeSalvo has countered, his attitudes about women also made it difficult for her to write.69 Woolf wrote both because of and in spite of her father; his influence is significant because of the directions in which he encouraged her. Hill has shown that Sir Leslie wanted his daughter to become his "literary and intellectual heir," expecting her to write histories, essays, and reviews.70 He fed her appreciation for
literature, but only according to his lights as a critic. When he chose books for her one year on a reading program, all but one were either biography or history, and almost all were by Victorian authors. Woolf's literary criticism strongly reflects this influence. It grows out of the belief that literature functions in historical progression and that each work manifests the spirit of its age. Her studies of fiction center on characterization as rooted in time and place. And perhaps most important, her analyses of literary style begin with the relationship between the writer and his culture. This biographical and historical bias is always basic to her criticism. And it characterizes her fiction as well.

According to Bell and others, the factual, unaesthetic qualities in Sir Leslie Stephen's character were countered by the beautiful and intuitive Julia Jackson Stephen, Woolf's mother. As recreated in To The Lighthouse, Julia's character opposed Leslie's in many ways. Woolf saw her parents as opposites (as indeed she saw many things), and she portrayed them as masculine and feminine polarizations. But in fact, Woolf admitted that she did not perceive her mother very clearly, beyond the amorphous motherly quality that most young children perceive. Julia Stephen died when Virginia was twelve; before that her time was dispersed among various sick friends and relatives, eight children, and the demanding Leslie. Woolf could never remember spending more than a few minutes alone with her mother, conceding that she had only the impression of a "general presence." The facts of Julia's life suggest that in many respects she was far from the emotional and aesthetic antidote to Sir Leslie's factualism. On the contrary, Julia was even more con-
ventional than her husband; her placid beauty required that she keep her emotions even more under control than he did; and she demanded even more social decorum of her children. Julia Stephen was the Angel in the Stephen house.

Whatever Sir Leslie's conventionalities, he had a strong, educated intellect to provide some balance; unfortunately, Julia did not. Woolf saw this lack of intellect in its best light; her mother, she said, "had an instinctive, not a trained mind," but she paradoxically also attributed to her mother the same worship of facts her father had had. Quentin Bell has probably implicitly assessed the true influence Julia wielded when he writes of her maternal relations, "The Pattles were an altogether less intellectual race than the Stephens; they had no aptitude for words; they are chiefly remembered for their faces."

Julia Stephen was one of the great Victorian beauties of England. Lord David Cecil has described her beauty as "the sort that appealed most to the Victorians; or rather to the serious and idealistic Victorians like Ruskin and George Eliot. This meant a beauty with nothing sensual about it, but rather grave, noble, aspiring..." Much of Julia's almost legendary magnificence seems to have been based on her appearance and social manner; she seems likewise to have been interested in appearances and externalities. She was apparently rather cold and unapproachable—"invincibly upright," Woolf called her—except to her own mother, with whom she corresponded daily upon two aspects of the body, illness and the preservation of beauty. The latter concern she transmitted to her daughters: "Hold yourself straight, my little goat," were her deathbed words to Virginia.
She was no less concerned with the preservation of the social system that had placed her in a position of upper-class privilege and patronage and that celebrated physical beauty as the province of womanhood. That system decreed, wrote Woolf, that "girls must be changed into married women." And Julia believed that she could best effect this for her daughters by forming them to be as her eldest daughter Stella became, "a part of herself"—beautiful to look at and charming to encounter, with little intellect and few emotional demands. To be sure, Julia was not merely ornamental; like Sir Leslie, she was endowed with the moral earnestness of her age and participated considerably in public works. But her services were limited to the traditionally feminine spheres of matchmaking, visiting the poor, and nursing the sick. While many women of similarly intellectual families, such as the Strachey's and the Darwins, worked for women's rights, Julia's whole existence worked against them. Her major political act was to sign Mrs. Ward's petition against women's suffrage. More important, she seems to have subscribed to the Victorian picture of womanhood as complete dedication to others. She expressed few desires of her own, living almost entirely (and Bell suggests, possibly working herself to death) for her husband.

Julia's first marriage had been to Herbert Duckworth, "the perfect type of public school boy and English gentleman." From all accounts, both he and his sons, Virginia's half-brothers George and Gerald, sound like manifestations of "Newbolt Man"—all exterior surface, and obsessively concerned with society, conventionality, and appearances. Woolf described George: "He had very little brain...he was poured into a per-
fectly adapted body. He was extremely handsome, perfectly healthy, and as well set up as a young man can be. Thus, wherever he appeared, society opened its arms.85 With Julia's encouragement, Stella married a similar young man, kinder and more intelligent but equally impene-trable to Woolf: "a desirable type, the English country gentleman type...perhaps no one is ever intimate with the country gentleman type."86 What Woolf observed in these young men was their "opaque," externalized quality, their adherence to a social type which seemed to her all appearance and no character, all public self and no visible private self.87 She saw very little else in any of the men in her family.

Every one of our male relatives was shot into that machine and came out at the other end at the age of sixty or so, a Head-master, an Admiral, a Cabinet Minister, a judge. It is impossible to think of them as natural human beings as it is to think of a plough horse galloping wild and unshod in the street.88

Woolf's simile expresses an idea that she repeats in the settings of her novels: the belief that the English social machinery represses something natural and real. The contrast between natural and ordered places in her fiction recapitulates the separation between external social surface and internal personal feeling that she saw around her. That contrast extends also to her characterizations: "Newbolt Men" and "Angels" appear in every novel, in implicit opposition to those characters who rebel against the pressures of social convention.

The role of women in the Victorian "patriarchal machinery" was simply to oil the gears, to have "beautiful feminine natures which are quite without wishes of their own."89 Julia Stephen sacrificed herself to her husband's needs; after she died, first Stella and then Vanessa
took her place. Had Vanessa not rebelled, Virginia would have been next. Woolf later saw both Stella and Vanessa as brutalized victims, and she acknowledged her mother's role in their victimization. Thus, whatever Julia's intuitive differences from Sir Leslie's factualism, it is not difficult to see why he considered her the perfect woman. She left her daughters Vanessa and Virginia a legacy of Victorian womanhood which neither ever entirely escaped, an emphasis on externality, physical beauty, social surface, and role-playing. Even Vanessa, the more rebellious of the two, retained many Victorian qualities: she had, Virginia said, "a love of the actual fact"; she married Clive Bell, "a sort of mixture between Shelley and a sporting country squire"; and she distrusted Virginia's displays of emotion. "When she is demonstrative," Vanessa wrote, "I always shrink away."

Virginia Woolf wrote that in the Victorian Age, "the curtains are very thick and the women are very pure." But behind the curtains, inner life seethed, manifesting itself at times in distorted ways. The role of women was to receive male outbursts in silence. Sir Leslie poured out his frustrations on women verbally; George and Gerald were more insidious and incestuous. When Virginia was about six, Gerald explored her body; when she was about sixteen, George fondled her in her bed at night. Such erotic excesses, though deplorable, are not unusual in any age. But what is remarkable is the fact that neither Vanessa nor Virginia felt they could tell anyone about these violations even after years into adulthood. The sisters were not "weak," as Bell suggests; rather, they were so well schooled in the complete suppression of thought and feeling, in "unqualified self-surrender" to the social unit
of the family, that they could not shatter it. The standard of decorum which reigned in the Stephen household would not have tolerated an open accusation of sexual misconduct, even though the alternative was to tolerate the misconduct itself. What ultimately mattered was the appearance of correctness. Woolf felt trapped by her situation, but she was particularly disturbed by the need to keep it hidden, by the inability to express it in words. "I felt myself struggling like a fly in glue," she wrote. "I felt that if one said the things one thought, anything beyond the usual patter, glue stuck to one's feet."

The dichotomy between feelings and behavior became greatest upon her mother's death and its aftermath. Sir Leslie's outward equanimity swung in the opposite direction, to sentimentality and maudlin over-dramatization. Real feelings now became muffled in Leslie's theatrical grief, and once again he demanded that his family behave as he did, lest they appear not to be grieving enough for their lost "saint." Again what Woolf resented was the social falsity, the theatricality of their position.

We were made to act parts that we did not feel, to fumble for words that we did not know. It made one hypocritical, and enmeshed in the conventions of sorrow. There was a conflict between what we ought to be and what we were.

After Julia's death, the utterly conventional George took over Julia's role as matchmaker. Forced to dress and appear for his inspection like "a horse turned into the ring," Virginia and Vanessa were coerced into entering Victorian society. The hypocrisies of upper-class social relations were torturous for Virginia, she felt terribly inadequate, and in years of parties, she made not a single friend. She
did learn, however, to "play the game" of society, and as she recognized, its rules affected both her behavior and her writing.

If you listened, as I did, it was like watching a game. One had to know the rules... We both learned the rules of the Victorian game of manners so thoroughly that we have never forgotten them. We still play the game; it is useful; it has its beauty; for it is founded upon restraint, sympathy, unselfishness—all civilised qualities. It is helpful in making something seemly and human out of raw odds and ends. But the Victorian manner is perhaps—I am not sure—a disadvantage in writing. When I re-read my Common Reader articles I detect it there. I lay the blame for their suavity, their politeness, their sidelong approach, to my tea-table training... On the other hand, this surface manner allows one to say a great many things which would be inaudible if one marched straight up and spoke out.98

Significantly, Woolf was ambivalent about the value of her own social surface. In her criticism, it kept her from telling the truth, yet it also helped her to communicate by allowing her to make contact with her audience within a mutually agreeable framework. The Victorian manner shaped her novels with the same ambivalence. Victorian modesty determined her indirect approach to her "experiences as a body," human physicality and sex.99 But at the same time, Victorian politeness also enabled her to transmit a vision replete with contradiction: Woolf's novels communicate the seamless thread of the inner life, a life which is "inaudible" in most Victorian novels. But paradoxically, she strives to integrate that inner life with the outer social world in a unity that is inimical to the Modernist conception of reality. Just as the Victorian social manner attempts to make "something seemly out of raw odds and ends," the Woolf novel seeks to make "some kind of whole out of shivering fragments."100 At the center of both attempts is the desire, and indeed the need, to communicate with others and to create a social unity.
The strictures of Woolf's Victorian childhood ended with her father's death. But, surprisingly enough, the Bloomsbury years that followed only refined the influences of her past. "Though Hyde Park Gate seems now so distant from Bloomsbury, its shadow falls across it," she wrote. 101 When Woolf moved to Bloomsbury in 1904, she leaped across half a century in culture. But, as J.K. Johnstone has shown, even the Bloomsbury group was less revolutionary than it has sometimes been described to be.

It would be wrong to think of them as revolutionaries in an intellectual world. They stood squarely within a tradition, and they carried that tradition a step or two further.... Keynes and Strachey did not want to burn down the Victorian house; they wanted to sweep out some trash, move in some new furniture, and rearrange the rooms. 102

Moreover, even by the standards of her day, Woolf's rebellions were mild: she did make friends with homosexuals, marry a "penniless Jew," and write "very un-Victorian" novels. 103 But whatever the excesses and snobberies of Bloomsbury, whatever aberrations the young men practiced, Woolf's personal revolution was tame indeed: she no longer presided at the tea-table. Furthermore, she approved of freedom and frankness in theory more than she could carry it out in practice. It was Vanessa, not Virginia, who danced one night until her clothes fell off; Vanessa, not Virginia, who lived with Duncan Grant while married to Clive Bell. Woolf herself seems to have participated only twice in activities that were even socially questionable, and both adventures were notably in disguise. In her more famous escapade, the Dreadnought Hoax, she masqueraded as an Abyssinian nobleman in order to visit a royal warship. 104 The other episode was what Bell has called "a kind of epistolary bal
masque," in which she and her Bloomsbury friends unveiled their feelings for one another by writing letters under pen names. When Woolf stepped beyond the boundaries of convention, she did it by playing a role, Victorian style.

For Woolf, the most important freedom of Bloomsbury was that of language. In her recollections, she speaks mainly about Bloomsbury's opposition to the characteristics she hated in her past: the surface quality, the materialism, the social dishonesty. In Bloomsbury she could talk about beauty and art instead of tea-table topics. "The atmosphere was abstract in the extreme," she wrote. And she no longer needed to dress up either her body or her conversation to please the men in the room; she wrote, "We discussed copulation with the same excitement and openness that we discussed the nature of good." Nevertheless, even this freedom was difficult for her to carry out; she could expose the mind but not the body; she could discuss abstractions but not emotions. Despite her determination to speak honestly about her feelings, she felt guilty and self-indulgent about revealing her own emotions. In 1920 she read a paper to the Memior Club about some intimate feelings, and the next day she berated herself in her diary.

Leonard was objective and triumphant; I subjective and most unpleasantly discomfited..."oh but why did I read this egotistical sentimental trash!" That was my cry....I couldn't help figuring a kind of uncomfortable boredom on the part of the males, to whose genial cheerful sense my revelations were at once mawkish and distasteful. What possessed me to lay bare my soul!" Clearly, Woolf's intention to talk about "the things people don't say" was fraught with ambivalence. For every leap forward into modern freedom, she was pulled back, not only by guilt, but also by attraction
to her Victorian past. For, although she loved the freedom from fixed sexual and social roles, she missed the titillation and energy of society. "Why should intellect and character be so barren?" she wrote about her Bloomsbury friends.\textsuperscript{109} And, despite her strong feminism, she loved the sexual excitement engendered by a traditional feminine social role. She missed the flirtations of her youth,

...one of the great delights, one of the chief necessities of life. Only then does all effort cease; one ceases to be honest; one ceases to be clever. One fizzes up into some absurd delightful effervescence of soda water or champagne through which one sees the world tinged with all the colours of the rainbow.\textsuperscript{110}

Moreover, she missed the sense of order and history that reigned in traditional society, especially the upper class society of her youth. Thus she maintained lifelong, though problematical, friendships with aristocrats like Lady Ottoline Morrell and Vita Sackville-West. The social game remained immensely important to Woolf; it was a game that as a young woman she had played but could not win until she first won literary fame. Though she bitterly resented its falsities, she never underestimated its attractions, and she remained ambivalent about society all her life. "I love the chatter and excitement of other people's houses," she wrote. "Have I not just said that it depresses me too?"\textsuperscript{111} In an essay entitled, "Am I a Snob?" she questioned her own motives and made her ambivalence public. And in her diary, often a chronicle of social events and gossip, she wrote, "I'm critical, intellectually, of the aristocrats, but sensually, they charm."\textsuperscript{112} Besides the sense of order, Woolf felt a sense of morality in social community, a morality in "civilization" that had its roots in the past. "I grow wearied of 'going out to tea' and yet can't resist it. To leave a door
shut that might be open is in my mind some form of blasphemy," she wrote.\textsuperscript{113} Bloomsbury had enabled her to escape from the hypocrisies of society; it was partly Leonard Woolf's disdain for society and convention that had attracted her to him—"that violent trembling misanthropic Jew who had...shaken his fist at civilisation."	extsuperscript{114} But later, when he kept her too long from social contact, she rebelled, notably on the grounds of her Victorian heritage.

There is, I suppose, a very different element in us; my social side, his intellectual side. This social side is very genuine in me. Nor do I think it reprehensible. It is a piece of jewellery I inherit from my mother—a joy in laughter, something that is stimulated, not selfishly wholly or vainly, by contact with my friends. And then ideas leap in me.\textsuperscript{115}

This same kind of ambivalence towards society and community characterizes her fiction. Each of her main characters must assert himself against the pressure of social restrictions. Yet each one fears disjunction from civilization and, in the end, attempts to integrate individual freedom with the social order, the inner self with the outside world.
The Critical Background:
"Order...and Some Kind of Form"

Clearly, Virginia Woolf was not simply a Bloomsbury revolutionist who joyfully galloped past the fences of Victorian convention into the freedom of the Twentieth Century. She was a complicated figure, often torn by her own perceptions of opposition and conflict. And similarly, it oversimplifies her art to see in her novels only the rejection of nineteenth-century externalities in favor of the exploration of consciousness.

The emphasis critics have put on internal reality in Woolf's novels follows her own lead, for, while she acknowledged the influence of her Victorian past on her critical writing, she described her novels as Modernist in temperament. At first, for her, "Modern" meant "un-Victorian": it meant telling the complete truth about individual consciousness, and it meant rebelling against the manners and the morals that had constituted the history of her life and the history of the novel up to that time. But, as she later recognized, Modernism also implies an ambivalent relation to the values of the past, a sense of loss as well as freedom. Woolf's novels thus also embody a fundamental attraction to the past along with their sharp and brilliant rebellion. Traditional English social structure and the traditional English novel shape Woolf's fiction in the presence of physical phenomena, in the play of time, place, and external circumstance upon character, in the dynamic of social rebellion and return, and in Woolf's overall view of the novel as a completed communication. To explain what I mean by each of these qualities, it will be helpful first to examine
the ways in which they characterize Woolf's theory of the novel. For her own novels fit neatly into Woolf's conception of the novel genre: like her Bloomsbury companions, she was the refiner and extender, not the destroyer, of a tradition.

To begin with, in much of her criticism, Woolf implicitly defines a branch of the novel that is specifically English in nature. The characteristics of this novel are precisely those traditional aspects that characterize her own novels—a cornerstone of empirical fact, the influence of English place and history, characters determined by society and culture, and an emphasis on authorial communication. For Woolf these qualities constitute the Englishness of the English novel.

Woolf's English novel begins with facts and things. In "Phases of Fiction," she describes four kinds of novelists, one of them "the Truth Tellers," who describe the external, empirical world.

> Each of them assures us that things are precisely as they say they are. What they describe happens actually before our eyes. We get from their novels the same sort of refreshment and delight that we get from seeing something actually happen in the street below.117

Fiction that treats fact in this way, says Woolf, is essentially English in character, and she contrasts it to the psychological fiction which is characteristic of "the inconclusiveness of the Russian mind."118 Woolf loved Russian fiction but found it ultimately alien to her sense of the factual world. The Russian novel, she concludes,

> fills us with a deep, and finally it may be, with a resentful despair. They are right perhaps; unquestionably they see further than we do and without our gross impediments of vision. But perhaps we see something that escapes them, or why should this voice of protest mix itself with our gloom? The voice of protest is the voice of another and an ancient civilisation, which seems to have bred in us the instinct to
enjoy and fight rather than to suffer and understand. English fiction from Sterne to Meredith bears witness to our natural delight in human comedy, in the beauty of the earth, in the activities of the intellect, and in the splendour of the body.\textsuperscript{119}

The novelist who repeatedly elicits Woolf's praise is not Tolstoy but Defoe. For Woolf, Defoe exemplified what is best in the factualism of the English novel, the ability to recreate reality through the external objects that circumscribe it. His "genius for fact" lay in his ability to evoke for her a special feeling of English place and history.\textsuperscript{120} Reading \textit{Moll Flanders}, she felt that she could see her own London through his eyes, and she admired his ability to transmit England through the centuries.\textsuperscript{121} In fact, throughout her years of critical writing, most of the English writers she chose to discuss held in common an ability to transmit concrete realities. Whether writing about novelists like Goldsmith and Scott, historians like Gibbon, or chroniclers like Leigh Hunt and Richard Hakluyt, she looked for and admired their truth to the facts of the English world they inhabited. And she was also fascinated by the picture of day-to-day English life evoked in the letters and diaries of earlier English women; she believed that if such women had lived later, they would have been novelists. Woolf demanded factuality not of all writers, but of all English writers. She looked for a picture of English life derived from the specific details of time and place, and she felt that no good English writer could eschew that picture. To an eighteenth-century diarist who tried, she wrote a hypothetical letter:

\begin{quote}
We know in our hearts, you and I, that England was a substantial, beautiful country in the 18th century; aristocratic and common, hand-made and horse-ploughed; an eating, drinking, bastard-begetting, laughing, cursing, humorous, eccentric,
lovable land...but I cannot put much life into my hoping when you withhold the facts.122

Woolf's idea of the English novel began not with the internal and psychological, but with the external and physical. Moreover, it assumed the importance of time and history. From childhood, she loved the historians, reading Gibbon, Carlyle, and Froude and admiring their use of facts to create a sense of time and place. The marriage of history and literature was for her inevitable, and she loved the historical novels of Scott and Marryat. Her own first literary intention was to write a history; she made an early attempt at a history of women; and for her last critical project she proposed a blending of history and literature, "a common history book to read from one end of literature, including biography, and range at will, consecutively."123 Similarly, she believed that history contributed to character. Although her own conception of fictional character developed far beyond the ideas of her predecessors, she nevertheless believed that character, fictional or real, began with biography, the facts of life and times. For Woolf, no character could be complete without the effect of time and external event upon it.

Nobody could maintain that the whole of life can be told without "piercing the haze," without revealing his own secret springs of action and reserve. Yet external events also have their importance. To tell the whole story of a life the autobiographer must devise some means by which the two levels of existence can be recorded—the rapid passage of events and actions, the slow opening up of single and solemn moments of concentrated emotion.124

As Katherine C. Hill has shown, Woolf also believed that the development of the novel as a genre was historically influenced, that each work was a product of its age.125 Like Eliot, she saw great works in
progression through time, with each work in relation to tradition. But her concern was not with how the present work altered tradition; rather it was with how tradition, both historical and literary, enriched the present work. "The present when backed by the past," she wrote, "is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel, nothing else, when the film on the camera reaches only the eye."126

She also believed that the novel was grounded in the sense of place--both as influencing factor upon the author and as setting within the novel itself. The differences between English and Russian fiction, she felt, derived in great part from the differences between the crowded streets of England and the cold expanses of Russia, which drove the English writer toward his fellow-man and the Russian writer toward his soul. Furthermore, she spoke of her own "scene-making ability" and her need to imagine a concrete place while reading a work, even when none was given.127 That need for a sense of place she believed to be universal.

Pick up any play by Sophocles...and at once the mind begins to fashion itself surroundings. It makes some background, even of the most provisional sort, for Sophocles; it imagines some village, in a remote part of the country, near the sea.128

For Woolf, then, part of the reality in any novel came from the external influences of time and place and from their factual recreation within the novel itself. In the English novel in particular, she found a kind of cultural amalgam comprised of time and place, the kind of society these created, and the kind of communication that society engendered. She wrote:

The English tradition is formed upon a little country; its
centre is an old house with many rooms each crammed with objects and crowded with people who know each other intimately, whose manners, thoughts, and speech are ruled all the time, if unconsciously, by the spirit of the past. 129

In Woolf's estimation, the characteristic that dominated the English novel was the importance of society and civilization: time, place, and history comprised a world in which society prevailed. English fiction, she wrote, is the fiction of social rank and class structure, and whatever one might wish for in the way of egalitarianism, to ignore the structure of society as the basis of English fiction was simply to lie. To search for the soul in the English novel, as the Russians did in their work, was to display an affectation "nauseating in the extreme." 130

It is not the samovar but the teapot that rules in England; time is limited, space crowded; the influence of other points of view, of other books, and even other ages, makes itself felt. Society is sorted out into lower, middle, and upper classes, each with its own manners, and, to some extent, its own language. Whether he wishes it or not there is a continual pressure upon an English novelist to recognize these barriers and, in consequence, order is imposed and some kind of form. 131

This insistence on physical facts and social forms in English fiction may seem antithetical to what we think of as Woolf's literary philosophy in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and "Modern Fiction," the essays in which she attacks the "materialists." 132 But it is important to see that in these essays Woolf never criticizes a writer for telling the truth about the material world. What she objects to is the material world without underlying meaning, facts "that have nothing of truth except the respectable outside"; that is, she objects to superficiality. 133 For Woolf, the physical world was not symbol but synecdoche: if the fact was the right fact, it evoked the whole of
reality. And to find that fact was her literary goal: "A writer," she said, "is a person who sits at his desk and keeps his eyes fixed as intently as he can on a certain object." ¹³⁴

And yet, Woolf's insistence upon the factuality of the English novel seems inadequate, even wrong, as a description of her own novels. "Facts" do not account for the remarkable experimental cast of her work: time, place, and the world of things are forgotten as we read. The facts are there, but they are hidden behind a mist of consciousness, caught in a "web" of language.¹³⁵ This is the central ambivalence in Woolf's novels: she based her art upon an acute awareness of the physical world and upon a critical understanding of the English novel's history of empiricism and social relations. But at the same time, she rebelled against the externality of the traditional novel just as she rebelled against the externality of her own traditional past.

Fiction was perhaps the only literary genre in which she could rebel: it was the only genre in which she worked where her father had not preceded her. More important, fiction is the form that could best contain her need for both fact and imagination. It is significant that, despite her fascination with inner experience and her poetic use of language, she never chose lyric poetry as her genre.

And furthermore, because fiction is not entirely grounded in fact, Woolf could speak in an unnamed, fictive narrative voice not clearly identified with herself, as it would have had to be in criticism, biography, or personal essays. James Naremore has commented upon the odd
relation between Woolf's narrative voice and the narrative itself: on the one hand, the voice is distant, disembodied; on the other hand it is so involved that it seems to merge with the characters and events it describes. In Woolf's novels it is sometimes difficult to discern where the narrator ends and the character begins, as this passage from Mrs. Dalloway illustrates.

Ah, said St. Margaret's, like a hostess who comes into her drawing room on the very stroke of the hour and finds her guests there already. I am not late. No, it is precisely half-past eleven, she says....It is half-past eleven, she says, and the sound of St. Margaret's glides into the recesses of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound, like something alive which wants to confide itself, disperse itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest--like Clarissa herself, thought Peter Walsh, coming down the stairs on the stroke of the hour in white.

This quintessentially Woolfian voice, shifting and ambiguous, characterizes her ambivalence. Both personally involved with the narrative and impersonally distanced from the reader, it is never precisely the voice of Virginia Woolf herself. When Woolf speaks the truth in fiction, when she tells "the things people don't say," she is once again the rebel in disguise, not behind Victorian politeness or an Abyssinian costume, but behind the anonymity of a fictional narrator.

In the aggregate, Woolf's ambivalence between the impulse for freedom and the need for "order...and some kind of form" determines her nature of her work. Many of her fictions and essays use a dynamic of departure and return as their organizational pattern, beginning with a sense of order, taking off in a flight to freedom, and ending with a return to order. Often they take flight into imagination and return to empirical reality. The short story "The Mark on the Wall" takes imaginative flight from a black mark and returns to explain that the mark is
a snail. The essay "Flying Over London" describes an airplane flight which takes place only in the mind; the end of the story reveals that the airplane is broken. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa escapes into her memories of the past, but she returns to the present and her party. In *Between the Acts*, Isa and Giles escape their difficulties for a few hours of drama and imagination, but they return after the play to the problems of their marriage. In Woolf's novels, the forays into imagination take as their point of departure and return a Victorian sense of solidity and factuality which is vested in the English world of time, place, and society.

These elements, time, place, and society, are in some ways inseparable in Woolf's novels; they form a social continuum, an external milieu, in which each work's progression of events and its less traditional aspects can occur. Yet in this continuum, each element also exerts its own influence, both as a general theme throughout the novels and as a specific factor within a particular work.

The factual world in Woolf's novels begins with the pervasive influence of time. Clock time and historical time run parallel to the Bergsonian time in Woolf's novels and grow out of her strong sense of historical determinacy. Some novels, such as *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Years*, function within, and are determined by, a specific historical era. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, Clarissa is identifiably an Edwardian lady in an Edwardian world: her manners have been shaped by her Victorian past, and her present feelings are shaped by the war which has just ended. Septimus, too, is a product of his age, but where Clarissa's roots are in her nineteenth-century certainties of behavior,
Septimus grows out of the uncertainties of the Twentieth Century. Thus both characters are focused by World War I, as Fussell has shown, the cultural watershed between the two ages. And ultimately, the values of the past give Clarissa strength to endure, while the lack of these values destroys Septimus.

Other novels function in purposeful opposition to the forces of time and history. To The Lighthouse, for instance, is also focused by World War I, but the movement of the novel is intentionally separated from the War by the pastoral timelessness of the Hebrides. Mrs. Ramsay does not simply progress through life and time; she also transcends them. Yet even in the novels which oppose time, time creeps in ironically and insidiously: the war brings death to Andrew, maturity and marriage bring death to Prue, and the departure from Skye at the summer's end signals death for Mrs. Ramsay.

The impact of time in Woolf's novels is more complicated than these contrasts suggest. Every novel in some way both embraces and opposes time. What is significant is the presence of time and history as the conscious object of both attraction and rebellion: in every novel, clock time and historical culture signify a world of social imperatives which must be encountered and resolved. While the time of the mind never ceases to function, neither does the march of the clock and history; the only escape is death.

As the above examples illustrate, time in Woolf's novels is integrated with place, which functions in a similar opposition. For example, The Voyage Out presents a voyage away from the culture of early twentieth-century London; only on a tropical island can Rachel free
herself from the social fetters of her childhood. When her Victorian father arrives and it is time to return to England, she dies. Every novel embodies this place opposition in some form; usually London is contrasted to some more primitive place, or large closed houses are contrasted to open streets and gardens. The city of London and the houses are the seats of convention, order, and social structure. The anonymous streets and garden spots are the openings to emotion, imagination, and freedom from social restraint. Often the action of the novel moves away from civilization to an open, pastoral world, but it always returns to the city and the house.

Moreover, for Woolf, civilization in both its positive and negative aspects is concentrated in a specific place, England, and in particular the city of London. London aroused strong personal feelings for Woolf; it represented an essential sense of civilization, culture, and order. In most Modernist literature, the city implies alienation, as Monroe Spears describes:

> The city is both massive fact and universally recognizable symbol of modernity; and it both constitutes and symbolizes the modern predicament: the mass man, autonomous and rootless, cut off from his past and from the nexus of human relations in which he formerly existed, anxious and insecure...is the typical citizen of Megalopolis...

But in Woolf’s novels the city of London differs from the modern symbolic cities of Baudelaire, Eliot, or Joyce. London is the seat of history, the center of society, that the Moderns have lost; it represents the social order, not its absence. Of course, Woolf is ambivalent towards that order: although the social order promotes community, it does so by denying honesty and individual communication. And so, although Woolf’s Londoners can feel a Victorian sense of cultural unity,
they also feel a modern sense of isolation. Thus, Woolf's characters rebel against the social order by escaping into pastoral settings, where they attain a more complete communion with self and others, away from the limitations of culture. But they try to escape only because the order is so emphatically there, and so grounded in the city itself.

Time and place in Woolf's novels are part of an external medium in which traditional social values prevail, and her ambivalence towards time and place is a constituent of her larger ambivalence towards society and social roles. Woolf's characters are always placed in relation to their social community, and that relation is essentially what the novels are about. Some characters accept their roles, while others will not or cannot "act" in the "play." Indeed, every female character questions her defined feminine role; Lily Briscoe voices the question most clearly:

There is a code of behaviour, she knew, whose seventh article (it may be) says that on occasions of this sort it behoves the woman, whatever her own occupation may be, to go to the help of the young man opposite, so that he may expose and relieve the thigh bones, the ribs, of his vanity, of his urgent desire to assert himself; as indeed it is their duty, she reflected, in her old maidenly fairness, to help us, suppose the Tube were to burst into flames. Then, she thought, I should certainly expect Mr. Tansley to get me out. But how would it be, she thought, if neither of us did either of these things?141

This insistent questioning occurs because the social world is so much a given and social roles, though confining and debilitating, are so very necessary. In Woolf's novels, women usually try to rebel but do not completely succeed; men usually reach for social completeness but do not achieve it; they "never reach R."142 Even The Waves, Woolf's most internalized novel, is founded upon human relations within a community.
What Woolf's characters are always thinking about in their inner worlds is their relation, or lack of it, to the culture outside themselves in which they must function. Woolf's novels are peopled with also-rans, people who never quite succeed in the external world. But it is the world that rejects them; they never completely reject the world; they question society and their own ability to fit into it, but they never wholly deny the value of society. Their hero always remains Percival, "Newbolt Man" in one form or another, even after Percival, like the culture that created him, is dead.

In the social world, communication between individuals is all-important, even though it is incomplete; only through communication can society be sustained. The conventional requirements of society never allow total openness, honesty, and communication; outside the boundaries of society a much greater communication can perhaps occur, and unity can perhaps be achieved. But such unity is always ephemeral, and, more important, it is frightening, for it is allied with loss of self and loss of the relation to the external world. Thus, society, though imperfect, permits survival; its communication, though incomplete, is the best that can be attained in an imperfect world. And so, for all Woolf characters, the price of disentanglement from the social fabric is isolation or death, and that price is too high. In all the novels, there remains an underlying faith in civilization--a feeling that the order imposed by history and society, though ever more open to question and ever more difficult to preserve, is worth preserving. Each novel therefore embraces the social order by means of a final assertion of community and communication, a summary gesture uniting self and world.
Katharine Hilbery marries, Clarissa Dalloway gives her party, Lily Briscoe talks to Mr. Ramsay and completes her picture, even though each of them questions the value of her acts. In Woolf's novels, the forces of order triumph.

As Virginia Woolf recognized, social relations are the stuff of the English novel. Similarly, social forms are the stuff of novelistic forms; the Bildungsroman and the novel of manners, for example, assume a relation between the individual and society that is recapitulated in their literary structures. And so, inevitably, Woolf objectified her rebellion against traditional social structures by rebelling against traditional novel forms. But equally inevitably, she embraced those forms: to a great extent, her literary experimentation is an ironic questioning of the very genres she has chosen to follow. The Voyage Out, for instance, takes off from the Bildungsroman and the tropical adventure story; Orlando plays off the Bildungsroman and the biography; The Years is a variation of the family saga.

Furthermore, just as Woolf ended her novels by affirming the value of traditional society, she also ended by affirming traditional novel structures; each of her novels ends with a gesture of completion or summation: Rachel's death, Katharine's marriage, Lily's picture, the waves reaching the shore are structural as well as thematic terminations. In Woolf's mature novels, these gestures are attenuated; Mrs. Dalloway's "For there she was" is only a small linguistic movement of closure, "the merest indrawn breath of a borderline";\(^{143}\) nevertheless it expresses the novel's conception that Clarissa is the summation of
all the moments of her life, and it ends the day that has recapitulated all those moments.

As Ruth Z. Temple has pointed out, Woolf's summary endings often feel alien to the open-ended experience that has preceded them. Woolf's reality is in many ways fragmented and ambiguous, but an underlying instinct for order, for a completed vision, makes her end her novels with gestures of completion. Alan Friedman has described the "closed" ending of the nineteenth-century novel, which reflects a sense of containment, consequence, and order; and he contrasts it to the Modernist "open" ending, which reflects a vision of experience that is incomplete and inconclusive. Woolf's endings are more closed than open: experience is circumscribed, social order and continuity are affirmed, the vision is completed and communicated as such. In her first two novels, the tightly closed endings threaten to negate the rebellions that have preceded them; but in her mature works, the subtler, less definite gestures of closure redefine the thematic ambivalence expressed throughout the work.

Woolf's summary endings are one characteristic of her traditionalism, one expression of the Apollonian desire for reconciliation of individual and community, of self and world, and one expression of her desire for completeness and communication. Although these qualities were so uncertain in her own perception of reality, she reaffirmed their possibility at the end of every novel with a declaration of life against death, community against isolation, order against chaos, language against silence. Indeed, this need to order, unify, and communicate stemmed from the Victorian sense of society she shared with her father.
For Virginia Woolf no less than Leslie Stephen, writing was to be understood and agreed upon; it was to affirm the bond between artist and audience, to create unity, not shatter it. Communication implied community, and only in a community did communication have value.

Nevertheless, communication was more difficult to achieve for Virginia Woolf than it had been for her father. "Communication is health; communication is truth; communication is happiness," she quoted from Montaigne in an essay, and she later gave almost those same words to Septimus Smith. That Septimus dies trying to communicate is a sign of the difficulty of the task for Woolf. For her, the thread of reality was almost impossible to perceive outside the self, as difficult to realize as a play of Shakespeare when the book is shut.

Only through language could she conceive reality; words for her did not describe so much as synthesize her vision of life. "I make it real by putting it into words," she wrote. "...It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what, making a scene come right; making a character come together." For Woolf, life was to be entrapped and transmitted through the medium of words; otherwise it would be lost: a day left unchronicled in her diary was "life allowed to waste like a tap left running." Behind the fragments of life was the reality they signified, the wholeness that language could sometimes discover; she wrote:

I attain a different kind of reality, achieve a symmetry by means of infinite discords, showing all the traces of the mind's passage through the world, achieve in the end some kind of whole made of shivering fragments.

Although her vision was individual and idiosyncratic, she believed
that the wholeness, the reality that her vision communicated, was universal. And the need to find that reality, she believed, was universal as well. She wrote, "For some reason the human mind is always seeking what it conceives to be the centre of things; sometimes one may call it reality, again truth, again life--I don't know what I call it." As tenuous and indefinable as reality was, she never questioned its existence or the validity of her own perception of it. Nor did she spend much time trying to determine the relation between the two: she did not care about philosophy. What she did care about, and worry about torturously, was the difficulty of communicating her vision to the world. The synthetic quality of language was meaningful for her only if it could both universalize and share her private vision. However internalized and personal her writing, she always wrote for an audience. Bad reviews depressed her because they indicated that she had failed to communicate her vision. Even in her diary she posited a hypothetical reader, Virginia at Fifty.

Sir Leslie Stephen's only lesson to his daughter about writing--"to write in the fewest possible words, as clearly as possible, exactly what one meant"—was the lesson of a Victorian mind. For it implied not only a will to communicate but also a trust in the validity of language as a tool, a trust in the power of language to convey shared meaning. Woolf inherited the will without the trust: to say what she meant required "appalling effort," and she never felt that she had transmitted completely "that vision to which I cling though I know no way of imparting it to you." The Victorian distrust of aestheticism also colored her feelings about language. Language could never exist for
beauty's sake alone, but must work to transmit the vision. Thus she repeatedly questioned her motives and abilities and the seriousness of her intentions. She wrote in her diary, "One must write from deep feeling," said Dostoevsky. And do I? Or do I fabricate with words, loving them as I do?" 156

A distrust of the beauty in language is paradoxical in a writer whose language is as consciously beautiful as Woolf's is. Naremore describes her writing as

...qualitatively different from the writing of nearly all her great contemporaries. No matter how complex her style becomes, it retains a self-consciously lovely quality and a certain easy elegance that sets her apart from other important twentieth century authors. 157

He also notes how much of her writing relies on the formulas of polite conversation. 158 What Naremore has perceived is that Virginia Woolf writes like a lady. In Woolf's fiction, coupled with the Modernist desire to tell the absolute truth is the Victorian woman's desire always to be beautiful, always to be polite, never to offend, never to rattle the spoon against the teacup. There are moments in modern fiction when reality and traditional concepts of beauty collide; at those moments in Woolf's fiction, beauty emerges victorious. As she herself realized, Victorian politeness shaped her scenes about sex and the body. It also shaped her fiction in a more all-encompassing way: the closed ending that caps an open experience comes from the desire to communicate, the desire not to leave the reader rudely hanging without complete understanding, even if the vision itself is incomplete.

This desire for complete communication tempers Woolf's Modernism; moreover, it forms the basis of her problematic criticisms of her
fellow-moderns Eliot and Joyce. Although she recognized their brilliance and originality, she could not tolerate their lack of deference to the understanding and sensibilities of their readers. "The indecency of the one and the obscurity of the other" seemed to her simply rude.\textsuperscript{159} Eliot's fragmented vision was in many ways not unlike Woolf's, but she accused him of "wilfully concealing his transitions."\textsuperscript{160} In "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" she complained, "How intolerant he is of the old usages and politenesses of society--respect for the weak, consideration for the dull!"\textsuperscript{161} She excused him in part as a poet--and an American. But Joyce she could not excuse for what she called "the damned egotistical self."\textsuperscript{162} That egotism refused to sacrifice a personal vision to public politeness or a private language to universal comprehension. To Woolf Joyce appeared not to care at all about his audience. In theory she felt that fiction should be free of the fetters of English social demands; she wrote, "If the British spoke openly about W.C.'s and copulation, then they might be stirred by universal emotions."\textsuperscript{163} But when Joyce wrote about just those things, he called forth her bitterest criticism, notably not on literary, but on class grounds. \textit{Ulysses} seemed to her not so much ill-written as ill-mannered. She wrote, "An illiterate, underbred book it seems to me: the book of a self-taught working man and we all know how distressing they are, how egotistic, insistent, raw, striking, and ultimately nauseating."\textsuperscript{164}

For Woolf, language and the reality it synthesized retained a formal quality, a deference to the requirements of public taste, which somehow had to be reconciled with the fragments that comprised her
private vision. Her literary goal was never merely to reveal the idiosyncrasies of the self; it was to disclose the shared reality behind them. Reality in Woolf's fiction does not consist of private experience or individual apprehension; it is these phenomena transformed by language into something communally shared and understood. To transcend the "damned egotistical self" was the object of all her prose, and it was terribly difficult for her to do. In her diary, she asked, "Have I the power of conveying true reality? Or do I write essays about myself?"  

Woolf was not alone in her drive to communicate both experience itself and the principle that lies behind it; that is the artistic intention of all writers in the realistic tradition. Nor was she alone in her ambivalence between the need for freedom and the need for order; that conflict is basic to Modernism. Most Modernist literature grapples, too, with the issues in Woolf's work—the dichotomy between the physical world and consciousness, the passage of time and the influence of history, the sense of place, the importance of social roles. And most Modernist literature employs forms that question man's relation to tradition: the outward forms of behavior that shape the novel from the time of Richardson and Defoe give way to the chronicling of the inner life; the novel of manners gives way to the novel of psychology. Behind this change is a general questioning of the efficacy of those social forms that have constituted civilized life.

Monroe Spears writes, "The great Moderns are haunted by the fear of discontinuity and obsessed by the problem of relating past and
The great early Moderns—Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf most obviously—manifest in their work both the pain and the exhilaration of their break with the past. Their concern is not the fact of disjunction, but the conflict between disjunction and unity; they are fundamentally transitional figures. Moreover, I believe, it is not their impersonality, but paradoxically, the personal nature of their conflict, that endows the best of their work with feeling and meaning. Woolf is arguably the most personal of these writers: if her female-ness—or her femininity—tempered her Modernism, it also allowed her to give voice to the mixed emotions that accompanied the artistic rebellion of her age. Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf all found forms in the past, the bond from which they feared disjunction. But the mythic forms that provide structure in Eliot and Joyce differ from Woolf's historical forms. Mythic forms rebel against the past by transcending it; Woolf's historical forms explore the immediate, personal past in an attempt to recapture its meaning. Woolf has been accused of never leaving her upper-middle-class drawing room. But clearly, confronting the walls of that drawing room was the most honest and courageous artistic act she could have performed.

Paradox and ambivalence, as well as duality, characterize Virginia Woolf's work. She struggled to find reality by writing fictions, to communicate through language though she felt its inadequacy, to escape from the strictures of the past by taking refuge in its forms. This sense of inconsistency gives us a feeling of shifting ground, subversion, even self-destruction in her work. But her dogged insistence on being inconsistent is the source of her complexity, strength, and truth,
and of our feeling of constant discovery in reading her work. For it is at the heart of her uniqueness that she saw with perfect clarity into the future of literature, yet she never ceased to look over her shoulder at the ghosts of the past.
Notes


21 Daiches, 3-4.
24 Q. Bell, I, 22.
26 Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury," 159.
28 Jerome Buckley, The Victorian Temper (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1969), 186-187. Unless otherwise cited, all of the factual information which supports my assertions about the Victorian Age comes from this study.
30 Buckley, The Victorian Temper, 134-135.
31 Buckley, The Victorian Temper, 133.
34 Woolf, "Genius," Collected Essays, IV, 8, 10.


40 Buckley, *The Triumph of Time*, 3.

41 Charles Kingsley, "North Devon," quoted in *The Victorians*, 34.


43 Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*.

44 Fussell, 198.


46 Fussell, 26.

47 Fussell, 181.

48 Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1854).


50 Fussell, 169.


52 Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 134.

Q. Bell, I, 19.


Maitland, 170.


Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 126.

Maitland, 130.

Q. Bell, I, 63.

Q. Bell, I, 11.


Maitland, 170.

Q. Bell, 1, 97.


Maitland, 266.

Maitland, 266.


Hill, 351.

Hill, 351.

Q. Bell, I, 20.
Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 83.


Q. Bell, I, 17; "Reminiscences", 34.

Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 84.


Woolf, "Reminiscences," 42.


Q. Bell, I, 39.

Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 90.


Woolf, Diary, I, 70; "Old Bloomsbury," 165; Q. Bell, II, 203.

93 Q. Bell, I, 95; Woolf, "Reminiscences," 44-45.


96 Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 95.

97 Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 130.


100 Q. Bell, I, 138.


104 Q. Bell, I, 157-161.

105 Q. Bell, I, 142.


111 Woolf, *Diary*, II, 237.

Woolf, Diary, II, 17.
Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury," 166.
Woolf, Diary, II, 250.
Spears, 7.
Woolf, Diary, I, 263.
Woolf, A Writer's Diary, 335, quoted in Hill, 354.
Hill, 354.
Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 98.
Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 122.
Woolf, "The Russian Point of View," Collected Essays, I, 239.
Woolf, "The Russian Point of View," 243-244.
Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 104.
Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," 64.
Hartman, 29.
The question of the relation between internal perception and external phenomena has invited speculation about Woolf's philosophy, notably in Maxime Chastaing, *La Philosophie de Virginia Woolf* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951). However, despite Woolf's association with G. E. Moore and her occasional study of individual philosophers such as Berkeley and Hume, she held no coherent philosophical viewpoint herself, and none emerges from her fiction. While working on *The Years*, she questioned her own ideas about internal


156 Q. Bell, II, 99.
157 Naremore, 14.
158 Naremore, 15-16.
159 Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," 203.
161 Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," 203.
162 Woolf, *Diary*, II, 141.
164 Woolf, *Diary*, II, 189.
165 Woolf, *Diary*, II, 248.
168 Spears, 34.
CHAPTER II

THE EARLY NOVELS

Woolf's first three novels, The Voyage Out, Night and Day, and Jacob's Room, are generally considered apprentice efforts, the first stirrings of a Modernist sensibility toward an appropriate form. All three novels have traditional plots dealing with the play of characters in society, while at the same time all three question their own traditionalism by establishing the inner world of consciousness as a counterpoint. By the end of Jacob's Room, Woolf's questioning breaks down the form of the novel, opening the door to the technical experiments of her mature phase. Nevertheless, Woolf's early emphasis on traditional aspects of the novel does not come entirely out of a sterile attachment to the past; it also expresses a deep-seated need for the physical and social world, a need she retains even in her most experimental novels. Her concerns with time and place, society and communication are not the misfirings of a young novelist who has not yet found her "modern" voice; they are the first expressions of Woolf's continuing belief that there are "two levels of existence," the individual consciousness and the outside world, which are often in conflict.

The Voyage Out

As early as her first novel, The Voyage Out, the conflict between inner and outer realities emerges clearly as the object of Woolf's concentration: thematically, Rachel's self-discovery parallels Woolf's
discovery of the inner life as fictional material, while structurally the love-and death plot meets the demands of the traditional well-made novel. The Voyage Out introduces the Modernist preoccupation with self and consciousness, but the traditional elements ultimately carry the greater weight.

The traditionalism of The Voyage Out is not inadvertent. Because Woolf saw herself as connected to the English novel tradition, she originally conceived The Voyage Out as a three-volume novel dealing with characters in society, "a stir of live men and women against a background."¹ Its earliest version, Melymbrosia, resembles an Edwardian problem novel; Jane Marcus comments, "Odd to imagine Virginia Woolf as a female H.G. Wells, but the impulse was there."² Although her first reader, Clive Bell, admired the novel's amorphous, internalized qualities over its concrete ones, Woolf's successive drafts retained her strong attachment to the traditions of both the English novel and English life.³ Technically, the novel depends upon setting, character, and event, and thematically, it affirms the value of history, place, and society. And it is distinctly a novel of social criticism.

Ironically, the similarities of The Voyage Out to the traditional fiction of its time were probably more obvious to its contemporary common readers than they are to the present-day literary critic. For The Voyage Out had a strong tie to a contemporary genre: Woolf's device of a voyage to a tropical location drew on a late Victorian interest, the travelogue or tale of tropical adventure.⁴ More specifically, The Voyage Out appears to owe a debt to Woolf's own affection for the most popular fictional work in this genre, W. H. Hudson's Green
Mansions: A Romance of the Tropical Forest. The plots of the two novels are remarkably similar, both pit the elemental forces of nature against the pull of social imperatives, and, most importantly, both works respond to an interest in imaginative escape that was prevalent in the literature of the time.

Woolf's use of the journey as plot device also suggests the literary importance for her of place and setting. The novel's title is usually interpreted as a metaphor for Rachel's movement inward to consciousness. But Rachel's inward voyage is occasioned by her external, factual voyage from one physical and social setting to another, an aspect which has important implications for the unfolding of the novel. For only by voyaging out of England into Santa Marina can Rachel attain the freedom necessary to discover "the vision of herself as a real everlasting thing, different from anything else, unmergeable like the sea or the wind" (84)—that is, a self detached from civilization. Therefore, a sense of place, physical setting as much as its psychological illuminations, informs the novel. As Austin Warren notes, setting can function as internal or external landscape; it "may be viewed as metonymic, or metaphoric, extensions of character," or as "massive determinant—environment viewed as physical or social causation." In The Voyage Out it is both. Santa Marina is to some extent moralized landscape, the expression of Rachel's desires for freedom and self-determination. But England is the "massive determinant" that drives her to those desires; she leaves England because she must and does not return because she must not. The open, abstract quality of the setting of Santa Marina reflects the limitless, abstract quality of
consciousness which makes itself felt there. But this vagueness does not betoken a lack of concern on Woolf's part with setting as a component in the novel; England and Santa Marina are both carefully created environments for what takes place there. The differences between them objectify the opposition of realities that the novel explores: London is the external world of society, Santa Marina the internal world of consciousness.

Because English culture figures significantly as the point of departure for Rachel's voyage out, the novel begins in London. From the opening passage onward, London objectifies the physical, rather than emotional, level of existence. Locations are precise, down to the exact side of the street the characters are walking on, and the action is confined to impersonal streets and sidewalks, rather than the intimacy of houses or parks. Woolf describes London in images of rigidity and separation: objects are placed in "angles," "squares," "rows," "a straight line"; they "thunder," "jingle," "jut," and "jerk" (10-13). A confusion of objects and people, crowded and confined, the streets of London function in the interests of commerce at the expense of human communication: "It is better not to walk down them arm-in-arm" (9).

It appeared that this was a great manufacturing place, where the people were engaged in making things, as though the West End, with its electric lamps, its vast plate-glass windows all shining yellow, its carefully-finished houses, and tiny live figures trotting on the pavement, or bowled along on wheels in the road, was the finished work. (12)

Woolf's London is a descendant of Defoe's, a mercantile society comprised of its own manufactured objects. The city itself is an enormous factory which diminishes its humanity into "tiny live figures," cogs in the commercial machine. The machine's ostensible purpose is to
maintain civilization, but that construct is "a very small bit of work" (12). The "thousand men and women" (12) thrust together seem unable to make contact across the lines that separate them. To Helen Ambrose, through whose point of view the city is described, London represents activity without community.

She knew how to read the people who were passing her; there were the rich who were running to and from each others' houses at this hour; there were the bigoted workers driving in a straight line to their offices; there were the poor who were unhappy and rightly malignant....When one gave up seeing the beauty that clothed things, this was the skeleton beneath. (11-12)

The "skeleton beneath" London is its class system, the lines of social separation that prevent communication among human beings.

The only escape from the externality and separateness of the city is the indeterminateness of the water; in the river, time, place, and the society of the present disappear: "Sometimes the flats and churches and hotels of Westminster are like the outlines of Constantinople in a mist; sometimes the river is an opulent purple, sometimes mud-colored, sometimes sparkling blue like the sea" (10). In Woolf's novels, water always suggests freedom, timelessness, the inner self and the unknown world, a world larger in emotional scope than the land can support. 10

Thus, the journey from London and the later one from Santa Marina are both literal and metaphoric water voyages. The Euphrasyne takes its passengers away from the external world of objects, commerce, and society. From the perspective of the water, the limitations of civilization become evident: London shrinks to rows of buildings "like a child's avenue of bricks" (13). England is the "light of civilisation" (19) struck against the darkness of the unknown, but the water puts
the meanness of such civilization into relief.

London was a swarm of lights with a pale yellow canopy drooping above it. There were the lights of the great theatres, the lights of the long streets, lights that indicated huge squares of domestic comfort, lights that hung high in air. No darkness would ever settle upon those lamps, as no darkness had settled upon them for hundreds of years. It seemed dreadful that the town should blaze forever in the same spot; dreadful at least to people going away to adventure upon the sea, and beholding it as a circumscribed mound, eternally burnt, eternally scarred. From the deck of the ship the great city appeared a crouched and cowardly figure, a sedentary miser. (17-18)

Although the travelers feel a sense of "exhilaration" (27) when freed from the strictures of society, they also feel isolation and danger. Civilization is confining but also protecting, and disjunction from the social continuum is liberating but also frightening. As Robert Alter observes, "The void...looms beyond Virginia Woolf's London." Thus, the characters are ambivalent toward their freedom. Helen and Ridley cross the river apprehensively and "mournfully," with an unknown old boatman, from "a world half obliterated in too fine a yellow fog" (13). On the Euphrosyne, Rachel apprehends the same dark and uncharted recesses, both physical dangers and demons which suggest the unconscious mind.

Beneath it was green and dim, and it grew dimmer and dimmer until the sand at the bottom was only a pale blur. One could scarcely see the black ribs of wrecked ships, or the spiral towers made by the burrowings of great eels, or the smooth green-sided monsters who came by flickering this way and that. (27-28)

Because the unknown world is dangerous as well as liberating, people "want bridges" (13): they form clusters of English civilization even as they journey away from it. This ambivalence toward English civilization, which is central to the novel, is part of the larger problem of
human communication. In England, the fixity of society and civilization allows communication within a community—a communication both made possible and limited by the safety and familiarity of fixed social forms. Outside of England, social freedom permits a more open and honest communication—communication first with the self, and through self-knowledge, a more open relation to others, frightening in its intimacy.

Woolf delineates these two forms of communication through characters as well as through settings. On the ship, Rachel's father and the Dalloways foster a belief in civilization and social role-playing; Helen Ambrose fosters a belief in the self and in complete honesty towards other people. As the **Euphrosyne** forms its miniature England, Rachel begins to see the terms of the choice she will face—a choice between civilization and self, safety and danger, the external and internal worlds.

Among the characters, Helen and Ridley Ambrose are the outsiders, the individuals, the rejectors of the conventions of English society. The opening lines of the novel place the Ambroses in opposition to the flow of society: "In the streets of London where beauty goes unregarded, eccentricity must pay the penalty, and it is better not to be very tall, not to wear a long blue cloak, or to beat the air with your left hand" (9). Helen, the eccentric, swears, dresses oddly, remained single until the age of thirty, and believes that, if properly educated, women could be "much the same as men" (196). Her most unconventional characteristic is a kind of social perversity that places individual feelings above social requirements. Opposed to the role-playing that characterizes English social relations, she wishes to teach Rachel to be
socially honest: "It's the facts of life, I think—d'you see what I mean? What really goes on, what people feel, although they generally try to hide it? It's so much more beautiful than the pretences—always more interesting..." (164) Helen's honesty places her in philosophical opposition to the Liberal Humanist patriotism and politics of her contemporaries, which are based on insincerity and gamesmanship. "No one liked it when Helen remarked that it seemed to her as wrong to keep sailors as to keep a zoo, and that as for dying on a battle-field, surely it was time we ceased to praise courage" (69). Her comments make clear that she feels dissociated from any communal belief in social and historical progress. Out of step with her time, she seems connected to the larger world of the self, disenfranchised from time and place and allied to myth and nature, a world later actualized in Santa Marina. Her tapestry, "a great design of a tropical river running through a tropical forest," populated with animals and naked natives, connects her to a timeless existence, as does her reading, which is about universals, the reality of matter and the nature of good (33).

Set in opposition to Helen are the socially conventional characters on the ship, Willoughby Vinrace and the Dalloways, Woolf's Victorian stereotypes; Willoughby and Richard are the "Newbolt Men" of the Euphrosyne. Willoughby is beefy, hearty, successful, unironic, and unemotional, and he seems to Helen "'sentimental,' by which she meant that he was never simple and honest about his feelings" (24). He manifests his Victorian conventionality most directly in his attitude towards women, exemplified in his treatment of his daughter. Rachel is poorly educated and ignorant of sex, and her father ignores her
opinions, abilities, and feelings. He primarily expects that she will replace his deceased wife, first by handling the domestic affairs of the ship, and in the future by handling his social affairs when he enters Parliament. He wants Rachel to grow up in the image of her mother, that is, to become the Angel in the House of Willoughby Vinrace. Helen suspects him of "nameless atrocities with regard to his daughter, as indeed she had always suspected him of bullying his wife" (24). When he speaks of his daughter and wife, there is a shadowy allusion to Browning's "My Last Duchess" as he points to the picture of his late wife on the wall.

Above him hung a photograph of a woman's head. The need of sitting absolutely still before a Cockney photographer had given her lips a queer little pucker, and her eyes for the same reason looked as though she thought the whole situation ridiculous. Nevertheless it was the head of an individual and interesting woman, who would no doubt have turned and laughed at Willoughby if she could have caught his eye, but when he looked up at her he sighed profoundly. (84)

Like Browning's Duchess, Willoughby's wife seems somehow larger in spirit than the man to whom she was married. "He had not been particularly kind to her while she lived" (85), and the viewer of the picture fears for the young woman who will replace her.

Willoughby Vinrace typifies the Victorian man as domestic force; the Dallways typify Victorian conservatism as political and social forces. Richard Dalloway, like Willoughby, is big, hearty, healthy, and handsome, and he is also an upper-class snob. Earnest and politically conservative, Dalloway seems slightly inhuman, suggestive of the "patriarchal machinery" Woolf abhorred: "He seemed to come from the humming oily centre of the machine where the polished rods are sliding, and the pistons thumping" (47). Dalloway is the human bearer of the light of English civilization, of the continuity of time, place, and history.
Clarissa and Richard celebrate the meaning of England and themselves as exponents of it.

"Think of the light burning over the house, Dick! When I stood on the deck just now, I seemed to see it. It's what one means by London."

"It's the continuity," said Richard sententiously. A vision of English history, King following King, Prime Minister Prime Minister, and Law Law had come over him while his wife spoke. He ran his mind along the line of conservative policy, which went steadily from Lord Salisbury to Alfred, and gradually enclosed, as though it were a lasso that opened and caught things, enormous chunks of the habitable globe. (51)

The Dalloways' England implies history and order, confinement and control. With Richard, as with Willoughby, this confinement is best observed in his attitude toward women. Vehemently opposed to women's suffrage, he relegates women to the limited role of beauty and social surface. He forbids his wife to talk politics: men have work; women have "illusions" (65). He reads only Austen among women writers because "she does not attempt to write like a man" (62). His wife exemplifies his desires for women: beautiful and charming, but socially hypocritical, she seems to be, like England itself, comprised of the external objects that surround her. Her cabin is "the dressing-room of a lady of quality. There were bottles containing liquids; there were trays, boxes, brushes, pins. Evidently not an inch of her person lacked its proper instrument." (49)

While the novel is not obviously polemical, these characters divide into an opposition of politics and art, society and individuality, communication and aloneness. To Helen, Richard is "pompous and sentimental" and Clarissa "thimble-pated"; to the Dalloways, the Ambroses are an ill-dressed, ill-mannered "set of cranks" (80, 82, 50). Rachel, a
tabula rasa, is caught between these two ways of life, and she must choose.

Rachel's choice is more difficult than it seems: she is inexperienced, and both Clarissa and Helen attract her with the motherly nurturance that she has missed—just as Woolf herself had missed it. Furthermore, the Dalloways have the advantages as well as the liabilities of society on their side; the forces of civilization which the Dalloways represent are attractive and secure in their orderliness and adherence to tradition. Mrs Dalloway is conventional and superficial in her tastes; she judges most things by external appearances. Nevertheless, her overdeveloped sense of "Cleanliness!" gives her an external surface of beauty and social polish. "She made Helen and the others look coarse and slovenly beside her" (47, 48). Her social relations are laced with hypocrisy: "I've never met a bore!" she exclaims publicly, while privately disdaining "that class" (50) to which her shipboard companions belong. But even though the Dalloways' social relations are characterized by "things that can't be said" (49), the Dalloways have learned to play the social game. They use the conventions of social life to make contact with others and to foster a sense of community around them which, if stereotypical, is still the first opening to communication.

Thus it is the Dalloways, not Helen, who wake in Rachel the desire to know other people. Although their communication with Rachel is limited and imperfect, it is the best she has ever experienced. Clarissa is the first to treat Rachel as an individual rather than as an inferior version of her mother, and so she penetrates Rachel's privacy,
bringing out in Rachel "an intense desire to tell Mrs. Dalloway things she had never told anyone" (66). And Richard is the first to treat Rachel as a woman rather than as a child; his kiss makes Rachel aware of the limitations of the life her father has set out for her. Accustomed to burying her feelings in music, she feels for the first time a desire to communicate, "a thrusting desire to be understood" (67). Woolf's male sexual image signals both Rachel's sexual maturity and the beginning of her desire to move beyond a conventional female stereotype. Treated as an individual and an adult, Rachel feels for the first time part of a community and part of a historical continuum larger than herself; she feels a brief "moment" of communication that transcends time, place, and her own sense of self.

She was haunted by absurd jumbled ideas—how if one went back far enough, everything perhaps was intelligible; everything 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. (67)

But significantly, Rachel is ambivalent about Richard's kiss; both attracted and repelled, she senses an unnamed danger. Richard offers Rachel an opening to emotion and imagination, but the offer is limited by the boundaries of his conventionality. His attitude toward women will define her as an object of beauty, sexuality, and social surface. Although Rachel cannot articulate the nature of these limitations, her dream objectifies her sense of entrapment, of being walled in.

She dreamt that she was walking down a long tunnel, which grew so narrow by degrees that she could touch the damp bricks on either side. At length, the tunnel opened and became a vault; she found herself trapped in it, bricks meeting her wherever she turned, alone with a deformed little man.... (77)

And Clarissa's self-deprecation threatens Rachel with the same kind
of entrapment. Richard, Clarissa believes, is "morally her superior," and her role is to worship him: "I suppose I feel for him what my mother and women of her generation felt for Christ" (52). Clarissa implicitly expects the same capitulation to social roles from Rachel:

"I shall never marry," Rachel determined.
"I shouldn't be so sure of that," said Clarissa. (60)

And so, because Helen later offers Rachel the motherly presence she needs without the threat of sexual stereotyping, she offers a different kind of communication. Helen is more interested in Rachel's individuality than her place in the social pattern. She believes that communication outside of social roles is far more difficult than conventional social contact, but more honest and so more rewarding. Consequently, she wants Rachel first to discover her own thoughts and feelings, to discover not the outer world, but the inner; not other people, but herself. Her invitation to Rachel is a bid for Rachel's soul against her father and the Dalloways, an invitation to free it from the fetters of civilization. Rachel now sees her past life in the same image as in her dream, "a creeping hedged-in thing, driven cautiously between high walls." (82)

When Helen brings Rachel to Santa Marina, then, she wishes to divest her of the conventions placed upon her by a childhood in Victorian England. Santa Marina provides a landscape that fosters Rachel's freedom. The physical setting of Santa Marina is as carefully described as that of London, but its effect is the opposite. Santa Marina has a calculated indefiniteness which promotes the freedom of mind that Rachel finds there. The abundant, untended nature implies an absence of order and control, an "indecency" (92) to the English point of view.
The garden called urgently for the services of gardener. Bushes waved their branches across the paths, and the blades of grass, with spaces of earth between them, could be counted. In the circular piece of ground in front of the verandah were two cracked vases, from which red flowers drooped, with a stone fountain between them, now parched in the sun. The circular garden led to a long garden, where the gardener's shears had scarcely been, unless now and then, when he cut a bough of blossom for his beloved. A few tall trees shaded it, and round bushes with wax-like flowers mobbed their heads together in a row. A garden smoothly laid with turf, divided by thick hedges, with raised beds of bright flowers, such as we keep within walls in England, would have been out of place upon the side of this bare hill. (91)

The descriptions of an English and a South American garden contrast the two ways of life. The English garden is walled and hedged—Rachel's metaphor for her life; beauty is created through order and uniformity, to be sacrificed to the needs of civilization: Flowers are "snipped through their juicy stalks and laid...upon cold stone ledges in the village church." (31) The tropical garden grows without human organization, alternating abundant life with patches of barren earth. But even the barrenness has beauty in its rainbow of colors, "no colour like it in England" (96). Instead of enclosure, one garden opens into another, suggesting possibility rather than limitation.

Like the garden, the villa represents an opposition to the English way of life. Open and "roomy," "ramshackle and absurdly frivolous" (91), it looks out to the sea. The windows are uncurtained, and house, garden, and sea seem to merge in an infinite connection of humanity and nature, in contrast to the "carefully finished houses" and thick curtains of England. Most notable is the absence of furniture and accoutrements; without these "proper instruments" of civilized life, the raw danger of existence is laid bare: "Standing in the bare stone hall, and surveying a staircase of superb breadth, but cracked and carpetless,
Mrs. Chailey further ventured the opinion that there were rats, as large as terriers at home, and that if one put one's foot down with any force one would come through the floor" (92).

Santa Marina's social life is random street activity, characterized by "amorous talk" and passionate song" (99). Its freedom and emotionalism contrast to the order and ritual of English social life, "like the kings and queens, knights and pawns of the chessboard" (99). Santa Marina's life is free from class structure: "There are no aristocrats" (96). Elizabethan England's attempt to colonize the country failed, the colonists overcame by the barbarism of the Spanish and Portuguese and the "subtle poisons" of the Indians. The fate of those settlers prefigures Rachel's fate; she, too, is overcome by the subtle poisons of the uncharted life. Santa Marina, then, is, and struggles to remain, free from the forces of history and civilization, "much where it was in Elizabethan days" (89).

To the English tourists, the uncontrolled emotionalism and primitive power of nature in Santa Marina are threatening; the price of so much freedom is its danger. Thus, they again grasp for safety and order by creating an island of civilization at the hotel. Among the English tourist population, just as on the ship, two opposing societies spring up, the Ambrose's villa and the hotel: "The words 'the villa' and 'the hotel' called up the idea of two separate systems of life" (220). The villa is an extension of Santa Marina, where the inner life of emotion and imagination is nurtured; the hotel is an extension of England, where external, conventional life reigns. Life at the villa is unstructured and private; here Rachel has a room of her own to "defy
the world" (123) and discover herself. Reading Ibsen, she feels the value of the self divorced from society: "The landscape outside...appeared amazingly solid and clear, but...for the moment she herself was the most vivid thing in it--an heroic statue in the middle of the foreground, dominating the view" (123). Helen dissuades her from playing the Victórian "Angel" role, "those habits of unselfishness and amiability founded upon insincerity which are put at so high a value in mixed households of men and women" (124).

Just as Helen is an outsider in the social life of London, she and Rachel stand outside the hotel windows, "all brilliantly lighted" (100), and look in at the English tourists, playing the card and chess games that symbolize their society. The hotel, "the big block to the left" (93), represents the physicality and solidity of England; the "box-like squares" of its rooms suggest uniformity, and its walls, "only matchboard...run up to make many little rooms of one large one" (103) allow only minimal privacy. Life at the hotel is trapped in time and history: "The paper lay directly beneath the clock, the two together seeming to represent stability in a changing world" (117). The Englishness of life at the hotel emerges in the quintessential ceremony, tea. Here the disparate guests are unified by another upper-class ritual of community: they realize that they have been to the same parties in London. "Mrs. Parry's drawing room, though thousands of miles away, behind a vast curve of water on a tiny piece of earth, came before their eyes. They who had no solidity or anchorage before seemed to be attached to it somehow, and at once grown more substantial" (147).

The members of this social group who are most important to the
novel are Susan Warrington and Arthur Venning, the engaged couple who function as counterpoints to Rachel and Terence. Susan and Arthur's engagement represents exactly what Rachel is trying to escape. Without marriage, Susan is trapped in the role of unmarried woman as family servant, whose life consists entirely of "doing things for other people" (12), another "Angel in the House." Arthur is yet another Victorian male stereotype, healthy, unironic, and unintellectual, a man of action rather than feeling. For Susan and Arthur, the implications of love are more social than emotional; their love centers upon marriage and its effect upon the community. Once she is engaged, the community treats Susan as one of its citizens, one of "the ranks of married women" (140). For Susan, religion, love and marriage constitute "the solemn and satisfactory order of the world" (227), a pattern in which her social and moral roles are predetermined and synonymous. But for both Susan and Arthur, love also brings a loss of identity; perfect communication is paid for at the price of the self: "'It's the most perfect thing in the world,' Susan stated, very gently and with great conviction....From this they went on to compare their more serious tastes, or rather Susan ascertained what Arthur cared about, and professed herself very fond of the same thing" (139). To Rachel, that loss of integrity which accompanies love is pathetic and degrading.

The problem of individuality in opposition to community concerns not only Rachel, but Terence Hewet and St. John Hirst also. Woolf introduces them in a discussion of the difficulty of communication. For
Hirst, communication is impossible; Hewet vacillates between individuality and community: "I flit from branch to branch" (107). Hewet wishes for communication based on honesty, but he is aware that conventional social roles often offer the only communication possible. Thus he is caught between self and society: "the truth of it is that one never is alone, and one never is in company" (108). Terence seems to have one foot in each world. He understands the hypocrisy of social roles and wants to shatter them by writing a book about "silence...the things people don't say" (216). He understands the frustrations of Victorian womanhood, "instinctively adopting the feminine point of view" (213), and he wishes that human beings could "burst the bubbles" of their privacy, so that "it would be an e-nor-mous world" (109). But Terence is also aware of the difficulty of such communication, the difficulty of transcending the self, and he understands the breach of social norms that such honesty entails.

"Cows," he reflected, "draw together in a field; ships in a calm; and we're just the same when we've nothing else to do. But why do we do it?--is it to prevent ourselves from seeing to the bottom of things...making cities and mountains and whole universes out of nothing, or do we really love each other, or do we, on the other hand, live in a state of perpetual uncertainty, knowing nothing, leaping from moment to moment as from world to world?--which is, on the whole, the view I incline to." (127)

Because he recognizes the difficulty, Terence does not break barriers himself; unlike Hirst or Helen, he is not an outcast from society, nor does he wish to be. Terence relies on the forms of English civilization to foster communication; he brings people together on an English-style picnic, pairs them off appropriately, and serves them tea. In addition to his book about feelings, he wants to write another book about a young
man's climb in society as reflected in his clothes.

Terence then, represents Woolf's authorial ambivalence between individuality and society, freedom and structure. Like Woolf, he is interested in the problem of communication, and he wishes to express the difficulty--and to communicate himself--in fiction. With "something of a woman in him" (247), he is Woolf's fictional counterpart in the novel. Both Terence and Woolf wish to unify the internal world of consciousness and the external world of society in a "moment" of unity. But they must "leap from moment to moment as from world to world," for unity is transient at best. Both want to transcend the limitations of society, but they are attracted to the order and security that society creates. And so, both ultimately rely on the external forms of civilization: Woolf, like Terence, pairs people off and examines their characters while serving them tea--the forms of society are the forms of her fiction.

In the novel, Terence cannot transcend the social world himself; thus, he is fascinated by Rachel, who can. In Santa Marina, Rachel breaks away from the social role that her English heritage has demanded; her Uncle Ridley's opening comment, "Ah! She's not like her mother" (15) remarks ironically on her separation from the past. When Rachel meets Terence at the picnic, they separate from the social group, moving "higher and higher...separated from the world" (129). From here Rachel can observe the freedom and scope that are hers outside civilization. Again she becomes the largest thing in the landscape, blocking out civilization and leaving only the sea: "Towns are every small," Rachel remarked, obscuring the whole of Santa Marina and its suburbs with one
hand. The sea filled in all the angles of the coast smoothly...." (129)
Unable to communicate with Hirst, the misanthrope and misogynist, Rachel
embraces her separateness in a solitude associated with nature.

"There are trees," she said aloud. Would trees make up for
St. John Hirst? She would be a Persian princess far from
civilization, riding her horse upon the mountains alone, and
making her women sing to her in the evening, far from all
this, far from the strife of men and women. (155)

Rachel is allied with the nature and independence expressed in the
life of Santa Marina. As she feels the threat of the intimacy of love
with Terence, she runs off into "those trees which Helen had said it was
worth the voyage out merely to see" (173). There, she reads about "the
forests and morasses of Germany...filled with a hardy race of
Barbarians, who despised life when it was separated from freedom" (175).
It is this freedom about Rachel that Terence senses, and just as he is
ambivalent about the value of communication, he is alternately
fascinated by and jealous of Rachel's privacy of self. He can envision
an openness in their marriage that would make it different from conven-
tional unions, yet he is jealous of the self-containment that affords
Rachel such freedom.

Rachel and Terence feel for a brief moment that mergence of selves
that comes with love: a union with nature, beyond time, place, and ego,
and a loss of identity. "Am I Rachel, are you Terence?" she
asks (289). Images of water suggest the blurring of individuality; the
boat takes them "slipping over barriers and past landmarks into unknown
waters," and the lovers feel "at the bottom of the sea" (266-270). Their
union differs from Arthur and Susan's: not a joining of external
tastes and opinions, but a joining of feelings and selves. Woolf's
language underscores the internal quality of their love: the curious combination of sentimentality and banality manifests the inadequacy of words to describe what they feel, the impossibility of communicating "the things people don't say." 

"We are happy together." He did not seem to be speaking, or she to be hearing.
"Very happy," she answered.
"We love each other," Terence said.
"We love each other," she repeated. (271)

Rachel and Terence's love cannot be transmuted into externalities, either linguistically or socially. It is essentially internal and private, and Rachel resents the social imperatives that infringe upon her feelings, to externalize, conventionalize, and share them.

"No," she repeated, "I never fell in love, if falling in love is what people say it is, and it's the world that tells the lies and I tell the truth. Oh, what lies--what lies!"
She crumpled together a handful of letters from Evelyn M., from Mr. Pepper, from Mrs. Thornbury and Miss Allan, and Susan Warrington. It was strange, considering how very different these people were, that they used almost the same sentences when they wrote to congratulate her upon her engagement. (293)

But because their intimacy is so intense and private, it can last only temporarily. Each time Rachel and Terence separate, a "barrier" grows between them; they are "drawn so close together as she spoke that there seemed no division between them, and the next moment separate and far away again" (280-282). This pattern of union and separation which characterizes Rachel and Terence's romance, Woolf suggests, governs all communication. True intimacy cannot be sustained; communication takes place most easily, though superficially, in a framework of convention—in the stylization of games, the ceremony of tea, the ritual figures of dance, the structures of the English novel. The dance at the hotel is a
paradigm of the difficulty and temporariness of communication.

It was as though the room were instantly flowed with water. After a moment's hesitation, first one couple, then another, leapt into midstream, and went round and round in the eddies....The eddies seemed to circle faster and faster until the music wrought itself into a crash, ceased, and the circles were smashed into little separate bits.... (152)

As the image of water suggests, there is unity, though it is transient, in the ritualized structure of the dance. And significantly, when Rachel begins to play her own music, she transcends the rituals, enabling a deeper unity to take place. Musically, she breaks the conventions, perceiving beyond the traditional English dance tunes to the classical structures beneath them, to rhythms that suggest a larger, more encompassing world. Each dancer finds his own dance, "invent[s] the steps" (166), unbounded by convention.

Once their feet fell in with the rhythm they showed a complete lack of self-consciousness. From Mozart Rachel passed without stopping to old English hunting songs, carols, and hymn tunes, for, as she had observed, any good tune, with a little management, became a tune one could dance to. By degrees every person in the room was tripping and turning in pairs or alone. (166)

All of life becomes caught up in one large moment of communication and connection through art. Rachel is the liberator; by breaking down the conventions of music, she enables the guests to find themselves first individually and then communally, not in small eddies but in a "gigantic circle" (166) which includes everyone. But again, that moment of intense communication cannot last: "the strain was too great" (166); the circle gives way, and the pressures of convention once more intervene. "It isn't becoming" (167), one guest observes, and the guests disperse. Rachel's liberation of the forms of music reflects Woolf's intention to liberate the forms of fiction; she, too, wishes to transcend the
conventions of the novel to create connection and communication through art. But in this early novel, the formal traditions of the novel exert their pressure, the strain is too great, and Woolf's liberated form of communication does not last, either.

This overriding ambivalence toward communication affects Terence and Rachel's love from beginning to end. Each time they reach an intimacy beyond the usual formalities, the external world intervenes, usually in the guise of time. As they declare their friendship, they realize it is late and they must return home. As they declare their love deep in the forest, Terence looks at his watch (!) and says, "We're so late--so late--so horribly late" (272); momentarily lost in the depths of nature and in their intimacy, Terence fears disjunction from civilization.

The pull of time and civilization attracts them away from their intimacy; both of them want and need other things, and these desires jeopardize their unity. "It chilled them to see themselves in the glass, for instead of being vast and indivisible they were really very small and separate, the size of the glass leaving a large space for the reflection of other things" (303). Rachel is attracted to the world of things--"the books on the table, the photographs, the fleshly leaved plant with the stiff bristles" (249); but essentially she desires a private level of existence which is beyond the external world, which extends from nature and merges with the universe. "She wanted many more things than the love of one human being--the sea, the sky. She turned again and looked at the distant blue, which was so smooth and serene where the sky met the sea; she could not want only one human
being" (302).

In this respect, Terence is Rachel's opposite. He is attracted to Rachel's sense of separateness and the total communication that such self-hood allows: "the great gift she had was that she understood what was said to her....You could say anything--you could say everything...." (243). He questions conventional marriage, imagining couples "walled up in a warm firelit room" (241). But in essence, unlike Rachel, Terence craves community rather than separateness. He stands outside the villa and looks in, just as Rachel stands with Helen outside the hotel: each is ultimately an outsider in the other's world. Terence is bound by the structures of civilization. He cannot imagine any alternative to marriage; Rachel, in contrast, suggests that "human beings should live separate" (156) and she later suggests breaking off their engagement (303). Having found love, Terence wants to join the "ranks" of civilization in a way not very different from that of Susan and Arthur; and he is willing to pay the price of lost intimacy. Madeline Moore writes:

Terence and Rachel's return to the hotel signals the anomalies of their coming marriage. For Terence now sees Rachel with the eyes of the Londoner, rather than through the romantic lens of the traveller playing primitive.18

When Rachel and Terence discover each other, they are walking between two landscapes, the land on one side, the sea on the other. For Terence, though, the sea leads to the Thames, which "washed the roots of the city of London" (210). He wants to be "in the thick of life, doing things with Rachel" (300), and his desire for people, things, and activities puzzles her. He imagines them walking together in the crowded London streets, while she thinks of "the long straight roads
where one can walk for miles without seeing anyone" (300). For each of them, life is profoundly different, she separate from the external world and he part of it.

"Does it ever seem to you, Terence, that the world is composed entirely of vast blocks of matter, and that we're nothing but patches of light--" she looked at the soft spots of sun waverung over the carpet and up the wall--"like that?"

"No," said Terence, "I feel solid, immensely solid; the legs of my chair might be rooted in the bowels of the earth." (293)

Because Terence sees himself as part of the pattern of civilization, he is willing to do what is necessary to remain part of the community. And so, even though he has "something of a woman in him," Terence takes a conventionally masculine attitude towards Rachel after their engagement. When they tell each other about themselves, it is his place to talk and hers to listen. He notes in some detail her lack of conventional physical beauty and describes her as "essentially feminine," which he defines as having "no respect for facts" (295). When she becomes enraptured in her own interests, she seems "less desirable as her brain began to work" (212)

Predictably, it is around the ceremony of tea that the differences between them break the surface. Terence wants to have tea with the hotel guests, wanting "Rachel to see them with him" (310); Rachel dreads the platitudes she will have to endure as the newly engaged female. Helen defends Rachel's view; thus Helen now competes with Terence for Rachel as she earlier competed with Richard Dalloway: "there were moments when they almost disliked each other" (310). Terence's anger at Rachel erupts into a statement that summarizes his viewpoint, undercutting Rachel's importance as an individual in contrast to the community.
"Fiddlesticks, Rachel," Terence replied. "Who wants to look at you? You're consumed with vanity! You're a monster of conceit! Surely, Helen, you ought to have taught her by this time that she's a person of no conceivable importance whatever—not beautiful, or well dressed, or conspicuous for elegance or intellect, or deportment. A more ordinary sight than you are," he concluded, "except for the tear across your dress has never been seen" (308).

Terence's bantering tone only thinly veils his belief that the individual is less important than society. Seen in terms of conventional social norms, Rachel is "ordinary"; her hard-won individuality is unimportant. That marriage to Terence will jeopardize Rachel's self-hood seems evident.

Although Woolf has earlier objectified in Terence her own need for social order and form, she also recognizes her ambivalence toward that need. And so in Terence's conventionality she also communicates the destructive capacities of conventional forms. Terence reads a chapter from a novel about an unhappy marriage which concludes, "They were different," and he asks, "Lord, Rachel, will it be like that when we're married?" (297) Rachel does not answer. But Woolf, it is clear, has answered the question affirmatively; for Rachel to marry Terence and return to England would be to return to everything she has escaped. Only by some form of separation from society can Rachel maintain her freedom.

That separation, of course, takes place through death. Rachel cannot remain forever in Santa Marina, nor can she become the Persian princess of her imaginings. Civilization reaches for her as her father approaches to bring her back to England and marriage.

Rachel would not consciously sacrifice the love she has found in favor of freedom. She does not choose death; she chooses Terence and
begins to embrace his values. During tea at the hotel she thinks, "Things formed themselves into a pattern not only for her but for them, and in that pattern lay satisfaction and meaning" (314). But when illness and death come, she succumbs to their isolation with a readiness that expresses a sense of relief. She seems happy to have the choice taken out of her hands.

All sights were something of an effort, but the sight of Terence was the greatest effort, because he forced her to join mind to body in the desire to remember something. She did not wish to remember; it troubled her when people tried to disturb her loneliness; she wished to be alone. She wished for nothing else in the world. (347)

It has been suggested that Rachel's sudden and unexpected death renders the novel meaningless; Frederick P. McDowell writes, "One can argue that the arbitrary demise of a woman built up through the entire novel is a flaw because this person's importance is thereby undercut. Rachel's inner expansion comes to seem pointless, perhaps, when she meets such an arbitrary end." But Rachel's end is not so much arbitrary as it is ambivalent. Not only does it express Rachel's uncertainty about her conventional marriage to Terence, more importantly, it objectifies Woolf's authorial uncertainty about her conventional novel form.

Because Rachel's illness is unexplained, her end is what Mark Spilka calls, "that Victorian heritage, senseless death." In traditional fiction, the difference between marriage and death makes the difference between comic and tragic vision: marriage is the reward and death the punishment for the conventional young heroine. But in The Voyage Out, Woolf both accepts and rejects this equation; for, while Rachel's death is a pessimistic statement in Victorian terms, it is an
ironic statement in Modernist terms--only through a "senseless" Victorian death can Rachel escape a "senseless" Victorian life. In this novel's vision, marriage to Terence will entrap Rachel in social tradition, and so her death is a kind of freedom. Thematically, then, her end fits both the Victorian and the Modernist visions of the novel.

Yet, despite the appropriateness of Rachel's end, her death does seem arbitrary; and that is because the Modernist sensibility can entertain options for Rachel that the Victorian sensibility could not. Twentieth-century heroines have other choices besides marriage or death. But these choices usually leave open possibilities; they do not close off the novelistic experience. And in the traditional structure to which this novel adheres, experience must arrive at a point of termination. Although this novel reaches towards Modernist freedom in theme, it is pulled back by its own Victorian structure, which must end in a closed, coherent statement. Rachel must either marry or die, and death is the closest thing to freedom that the novel's traditional structure will allow.

Thus, in this first novel, Woolf parallels her fictional counterpart Terence: she would like to break with the conventions that limit communication, but she cannot break them completely. She questions the traditional assumptions internally and thematically, but she follows traditional forms externally and structurally. In Rachel's death, Woolf realizes the capacity of traditional forms to limit and circumscribe freedom. But just as Terence cannot imagine a life with Rachel outside the traditions of society, Woolf cannot imagine a life for Rachel outside the traditions of English fiction. Terence wants to write two
novels, one about internal reality, "the things people don't say," and one about external reality, society and clothes. In *The Voyage Out*, Woolf has written both of Terence's novels.

Rachel's death enables Woolf to demonstrate the limitations of Victorian fiction while simultaneously retaining the conventions of its form; thus, her death is a statement of Woolf's ambivalence. This early novel's Victorian and Modernist meanings militate against one another, and these warring significances make the novel, as Lytton Strachey said, "very un-Victorian." Nevertheless, *The Voyage Out* is more traditional than modern, even thematically. For the novel does not end with Rachel's death; it ends by affirming the value of the physical and social world that Rachel has left behind.

Terence first interprets Rachel's death as the canonization of their perfect love, which has never been translatable to the physical world and is now preserved from civilization's decay. "They had now what they had always wanted to have, the union which had been impossible while they lived" (353). This is the love of Santa Marina, not England, and as Terence thinks about Rachel, he looks out an uncurtained window into limitless nature, "the moon, and a long silver pathway upon the surface of the waves" (354). But as he leaves Rachel's room, Terence makes a physical transition from the internal world to the external one in which he must now exist. His perceptions now are of intense loss, of emotions which must be controlled, of rooms, objects, and the bonds of other people. "As he saw the passage outside the room, and the table with the cups and plates, it suddenly came over him that here was a world in which he would never see Rachel again" (354, my
The inner world is beautiful and enticing, but Terence cannot live in it; the world of community, with all its limitations, is the best one he has. The close of the novel contradicts the idea of disjunction from society and the external world. For the impact of Rachel's death is assessed not by its effect on Terence or Helen, but by its effect on the English community as a whole, and in that community, the external world offers comfort through its pattern, ceremony, and communication. Helen disdains the bonds of civilization in favor of freedom when she says,

Directly anything happens--it may be a marriage or a birth, or a death--on the whole they prefer it to be death--everyone wants to see you. They insist upon seeing you. They've got nothing to say; they don't care a rap for you; but you've got to go to lunch or to dinner, and if you don't you're damned. It's the smell of blood." (309)

But the novel's ending contradicts Helen. Rachel's death elicits the community's desire for participation and reconciliation, but not because of "the smell of blood"; rather because of the blood of their common humanity. As they huddle together against the elemental forces of nature, the members of the English community search for meaning in Rachel's death and for a pattern in existence. At the hotel, the storm, like Rachel's death, draws people together in their insignificance against the dangers of unchecked nature. They "retreat from the windows" and "collect in little groups" (369). Once the storm subsides, the order and magnitude of civilization are restored: "the building, which had seemed so small in the tumult of the storm, now became as square and spacious as usual" (370). In the same way, English civilization, which has seemed so small in the tumult of Rachel's voyage to freedom, love, and death, is also restored to its former importance.
Finally, it is Hirst, the misanthrope, the character who is most estranged from other people and who believes communication impossible, who is directly redeemed by Rachel's death. For the first time he makes contact with the flow of common humanity. Returning to the hotel from the villa, he finds community and comfort in the order of English society around him. The external world asserts itself as a force of physical solidity, reaffirmed by the lights of civilization.

The sky was once more a deep and solemn blue, and the shape of the earth was visible at the bottom of the air, enormous, dark, and solid, rising into the tapering mass of the mountain, and pricked here and there on the slopes by the tiny lights of villas. (374)

Hirst watches the guests play chess, that paradigm of the English social order. And finally, even he takes comfort in civilization and its patterns. Whatever its limitations, the order of society offers comfort against the elemental forces that are beyond control. To be human and alive is to be reconciled with the external world.

The movements and the voices seemed to draw together from different parts of the room, and to combine themselves into a pattern before his eyes; he was content to sit quietly watching the pattern build itself up, looking at what he hardly saw. (374)

Thus, The Voyage Out makes a psychological return to England, to society, and to the external world. While Woolf does not minimize the value of Rachel's self-discovery, she makes clear that the inner life alone is not enough to sustain a life, or a work of fiction.
Night and Day

Woolf's second novel, Night and Day, is more complex and problematical than The Voyage Out, but it, too, explores her ambivalence toward the two worlds she has defined. The title suggests the division between outer and inner realities that is the point of departure for both novels. But Night and Day's events take place on a much more quotidian level than those of The Voyage Out; because Woolf does not allow the action to escape to a tropical country, she confronts her separation of worlds practically rather than hypothetically. Her characters struggle within the traditional English social world, and so her novel works within the traditional English novelistic concerns of manners, morals, and marriage.

In the light of Woolf's oeuvre, Night and Day is remarkably traditional. Critics have often characterized it as trapped in an antiquated form which could not encompass the new kind of "reality" Woolf wanted to transmit, and its upper-class socio-romantic entanglements seem a step backward from The Voyage Out. But in one significant way, it is a step forward: the conventional concerns of Night and Day reflect Woolf's recognition of a major limitation of her first novel. In The Voyage Out the foreign elements of a tropical island and an unexplained death served the symbolic and structural needs of Woolf's design, but they did not serve the empirical realities of English life. Night and Day demonstrates her belief that the physical presence of England and its culture shape English life and cannot honestly be escaped in the English novel. Thus, the task Woolf set herself in her second novel was more difficult than that of her first: Night and Day attempts to deal with the everyday
life that concerned people living in London, not vacationing in Santa
Marina, and it attempts to counter the day-to-day world with a sense of
that felt inner world which, for Woolf, was simultaneous and just as
real. Night and Day refined Woolf's vision and redefined the inner
world—not as a mysterious flower in a foreign soil, but as an ever-
present opposition to the external life.

In Night and Day, then, Woolf explored the same opposition of
Worlds as in The Voyage Out, but on a more practical level which made
the novel more difficult to execute. Katharine Hilbery cannot run away
to the jungle to contemplate stars and numbers, nor can she succumb to a
mysterious tropical fever when she reaches the impasse of marriage.
Daily life, not sudden death, curbs self-realization; the presence of
England, family, and culture, rather than a primeval paradise and an
enlightened fairy-god-aunt, complicates the necessities of living. If
Night and Day has a ponderous, pedestrian quality, that is because the
life Woolf chronicles is mired in history, place, and society. Woolf's
wish that the novel genre could "cut adrift form the eternal tea-
table" could not be realized in this novel's pre-War world, where life
itself was still tied to Victorian moorings.

The most representative aspect of Night and Day's deliberate tradi-
tionalism is its love-and-marriage plot. The upper-class tea-table
atmosphere of the novel, complete with rich, beautiful heroine and
intelligent, dominating hero reminds the reader of Jane Austen. But in
this novel, Austen goes awry, because, while the novel follows the
structure of the traditional novel of manners, it ends with an ironic
questioning of its own solution. For Night and Day is not, like an
Austen novel, a succession of developments toward a socially and morally agreeable solution; here the characters' self-knowledge develops away from the social norm as well as toward it; the protagonists desire freedom from society as much as unification with it.

Moreover, Woolf's interest in consciousness does not comfortably fit into a genre which emphasizes external plot elements. As a result, the events of the novel seem to exist less to advance the story than to elucidate Woolf's vision of internal and external worlds. The main characters share that inconsistency: Katharine and Ralph seem distant and unsympathetic, and some of these "cold and impersonal" (239) qualities derive from the fact that, at least as much as they are characters in a story, they are polemical figures in Woolf's pattern of oppositions. Thus, in many ways, Night and Day, like the earlier Voyage Out, rebels thematically against its own conventional structure. It again expresses Woolf's ambivalence towards tradition--her need for external and social forms, and her concomitant need to free herself from those forms.

Furthermore, even more directly than in The Voyage Out, Woolf confronts her personal literary concerns in the novel. Night and Day has no novelist-character like Terence Hewet to voice her ambivalence towards traditional novel forms; instead, it has Ralph Denham, the self-critical writer, who expresses Woolf's distrust of all writing. Indeed, in this novel, Woolf broadens her literary questioning to encompass all of English literature, for here she defines her ambivalence towards English culture as an ambivalence towards the entire literary tradition in which that culture is expressed. For Woolf, culture is externalized
in social conventions; among such conventions, the most powerful, and the most open to question, is language. In Night and Day, Woolf exemplifies the breadth of her doubting not in a Terence Hewet, who vacillates between two kinds of novels, but in Katharine Hilbery, who does not want to write at all. When Katharine rejects her English literary heritage, she is rebelling against all the limitations of English society and culture, including the traditional novel.

Because all of English literature is the province of Night and Day, the literary figure who dominates the novel is not Austen but the all-encompassing Shakespeare.27 Shakespearean comedy shapes the form of the novel, as we will see. And more immediately, the figure of Shakespeare pervades the novel as the quintessence of the English cultural heritage. In describing pre-War England, Paul Fussell remarks upon "the British awareness of possessing Shakespeare as a national asset."28 This awareness characterizes Night and Day, for the Hilbery family possesses Shakespeare, and indeed, English literature itself, as its social, cultural, and family inheritance: "Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, and so on...were, for some reason, much more akin to the Hilberys than to other people" (39).29 Katharine Hilbery's rebellion against, and return to, this heritage forms the internal/external opposition of the novel.

In general, English culture is represented by Shakespeare; more particularly, the Victorian cultural heritage is concentrated in the fictional figure of Richard Alardyce, Victorian England's greatest poet. Alardyce is Katharine's grandfather, and so, like Woolf herself, Katharine must struggle for self-hood in the shadow of a Victorian
literary father-figure, a Hero in History. Because she is Alardyce's
granddaughter, her family, social, and cultural obligations are unified.
When she serves tea and helps her mother write the Alardyce biography,
she preserves not only the traditional family structure, but also the
English literary tradition. Thus, while Rachel in The Voyage Out must
move away from place, England, Katharine must escape time, English
history.

The Victorian poet Richard Alardyce represents the limiting forces
of English history, for he belongs to a past so vital that it suffocates
the present. Showing her grandfather's artifacts to literary pilgrims
in a "ceremony of ancestor-worship" (319), Katharine says, "My grand-
father must have been at least twice as large as anyone is
nowadays"(15). In his shadow, Katharine and her contemporaries become
"only small people" (16). Because the heroes of the past are dead, it is
their physical objects, heightened by imagination and memory, that
render the present "insignificant" (16). Katharine is mistress of the
physical world that recreates the light of a civilization grounded in
the past.

As Katharine touched different spots, lights sprang here and
there, and revealed a square mass of red-and-gold books, and
then a long skirt in blue-and-white paint lustrous behind
glass, and then a mahogany writing table, with its orderly
equipment, and, finally, a picture above the table, to which
special illumination was accorded. (15)

Like the walls that limit Rachel, the physical objects that
enshrine the past form for Katharine "a kind of boundary to her vision
of life" (39). The unrealized part of Katharine's vision is her indivi-
duality; she cannot find herself outside the community which has
defined her all her life. "She very nearly lost consciousness that she
was a separate being, with a future of her own" (115). Her duties at home constitute the upholding of English history and society; since her mother is impractical, it has fallen upon Katharine to be The Angel in the Hilbery House, stifling her own desires "for the credit of the house" (9). Her appointed place, like Virginia Stephen's, is at the tea-table, providing for the physical accoutrements of tea. The time of day in the novel is almost always dusk: that hour expresses not only the novel's ambivalent oscillation between the day world of action and the night world of contemplation, and the grey mood of depression Katharine feels about marriage to William Rodney, but also, more concretely, the fact that for Katharine it is almost always tea-time, time to resurrect the dead ceremony of a past generation. Katharine is trapped in time; as she takes on the activities of the day, "the clocks...come into their reign" (108). Her chronic lateness argues her desire to escape time, and her repeated forgetfulness of her possessions expresses her need to escape the objects that limit her existence.

Because Katharine's vision of life is bounded by her social horizons, at first she cannot conceive of an escape from her home life by any means other than marriage. Mary Datchet's alternative, to live alone in a room of her own, requires "a power of being disagreeable to one's own family" (59), a power which Woolf implies that Katharine does not have. For Katharine, a life like Mary's "wouldn't do at all" (94), but, significantly, no one explains why. Katharine, in fact, is perfectly willing to be disagreeable to her father when the occasion demands it, and she is quite able to rebel against the social status quo. Consequently, her rejection of Mary's way of life is inconsistent
with her character: her social station will not allow her to entertain the prospect of living alone or joining an organization for the emancipation of women, but she wants to live with Ralph Denham without benefit of matrimony. Clearly, Katharine's choices are determined not by her own character, but by the demands of Woolf's love-and-marriage plot. Like Rachel, Katharine is a Modernist spirit trapped in a Victorian novel, and the question of her independence resolves into whom she will marry. She cannot reject tradition herself; the best she can do is to marry a man who rejects it. And so her first choice for marriage, William Rodney, is the wrong man, not because he is vain, petty, selfish, childish, or even a bad writer, but because he demands complete submission to the forces of the past.

William Rodney is the exponent of a past now fallen into decay and upheld by physical objects; like his dressing-room and his books, everything about Rodney connotes "shabbiness" (136). Living in eighteenth-century rooms, collecting first editions, composing plays in outdated conventions and antiquated language, Rodney is overwhelmed by his own artifacts: "His papers and his books rose in jagged mounds on table and floor, round which he skirted with nervous care lest his dressing gown might disarrange them ever so slightly" (73). Like Mr. and Mrs. Hilbery, who will tolerate nothing modern in literature, Rodney belongs to a dead past which he converts into dead literature. Another "Newbolt Man," he is further caught up in a blind adherence to the appearances and conventions of the English class system; he feels most at home dropping names among the decaying aristocracy of the Otway family, where he finds his true soul-mate, Cassandra.
As with all of Woolf's Victorian throwbacks, Rodney's most conventional, and most damning, aspect is his attitude towards women. He sees Katharine, and all women, as conformations to a stereotype: women should not be educated; instead of ideas, women have "feelings" (205). Rodney's image of womanhood ignores Katharine's character, which is overtly unemotional and abstractly intellectual. What Rodney "loves" about Katharine is her family connection to English literature and society and her physical beauty. He assesses her appearance and social behavior in much the same way that George Duckworth judged Virginia and Vanessa's, "like horses turned into the ring."

He had discovered that she never made an ugly movement; he also said that the shape of her head made it possible for her, unlike most women, to wear her hair low. He had twice reproved her for being silent at dinner; and once for never attending to what he said. (196)

In Rodney's stereotype, marriage is the only social relation for which Katharine, and "all women" (66), are fit; singleness for a woman is "odious" and "self-centered" (71). Moreover, in the social world of the Hilberys, marriage by definition denies individuality for the sake of social requirements. "It's no good being married unless you submit to your husband" (211). Mrs. Hilbery ironically predicts Katharine's probable future with Rodney when she describes her own parents' marriage, engineered by elder relations: "She said to my father, 'Marry her,' and he did; and she said to poor little Clara, 'Fall down and worship him,' and she did; but she got up again, of course. What else could one expect?" (177) Katharine's engagement capitulates to the past and the physical world; it is a "desperate attempt to reconcile herself with facts" (242). Once engaged, she feels trapped by objects, "a sense
of impediments accumulating on all sides of her" (269).

In the first part of the novel, Katharine can only escape this world through her imagination; curiously, she makes contact with her own individuality by contemplating stars and studying mathematics. Her fascination with stars derives from the fact that their illumination is completely unaffected by, and broader in scope than, the concrete world of history, place, society, and physical objects.

The stars did their usual work upon the mind, froze to cinders the whole of our short human history, and reduced the human body to an ape-like, furry form, crouching amid the brushwood of a barbarous clod of mud. This stage was soon succeeded by another, in which there was nothing in the universe save stars, and the light of stars. (196)

And she admires the laws of mathematics because they reflect a timeless, changeless certitude, an impersonality beyond the grasp of human society and its conventions. Because numbers are not ruled by social requirements, mathematics seems to Katharine "unwomanly" (46). Most important, numbers are unrelated to language, the convention that Katharine most distrusts.

But the more profound reason was that in her mind, mathematics were directly opposed to literature. She would not have cared to confess how infinitely she preferred the exactitude, the star-like impersonality, of figures to the confusion, agitation, and vagueness of the finest prose. (46)

Contemplating stars and "star-like" numbers takes Katharine beyond the physical and conventional world which entraps her. And once freed from that world, her own mind is released to discover her inner self, the world of imagination and emotion, detached from society. Like Rachel's inner world, Katharine's internal world is paradoxically expressed as both the diffusion of self and the communion of love, set in a timeless, natural realm of expanded possibility.
...the pupils of her eyes so dilated with starlight that the whole of her seemed dissolved in silver and spilt over the ledges of the stars for ever and ever indefinitely through space. Somehow simultaneously, though incongruously, she was riding with the magnanimous hero upon the shore or under forest trees. (196-197)

Katharine's imaginative visions of taming wild ponies on the American prairies or steering a ship through a hurricane express her need to control her environment rather than be controlled by it. Such daydreams, "marked by her complete emancipation from her present surroundings," take place in settings antithetical to the world of English culture and history. To chart the time of her mind would require "some magic watch" (45).

Katharine's need to escape history and the physical world is the source of her relation with Ralph Denham. Like Katharine, Ralph must win his freedom from "the grasp of the family system" (27). Because he is male, of a lower class, and without strong traditions, Ralph has less to gain by maintaining the status quo, and so he is more free than Katharine. Furthermore, he has intellectually rejected the Victorian cultural baggage that Katharine and her family represent. "I hate great men," he says. "The worship of great men in the Nineteenth Century seems to me to explain the worthlessness of that generation" (20). The "hidden impulse" (177) in both Katharine's and Ralph's characters is the need to escape Heroes and History.

In rejecting the past and the communal for the present and the individual, Katharine and Ralph make a philosophical transition from the Victorian to the Modern temperament. Ralph and Katharine are Woolf's "revolutionists" who "press on rather in advance" (366), in contrast to Rodney and Cassandra, their conventional foils. When Katharine secretly
breaks her engagement to Rodney, she commits an act of social rebellion against English culture and history, "the common sense of twenty generations" (317). She redefines public morality in private terms.

"We'll help each other. That's a Christian doctrine, isn't it?"
"It sounds more like Paganism to me," Rodney groaned, as he reviewed the situation into which her Christian doctrine was plunging them. (326)

Once Katharine has outwardly broken from English history, she is, like Rachel on her voyage out, free for self-discovery in the external world as well as the internal, and through self-discovery, she finds genuine communication and love. Freedom is no longer only inward: London itself suddenly discloses a landscape of freedom like Santa Marina, spots of untamed nature. That such places exist even in the city demonstrates that a larger world lies hidden beneath the veneer of English culture. The stultifying constructs of English life, Woolf suggests, conceal a larger, more natural world, free of constraint. This larger world transcends time, place, and society; thus it exists even in London, the center of English civilization. But it can only be discovered in moments of imaginative freedom; like the stars and mathematics which open the gates to Katharine's imagination, this natural world is analogous to the inner world. And not until Katharine overtly crosses the boundaries of externalized, civilized life does she even become aware that such a world exists. Very soon after she breaks her engagement with Rodney, she meets Ralph in Kew Gardens. Although she has visited Kew before, the presence of so much natural freedom in the midst of London is a revelation to her. "Why did you never tell me?" she says. "I didn't know there was this" (329).
Katharine's two opposing worlds, and the conflict of the novel, then, are externalized in Woolf's use of setting. The action of the story begins to oscillate between two kinds of settings—from stuffy, overcrowded rooms to open gardens and streets. The closed-off, man-made, many-roomed Victorian house both physically centers and symbolizes English life as it is lived in the external world. In the Hilbery house" crowded with relics" (15) and relatives, Katharine perceives "the body of life...without its soul" (407). Even worse is Stogdon House, as its name implies, the stodgy lodging of the Otways, from whence emerges the conventional, ill-educated Cassandra, looking "like a French lady of distinction in the Eighteenth Century" (343). The Otway mansion houses a life now passed into decay, with its "horned skulls, sallow globes, cracked oil-paintings, and stuffed owls" (197). As the dead animals suggest, the Victorian house cages in the impulses for natural freedom.

From this suffocating setting Katharine and Ralph escape to nature and to the streets. The newly discovered natural world within the city blossoms along with Katharine and Ralph's self-discovery. Kew Gardens becomes their Shakespearean green world, "analogous to the dream world that we create out of our own desires." For Katharine and Ralph, nature symbolizes freedom and emotion: love is allied with nature in Katharine's mental image of "some magnanimous hero, riding a great horse, by the shore of the sea" (107). Ralph's dream of Katharine also evokes nature, "as if the sky had been drawn apart, and the heaven lay bare, as it does in the country" (64). Both Katharine and Ralph, like Mrs. Hilbery but unlike Rodney, have affinities with nature, especially animals. Katharine and Ralph nurture animals; Rodney rattles the bars of
their cages.

Just as Katharine and Ralph seek the freedom of nature, they hunger for the impersonality of the streets, detached from identity, community and control. The flow of humanity in the open streets corresponds to the flow of water in Santa Marina, again, not only symbolically, but also practically, as a physical setting that affords Katharine and Ralph the freedom to find each other outside of cultural encumbrances. Like the spots of nature, the streets are not part of English civilization; they belong to the world of larger possibility that exists simultaneously with, but separate from, the constructs of culture. In the streets Katharine's new sense of self-definition is paradoxically allied with the sense of self-diffusion, a union which, in Woolf's estimation, comprises true freedom—a merging of self in a larger, anonymous world that transcends the limitations of both culture and individuality.

...pedestrians were streaming in two currents along the pavements....The deep roar filled her ears; the changing tumult had the inexpressible fascination of varied life pouring ceaselessly with a purpose, which, as she looked, seemed to her, somehow, the normal purpose for which life was formed; its complete indifference to individuals, whom it swallowed up and rolled onwards, filled her with at least a temporary exaltation....They tended the enormous rush of the current—the great flow, the deep stream, the unquenchable tide. (439)

Once they establish their new relation, Katharine and Ralph, like Rachel and Terence, find themselves connected to the uncharted, natural world, beyond the reach of English history and culture. Together they become part of the natural order as physical, sexual beings. He sees her among "the fantastic plants, which seemed to peer and gape at her from striped hoods and fleshy throats" (331); Katharine "in defiance of
the rules stretched her ungloved hand and touched one" (332). Like Adam
and Eve, they are exposed in a new world, in which, for better or worse,
they will act as if they are free and create their own codes of
behavior. In Kew Gardens, the "only...place to discuss things satis-
factorily" (302), Katharine and Ralph express their desires for complete
freedom from social conventions and for the prize that such freedom
brings, communication. "Neither is under any obligation to the
other....They must be able to say whatever they wish to say" (337).

As in The Voyage Out, communication is the real issue in Night and
Day, and only in this free, natural world can complete communication
take place. In the conventional English world, communication occurs
only with difficulty; inhabitants struggle for "that kind of gay toler-
ance and general friendliness which human beings in England only attain
after sitting together for three hours or so, and the first cold blast
in the air freezes them into isolation once more (63). Before meeting
Ralph, Katharine has maintained all of her relations with other human
beings by means of a social role, avoiding communication by using lan-
guage as an external tool to hide her feelings. Katharine's
Englishness, her sense of family and cultural connectedness, prevents
her from being honest: "Surely you must have found with your own family
that it's impossible to discuss what matters to you most because you're
all herded together, because you're in a conspiracy, because the posi-
tion is false" (336). Katharine's difficulty with communicating in her
life is the same as Woolf's difficulty in her novels, the pressure of
tradition:

...the teapot...rules in England; time is limited; space
crowded; the influence of other points of view, of other
books, and even other ages, makes itself felt....Whether he wishes it or not there is a continual pressure upon an English novelist to recognize these barriers, and, in consequence, order is imposed and some kind of form.

Because Katharine's life, like England itself, has been ruled by the teapot, her only moments of honest emotion have been alone. "How you go on about feelings!" (241) she complains. However, it is not feelings, but the constant "going on" about them that she avoids. She distrusts the ability of language to communicate anything real.

Ah, but her romance wasn't that romance. It was a desire, an echo, a sound; she could drape it in color, see it in form, hear it in music, but not in words; no, never in words. (287)

Katharine and Ralph belong to a society empowered by words: Katharine's literary heritage and Ralph's literary abilities tie them to a world defined by language. "No one can escape the power of language," Woolf writes, "let alone those of English birth" (304). Almost every major character in Night and Day is a writer of some sort: Mr. Hilbery writes literary criticism, Mrs. Hilbery, biography, Rodney, criticism and drama, Mary Datchet, political tracts, Ralph, history and legal essays, and of course, Richard Alardyce, poetry. For the Hilbery family, language does not so much serve life as life serves language: "The best of life is built on what we say when we're in love" (307), says Mrs. Hilbery. Significantly, Mrs. Hilbery's own sojourn with language, The Life of Richard Alardyce, is a failure. Although she does not realize it herself, her inability to write grows out of her inherent opposition to language and the external world it reflects. As she writes her Victorian biography, her imaginative capacities rebel against Heroes and History, for she is a "visionary" (46), an alien in the world of time, place, and social conventions. "She was beautifully adapted for life in
another planet....Her watch, for example, was a constant source of
surprise to her, and at sixty-five she was still amazed at the ascen-
dancy which rules and reasons exerted over the lives of other
people" (44). And so, even though she writes and writes, no words will
capture the truth about her father: "It isn't that I don't know every-
thing and feel everything....but I can't put it down, you see" (115).
And thus, Katharine sees "her own state mirrored in her mother's
face" (46), for she shares her mother's distrust of language.

As Ralph recognizes, in English society, language blocks real
communication; he says, "I doubt that one human being ever understands
another....such liars as we all are, how can we?" (254) But once they
are outside of society, they transform the natural world into an Edenic
world of communication. They reinvent language by detaching it from its
English social and historical relations in a ritual act of naming.

In naming the little green plant to her he used the Latin
name, thus disguising some flower familiar even to Chelsea,
and making her exclaim, half in amusement, at his knowledge.
Her own ignorance was vast, she confessed. What did one call
that tree opposite, supposing one condescended to call it by
its English name? (330)

As well as "refashioning" (330) language, Katharine and Ralph
reject language. To Ralph, the "mystical conclusion" of their relation-
ship is a transcendence of the external world: it is "an ideal, a vision
flung out in advance of our actual circumstance" (487). Because he is a
writer, he attempts to translate the mystical nature of their communion
into words. But language fails him. "The difficulty with which even
this amount was written, the inadequacy of the words, and the need of
writing under them and over them others, which, after all, did no
better, led him to leave off..." (487).
Because Ralph and Katharine find words inadequate, their deepest revelations take place outside the scope of language. In a "moment" of complete communication, Katharine shows Ralph her mathematical calculations and he shows her a picture of "blots fringed with flames meant to represent--perhaps the entire universe" (487). Each of their symbols bears some relation to the inner world: Katharine's mathematics are her secret gateway to her imaginative life, and Ralph's drawing perhaps illustrates his conception of the relation between the internal and the external world--"all that encircling glow which for him surrounded, inexplicably, so many of the objects of life" (493). But Ralph's drawing, like Katharine's mathematics, is essentially an abstraction. Its significance is that it is not language, but a symbol with no concrete or conventional correspondence: "On the surface, the whole thing must appear of the utmost absurdity" (492). When Katharine says, "Yes, the world looks something like that to me, too," (493), she is averring that she shares a vision of life, the Woolfian vision, inexpressible in language. At that moment, Woolf suggests, Katharine and Ralph lose themselves in a communicative depth so profound that, like Rachel and Terence in the forest, they seem to have crossed the boundaries of the physical world into the recesses of the mind, "with shadows so deep and dark that one could fancy pushing farther into their density and still farther, exploring indefinitely" (493).

In both The Voyage Out and Night and Day, this depth of communion is characterized by the inability of language to describe it. The banality "We love each other" trivializes Rachel and Terence's moment in the forest; similarly, Woolf only weakly captures Ralph and Katharine's
communion in the image of a dot with flames. As she says, it is an "idiotic symbol" (493). Furthermore, its significance as a representation of non-verbal communication is undercut by the fact that Woolf can only describe it in words. Woolf both wishes to demonstrate the inadequacy of language and to define her vision; paradoxically, as a novelist, language is the only medium she has in which to frame that vision. Thus she, like Ralph, must employ "an infinite number of half-obiterated scratches" to describe the inner world,

...a world of law, of philosophy, or more strangely, a world such as he had had a glimpse of the other evening when together they seemed to be sharing something, creating something, an ideal....If this golden rim were quenched, if life were no longer circle'd by an illusion (but was it an illusion after all?), then it would be too dismal an affair....(487)

Woolf's halting, uncertain prose communicates her doubt in her own medium. As she realizes, neither the convention of language nor the conventions of the traditional novel can capture her vision, and she projects that realization into Ralph's thoughts: "What worse sacrilege was there than to attempt to violate what he perceived by seeking to impart it?" (473)

Woolf's attitude towards language is ambivalent; she distrusts its limitations, but she ultimately asserts its power by writing a novel. That same ambivalence determines the fate of her characters and shapes the structure of her novel. She creates characters who question the limitations of traditional social forms, but her novel ultimately follows the traditional social forms of English fiction by ending in marriage.

Katharine and Ralph perceive their love as a form of social rebellion which will not be pressed into any public form such as marriage.
And so, when Mr. Hilbery challenges the unorthodoxy of their relationship by ordering Katharine to define it, she replies, "I refuse to explain" (476). She refuses to equivocate through language, to make public and social what is for her private and individual. She further refuses to allow her father to discuss her situation with Rodney. "It is I who am concerned," (470) she says, asserting her identity as an individual, rather than as a generic female object in the English social system. Mr. Hilbery resorts to the language and literature of the past, Sir Walter Scott, as a palliative for Katharine's rebellion, but he recognizes the social, cultural, and linguistic implications of her refusal to speak.

Civilization had been very profoundly and unpleasantly overthrown that evening....His house was in a state of revolution;...was literature itself a specific against such disagreeables? A note of hollowness was in his voice as he read. (477)

The scope of Katharine and Ralph's rebellion thus poses a question not only crucial to their own fate, but crucial to the fate of the English novel: "Why, after all, isn't it perfectly possible to live together without being married? (482) To maintain their freedom and communication, the boundaries of marriage are "out of the question" (472), and Katharine contrasts her attitudes to those of Cassandra, her Victorian foil: "She had only to look at Cassandra to see what the love that results in engagement and marriage means" (432). Cassandra and Rodney's love fits into the social relation of marriage, and so it adheres perfectly to the demands of Victorian novel form. Giving Cassandra Rodney's engagement ring, Katharine says "I believe it will fit you without any alteration" (495).
But clearly, for Katharine and Ralph some alteration is required. Yet, instead of altering the end of her novel to suit the needs of her characters, Woolf alters her characters to suit the needs of the traditional novel ending. Thus, in this novel as in all things, Woolf attempts to escape the past but is finally pulled back by the power of external conventions. Consequently, Katharine and Ralph do not carry their rebellion through to the end of the novel, and, Woolf, implies, they should not. She suggests instead that the completed vision must contain both freedom and structure and she creates such a vision in her novel. To give oneself entirely to freedom, to sacrifice external society to the needs of the internal self, she indicates, is to lose as much as one gains. For in disjunction from society there is not only self-definition but also self-dissolution; there is communication, but also, paradoxically, intense loneliness. She objectifies the price of disjunction from society in the character of Mary Datchet, who effects the separation from the past that Katharine does not. Mary rejects the past, leaving her father's house, refusing to marry, earning her own living, and becoming a feminist. Her freedom allows her to communicate in a novel filled with women and filled with writers, Mary is the only woman who actually succeeds in writing anything. But to do that she must first lose the game of love and marriage: to live alone, as Mary does, in a room of one's own, Woolf implies, is to be "not quite 'in the running' for life" (265). Life, "round, whole, and entire" (503), Woolf thus demonstrates, contains tradition as well as rebellion, the past as well as the present. And so, although Katharine and Ralph have struggled to escape from tradition and convention, they must ultimately
be reconciled with them.

The agent of this reconciliation of past and present is Mrs. Hilbery. When Katharine asks her mother why she must marry, Mrs. Hilbery refers not to marriage, but to Katharine's mathematical symbols. "'A plus B minus C equals xyz. It's so dreadfully ugly, Katharine!'" (483). For Mrs. Hilbery, as for Woolf, abstractions disassociated from humanity, individuals divorced from society, life without language, are "ugly thoughts" (484); she cannot envision life cut adrift from social conventions. And so she returns from Shakespeare's tomb as "a moving mass of green" (479), laden with flowers which she brings into the Hilbery house, her Shakespearean vision uniting the natural world and the social world in a moment of complete unity that transcends all limitations.

"So much earth and so much water and that sublime spirit brooding over it all," she mused, and went on to sing her strange, half-earthly song of dawns and sunsets, of great poets, and the unchanged spirit of noble loving which they had taught, so that nothing changes, and one age is linked with another, and no one dies, and we all meet in spirit, until she appeared oblivious of anyone in the room. (497)

Mrs. Hilbery persuades Katharine and Ralph to share her vision of reconciliation, and even she celebrates the conventional social implications of their acquiescence.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mrs. Hilbery. She thanked him for a variety of blessings: for the conviction with which the young man spoke; and not the least for the prospect that on her daughter's wedding day the noble cadences, the stately periods, the ancient eloquence of the marriage service would resound over the heads of a distinguished congregation gathered together near the very spot where her father lay quiescent with the other poets of England. (489)

And so, while the early part of the novel records Katharine and Ralph's rebellion against the world of English history, society, and language,
the end of the novel records their return to that world. Just as they reinvent language in Kew Gardens, they learn to reinterpret English culture and the past. Ralph discovers a past rooted in nature, individualism, and honesty when he visits the English countryside at Disham; here he sees life allied with cosmic time instead of history, "the long-sighted peaceful expression of eyes seeking the turn of the road, or the distant light through rain, or the darkness of winter" (188). Bringing Katharine home to his family tea-table, he realizes, too, the value of his personal past. Like England itself, his family represents a shared history and a present crowded with social relationships, a small island of communication and connection given shape by social convention. "All that brotherhood and sisterhood, and a common childhood in a common past mean, all the stability, the unambitious comradeship, and tacit understanding of family life at its best, came to his mind...." (379). He learns to find the same value in Katharine's heritage; beyond the stifling past of Heroes and History lies the light and warmth of human community, limited but real. As he stares enviously at the light in the windows of the Hilbery house, Katharine ushers him into the gathering; "like someone rescued from an open boat out at sea" (419), he is rescued from cosmic aloneness by the light of civilization.

Ralph writes a letter to Katharine about the value of community. In his letter, he proves to be another literary version of the author: like Woolf, he writes out his ambivalence, and his statement objectifies her difficulties with writing as much as his difficulties with society. Despite the imperfections of civilization, community, and convention, he
concludes, these are all that exist in the external world. "Although human beings are woefully ill-adapted for communication, still, such communication is the best we know...." (487)

Katharine, too, reinterprets the past and learns to see the beauty in her own heritage, not in the artifacts of her grandfather, but in the emotions that she and her grandfather have in common. She begins to see her grandfather not as a Hero in History, but as a real human being with human imperfections.

For perhaps the first time in her life she thought of him as a man, young, unhappy, tempestuous, full of desires and faults; for the first time she realized him for herself and not from her mother's memory....He would have understood, she thought suddenly; and instead of laying her withered flowers upon his shrine, she brought him her own perplexities--perhaps a gift of greater value, should the dead be conscious of gifts, than flowers and incense and adoration. (320)

Night and Day, then, seems to end on a note of reconciliation of past and present. Mrs. Hilbery, the envoy of Shakespeare, brings the two couples together and reconciles them with Mr. Hilbery, who presides at a ritual dinner. The lost wedding ring is found, and "civilization had triumphed" (501). Katharine and Ralph, who earlier wanted to escape the social world, acknowledge both worlds: "on one side, the soul was active and in broad daylight; on the other side, contemplative and dark as night" (339). Katharine is "happy, though still bound to earth by a million fibres" (301).

Such a reconciliation meets the needs of the traditional structure of the novel. But in many ways, it does not meet the needs of the story or the characters; what works well theoretically does not work as well practically. The novel, which suggests throughout that there must be alternatives to traditional social codes such as marriage, never shows
us what those alternatives are or whether they will work. Katharine and Ralph, whatever their needs for solitude, will presumably marry and live happily ever after, participating quite conventionally in the world of words and things. "Books were to be written in rooms, and rooms must have hangings, and outside the window there must be land, and an horizon to that land, and trees perhaps" (596). Moreover, they no longer rebel against language: Ralph will write, and Katharine will help with the writing, exactly as they did before they met. Again, their future suggests Woolf's ambivalence about the future of the novel: she implies throughout that the novel, too, must break with conventional forms, but she does not show us what the new form will be. Instead, she concludes that the novel, too, must have rooms, hangings, and land--the objects of the external world, and a "horizon"--the boundaries of form.

Thus, Katharine and Ralph's desperate need for mental freedom, and Woolf's need for novelistic freedom, the starting points for the novel, seem to dissolve in the satisfaction of love and marriage--all Katharine really needed, this novel suggests, was a good man. Katharine and Ralph seem to ignore what they have worked so hard to achieve. Significantly, there is no sea on their imagined horizon. And so, the traditional ending, which fits so well structurally, questions the practical issues Woolf has brought forth, and those issues, in turn, challenge the traditional ending.

Night and Day, then, ends not on a gesture of reconciliation, but on a gesture of ambivalence. At the novel's close, Katharine and Ralph stand, like Rachel and Terence before them, between the landscapes that reflect their two worlds--the river on one side, the house on the other.
The river's "relentless flow toward the heart of darkness" attracts but also threatens them; they are free but frightened by their own aloneness. "Pausing, they looked down into the river, which bore its dark tide of waters, endlessly moving, beneath them. They turned and found themselves opposite the house" (507). The scope of their own rebellion frightens them, and they return to the familiar world of things. They do not reject either world, but neither do they reconcile them. Katharine and Ralph's final exchange, "Good night" (508), perhaps acknowledges their special cognizance of their inner world, but only symbolically. In that other world, the external world, they stand on the threshold of the Hilbery house--neither inside nor outside, but right in between. Whatever their self-discoveries, they cannot sever themselves from the world of time and place, and neither can Woolf.

Indeed, in this early novel, Woolf, like Katharine in her early engagement, was trapped by the forces of externality, "a sense of impediments accumulating on all sides of her." The novel's broken engagement, witness behind a curtain, dropped hankerchief, and tearful declarations of love are patently alien to Woolf's reality. But Woolf, too, was frightened by the scope of her own rebellion, and so she returned to the familiar world of things. Furthermore, playing the role of the Victorian lady novelist, she concealed her own novelistic rebellion behind the social rebellion of her hero and heroine. It remained for Woolf, like Katharine, to externalize her inward desires, to rebel and return more openly and more effectively: not to reject language completely or to be bound by it, but to reinvent it so that she could
trust it to communicate her vision; not to discard the conventions of the English novel or to sacrifice her vision to its structures, but to find a marriage of form and freedom, past and present, external and internal worlds. That marriage, like Katharine's, took place very soon after the end of Night and Day.

Jacob's Room

The Voyage Out and Night and Day oppose their traditional characteristics with the concern for inner reality; nevertheless, these early novels are ultimately weighed down by their lengthy, love-and-marriage plots. And so, in contrast, the amorphous structure and stylistic delicacy of Jacob's Room appear completely new, and they suggest the mature novels which follow. Because of its formal as well as thematic departure from tradition, Jacob's Room feels like the first really Woolfian novel, and most critics have treated it as such.

But Woolf's third novel resembles its predecessors more than its experimental form suggests. Like the two earlier novels, Jacob's Room concerns a young person searching for an identity that mediates between individual and social values. That concern is again reflected in structure. Jacob's Room, too, plays upon the conventions of a traditional novel form, and it uses its main character to question that form. Furthermore, as in the earlier two novels, it projects Woolf's ambivalence into the voice of a writer-character. In summary, Jacob's Room once again posits the opposition between the internal and external worlds, and exhibits Woolf's ambivalence between them. And, in fact, Jacob's
Room is probably the novel that best characterizes Woolf's struggle between two worlds: it holds a place between her early, traditional novel forms and her later, experimental forms. Jacob's Room rebels against tradition, but it ironically asserts tradition as the given point of departure. And in its departure from conventional English novel forms, it assumes the power and precedence of those forms.

In general, the technical differences between this novel and the earlier ones stand out more than the thematic similarities; the novel, as Woolf described it, is shaped not by the demands of a linear plot, but associatively, by the events and observations that cluster around Jacob. This formless, open-ended quality is an identifying characteristic of her mature work. But to many readers, she did not skillfully exercise her new technique in this early novel. A number of critics believe that, since the narrative circles around Jacob rather than entering his consciousness, the novel never really captures its main character. Paradoxically, most critics also agree that this failure fulfills the novel's purpose: Woolf wanted to prove that the events and observations which surround Jacob do not constitute Jacob himself, and, by extension, that the external trappings of the nineteenth-century novel do not constitute what she called "reality." As such, Jacob's Room is an "anti-novel" in which absence is the underlying principle.

For many critics, then, the success of Jacob's Room depends upon whether its negative energy is enough to hold it together. For some, negativity is not enough: James Hafley, for example, believes that in
Jacob's Room Woolf shows the limitations of Edwardian techniques without replacing them with anything better. And Josephine O'Brien Schaefer questions whether such a novelistic statement, no matter how delicately executed, is enough to sustain any novel.

The chief objection to the book is that it is a tour de force, that it never gets beyond being a brilliant experiment in technique. Nor will most readers willingly accept the need for Virginia Woolf to make Jacob vague because she is making fun of the Bennett-Galsworthy equation of knowledge and describability.38

But it is a mistake to judge Jacob's Room solely as an exercise in formlessness and negativity: although the novel is vague in reference to Jacob, it is decidedly not so in reference to the world he inhabits. Jacob's room is a synecdoche for Jacob's world--that is, for all the people, places, and things that are external to Jacob. If we lose sight of Jacob in the novel, or if we can never find him to begin with, we still have his room, the world of things. And, Woolf suggests, that may be all we can ever have.

Every face, every shop, every bedroom window, public-house, and dark square is a picture feverishly turned--in search of what? It is the same with books. What do we seek through millions of pages? Still hopefully turning the pages--oh, here is Jacob's room. (96)39

Moreover, what gives this world--and the novel--their vitality is Woolf's fascination with all the things that are in them. If the world of things is insufficient, it is certainly abundant, evocative, and sparkling. And if Woolf is trying to prove the failure of the physical world as a creative force, she is also, paradoxically, in love with its very physicality.

The conflict in Jacob's Room, then, is really no different from that which Woolf has expressed earlier in the characters of Rachel
Vinrace and Katharine Hilbery. Jacob wants to establish his identity as a new kind of hero, but he must participate in the external social world which thwarts his identity. On another level, Woolf's narrator wants to communicate everything about Jacob, but she cannot sever herself from the physical and social world which limit that communication. Thus this novel covers the same ground that Woolf's earlier novels have—the external world of time, place, and society and the limited communication they engender. Furthermore, these themes explored in the novel once again voice Woolf's own difficulties with writing: she wants to create a new form of fiction that can communicate all of reality, but she cannot completely escape the conventions of the English novel. The technical experiments of Jacob's Room question the dependence of the English novel tradition upon physical and social reality; nevertheless, this novel exhibits many important characteristics of that tradition; it is another exercise in ambivalence. Woolf's statement of praise for Jacob's Room, "At last I am beginning to say something in my own voice," perhaps expressed not only her discovery of a new narrative technique, but also her recognition that the conflicts embodied in her characters, themes, and structures were her own conflicts as a writer. And her conviction that "It is the same with books" suggests that she realized that the opposing forces in her work were identical with those in her life.

Woolf's "own voice" in Jacob's Room expresses for the first time the sense of irresolution and paradox inherent in all her novels. She presents two antithetical characters: Jacob, a silent young man viewed almost entirely from the outside, who displays few significant thoughts or feelings; and the narrator, a communicative older woman, who
demonstrates almost no physical presence in the story and instead is defined by her thoughts and emotions. Since the narration is not determined by the exigencies of a conventional plot, it roams free to explore both of the characters and thus, both the internal and external aspects of Woolf's vision of reality. An example will illustrate the complexity of the narration.

Yes, the chimneys and the coast-guard stations and the little boys with the waves breaking unseen by any one make one remember the overpowering sorrow. And what can this sorrow be? It is brewed by the earth itself. It comes from the houses on the coast. We start transparent, and then the cloud thickens. All history backs our pane of glass. To escape is vain. But whether this is the right interpretation of Jacob's gloom as he sat naked in the sun, looking at the Land's End, it is impossible to say, for he never spoke a word. (49)

The narrator is describing Jacob as he sits in a boat. Seen only externally, Jacob is an unknown being, and since the narrator cannot perceive his thoughts, she cannot communicate them. And so instead, she moves inward to describe her own thoughts about the young man she sees and the world he inhabits. Moreover, as the example illustrates, the prose follows the Woolfian dynamic of rebellion from and return to the external world. It takes flight from Jacob's empirical reality into the internal realm of the narrator's thoughts, and then it returns to Jacob and his surroundings. Through this dynamic, Woolf contrasts the narrator's thoughts to Jacob's actions: for the narrator, the "overpowering sorrow" of the "earth itself" is "history," which can never be escaped. She cannot perceive whether Jacob shares her feelings about the external world; she can only observe that he participates in that world with the same pattern of rebellion and return: Jacob has sailed away from the land and sits naked on a boat in the sea, but he stares at the coast of
England, to which he must soon go back. The narrative exists in two dimensions, that of Jacob and that of the narrator, and thus Jacob's Room is both fiction and metafiction, both a novel about Jacob and "a novel about writing about Jacob". And on both levels, Woolf expresses her ambivalence towards external reality. Jacob's uncertain relation to his world shapes the story, and the narrator's uncertain relation to her narrative shapes the form.

On its more traditional level, Jacob's Room is the story of Jacob Flanders, who, like Woolf's earlier characters, is caught between the Victorian and the Modern ages, and whose "room" is the time, place, and society of pre-World War I England. Because the story follows the events of Jacob's growth and education, Jacob's Room is a Bildungsroman, a genre common in the English novel tradition. The form would seem to suit Woolf's purposes perfectly, since the Bildungsroman hero must mediate between self and world and must grow toward a workable relation to his society. But Jacob's relation to his society, and thus his role as hero in a traditional novel, are unclear. To begin with, as Judy Little demonstrates, Woolf gives the novel a Bildungsroman structure only to subvert the structure in the novel's internal events.

Jacob, unlike the typical Bildungsroman hero, receives no revelation, no "epiphany." Yet opportunity after opportunity is supplied by the author; she deliberately makes Jacob look the other way, or she mocks the offered moment. Virginia Woolf drags in all the Bildungsroman scenery, then she lets Jacob walk aimlessly about, as though the stage were bare. As Little's stage simile makes clear, the traditional genre of Jacob's Room posits a relation between Jacob and his physical environment, while the rest of the novel demonstrates that the relation is amiss. Instead of acting like a hero in a novel whose form calls for action, Jacob
assumes an essentially passive role. Most critics have agreed that the source of Jacob's inaction is not within Jacob himself, but in his surroundings, which are grounded in the values of the past. Carol Ohmann writes:

Jacob's times encourage without entirely excusing his failure; those who entreat him are uncreatively wed to the past. Jacob's Room reveals society at the end of the Victorian-Edwardian peace, inevitably hurried along in the twentieth century but with the habits of mind, still, of the nineteenth or even the eighteenth.43

It is true that Jacob is overpowered by the forces of culture and history; for this reason, critics analyze him less often as a character than as a symbol—a paradigm of the shattered promise of the generation killed off by the Great War, that drama of nineteenth-century heroism.44 But Woolf purposely avoids assigning any one-to-one cause for Jacob's inadequacy; his failure is individual and personal as well as cultural. Jacob cannot function successfully in his traditional culture. Presented with the social world, he moans, "Oh-h-h-h!" or "Oh God, oh God, Oh God!" (37, 35) but he seldom says anything more. His inability to acquiesce to the convention of language will spell his doom in a conventional culture: "Then Julia Eliot said, 'the silent young man,' and as she dined with Prime Ministers, no doubt she meant, 'If he is going to get on in the world, he will have to find his tongue" (71).

Jacob is not a Victorian hero, but, as Ohmann shows, he is also "insufficiently...or ineffectually modern."45 Like the earlier Terence Hewet and Ralph Denham, Jacob is an incipient writer with a new vision, but he is unsuccessful. "A writer?" the narrator asks, "He lacked self-consciousness" (70). His paper, "'Does History Consist of the Biographies of Great Men?" (39) is left as an unanswered question and lies
on the table unread. Although the question in his paper challenges nineteenth-century attitudes, at the same time it mocks Jacob himself, who does not know how to be a great man of any kind, in any century. Jacob is one of six young men upon whom the future depends (107), and he wants to assert himself in a new relation to a traditional society. "'I am what I am, and intend to be it,' for which there will be no form in the world unless Jacob makes one for himself" (36). But Jacob has no coherent form in the world. He is not about to carve out a new future for himself or anyone else; thus his death also mocks the literary image of the youthful hero whose promise has been left unfulfilled.

Jacob's lack of self-definition, his silence, and his incomplete attempt to write identify him with his author. He cannot fit his uncertain identity into external culture just as Woolf cannot fit her ambivalent vision into the traditional novel. His need to create a form for himself in a changing world is Woolf's need to create a form for her vision in a changing novel. And Jacob's inability to find that form suggests that, in this novel, Woolf has not yet found hers.

Both Woolf and her character are caught between the past and the present in this novel. And Woolf objectifies this uncertainty, as she has in earlier novels, by means of antithetical settings. In Jacob's Room, her use of setting underscores her ambivalence on two levels: first, it counters the novel's plotlessness with a structured English novel convention; and second, the antithetical settings themselves reiterate the opposition of internal and external worlds.

Jacob moves between two significant landscapes, from timeless, natural, unsocialized Cornwall and Scarborough to history- and
culture-laden Cambridge and London. Moreover, landscape is not a static backdrop for Jacob's actions or a symbol of his state of mind. Rather, the physical setting around Jacob is more vital than he himself is, and it contributes to his ability to function: nature fosters his freedom while civilization stifles it.

Though the opinion is unpopular, it seems likely that bare places, fields too thick with stones to be ploughed, tossing sea meadows half-way between England and America, suit us better than cities. There is something absolute in us which despises qualification. It is this which is teased and twisted in society. People come together in a room. "So delighted," says somebody, "to meet you," and that is a lie. (44)

In Cornwall, away from the city and surrounded by "the waves that have been breaking precisely so these thousand years"47, Jacob struggles to keep himself unhampered by social restrictions. "Jacob doesn't want to play" (7), Betty Flanders complains of the son who is not her favorite, "the only one of her sons who never obeyed her" (23). Unlike the rebels of Woolf's earlier novels, Jacob is "not much given to analysis" (139); his freedom is physical and social rather than mental. Instead of playing games, the traditional pastime of English schoolboys, he is alone with nature, "after his butterflies, as usual" (29). The sheep's jaw he collects against his mother's wishes recalls nature and cosmic time.

Clean, white, wind-swept, sand-rubbed, a more unpolluted piece of bone existed nowhere on the coast of Cornwall. The sea- holly would grow through the eye-sockets, it would turn to powder... (10)

Jacob is at least potentially unsocialized in Cornwall and Scarborough, but the process of education wrests him from the seaside to "the light of Cambridge" (42), inimical to nature. "Neither snow nor greenery, winter nor summer has power over the old stained glass" (32).
At Cambridge Jacob is inculcated with the values of civilization, time, place, and the patriarchal tradition, "the sound of the clock conveying to him (it may be) a sense of old buildings and time; and himself the inheritor" (45). Here, Jacob is almost completely a receptor; it is time and place that seem alive.

As a patriarchal inheritor, Jacob responds to the demands of his culture with the attitudes of an incipient "Newbolt Man"; he is arrogant towards his social inferiors and culturally chauvinistic. Jacob's absorption by his society is expressed as an absorption in physical objects.

For he had grown to be a man, and was about to be immersed in things—as indeed the chambermaid, emptying his basin upstairs, fingering keys, studs, pencils, and bottles of tabloids strewn on the dressing table, was aware. (139)

The most inhumane aspect of Jacob's socialization is, predictably, his attitude towards women. Allowing women into the King's College service, he thinks, is like allowing a dog into church. Although in his more romantic moments he thinks of men and women as equals, he usually perceives women in terms of their service to the ideal of physical beauty. The Cambridge women are "as ugly as sin" (33), but Florinda, Fanny, Clara, and Sandra are all beautiful. The woman he respects most is Clara, the Angel in the Durrant House, but he ignores her in favor of superficial physical relationships outside the social perimeter. Jacob is insensitive to all the women who care for him, including his mother. He is a love object, not a lover, who gives little in return to those who love him, even Bonamy. As the narrator's regretful tone suggests, she mourns not only Jacob's inevitable death but also the death of the heart which is imposed by culture: "When a child begins to read history
one marvels, sorrowfully, to hear him spell out in his new voice the ancient words" (98).

But, despite his general passivity, Jacob does not simply allow himself to be transported into civilization without questioning its values; he remains ambivalent about his own enculturation. Although "distinguished," he remains "awkward" (61); to Bonamy he is both "urbane" and "barbaric" (164). At Cambridge, he arrives late for an academic luncheon and feels appalled at the life it represents. In society, he cannot dance and make banal conversation; at the Durrants, "the dinner jacket alone preserved him" (57). And Jacob's artistic passions for Shakespeare, Greece, and Fielding recall a richer, more deeply rooted tradition than "Shaw and Wells and the serious sixpenny weeklies" (35) that dominate his contemporary culture.

Nevertheless, these rebellions against culture are attenuated. His Shakespeare volume blows into the sea unread. In Greece, his haven from civilization, he falls in love with a self-serving married Englishwoman. And his favorite novel, Tom Jones, serves only to mock Jacob's own failure to fit into his world.48 Like Tom Jones, Jacob lives in eighteenth-century rooms. But unlike Tom with Sophia Western, Jacob cannot marry Clara Durrant and live happily ever after in English society.

Of all women, Jacob honoured her most. But to sit at a table with bread and butter, with dowagers in velvet, and never say more to Clara Durrant than Benson said to the parrot when old Miss Perry poured out tea, was an insufferable outrage upon the liberties and decencies of human nature. (123)

Jacob has nothing to say at the tea-table, and his silence communicates Woolf's realization that the romantic conventions of her first two
novels, and of the English novels before them, are no longer appropriate for her fiction. Furthermore, Jacob cannot marry Sandra Wentworth Williams, the one woman to whom he can say what he thinks, because she is already married to someone else. Thus Woolf demonstrates that she no longer sees marriage as an appropriate termination for her characters' experience. Despite the attraction and the influence of traditional English novel structure, they no longer suit Woolf's vision or the characters who voice it, and in Jacob's Room Woolf shows that she knows it.

Nothing could appear more certain from the steps of St. Paul's than that each person is miraculously provided with coat, skirt, and boots; an income; an object. Only Jacob, carrying Finlay's Byzantine Empire..., looked a little different. (66)

Jacob is a little different, but not different enough. And so, although he tries to maintain his freedom in some ways, the world of time and place overtakes him as, Woolf suggests, it overtakes everyone: "The night is not a tumultuous black ocean in which you sink or sail as a star. As a matter of fact it was a wet November night. The lamps of Soho make large greasy spots upon the pavement" (181). Jacob is bounded by the confines of the physical and social world. Mrs. Durrant, exponent of social forms, notices Jacob's reticence and says, "Poor Jacob,...They're going to make you act in their play!" (62) Jacob refuses to "act"; he goes to see his mother instead. Still, as Paul Fussell points out, the forces of society and history force Jacob to act in the all-encompassing drama of his time, the theatre of war, in which his role is to die. \(^{49}\)

Jacob's life and death, then, make no definitive statement about the relation between the hero and his world, except that they are an
ill-matched pair. Each seems to cause the other's destruction, but even this conclusion is questionable. Although the novel comments explicitly upon the futility of war and the unfulfilled promise of youth, Jacob's death is also simply a stop to an action that seemed headed nowhere in any case. As Fleishman notes, the movement of Jacob's life is "an extension of the Bildungsroman form into a fitful sequence of unachieved experiences rather than a coherent process." Furthermore, despite the cultural vitiation of Jacob's surroundings, his world is still more vital than he is. Instead of providing a backdrop for Jacob's actions, the physical world showcases his failures.

Nor does Jacob's death make any definitive statement about the relation of Woolf's vision to the traditional novel, except that they do not suit one another either. Thematically, Jacob's death may or may not be the heroic death of the traditional novel; its meaning is unknown because its circumstances are unknown. Certainly it is structurally conventional, for it is as terminal an experience as the English novel can provide. Therefore, even though the ending does not negate Jacob's character or achievements, it does question the novel's open, plotless structure. Thus the ending of *Jacob's Room* communicates only uncertainty.

And so, Mrs. Flanders' observation, "Such confusion everywhere!" (176) refers not only to Jacob's room, but also to *Jacob's Room*. All that remain are meaningless physical objects--a pair of shoes with no one to walk in them, and a setting with no one to act in it. The failure of the Bildungsroman form to create a novelistic shoe that fits its hero makes clear that some new form of communication is required;
however, Jacob's story does not show us what that form will be. The failure itself is the point.

However, saying that Jacob's Room demonstrates the failure of the traditional novel is not the same as saying that it is itself a failed novel. Jacob's Room does not claim attention entirely as a truncated Bildungsroman, because Jacob's story is not the only significant narration in the novel. Like its predecessors, Jacob's Room explores communication in two worlds. And so, as illustrated earlier, the novel takes place on two levels, as a fictional story about Jacob, and as a metafictional essay by the narrator. On its metafictional level, Jacob's Room experiments with form and meaning in a personal narrative about the nature and difficulty of communication. And Jacob's story is the exemplum that illustrates that narrative. Throughout the narration, Woolf clearly communicates her ambivalence towards language and the novel.

Nobody sees anyone as he is, let alone an elderly lady sitting opposite a strange young man in a railway carriage....But since, even at her age, she noted his indifference, presumably he was in some way or other--to her at least--nice, handsome, interesting, distinguished, well-built, like her own boy? One must do the best one can with her report. Anyhow, this was Jacob Flanders, aged nineteen. It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done--for instance when the train drew into the station, Mr. Flanders burst open the door, and put the lady's dressing-case out for her, saying, or rather mumbling, "Let me" very shyly; indeed he was rather clumsy about it. (31)

Here, Jacob is the "instance" illustrating the narrator's idea that in the external world, communication is incomplete. The passage emphasizes Jacob's social and verbal ineptness and the fact that the narrator cannot know or tell very much about him. Nevertheless, despite her
inability to understand Jacob completely, he remains the object of her fascination: "over him we hang vibrating" (73). Furthermore, just as the narrator uses Jacob to express her difficulty with language, Woolf uses her narrator to express her difficulty with the novel. She, too, remains fascinated by a reality she feels she can never completely impart.

As I have noted in an earlier example, the narrator of Jacob's Room repeatedly takes flight from Jacob's external reality to her own inner world. And because the novel explores the narrator's inner world as carefully as Jacob's, the narrator emerges as a coherent character in the novel--more coherent, in fact, than Jacob. Moreover, because her ideas about communication carry the true emphasis in the novel, the narrator, rather than Jacob, is the character who succeeds in giving the impression of a completed self. Unlike Jacob, she does communicate something definite, although what she imparts is, paradoxically, her ambivalent relation to the world--physical, social, and linguistic.

As Barry Morgenstern shows, the narrator in Jacob's Room is an integral character, not just an extension of Woolf or an omniscient point of view. Armed with a store of independent experiences, she abundantly interjects comments as she tells Jacob's story. Her intrusions, Alex Zwerdling points out, often call attention to themselves. More than that, they have the effect of preventing the reader from immersing himself in Jacob's experience: the narrator repeatedly pulls the reader's consciousness back to her own experience of the difficulty of writing her novel. To many critics, this idiosyncratic voice is an inexplicable lapse on Woolf's part; Jean O. Love, for example, writes:

Although the diffusion of Jacob as a personality is well expressed by form and pattern...the author seems to lack
confidence that it is adequately expressed and that the reader can comprehend her meaning. Therefore she steps in and out of the novel repeatedly, with annoying preciosity and self-consciousness, to tell the reader what she is demonstrating quite adequately.54

Certainly what Love terms the "diffusion of character" is a theme in the novel. "We're splinters and mosaics," Woolf wrote, "not, as they used to hold, immaculate, monolithic, consistent wholes." 55 But this diffusion is not the narrator's focus. Like Woolf herself, the narrator is less concerned with the nature of character than with the difficulty of transmitting it, whatever it may be. Communication, not substance, is her problem. Thus she calls the reader's attention away from Jacob's difficulties and focuses on her own.

"Distinction"--Mrs. Durrant said that Jacob Flanders was "distinguished-looking." Seeing him for the first time that no doubt is the word for him...though, from looking at him, one would have found it difficult to say which seat in the opera-house was his, stalls, gallery, or dress-circle. A writer? He lacked self-consciousness. A painter? There was something in the shape of his hands (he was descended on his mother's side from a family of the greatest antiquity and deepest obscurity) which indicated taste. Then his mouth--but surely, of all futile occupations this of cataloguing features is the worst. One word is sufficient. But if one cannot find it? (71)

In fact, the narrator's difficulties are not all that different from Jacob's; they, too, stem from the English cultural and narrative tradition in which she participates. The conventions of English culture limit human communication, and those of the English novel do the same. Thus the narrator doubts that she can ever get her message across by the means at her disposal. In revealing her distrust of novel conventions, especially language, the narrator is yet another Woolfian literary voice projected into a character. But significantly, this time Woolf's disguise is pointedly transparent: the narrator is a woman and a
storyteller, just as Woolf is, and author and narrator share other similarities. As Woolf comes to terms with her own ambivalence and finds a form that will express it, she disguises her voice and her vision less. Consequently, the narrator's difficulties—and her achievements—in *Jacob's Room* are patently Woolf's own.

In *Jacob's Room*, the narrator ostensibly proposes to impart her conception of Jacob and his world. But for her, a major attribute of Jacob's world is the impossibility of communicating it completely. Since the task of transmitting her vision is only partially possible, she breaks into her own narrative in part to vent her frustration at her own limitations. Her intrusions form a running commentary about the obstacles to communication. First, as Morgenstern points out, the narrator is limited by her own perceptions. Being human, she is bound to be biased, as she recognizes: "It seems that a profound, impartial, and absolutely just opinion of our fellow-creatures is utterly unknown" (72). And because she is a character rather than an omniscient voice, she is subject to the boundaries of her own physical presence. This restriction becomes particularly evident when Jacob is at Cambridge: a woman ten years Jacob's senior, the narrator, like Woolf, has had no opportunity to attend Cambridge. Therefore she impresses her social and physical exclusion upon the reader by viewing Jacob from outside a window.

...presumably, for you could not see him, somebody stood by the fender, talking. Anyhow Jacob, who sat astride a chair and ate dates from a long box, burst out laughing....The laughter died out, and only gestures of arms, movements of bodies, could be seen shaping something in the room. Was it an argument? A bet on the boat races? Was it nothing of the sort? What was shaped by the arms and bodies moving in the twilight room? (44)
The narrator is further frustrated by the undependable information she receives when observing her fellow-humans. She deplores the fact that information is often incomplete, or else it is wrong; conclusions must be based on hints and fragments, or, alternately, "the observer is choked with observations" (181, 102, 31, 69). At best, all she can do is draw conclusions from the external world: "This was in his face," she says. "Whether we know what was in his mind is another question" (94). Because she distrusts her own conclusions, her tone is tentative, her assertions qualified with phrases like "presumably," "no doubt," "it may be."

However, what troubles the narrator even more than her inability to know is her inability to communicate the little that she does know. Social conventions, especially language, order the chaos of observation, yet also limit communication. The epitaph which designates Betty Flanders' husband "Merchant of this City" fails to consolidate the fragments of his life, but words are all Mrs. Flanders has to transmit a heritage to her sons: "She had to call him something" (16). Another drawback of language is its inadequacy: "One word is sufficient. But if one cannot find it?" (71)

And finally, beyond the stumbling blocks of observation and language lies the fear of the loss of individuality that communication brings about. "Stop a man. Ask him the way; he'll tell it you; but one's afraid to ask him the way. What does one fear? The human eye" (81). Like all of Woolf's major characters, the narrator fears a dissolution of the self and a mitigation of her own honesty once she makes contact with another human being.
Ultimately, the narrator's insoluble problem of communication overwhelms her ostensible subject, Jacob. Jacob emerges not as the subject of her novel, but as the example that demonstrates the narrator's real subject, the permutations of communication. In one passage about letters, she specifies Jacob's secondary role:

...that letter-writing is practised mendaciously nowadays, particularly by young men travelling to foreign parts, seems likely enough. For example, take this scene. Here was Jacob Flanders gone abroad... (125)

What is important here is that Jacob's letters, like all forms of communication in the social world, cannot be trusted; Jacob himself is beside the point. And because he is finally incidental to the narrator's discussion, he remains essentially passive and unknown in her story.

In Jacob, then, the narrator chronicles a character who fails to make significant contact with his world and with the reader. But Jacob is not the final word in the novel. Like Woolf, the narrator never ceases to strive for a moment of social communion, which she achieves on the level of narration outside of Jacob's story. And so finally, Jacob's failure provides a foil for the narrator herself, who does make contact in several ways. Her communication, though limited, finally takes precedence over Jacob's failures and affirms the value of human society and social conventions. To begin with, the narrator remains strongly attached to the physical world. Although she insists upon the inadequacy of external phenomena as receptacles of reality, she nevertheless fills her narrative with as many things, lovingly named and described, as there are in any nineteenth-century novel. If a narrative comprised
of things fails to evoke a coherent vision, the reader is often momentarily deceived into thinking it does. The narrator demonstrates her ambivalence toward the physical world in an incidental description of a room.

The fire burnt clear between two pillars of greenish marble, and on the mantelpiece there was a green clock guarded by Britannia leaning on her spear. As for pictures—a maiden in a large hat offered roses over the garden gate to a gentleman in eighteenth-century costume. A mastiff lay extended against a battered door. The lower panes of the window were of ground glass, and the curtains, accurately looped, were of plush and green too. {104}

As the narrator describes it, the setting radiates the beauty and ceremony of the English past. But, she tells us, unfortunately the room is only a surface designed to conceal the fact that this is a house of prostitution which Jacob is visiting. The culture which such a room once signified, she suggests, has decayed, and the room now communicates nothing real. And yet, the narrator's careful interest in each detail makes the setting vital in its own right; her later assertion that "something was wrong" (105) feels irrelevant in contrast to the abundant physical beauty she has just described. What she shows the reader belies what she tells him.

Even more importantly, the narrator makes contact with the social as well as the physical world. Like Woolf's earlier characters, the narrator is caught between her sense of the limitations of society and her need for the human community. And she, too, chooses to attempt communication, both by writing her novel in the face of all her difficulties, and by bringing forth those difficulties to discuss them with the reader. Although language and social conventions are limited, she concludes, they are all we have.
"Try to penetrate," for as we lift the cup, shake the hand, express the hope, something whispers, is this all? Can I never know, share, be certain? Am I doomed all my days to write letters, send voices, which fall upon the tea-table, fade upon the passage, making appointments, while life dwindles, to come and dine? Yet letters are venerable, and the telephone valiant, for the journey is a lonely one, and if bound together by notes and telephones we went in company, perhaps—who knows—we might talk by the way. (93)

While the narrator is asserting the value of communication, Jacob, her failed hero, is nowhere in her thoughts. Instead her subjects are herself and her readers—"we"—and for a brief moment, she succeeds in making direct contact and in imparting her—and Woolf's—vision of reality, the ambivalence toward language.

The narrator of Jacob's Room is not the first to endow her narrative with a sense of self-awareness and a knowledge of the difficulty of writing; she is the daughter of the narrators of Tom Jones and Tristram Shandy. And like them, she admits the incompleteness of her narrative and her need for the reader's effort and indulgence. In devising such a narrator, Woolf is the daughter of Fielding and Sterne, for, like them, she is defining her genre and teaching her reader a new way of interpreting the novel. In Jacob's Room, writer and reader must collaborate in the creation of a vision of reality from fragments of observation and communication: "One must do the best one can with her report."

Therefore, Jacob's Room is not entirely a rejection of the past, nor is it entirely an "anti-novel." On the contrary, it has a positive, as well as negative, relation to the traditional English novel, and Jacob's Room explores that relation on every level. While the death of Jacob signifies the demise of the nineteenth-century hero, the artifacts of his world and the desire to communicate that world remain.
What distinguishes *Jacob's Room* from Woolf's earlier novels is that, for the first time, Woolf herself seems aware of the contradictions inherent in her view of reality, and she devises a form that can contain her ambivalence. *Jacob's Room* still exhibits Woolf's struggles to wholly integrate form with theme; nevertheless, she displays a technical complexity that, whatever the novel's flaws, clearly prefigures the mastery of her finest works. Her self-knowledge expressed through form enabled her, in the novels that followed, to remain connected to the traditions of the English novel even as she altered them irrevocably.
Notes


3 See correspondence between Woolf and Clive Bell in Q. Bell, I, 207-212.


5 Woolf reviewed Hudson's work favorably in the *Times Literary Supplement* and wrote in her diary, "Thomas Hardy has what I call an interesting mind; so have Conrad and Hudson." Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, I, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), 238.

6 Harvena Richter argues that "the journey is inward, symbolized by the country of Santa Marina to which the travelers go, 'marina' suggesting the watery world of emotion and the inner depths." Harvena Richter, *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 25. Fleishman argues that Rachel's voyage is a series of "moments of vision" and the novel itself "a turn in the tradition of the English Bildungsroman toward the tracing of a metaphysical education." Fleishman, 3.
7 Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1920). All citations from the novel in this section of my text are from this edition; page numbers will be cited in the text.


9 Jean Guiguet believes that "Virginia Woolf was notorious for her lack of attention to factual accuracy, and the exact scene of the action is unimportant." Jean Guiguet, *Virginia Woolf and Her Works*, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1966), 33.


13 James Naremore argues even more strongly that sexuality, love, and nature are linked with death. Naremore, 21-29

14 James Hafley describes the villa as "the individual's world" and the hotel as "the social world" representing unity in diversity, but he argues that "as a structural unit, the social world is very similar to the individual world of the villa." James Hafley, *The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1954), 16.

15 I am indebted to Susan Gillman for this observation.
James Naremore describes the relation of setting to Terence and Rachel's love. Naremore, 31-59.

Naremore describes these scenes as technical failures, "shamelessly overwritten, like a parody of a slick romantic story in a lady's magazine." He argues that Rachel and Terence "both make what they no doubt think are profound statements" and he suggests that Woolf also thinks they are profound. Naremore, 47. On the contrary, it seems clear that Woolf knows they are not profound, and that is exactly her point.

Madeline Moore, 100.


Mark Spilka, Virginia Woolf's Quarrel with Grieving (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 18.

Madeline Moore and Avrom Fleishman both argue that Rachel's death and the bonding of society are aspects of an integrated vision. Moore suggests that the novel ends in mourning as in a traditional pastoral. Moore, 101. Fleishman believes that Rachel's voyage out is an initiation rite, a form of the myth of heroic quest for reaffirmation and rebirth. Fleishman, 3. I believe that while Rachel's death is the event around which social communion takes place, Rachel's death is not a symbolic union with society; for Woolf, individuality and society are antithetical and can never be completely integrated.

David Daiches writes that Night and Day has "vestments which do not altogether fit 'the life or spirit, truth or reality' which Woolf was endeavoring to express." David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (Norfolk,
Conn.: New Directions, 1942), 23. Jane Novak agrees that "the outer action is not in perfect harmony with the uneasy questioning beneath the surface...and the details of everyday life are tedious and lengthy."


Nancy Topping Bazin, Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 82-83. All of these critics see the technical problem of Night and Day as a form-content split. While this is partly true, it is also true that Woolf's content is split between traditional and modern values. She requires a form that can encompass both.

23 Alice Van Buren Kelley agrees: "Because she felt that she was dealing with a real problem, not merely a literary toy, she tried to present it as it actually existed in the world around her." Alice Van Buren Kelley, The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 34.


25 T.E. Apter contrasts Austen's and Woolf's visions. In Austen, the character merges his own consciousness with society; in Woolf,

26 Joan Bennett believes that "It is not Ralph and Katharine as individuals that matter here but the experience unveiled in their encounter." Joan Bennett, *Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1945), 8. Woolf wrote to Janet Case about Katharine's coldness: "Try thinking of Katherine as Vanessa, not me; and suppose her concealing a passion for painting and forced to go into society by George Duckworth--that was the beginning of her, but as one goes on, all sorts of things happen. It's the conflict that turns the half of her so chilly, but I daresay this was overdone." The *Letters of Virginia Woolf, 1912-22*, ed. Nigel Nicolson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 400.

27 Avrom Fleishman points out the repeated references to Shakespeare in *Night and Day* as well as the thematic similarities to Shakespeare's festive comedies. He calls *Night and Day* "a comedy of transformation under the spell of love's illusions." Fleishman, 22-34, 28. Although Nancy Topping Bazin describes the novel's form as "Elizabethan" (see note 21), the novel actually follows the form of Shakespearean comedy as derived from Attic New Comedy. Northrop Frye describes the movement of such comedy as "a movement from one kind of society to another. At the beginning of the play, the obstructing characters are in charge of the play's society, and the audience recognizes that they are usurpers. At the end of the play the device that brings hero and heroine together causes a new society to crystallize
around the hero." The new society which emerges is a "pragmatically free" one, and the happy ending is not moral but social. This is the structure of the rebellion in Night and Day. Frye also points to the figure of the "benevolent grandfather...who overrules the action set up by the blocking humor." Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), 163, 169, 171. Richard Alardyce, who appears to be the blocking character, becomes by the agency of Katharine's realization a truly benevolent grandfather; his own rebellion from the social norm becomes a model of behavior which she can imitate.


29 Woolf, Night and Day (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1920). All subsequent references to the novel in this section of my text are from this edition; page numbers will be cited in the text.

30 Herbert Marder points to the use of the house as an example of Woolf's concreteness of style. "Woolf tended to think concretely and to visualize ideas like domestic life in terms of concrete images. The house represents Victorian civilization; tradition, the Hilbery's drawing room." Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 36.

31 Frye, 184.

32 Herbert Marder believes that the novel ends with this reconciliation, that Katharine and Ralph are "resolved to combine opposites in an experimental marriage. There is some possibility that they will succeed." He agrees, however, that this possibility is not explored
within the range of the novel. "Katharine and Ralph's experiment, the marriage in which they are to live both together and apart, is to take place in a nebulous future after the close of the novel. Like The Voyage Out, Night and Day ends in an evasion. Marder, 22.

33 According to Frye, in comedy the new "free" society is frequently signalled by some party or festive ritual, which either appears at the end of the play or is assumed to take place immediately afterward. Frye, 163.


35 Avrom Fleishman believes that "the conventional phrase 'Good night' conveys an affirmation of the nocturnal realm, which has been successfully mingled with the diurnal course of life." Fleishman, 45.


39 Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1923). All subsequent references to the novel in this section of my text are from this edition; page numbers will be cited in the text.

40 Woolf, Diary, II, 186.


43 Carol Ohmann, "Culture and Anarchy in Jacob's Room," Contemporary Literature, 18, 1 (Winter, 1977), 17

44 Lee, 84; Moody, 16; Schaefer, 70; Fussell, 325; Beverly Ann Schlack, Continuing Presences: Virginia Woolf's Use of Literary Allusion (University Park, Pa: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), 46.

45 Ohmann, 171.


47 Woolf, Diary, II, 103.

48 See also Schlack, 45.

49 Fussell, 230.

51 Fleishman, 46.


53 Zwerdling, 894.

54 Love, 127.


56 Morgenstern, 354.
CHAPTER III:
THE MATURE NOVELS

Woolf's mature novels are identified by their coherent integration of vision and form. As Woolf demonstrated in Jacob's Room, she could not fit the conflicting worlds of her reality into a completely traditional structure. Thus, in every novel from Mrs. Dalloway to Between the Acts she formulated a new novel structure that presented her vision from a new perspective.

Yet, even though the mature works break the tight structures and completely closed endings of nineteenth-century novels, they continue to evoke significance from their strong connections to tradition. Each of her novel forms draws its meaning from its dependence upon, and its ironic relation to, conventional fictional forms. Mrs. Dalloway, for example, presents love and marriage, but after the fact instead of before; Orlando follows a young man's growth and education, but he grows up to be a woman instead of a man; The Waves follows its characters' growth, maturity, and friendship, but chronicles their inner lives instead of their outer. Virginia Woolf's mature novel forms both directly and ironically attest to the power of the traditional novel to shape experience.

Furthermore, the given theme of every novel remains, in some guise, individuals and their questionable relation to the social world. Every novel is grounded in a particular time and place, while it assesses the social value that such a milieu has created. And every work, even the
internalized *The Waves* and the bare, minimal *Between the Acts*, exhibits Woolf's fascination with the shape and feel of physical reality. Moreover, the characters continue to question the ability of language to communicate in their world. But their questions never mask Woolf's own statement, which she embodies in the powerful connective language that communicates her vision in spite of the doubts she and her characters express.

And finally, the novels' endings, although loosened to contain the uncertain nature of her reality, still attempt to summarize and to make coherent and whole the experience that has preceded them. Like her early novels, her mature novels culminate in affirmation of the necessary relation between inner self and outer world.

The two novels I am examining, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*, exhibit in character, theme, setting, and language the shifting attitude towards externality that characterizes all of Woolf's work. Furthermore, the interrelation of elements within each novel, and the relation of these two novels to one other, perfectly illustrate the structure of oppositions whose tension gives substance to Woolf's delicacy of language and vision.

*Mrs. Dalloway*

*Mrs. Dalloway* is usually considered Woolf's first major novel, the first in which her style reaches maturity.¹ To most readers, this maturity is signified by Woolf's overt concern with consciousness and her discovery of a technique to express that concern. But equally
important, in Woolf's major work she clearly demonstrated that consciousness comprises only half of her conception of reality, and that the world of things constitutes the other half. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf for the first time integrated perfectly her opposing poles of inner and outer reality, and she objectified her ambivalence towards the external world in theme, structure, and language. Throughout the novel, Woolf shaped her characters' experience around physical and social elements as much as consciousness, leaving no inconsistencies between form and meaning. Furthermore, in Clarissa Dalloway, Woolf created a character whose self-knowledge paralleled her own: unlike earlier characters, Clarissa fully understands her fascination with the world around her, a world that generates both self-expression and self-destruction. And perhaps most important, here Woolf fashioned a language that, paradoxically, communicates her ambivalence towards language. Instead of projecting her novelistic difficulties into the voices of her characters, she embodied her uncertainties in her own narrative style. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf no longer self-consciously struggled to control her opposing realities; instead, she animated her work with the complexity of her vision.

In her diary, Woolf envisioned her fourth novel, in strikingly material terms, to be "hard as nails, while bright as diamonds." She wrote, "I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticize the social system and to show it at work, at its most intense." In her statements delineate two characteristics central to the novel: first, the novel is organized around polarities of the external and internal worlds, and second, the matrix for these polarities is the
English social system. The fact that Woolf intentionally chose a context of social criticism indicates that in this novel she acknowledged her alliance with her English literary forebears. Of course, Mrs. Dalloway also roundly demonstrated her rebellion against literary tradition, and this opposition is a structural principle of the novel. Polarities are everywhere in Mrs. Dalloway—past and present, potential and realization, community and solitude, psychic time and clock time, to name a few.

Perhaps because the novel mediates between its oppositions with such technical mastery, Josephine O'Brien Schaefer calls it "quite a perfect novel" and Bernard Blackstone describes the language as "an eminently civilised prose." To the Modernist sensibility, though, these are left-handed compliments, perfection and civilization implying a sense of boundaries associated with nineteenth- rather than twentieth-century fiction. This finite quality in Mrs. Dalloway identifies an underlying feeling of solidity and English traditionalism that qualifies the novel's experimentation: along with its exploration of consciousness, Mrs. Dalloway, more than any other Woolf novel, also evokes a specific external milieu, a certain time, place, and culture, and it pictures vividly the kind of life that culture engenders.

The vein of concreteness that runs through the novel is intentional; from its inception, Woolf intended this work to be "more close to the fact than Jacob." And so, despite its concern with consciousness, a decidedly visual quality characterizes Mrs. Dalloway, a pictorial realism that colors the novel's tone and substance. We can see Clarissa, "a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light,
vivacious" (4)\(^5\), and we can visualize her upper-middle-class surroundings, "Bond Street early in the morning in the season; its flags flying; its shops; no splash; no glitter; one roll of tweed...a few pearls; salmon on an ice-block"(15). This sensory atmosphere is confirmed by a series of evocative images connected to the novel's theme of communication: to suggest moments of social communion, Woolf uses images of flowers, soft colors, and gentle movement; to evoke the opposite, the absence of communication, she uses images of stiffness, stasis, and the color grey.\(^6\) Both groups of images influence the novel in such a way that, while they seem to diffuse the novel's concreteness into the range of metaphor, they also function as objective correlatives for the tenuous realms of consciousness and communication.

As in all Woolf novels, the concrete, pictorial quality of _Mrs. Dalloway_ begins with a strong attachment to place, and place itself is at once both both actual and psychic. The novel moves between two opposing landscapes, one Bourton, the landscape of memory, and the other London and Westminster, the landscape of present reality. "I love walking in London," says Clarissa in the opening scene. "Really it's better than walking in the country" (17). In this peripatetic novel, Clarissa's choice of places to walk signifies her choice of lives: she has given up the possibilities of Bourton and the past for the practicalities of London and the present.\(^7\) About Bourton she says, "I never go there now" (63).

The physical landscape of Bourton objectifies the youth, possibility, and communication that take place there; its freedom is expressed in images of natural abundance, flowers, colors, and gentle,
wave-like movement. Like the house in *The Voyage Out*, the house at Bourton is ramshackle; the air and the flowers are "misty" (18), and the hours Clarissa most often recalls are the transforming moments of dusk and early morning. Although the landscape is physical, its misty indefiniteness seems to dissolve the boundaries of the material world. As always in Woolf, the profusion of flowers, colors, and movements suggests a wealth in nature, youth, beauty, and potentiality. The landscape is both concrete and evocative: though it exists for Clarissa only in memory, it calls forth an actual past whose influence transforms the present day. Clarissa's immediate action of buying flowers for her party releases a communion between the present day and her past. Inside the flower shop are "irises and roses and nodding tufts of lilac...red carnations...sweet peas spreading in their bowls...tinged violet, snow white, pale" (18). The flowers carry Clarissa's mind back to Bourton where there were "roses, carnations, irises, lilacs," in colors of "white, violet, red, deep orange," and the air felt "like the kiss of a wave" (18,3). Clarissa remembers her own feelings of potentiality as "she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air" (3). In the flower shop, the beauty and intimacy of Bourton are recomminated from past to present, bringing with them the pastoral regenerative power of a Wordsworthian "spot of time." Mrs. Dalloway momentarily becomes the Clarissa of her youth, filled with a sensory wave of communion, "as if this beauty, this scent, this colour, and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her, were a wave which she let flow over her" (19). The possibility translated from Bourton to London is that of communication, an unlimited communion that crosses all boundaries of
time and place, transforming the present moment.

Place in Woolf's novels is inseparable from time, and Bourton is inseparable from the past. In earlier novels, the past is primarily a barrier of English convention which must be escaped before its value can be understood. But in Mrs. Dalloway, the past is more than anything else a lost Eden to be regained; it signifies a freedom and possibility that seldom exist in present-day London. Peter Walsh and Sally Seton recall Clarissa at Bourton in images of colors, flowers, and movement; Peter remembers "her voice, her laugh, her dress (something floating, white, crimson), her spirit, her adventurousness" (94). Although Bourton was a conventional Victorian home, Clarissa intended to transcend the limits of her society and traditions; she was a radical, read Tyndall and Huxley, intended to change the world. She was "in love" with Sally Seton and with Peter Walsh and "spoke of marriage always as a catastrophe" (49-50). Like Katharine and Ralph in Night and Day, Clarissa and Peter transformed the convention of language; thinking of Peter, Clarissa recalls that "she owed him words" (53-54). Moreover, at their closest moments they passed beyond the limitations of language with their "queer power of communicating without words" (90). And even the limiting qualities of tradition seem softened at Bourton: Peter remembers that old Miss Parry was kind to him, "for he had found her some rare flower" (9).

Nevertheless, even though the beauty and possibility of Bourton are communicated to the present in a "moment" (47) of transformation, such moments are rare and transitory. Clarissa Dalloway has not fulfilled her possibilities; instead, she has capitulated to her present-day world
of English civilization and convention. She chooses not to live with the values of the past; for Clarissa, life exists in the present day and the external world around her. She thinks, "But everyone remembered; what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her" (12). Clarissa searches in the surrounding external world for the same sense of connection and communication she once felt at Bourton, a connection that merges past and present, life and death, self and other in a great unity. The landscape where she seeks the possibility of her past is not a pastoral mist, but an urban panoply of sights and sounds.

In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June. (5)

In the streets of London Clarissa can recapture the sense of connection and possibility she once felt at Bourton. But the unity she feels in the present day is ephemeral, a gift from the past grasped only momentarily in the present and accompanied by a corresponding sense of lost possibilities.

...somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home, of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between 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. But what was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchard's shop window? What was she trying to recover? What image of white dawn in the country? (12)

As in all Woolf novels, the sense of unity and mergence that Clarissa feels is temporary and is shattered by the forces of time and place. Time, represented in the clocks of Sir William Bradshaw's Harley
Street, is the destroyer, the blade that, "shredding and slicing, dividing and sub-dividing" (154), destroys unity, cutting the "thin thread" (170) of attachment among human beings. The past at Bourton is the victim of time. And in Clarissa's London, every recaptured moment of communion is destroyed by the intrusion of present-day reality. Clarissa's feeling of connection with Miss Pym is shattered by the explosion of the dignitary's stalled car. The entrance of Elizabeth terminates Clarissa's reunion with Peter; as Elizabeth walks in, reminding them of the years that have passed, time asserts its power of separation, striking out "between them with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumbbells this way and that" (71). As her image of the young man and his "dumbbells" suggests, for Clarissa the passage of time signals the loss of communication. She perceives her own failures to make contact with Richard in the context of time and of growing older: "Lovely in girlhood, suddenly there came a moment...when, through some contraption of this cold spirit, she had failed him" (46). Now, she and Richard sleep separately, and she summarizes in that gesture the loss of her communicative possibilities, the "moments" of her youth. "Against such moments...there contrasted...the bed and Baron Marbot and the candle half-burnt" (47). Clarissa's candle, too, is half-burnt, and she fears the death, both physical and communicative, that time will bring. Like the grave, "Narrower and narrower would her bed be" (45-46). When she is excluded from a party, she contemplates a loneliness allied with aging and death,

a single figure against the appalling night, or rather, to be accurate, against the stare of this matter-of-fact June
morning...feeling herself suddenly shrivelled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which now failed, since Lady Bruton, whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing, had not asked her. (45)

Thus, while Clarissa has chosen to live in a world ruled by time, time is also her greatest fear.

But she feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton's face, as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone, the dwindling of life, how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years, the colours, salts, tones of existence. (44)

In choosing a life shaped by her time and place, Clarissa elects conventionality over creativity and connection, a choice at times unsatisfactory and even frightening to her. As her mind wanders, again and again she juxtaposes past and present, potential and reality, Peter and Richard, rationalizing her choice in a way that suggests she is not entirely convinced of its rightness. "So she would find herself arguing in St. James' Park, still making out that she had been right--and she had, too--not to marry him" (10). Clarissa has rejected Peter because he allowed her no privacy; he required the complete communication and unity that characterized her past at Bourton. "With Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into" (10). Clarissa prefers some solitude and independence, "even between husband and wife a gulf" (181), a separateness that characterizes her present-day life. But she also fears her own solitude. Clarissa's central ambivalence, then, is the same as that of all of Woolf's major characters: she wants communication, but she fears annihilation; she desires unity with others, but she is afraid of absorption by them. And so she recaptures moments of connection in the inner world of memory, but she paradoxically guards
her essential separateness in the external world of her daily life. Furthermore, even though she requires "a little independence" (10), she also fears the "death of the soul" (88) that takes place in isolation. And so, in spite of her fear of losing herself to others, she also fears disjunction from the social community. Ultimately, Clarissa fears absorption more than disjunction, and so she has chosen a conventional life with Richard. Therefore, the Clarissa who walks across London differs from the Clarissa at Bourton: in London, she stands stiffly, "very upright" (4), like her idol Lady Bexborough, who controls her emotions to a level almost beyond the human. Clarissa in London, like Rachel Vinrace of *The Voyage Out*, shrinks from intimacy and believes love to be a "horrible...degrading passion" (192). Looking at the dignitary's car, Clarissa takes on the negative characteristics of the social system. "With a look of extreme dignity" (23-24), she compares herself to a dignitary attending an affair of state, and she stiffens as she remembers her own party, which "Hugh Whitbread and all his colleagues, the gentlemen of England" (25) will attend. Clarissa and Hugh, who grew up together, have an unfortunate amount in common. He is "the perfect gentleman" and she "the perfect hostess" (110, 93). If "no country but England could have produced him" (110), no city but twentieth-century London could have produced the Clarissa who stands stiffly watching the dignitary's car.

Clarissa's rigidity of manner externalizes her failure to realize her communicative possibilities. Peter feels in her "this coldness, this woodenness...an impenetrability" (19) which he rightly associates with her "conventionality" (73). She defends herself by attacking his
"silly unconventionality" (69) and by declaring to herself that a certain amount of distance from others is necessary for "the privacy of the soul" (192). But that "gulf" (181) is widening as time passes, not only with Richard, but with everyone. Even as Clarissa and Richard share a moment of communion before her party, each thinks of his failure towards the other--Clarissa that "she had failed him, once at Constantinople" (178), and Richard that "he could not bring himself to say that he loved her" (179). Clarissa is not at odds with her daughter, but Elizabeth is closer to her father. And even Lady Bruton can "never think of anything to say to Clarissa" (273).

Clarissa's house in Westminster, with its small attic room at the top, is the setting that counters Bourton, objectifying Clarissa's chosen disconnection from humanity. In her "vault"-like house, "as if she had left a party" (42, 45), Clarissa reflects upon her inability to make contact with the world, her inability to "permeate" (46) Time has left her alone in her attic room with her narrow bed, tightly stretched sheets, and book of memoirs (for in memory there is communication). Of her choices, this is what she really prefers (46). But she knows that she has incurred a loss, and that the passage of time will isolate her more: "narrower and narrower would her bed be" (46-47).

In her room, Clarissa feels her inviolable "virginity" (46); in the "devotions" of her home, she can withdraw like a nun, feeling "blessed and purified" (42). But the devotions of her home also reveal her attachment to the things of the external world and to the social system supporting that world. The Dalloways' world is "all this--the inlaid table, the mounted paper-knife, the dolphin and the candlesticks, the
chair-covers and the old valuable English tinted prints" (64). Here Clarissa is "mistress if silver, of linen, of china" (56); here is a world that separates by class distinctions. Clarissa's life at home reveals her most conventional qualities: she prides herself on her generosity to her servants, who can stay out after ten "if they asked her" (57). In her room, sewing the green dress that shimmers only in artificial light, she thinks of her former seamstress, whom she will visit "if ever I have a moment." But Clarissa's "moments" of intimacy are dwindling in time—"never would she have a moment any more," and they no longer cross her social stratum. She has time to wear her dresses "at Hatfield, at Buckingham Palace," but not time to visit her seamstress, "a character, a real artist"(58).

Clarissa realizes such "moments" as she can still experience in a social context and on her own social level. By gathering and unifying others, "making a world of her own" (114), she embodies, at her best, the generative, life-affirming powers of a goddess. Her friends envision her "floating" (94) among other people dressed in white and crimson, or "lolling on the waves" in her "silver-green mermaid's dress" (264), images which enforce her mythic stature. To her servants, even her umbrella is "like a sacred weapon which a Goddess...sheds" (43-44). Nevertheless, for some critics, Clarissa is simply too shallow and withholding to support her weight as a creative life-force, and her power as a unifier pales, like her green dress in the sun, in the light of her less admirable qualities. Jane Novak, for example, speaks of the discrepancy between Clarissa's "mundane and her mythic selves"; while to A. D. Moody, Clarissa's superficiality and self-serving isolation con-
demn her beyond redemption. Woolf intended Clarissa to be self-centered and uncommunicating, characteristics she associated with conventional English life—but she also worried that such a character might not engage the sympathies of her readers; she wrote, "The doubtful point is I think the character of Mrs. Dalloway. It may be too stiff, too glittering and tinsely." And, for some readers, Mrs. Dalloway is, alas, not Mrs. Ramsay. But Woolf never intended her to be. More than individual or myth, Clarissa Dalloway is the exponent of a world, of a certain milieu. As the title suggests, Clarissa's identity cannot be separated from her Englishness, from her social and political relations, from her marriage to Richard and her marriage to the conventional forms of English life, which create boundaries that limit communication. Clarissa recognizes her attachment to her world, and she can even feel herself defined in a social context.

She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children, 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. (14)

If Clarissa Dalloway is less than she might be, that is because her world is less than it should be: it, too, is shallow, conventional, and withholding, and Mrs. Dalloway is about that world as much as it is about Clarissa.

The world of Edwardian London portrayed in Mrs. Dalloway is a powerful cultural complex of history and civilization, like Clarissa herself, both "tinsely" and archetypal. And Woolf's attitude towards it is ambivalent, as she indicates in the image of the dignitary's car. To British onlookers, the car represents English tradition. As it passes
through the streets of London, it touches "something very profound" (26), both positive and negative, in the citizenry, and their reactions range from pledges of eternal patriotism to insults and a public-house brawl. Throughout the novel, Woolf amplifies the implications of this opening image; she admires what is valuable and unifying in English society, and she criticizes its destructive and divisive elements.

For Woolf, the greatest value of English tradition is its focus as a center of community. Community and connection are rare in modern-day English life, but what little there are grow out of the English past, tradition, and culture. Even though the dignitary's car is closed and uncommunicative, even though the Prime Minister is somewhat ridiculous, "all rigged up in gold lace" (261), they are centers of community. In spite of their inadequacies, England and its traditions create a social unity: everyone on Bond Street looks at the passing car; everyone at Clarissa's party watches the Prime Minister pass by. And that sense of connection in English life, handed down from the past, Woolf approves: not the outer forms, but the inner feelings: "something in its common appeal, emotional" (25). Passing Buckingham Palace, Richard participates in a feeling of community and continuity.

As for Buckingham Palace...you can't deny it a certain dignity, he considered, nor despise what does, after all, stand to millions of people...for a symbol, absurd though it is...he liked being ruled by a descendant of Horsa; he liked continuity; and the sense of handing on the traditions of the past. (177)

Richard is, of course, a proponent of the social system, but even Peter Walsh, who is something of an outcast, feels "moments when civilisation seemed dear to him as a personal possession; moments of pride in
England...one might laugh; but one had to respect it" (82, 77). There is unity but not rigidity in Richard's and Peter's perceptions of tradition; they can admit its absurdity even while they feel its communal strength. And even more than they, Clarissa feels herself part of a rhythm that unifies the disparate elements of existence through the ordering tradition of the past.14

It was June. The King and Queen were at the Palace. And everywhere, though it was still so early, there was a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats; Lords, Ascot, Ranelagh and all the rest of it; wrapped in the soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air...and she, too, loving it as she did with an absurd and faithful passion, being part of it, since her people were courtiers in the time of the Georges.... (5-6)

The community and communication in English life are limited but important, and Woolf objectifies this significance in the repeated image of roses. Roses are ubiquitous in Mrs. Dalloway. Among the other flowers which Clarissa remembers at Bourton, roses signify moments of inner fulfillment through communion with others.15 But, equally important, they also evoke a sense of communication of a particularly English stamp. To the British, Paul Fussell notes, roses have historically connoted England, and loyalty, service, and sacrifice to it, a signification that reached its apogee around the time of the Great War, when the rose became "virtually equal to the idea of England." Moreover, in the English literary tradition, David Jones writes, "the familiar and common June rose has...managed to recall and evoke for the English a June-England association.16 The ever-present roses of Clarissa's June day are English roses, evoking not just the communication of her past, but also that of her present in London, limited but significant. Thus, when Richard reflects upon his "whole life" with
Clarissa, he brings her "red and white roses together, a vast bunch" (175, 174) to reccommunicate his love, because he cannot tell her that he loves her. He regrets the incompleteness of his message, but for Clarissa, it is enough. "He stood for a moment as if he were about to say something, and she wondered what? Why? There were the roses" (181).

The English world pictured in Mrs. Dalloway allows momentary communication, but Woolf is equally concerned with the qualities that are lacking in English life. Social criticism pervades Mrs. Dalloway. Alex Zwerdling has pointed out the novel's socio-historical context, in particular its focus on the governing class of England and its delineation of a precise and meaningful historical moment whose world-view informs the action. Zwerdling shows the novel's sharp attack on the ills of English society, "its hierarchies of class and sex, its complacency, its moral obtuseness." The values of the governing class, he believes, are destructive--"solidity and rigidity, stasis, and the inability to communicate feelings"; the stoicism of the age seeks to deny the sorrow and the significance of the Great War that has marked an end to English ascendancy. Those who maintain that stoicism are set in power against those who fail to maintain it, and in the center is Clarissa, who balances "the anaesthesia of the governing class against the fervor of a Septimus Smith." Zwerdling's discussion is seminal, first, because he examines the novel from the traditional perspective of social criticism, and second, because he points out the connection between English society and communication that is Woolf's recurrent theme.
What Zwerdling perceives as a thematic concern is objectified in the novel by pictorial images of stasis and "London greyness" that transmit Woolf's criticism into the external reality of the novel. The dignitary's car, for example, stalls, bringing "everything...to a standstill" (20), including the movement of Woolf's fluent prose. "Everyone looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. And there the motor car stood..." (21) The car is an image of the inability to communicate that is characteristic of the British upper class. The dignitary's identity is hidden behind drawn blinds and "an air of inscrutable reserve" (23); only "a square of dove grey" (19) is visible. The car concretizes the communicative distance between people. "Was it the Prince of Wales', the Queen's, the Prime Minister's? Whose face was it? Nobody knew" (20). The proponents of the English class system are pictured externally, like Hugh Whitbread, the quintessential "Newbolt Man," with "no heart, no brain, nothing but the manners and breeding of an English gentleman" (8). And Woolf concentrates the insidiousness of the social system in Sir William Bradshaw by objectifying him as a living "figurehead" (144). Sir William's power is cultural more than personal; he "made England prosper" (150). In his grey office, he stiffly jerks his arms about in a physical demonstration of the idea that sanity consists of adherence to the social code. "'Nobody lives for himself alone,' said Sir William, glancing at the photograph of his wife in court dress" (48). His grey car resembles the dignitary's car, and his wife, another possession dressed in grey, has lost her identity in the role of middle-aged "Angel," "quick to minister" (152).
Because Woolf's criticism of the English social system focuses on its lack of communication, she defines the victims of the system as those who try to communicate and fail, those who "bestow emotion vainly" (27). One such group is the poor: their poverty is not Woolf's concern; rather, she deplores their wasted possibility, their desire for connection and creation that is held back by the social system. In contrast to the stiff, grey proponents of the system, society's victims are described in images of flowers and movement that recapture the images of Clarissa at Bourton. As they stand locked outside the walls of Buckingham Palace, the poor press close together communicating their excitement, "unafraid to let rumour accumulate in their veins and thrill the nerves in their thighs" (27). Appropriately, they admire what is flowing and floral—"Victoria, billowing on her mound...her shelves of running water, her geraniums" (27). But, like Clarissa's Bourton, the Victoria they admire belongs to the past, and present-day English life communicates nothing to them. They fail even to see the dignitary's car as they search for the indecipherable message of the airplane. The airplane, unattached to English soil, flies freely, but transmits nothing to those trapped in the English social system. "It soared up and wrote one letter after another—but what was it writing?" (13) Nor can the poor communicate anything to the rest of society. Moll Pratt, an Irish flower woman watching the passing dignitary's car, wishes to toss a bunch of roses in celebration, but the stiff gaze of the constable thwarts her.

Moll Pratt is Irish, not English; foreigners, too, try to transcend the absence of communicative possibility in English life. Rezia Warren
Smith, whose life will be shattered by the social system, contrasts the activity of Milan, "people walking, laughing out loud," to London's "people...huddled up in bath chairs." She speaks aloud, "But to whom? There was nobody" (54). Just as the stalled motor car objectifies the lack of communication in the English governing class, a battered old woman in Regent's Park represents the victims of the social system. The old woman sings a song about love and flowers. Her love, she sings, is stronger than time and will last until "the pageant of the world would be over" (123). Her music flows, "fertilising" the earth around the London tube station with its "eternal spring" (124). But the absence of possibility in the present moment sadly undercuts those timeless generative possibilities. The woman is old, battered, poor, the victim of time and place: "her bright petalled flowers were hoar and silver frosted" (124). She transmits nothing to the "bustling, middle-class people" of London except

a frail, quivering sound, a voice bubbling up without direction, vigour, beginning or end, running weakly and shrilly and with an absence of all human meaning, into

    ee um fah um so
    foo swee too eem oo. (122)

The primary victim of society's lack of communication in the novel is, of course, Septimus Smith. Septimus begins life as a divided self, "on the whole a border case, neither one thing or the other" (127)--half poet, half conventional Englishman. The English social system and the Great War, "that little shindy of schoolboys with gunpowder" (145), feed his conventional half, teaching him "the whole show" (130) of denying emotions and communicating nothing of what he feels. But the poet in Septimus cannot live without emotion and communication. His madness is
not, as he believes, the inability to feel; rather it is the capacity to feel too much for the world he inhabits. His disconnection is only from "human nature" (137), his term for the civilization around him. And his ability to feel is concentrated in Evans, "among the orchids" (105), whom civilization has destroyed. Even more than Clarissa, Septimus Smith cannot connect in twentieth-century London; as she retreats intermittently into her memories, he retreats entirely into his consciousness, where he feels a sense of connection. Clarissa achieves her moments of communication through her past, but Septimus has no such past: he is a child of Modern disillusion, not Victorian optimism. And so only in a self-created world does he feel a sense of connection. In madness he need not withhold his emotions, and he unifies himself with the natural world in visions of flowers and movement. 

They beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibers with his own body...fanned it up and down....The sparrows, fluttering, rising and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern....The earth thrilled beneath him. Red flowers grew through his flesh....Now he withdraws into the snows, and roses hang about him. (32, 103)

Even though Septimus is mad and Clarissa sane, they are united by their ability to connect in the internal world and their failure to connect in the external. Their failures are partly qualities of self, but also qualities of the world they inhabit. Both have survived the Great War, the watershed of English life, which has cut off a world of beauty, youth, and hope, and has effected the "change from felicity to despair, pastoral to anti-pastoral."  

Both Clarissa and Septimus have lived through the war, but Clarissa's generation counters its sense of loss with a sustaining
memory of tradition and community that is unavailable to Septimus and his peers. In the London of Mrs. Dalloway, twentieth-century youth is identified by its absence of feeling and communication. Clarissa's daughter Elizabeth is a "silent, stolid creature" (119) who does not want to be some young man's "garden lily" (204). And the young party guests, Lord Gayton and Nancy Blow, stand silent as Clarissa contrasts them to her own generation: "The enormous resources of the English language, the power it bestows, after all, of communicating feelings (at their age, she and Peter would have been arguing all the evening) was not for them. They would solidify young" (270).

Septimus is a "border case": like the younger generation, he cannot communicate, but unlike them, he wants "to renew society" (37) by reconnecting past and present. In this conflict lies his madness, for he believes that "Communication is health; communication is happiness" (141). A "young man who carries the greatest message in the world" (125), he must deliver his message to the leaders of English society, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. Like Jacob Flanders, Septimus feels called upon to revivify his culture, but he cannot make contact with it. The skywriting airplane sends its message "not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet" (31). And so, cut off from the traditional tools of his culture, Septimus waits for a new form of communication. But the language that will reuniﬁy Septimus and his generation with their past is not forthcoming. In his table drawer are the drawings and writings of Septimus' own language, but the servant girl who ﬁnds them laughs at them.

Only Rezia, Septimus' foreign wife, understands the value of his
messages; she refuses to destroy them not because she can understand their meaning, but because she can intuit their beauty, which is the message of the world that Septimus must recommunicate (104). When Septimus communicates with Rezia, she becomes "a flowering tree" (224) in his imagination. Together they look at his drawings and writings, "the map of the world" (224). And they share a moment of communication as they create a small object of beauty, Mrs. Peters' hat. Rezia rejoices in her reconnection with Septimus. "'There,' she said, pinning a rose to one side of the hat. Never had she felt so happy! Never in her life!...For she could say anything to him now" (217, 221). And Septimus rejoices in his ability to translate even this small message of beauty into the physical world. "It was wonderful. Never had he done anything which made him feel so proud. It was so real, it was so substantial, Mrs. Peters' hat" (218).

As Septimus externalizes his imaginative capacities for beauty into a material object, he feels a "moment" of communication and unity. Once again he communicates with Rezia, "for she was with him" (226). And he grasps both worlds simultaneously: in the imaginative world, he embraces death: "It was their kind of tragedy, not his or Rezia's"; and in the physical world, he loves life: "He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot" (226). Septimus holds both worlds in a moment of intense connectedness that crosses all boundaries and encompasses all oppositions.

But, in Woolf's vision, such an "illumination" (47) does not last. Like Clarissa's moments, Septimus' moment is shattered by the pressure of externality, objectified in the impregnable physicality of Dr.
Holmes. "(Holmes was a powerfully built man)" (225). Communication cannot be maintained in the external world of daily English life, and to try to do so is to court self-destruction.

Nevertheless, Septimus refuses to capitulate to the pressures of physical and social reality. And since only by severing himself from the external world can he maintain his feeling of unity, he opts for death. Thus, as Clarissa later perceives, "Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate" (280-281). He shouts, "I'll give it you!" (226) as he jumps, for his death is his "gift" (185) of communication, just as Clarissa's parties are hers.

Through death, Septimus succeeds in communicating his message of beauty and unity. Clarissa, upon hearing about his suicide, immediately intuits that his death and her party have somehow interpenetrated one another: "Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought" (279). And Rezia feels a permeation of worlds, "in London, too...the caress of the sea" (228). Significantly, Septimus chooses to jump through an open window to his death, and his movement from a closed room to an open street objectifies his death as a leap into freedom from social structures. Rezia similarly imagines herself "opening long windows, stepping out into some garden" (227). Both recapitulate Clarissa's early morning "plunge" through the windows at Bourton, and all celebrate communication and connection. Thus, paradoxically, Septimus dies to fulfill a desire to connect with the world, not separate himself from it. But he can connect only to Rezia, whose roots are in another country, and to Clarissa, whose roots are in another century.24
In essence, all the characters who populate the world of Mrs. Dalloway chart the effect of time on possibility and communication; all have failed to some degree, from Lady Bruton, who cannot write a letter to the Times, to Ellie Henderson, who cannot find anyone to talk to at Clarissa's party. And conspicuous among the failures are those who have shared Clarissa's past and possibilities at Bourton, Richard Dalloway, Sally Seton, and Peter Walsh. Richard has not lived up to his expectations personally or politically; time has made him "rather speechless, rather stiff" (175) and has erased his ability to declare his love to Clarissa. The flowers he brings are his "weapon" (176) against time, but he still cannot speak. Sally, too, has become limited with time. Her great strength at Bourton was her communicative freedom, "as if she could say anything, do anything, a quality much commoner in foreigners than in Englishwomen" (49). Sally was to paint and write, and her creativity was reflected in "her way with flowers": in place of "stiff little vases", she "went out, picked hollyhocks, dahlias—all sorts of flowers that had never been seen together—cut their heads off, and made them swim on top of the water in bowls" (49-50). As Miss Parry observed, it is "wicked to treat flowers like that" (50); in Sally's freedom lay the potential for dominance and destruction. Not only did she demand complete communicative surrender from Clarissa, as Peter did; even more dangerously, she threatened to release Clarissa's pent-up sexual attraction for women. And while such freedom might have liberated Clarissa's controlled emotional life, it would also have cut
Clarissa completely adrift from social convention: "Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down!" (52) Nevertheless, for all Sally's "overpowering" (51) potential, she no longer exercises her creativity on anything but flowers and sons—her flowers now behind the walls of a hothouse, and her sons in the halls of Eton. Sally serves the world she once dominated and promotes what she once promised to change.

Nor has Peter Walsh changed the world. He also was to write, but he has "never done a thing that they talked of; his whole life had been a failure" (11). Peter has failed not only socially, but also emotionally, despite his "susceptibility" (107). His real feelings are locked inside his own imagination, remembering his unfulfilled romance with Clarissa and chasing young women who call him "not Peter, but his private name which he called himself in his own thoughts" (79). His latest flower, Daisy, is simply another version of this self-centered escapade; she is in love with him, but he does not return that love, and he knows that in time he will fail her. As he admits, he would really rather be alone with his imaginative life, for "all this one could never share—it smashed to atoms" (81). Richard, Sally, and Peter, for all their time spent "tunneling" into their thoughts and memories, all come up short emotionally, and this characteristic Clarissa shares. In respect to her failures, Clarissa is no different from those around her; she differs only in her self-awareness and self-criticism: "She was honest" (115). Unlike Peter, she can "see what she lacked" (46) and knows that she has "pilfered" (82) her youthful possibilities. Clarissa knows that the price of her social success and her privacy of self is a
more true connection with humanity. And she can see that Septimus' death "was an attempt to communicate" (280), an attempt to realize the connection she has failed to make.

This understanding is at the heart of her "gift" for "making a world of her own wherever she happened to be" (114). Both in spite of and because of the failures of her self and world, Clarissa tries to generate communication in those around her. Communication is the impulse behind her parties and the reason she equates her parties with "life"—her moments of true connection are transient and are diminishing with time, and her parties are among the few "moments" she still has.27

Clarissa's parties, like all moments, communicate only temporarily. In English life especially, moments of closeness last only briefly: "the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over—the moment" (47). Clarissa's moments are not only brief, they are limited in scope, confined to the upper-class gentry of her social circle. But Clarissa knows her limitations and those of her world, and she is willing to live with something less than perfection, so that she may live at all—Septimus, unwilling to compromise, is dead.28 Living as she does, Clarissa gives up beauty and connection, but she is willing to make that sacrifice, "there being in her a thread of life which for toughness, endurance, power to overcome obstacles and carry her triumphantly through Peter had never seen the like of" (236).

Furthermore, the communication of Clarissa's party is of value to the community as well as to Clarissa herself. She knows that isolation characterizes her world, and she shares with Peter the dissatisfaction of "not knowing people; not being known. For how could they know each
other? You met every day; then not for six months, or years" (231).
But each meeting engenders a communication that grows through time. The
"moment" blooms into something larger that transcends the limitations of
time and place.

You were given a sharp, acute, uncomfortable grain--the actual
meeting; horribly painful, as often as not; yet, in absence,
in the most unlikely places, it would flower out, open, shed
its scent, let you touch, taste, look about you, get the whole
feel of it and understanding, after years of lying lost. (231)

Clarissa's gift is the ability to create that "grain" which flowers out
into a message of beauty. She creates the opportunity for these moments
of experience at her parties. Septimus must die to communicate his
message to Clarissa, but Clarissa, who survives, carries that message of
beauty to others, beauty that will bloom in the process of memory. The
"grain" of meeting is a moment of communication, a moment of life trans-
formed.

It was, she thought, partly their clothes, partly being taken
out of their ordinary ways, partly the background, it was
possible to say things you couldn't say anyhow else, things
that needed an effort; possible to go much deeper. (259-260)

Clarissa's party momentarily merges the time-bound and the timeless.29
The instant when Peter can say, "there she was" (296) is transient, but
it encompasses all the moments of their experience together, and it will
flower as the earlier moments at Bourton have done. Clarissa's parties
give her the opportunity to endow that passing moment with possibility
for all moments--"to sum it all up in the moment as she passed" (264);
at her party she can fleetingly integrate the disparate layers of her-
self and her world. Past and present, communication and solitude,
possibility and failure, inner and outer worlds all converge and all
"permeate" one another. Clarissa stands, "a stake driven in at the top
of her stairs" (259), but also a mermaid in a green dress, "prancing, sparkling...lolloping on the waves" (264). Only at such moments can she "assemble" the parts, "composed so for the world into one centre" (284, 55).

This generative power is the source of Peter's "extraordinary excitement" (296) at Clarissa's party. As her party comes into being, all of London seems to share the excitement in a wavelike wealth of movement. "Cabs were rushing around the corner, like water around the piers of a bridge, drawn together, it seemed to him, because the bore people going to her party, to Clarissa's party" (250). At the party, as people begin to transcend their private selves, the curtain with its flock of birds blows out "as if there were a flight of wings into the room... (For the windows were open.)" (256). As Clarissa realizes that her party is a success, she sees "the blowing curtains, and the roses that Richard had given her" (261). With the presence of Peter, Sally, and Richard, Clarissa merges past and present, memory and reality at her party. Woolf recommunicates her own literary past, too, in the presence of Mrs. Hilbery from Night and Day and Mrs. Durrant and Clara from Jacob's Room at the party.

To be sure, Clarissa's party, no matter how successful and generative, is the limited triumph of a limited woman. But Clarissa knows the strengths and weaknesses of her "little point of view" (255) for herself and her world.

And people would say, "Clarissa Dalloway is spoilt." She cared much more for her roses than for the Armenians....But she loved her roses (didn't that help the Armenians?)--the only flowers she could bear to see cut. (182)

Roses are the image of Clarissa's love of beauty and life. But she is
willing to see them cut, to live with loss, to sacrifice beauty and nature to civilization because she loves life more than perfection. For Clarissa, beauty and life are to be shared, even though they can be shared only imperfectly. She has "once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more" (280), while Septimus has thrown his whole life away. But only through Clarissa, through life in the world of time and place, can Septimus' death transmit any meaning, and only to the shared society of those left living does it matter that he has died.31

Clarissa Dalloway's life capitulates to the external world. But she is not, as Alex Zwerdling has concluded, "a sympathetic portrait of a woman who has surrendered to the force of conventional life and permitted her emotions to go underground."32 Clarissa is aware of her losses and her gains, and she gives what she can to the world. She has learned, in the fullness of time and place, as Voltaire's Candide learns, that she must cultivate her own garden.

Through her parties, Clarissa attempts to realize in the external world her belief in the underlying connectedness of things; she attempts "to combine, to create" (185). Although her moments of connection are tenuous and temporary, she never doubts the unseen unity of reality or her own place in it. Clarissa's affirmation of connection identifies her with her author. As Clarissa transforms the conventions of English life into a moment of connection, Woolf transforms the convention of the English language into a moment of communication. In Woolf's first three novels, she did not achieve the coherent statement that she so
beautifully realized in Mrs. Dalloway. Not only did she lack appropriate structures in her early work; she also exposed her lack of confidence in her own vision by projecting her ambivalence about writing into the voices of writer-characters. In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf mastered the ambiguities of her craft. She loosened the restrictions of her earlier novel structures with her "tunneling process" and her open, associative train of events. She also refined her ending: her delicate closure, "For there she was," (296) terminates the novelistic experience and subtly communicates her confidence in the verbal portrait just completed; at the same time, the ending does not alter the direction or the significance of the experience that has preceded it, as her earlier endings do.

Furthermore, just as Woolf integrated her ambivalent vision into her structure, she integrated her ambivalence towards language into the narration of the novel. Instead of characters speaking for Woolf, the novel speaks for itself: the language does not talk about, but rather, it embodies Woolf's conflicting distrust of and dependence upon language. Thus, paradoxically, while in the novel she questions the possibility of complete communication, she herself fully succeeds in communicating. She externalizes in language the unity that Clarissa believes in.

The seamless winding thread of prose which characterizes Mrs. Dalloway knits disparate elements into a single reality, achieving Woolf's aim of making "some kind of whole out of shivering fragments." Within that thread, the substance of her narrative is a multiplicity of things and thoughts which seem unrelated but which are connected through
the novel's prose. In particular, the typical sentence structure of the novel demonstrates both the difficulty of connection and the connection itself: her primary conjunctive punctuation is the semicolon, which both binds and separates. Woolf's semicolon separates more than a comma and joins more than a period. In her vast collation of thoughts and external phenomena, her semicolon simultaneously emphasizes the unity of life and the quidditas of all the things that comprise it. Her sentence structure echoes the thematic concern of the novel, as she demonstrates, for example, in her description of the London poor:

Listlessly, yet confidently, poor people all of them, they waited;...while this car passed and that; and all the time let rumour accumulate in their veins and thrill the nerves in their thighs at the thought of royalty looking at them; the Queen bowing; the Prince saluting; at the thought of the heavenly life divinely bestowed upon Kings; of the equerries and deep curtseys; of the Queen's old doll house; of Princess Mary married to an Englishman, and the Prince--ah! the Prince! who took wonderfully, they said, after old King Edward, but was ever so much slimmer. (28)

Woolf's substance underscores the devotion of the poor to a life from which they are irrevocably separated. But the abundance of people and things set in a sequence of phrases also demonstrates the connectedness of these people and their culture, a connectedness based on their shared consciousness of the external world.

Throughout the novel, Woolf strives through her prose to externalize the underlying unity of life. Although unity is real, it is also tenuous and difficult to perceive; in the novel, some connections are so slight that they seem to exist only through her verbal structures, as in her description of Richard Dalloway and the country life he loves.
Richard Dalloway's consciousness only half connects him to Norfolk. He cannot see, nor is he imagining, what Woolf describes there. Rather, Woolf's language makes the connection between Richard on a London street and Norfolk, where he likes to go. In this narrative connection, the images of nature, flowers, color, and movement identify a moment of connection made by Woolf's language, not by Richard's thoughts. Like Clarissa's moments, Woolf's moment in prose unites disparate people and places and the internal and external worlds.

The single thread of connection that unifies the novel is expressed in suggestive images. As the dignitary's car travels through the city, it leaves "a slight ripple which flowed through glove shops and hat shops and tailors' shops on both sides of Bond Street" (25). The airplane, too, "soared straight up, sank, rose, and whatever it did, wherever it went, out fluttered behind it a thick ruffled bar of white smoke which curled and wreathed upon the sky in letters" (29). Even though no one can agree upon what the letters actually say, the shared perception of the thread of smoke connects those who see it. As Woolf says in *To the Lighthouse*, "Looking together united them."33 Most importantly, the thread of connection unites people. As Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread leave Lady Bruton's house, a thread connects them across time and space.

And they went further and further from her, being attached to her by a thin thread (since they had lunched with her) which
would stretch and stretch, get thinner and thinner as they walked across London. (170)

The thread remains as long as human consciousness perceives; when Lady Bruton falls asleep, it snaps.

Woolf's linguistic thread of connection also expands and universalizes the experience it encompasses. The images of nature, color, and movement are not abstract symbols of communication; they express the enlarged possibilities for growth and transformation that communication and connection generate. During Peter and Clarissa's reunion, for example, a nature simile amplifies the transient intensity of their emotions and universalizes them.

She looked at Peter Walsh; her look, passing through all that time and all that emotion, reached him doubtfully; settled on him tearfully; and rose, and fluttered away, as a bird touches a branch and rises and flutters away. (64)

At other times, the narrative raises the experience to the level of myth. When Clarissa talks to Peter about herself and her life, she feels "like a Queen whose guards have fallen asleep and left her unprotected" (65). The simile underscores Clarissa's essential characteristics, her privacy and her social dominion over others; moreover, it echoes Clarissa's English heritage by suggesting her similarity to a Virgin Queen.

Most often, the narrative thread encompasses and enlarges the English world of which Clarissa is part. Language defines that world and makes clear that the novel is a portrait of a time, place, and society as well as one woman's life. On Bond Street, at Buckingham Palace, in Regent's Park, the narrative thread winds from one person or group to another, creating a "chorus" of Londoners who comment on their
world. In one of the most moving of these narrative conceptions, the thread travels from the thoughts of Septimus Smith to those of a Scottish girl, Maisie Johnson, and from Maisie to the thoughts of an old woman, Carrie Dempster. On the surface, Mrs. Dempster seems a random character with random thoughts. But in the context of the whole narrative about Clarissa and her world, Carrie Dempster's thoughts amplify the meaning of the novel.

That girl, thought Mrs. Dempster (who saved crusts for the squirrels and often ate her lunch in Regent's Park), don't know a thing yet; and really it seemed to her better to be a little stout, a little slack, a little moderate in one's expectations....Get married, she thought, and then you'll know....For it's been a hard life, thought Mrs. Dempster. What hadn't she given to it? Roses; her figure; her feet too. (She drew the knobbled lumps beneath her skirt.)

Roses, she thought sardonically. All trash m'dear. For really, what with eating, drinking, and mating, the bad days and the good, life had been no mere matter of roses, and what was more, let me tell you, Carrie Dempster had no wish to change her lot with any woman's in Kentish Town! But, she implored, pity. Pity, for the loss of roses. Pity she asked of Maisie Johnson, standing by the hyacinth beds. (40)

Carrie Dempster bears no immediate relation to Clarissa Dalloway, but Woolf's narrative clarifies the relationship between them. As their similar names may suggest, Mrs. Dempster and Mrs. Dalloway share life in the world of twentieth-century London, and Mrs. Dempster's thoughts sound a refrain for Clarissa as much as for herself. The image of roses has no intrinsic connection to Mrs. Dempster's experience: it is impossible to know what she means when she says she has "given...roses" to life. Rather, her reference to roses seems to comment upon the significance of roses throughout the novel as a whole and for Clarissa in particular. Clarissa has sacrificed roses to life, the roses of Bourton and London, which signify communication. Clarissa, too, has learned to
be "a little moderate" in her expectations of life. Like Mrs. Dempster, Mrs. Dalloway spends her June day assessing her gains and losses and ends by regretting her lost possibilities. Clarissa, and indeed all of Mrs. Dalloway ask, "Pity, for the loss of roses." But only in the context of the narrative does the connection between these two characters emerge, and through that connection the reference to roses takes on a meaning that reverberates through the novel.

The sense of connection, of unity in multiplicity, that characterizes Mrs. Dalloway signals Virginia Woolf's novelistic maturity. In form and theme, in character and world, in the communication of art, Woolf realizes her connections to the past. Rebellion and separateness remain important Woolfian themes and techniques, but they no longer subvert the sense of connection she also feels to her literary and cultural heritage. Both rebellion and connection can coexist among the polarities and disparate elements of the Woolfian vision. The unity of form, theme, and language in Mrs. Dalloway create not limitation, but communication. Like Clarissa Dalloway, Virginia Woolf has learned to cultivate a garden of compromise between two worlds, and roses grow there.

To The Lighthouse

While Mrs. Dalloway calls forth a world rooted in a specific time and place, To The Lighthouse evokes an opposite world whose time and place at first seem nonexistent and irrelevant. Even though To The Lighthouse is factual in origin, shaped by the characters and events of
Virginia Woolf's childhood, it seems to epitomize the modern novel's concern with states of mind, or what Wayne Booth calls "sensibility," rather than factual reality. For Erich Auerbach, *To The Lighthouse* typifies the novel of consciousness and its rejection of the outer world.

The exterior objective reality of the momentary present which the author directly reports and which appears as established fact...is nothing but an occasion. The stress is placed entirely on what the occasion releases, things which are seen not directly but by reflection, which are not tied to the present of the framing occurrence that releases them.

It is telling that Auerbach chooses *To The Lighthouse* rather than *Mrs. Dalloway* to illustrate his concepts. Both novels move back and forth between objective reality and consciousness, but the novels evoke opposite feelings: *Mrs. Dalloway's* world ultimately seems to be that of external reality and quotidian affairs, while *Mrs. Ramsay's* world seems to be an extension of that novel's preoccupation with consciousness. Both the similarity and the difference are characteristic of Woolf: in essence, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* are mirror-image novels. From opposite poles, they embody the same ambivalence towards the world of time, place, and society that structures every Woolf novel.

The opposition between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* makes itself felt most obviously in the surface qualities of the novels' main characters. Clarissa Dalloway, née Parry, inhabits the time-bound city of Edwardian London, and she associates with politicians and socialites, who shape their time and place. *Mrs. Ramsay*, first name unknown, belongs to an unchanging landscape of sea and sand, a timeless, unspecific island somewhere among the Isles of Skye; and her acquaintances are artists and academics, who ponder unending abstractions. Clarissa is
pointed, definite, dartlike; Mrs. Ramsay is diffused, indefinable, "a wedge-shaped core of darkness" (95). Clarissa is virginal; Mrs. Ramsay maternal. The events of the day converge upon Clarissa; Mrs. Ramsay's activities radiate outward towards others. Clarissa struggles to maintain a center of self-hood, and in moments of solitude she retreats into her silent "vault" of a house. Mrs. Ramsay gives so much that "scarcely a shell of herself" (60) remains, and she inhabits a house of open doors and windows, noisy with children; her only solitude is in the privacy of her mind. And finally, Clarissa lives while Mrs. Ramsay dies.

The prose styles of the two novels amplify the opposing moods expressed in the characters. The language of *Mrs. Dalloway* is concrete and precise, the syntax busy. Clarissa observes, "There were Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities; there were Soapy Sponge and Mrs. Asquith's Memoirs and Big Game Shooting in Nigeria, all spread open. Ever so many books there were..." And even her memories leave their impressions in precise, sensual images; she remembers "when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air". In contrast, the prose style of *To The Lighthouse* favors the abstract. Its paths of reverie gravitate towards generality, as when Lily thinks, "She now remembered what she had been going to say about Mrs. Ramsay. She did not know how she would have put it; but it would have been something critical" (75). Even the concrete descriptions of material objects emphasize the ephemerality and insignificance of the physical world: The house contains "crazy ghosts of chairs and tables whose"
London life of service was done— they did well enough here... the mat was fading, the wallpaper was flapping. You couldn't tell anymore that those were roses on it" (43-44). Jane Novak writes that the tone of To The Lighthouse "contrasts with the tone of nervous excitement pervading Mrs. Dalloway, an emotion perfectly suited to the rapidly alternating vignettes of a busy London day. The feelings of To The Lighthouse are like the slower rhythms of the sea...."42

Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse, then, enforce Woolf's perception of opposing worlds. But this opposition emerges so vividly because of the essential sameness of the vision that these two mirror-images reflect, a vision of ambivalence between the two worlds she has defined. The similarity and the ambivalence begin with form: both novels structure themselves around a woman and her life on a single day— her home, her family, her associations, her thoughts about herself and others and about life and death. Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay have essential resemblances: both are around fifty years old, both stand very straight (as Woolf's mother did), and both share the outstanding quality of a strong, dominating presence— about each, Woolf writes, "There she was" (18).43 Most important, as Bernard Blackstone observes, both "have the same gift of charming people."44 They use their charm to gather others around them and create "moments" that transcend the limitations of their day-to-day lives.

Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay and the novels they dominate are therefore as similar in essence as their surfaces are different. If most readers feel that Mrs. Ramsay and her world are somehow richer and less "tinsely" than Mrs. Dalloway and hers, that is not because Mrs.
Ramsay's dinner partakes of eternity any more than Mrs. Dalloway's party does. Nor is it entirely because *To The Lighthouse* explores consciousness more deeply—or explores deeper consciousnesses—than Mrs. Dalloway. Our preference also comes, ironically, in part from the very kinds of judgements—those based on social and material assumptions—that run counter to the concern with consciousness that has always been considered Woolf's identifying quality. That is, we simply approve of Mrs. Ramsay, her friends, and her world more than Mrs. Dalloway and hers. To most Woolf readers, the thoughts and works of artists and academics seem more familiar, appealing, and significant than those of politicians and socialites. The Isles of Skye seem more eternal than Regent's Park, whether they are or not. And finally, Mrs. Ramsay's all-nurturing generosity seems more admirable than Mrs. Dalloway's cool core of privacy: like Woolf herself, we are all attracted to the Angel in the House.

These comparisons and observations clearly lead to the conclusion that Modernism and consciousness are not the only spheres of *To The Lighthouse*. Rather, the opposition of worlds evident in Woolf's two mirror-image novels also structures this individual novel. Woolf shaped *To The Lighthouse*, as she did all her novels, around her vacillation between inner and outer worlds, between past and present, tradition and modernity. And she states the heart of her vision in James Ramsay's realization that "nothing was simply one thing" (277). Furthermore, she dramatizes the same vision in her paradigm for the novel, Lily Briscoe's painting, which unites the imagination with the material world.

She could have done it differently of course; the colour could have been thinned and faded; the shapes etherealized; that was
how Paunceforte would have seen it. But then she did not see it like that. She saw the colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly's wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral. (75)

The "bolts of iron" that "clamp" together the "feathery and evanescent" (255) substance of consciousness in Woolf's novel are the physical and social realities of day-to-day life. They do not dominate To The Lighthouse, but they structure it.

To begin with, despite the indefinite atmosphere of the novel's island landscape, physical setting functions concretely and significantly in To The Lighthouse. David Daiches has contrasted the implications of the settings in Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse:

Middle-class London is not, perhaps, the best scene for a tenuous, meditative work of this kind, and Mrs. Dalloway might be said to suffer from a certain incompatibility between the content and the method of treatment. A misty island is more effective than a London dinner party as the setting for a novel of indirect philosophical suggestion. 45

Daiches' analysis underscores how important and how calculated the setting of To The Lighthouse is, and how directly it contributes to the tone of the novel. Nevertheless, he sees the opposition of inner and outer worlds in Mrs. Dalloway as a form-theme "incompatibility," instead of perceiving it as the structural principle that animates the novel just as it does all her fiction. Woolf's first two novels demonstrated her belief that her vision of reality inhered in urban society as much as in pastoral seclusion; Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse, her finest novels, I believe, express exactly the same conception in much more polished terms. And in each, the setting is perfectly compatible with Woolf's reality.

Moreover, the setting of To The Lighthouse influences the progres-
sion of events as much as it does the tone. The open house and garden, the island and the sea have been described as symbols of a world in which consciousness, emotion, and sensibility are supreme values. Furthermore, they provide a physical background which actively promotes the freedom of consciousness that occurs there. The calculated indefiniteness of the Isles of Skye, like that of Santa Marina, Kew Gardens, Cornwall, and Bourton in earlier novels, allows for an imaginative possibility that is impossible in the tightly structured social life of London. The "general impression of sea, sand, and rocks" allies the island to an infinite past outside the scope of history and culture, and it takes people away from their time-bound concerns.

For Woolf, the sea more than anything else helps create a world of possibility. The sea does something to people, releasing them from their external limitations. "It was as if the water floated off and set sailing thoughts which had grown stagnant on dry land, and gave to their bodies some sort of physical relief" (33). During the daytime, the house, with every door and window open, forms part of a limitless connection in nature that extends to the sea. The center of this world is Mrs. Ramsay's house, in which all life merges in an aggregation of people, objects, and nature. Clarissa Dalloway feels this same sense of emergence at times, but not in her house or among her family--only in the anonymous city streets and in her memories of Bourton. The small attic room of Mrs. Dalloway's house, where she contemplates her essential isolation, directly opposes Mrs. Ramsay's attic, whose several rooms, impregnated with the sea, seem joined in one limitless life.

The sun poured into those attics which a plank alone separated from each other so that every footstep could be plainly heard
and the Swiss girl sobbing for her father in a valley of the Grissons, and lit up bats, flannels, straw hats, ink-pots, paint-pots, beetles, and the skulls of small birds, while it drew from the long frilled strips of seaweed pinned to the wall a smell of salt and weeds, which was in the towels, too, gritty with sand from bathing. (17)

The daytime background of _The Lighthouse_ provides for a communication and connection that seem untouched by the strictures of conventional society; nevertheless, the limiting world of time, place, and social conventions impinges even upon this remote island. The "thud" of muffled gunfire and the "silent apparition of an ashen-coloured ship" (201) manifest, however indistinctly, the Great War, the instrument of civilization that will eventually destroy Mrs. Ramsay's idyllic world. One messenger from that world is the "odious" Charles Tansley, "saying who had won this, who had won that, who was a 'first-rate man' at Latin verses" (26,15). Like St. John Hirst in _The Voyage Out_, Tansley is a misogynist, a cog in the "patriarchal machinery." His vehicle of destruction is not a warship, but "fellowship...readership...lectureship...the ugly academic jargon that rattled itself off so glibly" (22). The thud of gunfire and the rattle of jargon, the manifestations of English civilization, reach even the Isles of Skye.48

Not surprisingly, Andrew will be killed in the War, and Mrs. Ramsay will die in London.

Woolf's subtle contrast between the Great War and the timeless peacefulness of Skye seem to suggest that outside of civilization lies freedom and within it destruction. But that simple polarity does not encompass the complex and ambivalent attitude toward civilization that Woolf objectifies in her setting. The apparently limitless connection of house, garden, and sea at Skye exists only during the daytime; at
night the relations change. This shifting of relations is signalled by
the hedge which separates the house and garden from the sea. The hedge
has a gap in it which opens to a view of the sea. During the day, when
the Ramsays and their guests walk in the garden, they look through the
gap in the hedge at the freedom of the sea. But at night, they remain
inside the hedge and inside the house, protected from that same sea. At
some times the sea promotes freedom, but at other times it is an
oblivion of forgetfulness, loss of self, and death which inspires not
liberation but terror. The house and garden are a protected, pastoral
world, presided over by the Ramsays, themselves a balance of internal
and external forces. But in the sea, ships sink and sailors die. At
the seaside, when Minta and Paul momentarily lose themselves in love,
Minta also loses her grandmother's brooch, a connection with her past.
The waves come in and darkness falls: "We shall be cut off!" she
shrieks, "terrified" (117). The freedom of consciousness engendered by
the sea is not simply one thing. Because the sea inspires fear as well
as freedom, the small island asserts itself as a force of physical
solidity and permanence. As Cam observes, looking at the other nearby
island on which the lighthouse stands, "It looked like the top of a rock
which some wave bigger than the rest would cover. Yet in its frailty
were all those paths, those terraces, those bedrooms—all those innumer-
able things"(303). And the Ramsays' hedge, which sometimes opens to the
sea and sometimes protects against it, is significantly the aesthetic
problem that Lily attacks repeatedly in her painting.

The shifting relations of the landscape in To The Lighthouse under-
lie the shifting social relations that are the substance of the novel.
Just as post-Victorian England asserts itself upon the universal seascape, the social codes of that time and place assert their force upon the thoughts of the characters. The novel's realm of exploration is consciousness, but what the characters are always conscious of is their relation to other people through the social codes they live by. Woolf concentrates her analysis upon her characters' reactions to the social order. And thus the novel itself, which apparently seeks to escape the material and social forms of the Victorian novel, ironically asserts the importance of those forms at the same time as it questions them. Arnold Kettle writes that the dinner scene in *To The Lighthouse* is "worth comparing" with the dinner scene in Galsworthy's *Man of Property*.50 Kettle contrasts Galsworthy's Georgian treatment with Woolf's Modernist treatment of the scene. But his contrast grows out of the essential comparability of the two scenes: human nature in the English novel seems to be best analyzed under the scrutiny of social conventions—at the tea table or the dinner table. At Mrs. Ramsay's table, Lily cannot escape the external "code of behavior" of an early twentieth-century English woman. She can only retreat to her consciousness and wonder what it would be like to be free of the conventions that shape the behavior of men and women: "How would it be if neither of us did either of these things?" (137) Woolf stresses her characters' inner world because their outer world is so patently given and so patently inescapable. "Of course for the hundred and fiftieth time Lily Briscoe had to renounce the experiment—what happens if one is not nice to that young man over there—and be nice.(139). Moreover, Woolf, too, retreats to consciousness in her novel because the external conventions of English fiction
are so patently inescapable. The code of English social convention which governs Lily's behavior at the dinner table also declares that there will be a dinner table in Woolf's English novel.

Clearly, even this novel of consciousness exhibits a shifting attitude towards the external world of time, place, and social codes, an attitude best embodied in Mrs. Ramsay herself. The majority of critics have designated Mrs. Ramsay the patron of the inner world of consciousness, symbiotically opposed to Mr. Ramsay and his world of fact. James Naremore has summed up the implications of this opposition:

On the one hand is an active life which is egocentric and time-bound, usually associated in this novel with the land, and described by Virginia Woolf as a world of "facts," "surfaces," and "the masculine intelligence," a world of separateness, struggle, and death; and on the other hand is an immersed, passive life without any sense of personality or time, a watery world of emotion and feminine sensibility which makes of all experience a great unity and which, it is suggested, partakes of eternity...These two views of life...at times seem to represent the male and female principles.51

In this view Mrs. Ramsay's outstanding quality is her generative, all-mothering transcendence over the physical world, a recreation of Woolf's memory of her own mother, "typical, universal, yet our own in particular."52 Mrs. Ramsay is "sheer goodness for its own sake" and her selflessness is her self-definition. This paradigm of beauty and sacrifice to others embodied in Mrs. Ramsay (and in Julia Stephen) is, of course, Woolf's "Angel in the House," and, until recently, few critics have questioned Mrs. Ramsay's own perfect satisfaction with her role. Bernard Blackstone writes,

Mrs. Ramsay finds her life by losing it, she is completely unselfish, and she is absorbedly interested in the lives of others, not through stupid curiosity, but through the desire that they shall be happy and the instinct to do all she can to
bring this about....All the time she is spending herself....53

The cost of Mrs. Ramsay's absorption in others is her own identity as an individual in the physical and social world, a price, it is suggested, that she is perfectly happy to pay. In fact, James Naremore argues, even when Mrs. Ramsay finds rest from others in solitude, she is merely absorbing her individuality in another kind of oblivion, a wish for death, self-forgetfulness, and self-diffusion.54 Whether in community or solitude, Mrs. Ramsay seems to be perceived by the majority of critics as immersed in a world larger than herself and, more important, always wishing to be so immersed. She is never merely an individual living in the day-to-day world.

But Mrs. Ramsay is more complex, and thus more human, than these critics have interpreted her to be. It is true that on the one hand Mrs. Ramsay exhibits a self which seeks fulfillment through loss of ego, a transcendence to Angel stature, removed from the physical world and social restrictions. But on the other hand, there is also a self who strives for self-definition through society, who gathers others around her in conventional social relations, not to immerse herself in them, but to define herself and remind herself of who she is. Some recent critics have noted a strain of domination in Mrs. Ramsay, a failure to attain the unification in community she is purported to desire, because she refuses to submerge her own needs for self-assertion into the oneness of a social group. Glenn Pedersen writes:

The Ramsay weather is never fine as long as she lives, fundamentally because Mrs. Ramsay refuses to subordinate her individuality to community, to become one with Mr. Ramsay, to share with him the forming of the family into a unity, with the father as head and to give him the love of her heart.55
Those who share Pedersen's view see Mrs. Ramsay's failure to merge with her family as a failure of character. No differently from earlier critics, they are implicitly assessing Mrs. Ramsay in terms of her role as Angel. And they would find her a great deal easier to like if she would simply immerse herself in tradition and community and stop trying to be an individual. But significantly, Mrs. Ramsay refuses to let herself be drowned in this sea of otherness.

In truth, Mrs. Ramsay is unsure about her identity: at one point, she thinks of "oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others"; a moment later, she thinks, "not as oneself did one find rest ever, but as "a wedge-shaped core of darkness" (95, 96, my italics). The "wedge-shaped core of darkness" is Mrs. Ramsay's conception of the inner world--a "core," divorced from physical reality--"no one saw it" (96), and at rest from "all the being and the doing" (95) that her social relations demand. In the first part of her reverie, she defines her self as that wedge-shaped core: the essence of her being is that which escapes the physical world and exists within. But in the second part, she defines her self as that which participates in the life of other people and things; although she can escape momentarily, her essence exists in the external world. Mrs. Ramsay thus defines herself in two opposing ways. Which is the real self? Mrs. Ramsay is not sure. The garden hedge with its gap poses Lily's problem in painting because it symbolizes Mrs. Ramsay's problem in living. On the one hand, Mrs. Ramsay feels connected to the all-encompassing life-and-death force of the sea, the oblivion that comes with immersion in either community or solitude. But on the other hand, she also fears the loss of individu-
ality that such complete unity or separation entails. Mrs. Ramsay is a human being, not a Victorian paragon, and she needs to define herself in the physical and social world. She can perceive moments of complete unity in which she feels "a coherence in things" (158) that merges all things in one tremendous life-force--"it did not matter whose" (170)--and makes her indifferent to even her own death. But at most other moments, Mrs. Ramsay lives in fear of death. The sound of the waves makes her "think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea, and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow" (28).

Moreover, although Mrs. Ramsay sometimes finds rest in a solitude that overflows the boundaries of her own ego, she more often asserts herself against transcendent aloneness just as she does against transcendent community. While Mrs. Dalloway retires to her room for a necessary rejuvenation of self, Mrs. Ramsay pulls away from her own need for solitude because she fears annihilation. Paradoxically, because her attraction to solitude is so strong, she is afraid to be alone. Mrs. Dalloway's solitary moments of reverie are always interrupted by the forcible intrusion of the physical world, but, in contrast, Mrs. Ramsay always interrupts her own solitude to reach out for the solidity of the world around her. "She disliked anything that reminded her that she had been sitting, thinking. So she looked over her shoulder at the town" (104). Although she leaves her solitude "reluctantly" (99), she always leaves it voluntarily. Mr. Ramsay, though tyrannical and demanding, is yet willing to leave his wife in silence and thought; she however, will not permit it. "And again he would have passed her
without a word had she not, at that very moment, given him of her own free will what she knew he would never ask, and called to him..." (100).

Undoubtedly, some of Mrs. Ramsay's denial of solitude and her need to surround herself with people stems from her role as Angel who "never had a wish of her own." But Mrs. Ramsay clearly does have a wish of her own, a wish not to lose herself in the desires of others, but to lead them to fulfill her desires. Mrs. Ramsay has "astonishing power" (262), and she exercises it. "She put a spell on them all, by wishing" (153). She is not the servant of others; she is their "queen, who, finding her people gathered in the hall, looks down upon them, and acknowledges their tributes silently, and accepts their devotion and their prostration before her." (124) Furthermore, as Mitchell Leaska points out, it is this social dominion, not solitude, that replenishes and invigorates Mrs. Ramsay. He writes that at her dinner, "it is clear from the liveliness of her thoughts and images that her weariness has disappeared: the energizing centre of her being has become operative, as she moves these people about according to her design." Mrs. Ramsay's need to assert herself as the mothering force in her community far outweighs her need for self-effacement. "It was her instinct," Lily thinks, "turning her infallibly to the human race, making her nest in its heart" (292).

Clearly, then, although Mrs. Ramsay is symbolically and psychologically associated with the selflessness of the sea, her strongest impulses attach her to the land and its quotidian affairs. When the other members of the dinner party go to the sea at night, Mrs. Ramsay stays in the house, "withheld by something so strong that she never even
thought of asking herself what it was. Of course it was impossible for her to go with them" (175-176). Mrs. Ramsay encourages others to go to the sea, others to sail to the lighthouse, but she does not go herself. What holds her back is her fear of disjunction from the physical and social world in which she asserts her mothering power. Unlike Mrs. Dalloway, who is forcibly jolted out of her privacy by the intrusion of the physical world, Mrs. Ramsay's is startled from her privacy only by the sudden absence of that world. While she hears the men talking, convention reigns, and the sea "beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts." But when the sound of male voices ceases, the sound of the sea "thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror" (27-28). Conventional society is Mrs. Ramsay's hedge against the waters of oblivion, and her need for solitude is safe only as long as it is bounded by civilization. Mrs. Ramsay's desire to retreat into a wedge of darkness is a real need given existence by "all the being and the doing" (95) in the external world. But all that she is and does derives from her own need to escape the self-diffusion she feels outside the boundaries of society.

Because of her fear of annihilation, then, Mrs. Ramsay requires an excess of community: "she asked too many people to stay" (13). And because English community can only be constructed upon a framework of social convention, she is excessively conventional as well. This adherence to social strictures stultifies her own possibilities; "afraid, even for a second, to feel finer than her husband" (61), she cannot be completely honest with him and she cannot fulfill her own talents. 57 Although married to a philosopher and admired by artists,
Mrs. Ramsay really prefers "boobies" (85) like Paul Rayley, simple obtuse "Newbolt Men" who follow her advice to marry young women like Minta Doyle, who "made herself out even more ignorant than she was" (148). Mrs. Ramsay admires men most for their membership in the English patriarchy, "for their chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance; finally, for an attitude towards herself..." (13). Charles Tansley's reverence for Mrs. Ramsay hinges upon her beauty and her support of the patriarchal conventions, "insinuating, too, as she did, the greatness of man's intellect, even in its decay the subjection of all wives...to their husband's labours" (20).

The life over which Mrs. Ramsay holds sway, therefore, is not the infinite, omnipresent ocean of consciousness, but a life defined by the conventions of a specific time and place. Lily Briscoe's aesthetic eye sees the entire relation between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay as a Victorian tableau caught in time as if preserved in amber.

He stretched out his hand and raised her from her chair. It seemed somehow as if he had done it before, as if he had once bent in the same way and raised her from a boat which, lying a few inches off some island, had required that the ladies should thus be helped by the gentlemen. An old-fashioned scene that was, which required, very nearly, crinolines and peg-top trousers. Letting herself be helped by him, Mrs. Ramsay had thought (Lily supposed) the time has come now. Yes, she would say it now. And she stepped slowly, quietly on shore. (295)

Significantly Lily sees Mrs. Ramsay stepping onto the land, an island, and saying "Yes" to a world of conventionality and safety which calls for even the physical accoutrements of the English past.

Mrs. Ramsay's conventional world requires the presence of other people; thus she exerts pressure upon others to perpetuate the community
she has created. She urges others to marry and have children, "driven on, almost as if it were an escape for her" (92-93). The full weight of this pressure falls upon her children, whose happiness she can only envision in the most conventional terms. She pictures James "all red and ermine" (10), dressed for his role in the patriarchy; Prue, the "perfect angel" (90) will be beautiful and marriageable. And so to escape their social requirements, the Ramsay children must sneak away to their rooms "in a house where there was no other privacy" (16). The Ramsay daughters accurately perceive their thoughts of escape as "infidel ideas," inimical not only to their mother but to the whole English cultural tradition.

Thoughts of a life different from hers, in Paris perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other; for there was in all their minds a mute questioning of deference and chivalry, of the Bank of England and the Indian empire, of ringed fingers and lace...(14)

Mrs. Ramsay is short-sighted and cannot see past the boundaries of convention she has placed upon her world. She does not see that convention can destroy as well as create: Prue will die fulfilling her mother's wish that she marry and have children. Nor does Mrs. Ramsay perceive that rebellion against the social order can allow growth as much as destruction: Cam, the rebel, who "would not give a flower to the gentleman" (36), will someday complete the journey to the lighthouse with her father and brother.

Given Mrs. Ramsay's need for social convention, it is fitting that only out of the materials of conventionality can she create a moment that partakes of eternity, a moment of "stability" (170) in connection with others. Like Mrs. Dalloway's gift, Mrs. Ramsay's gift is the
ability to create "a world of her own wherever she happened to be." And so, paradoxically, through the forces of community engendered by her time and place, Mrs. Ramsay transcends the limitations of time and place to "make of the moment something permanent" (241). She merges internal and external worlds in an instant of unity.

The scene at the dinner table, like the dance in *The Voyage Out* and the party in *Mrs. Dalloway*, is a portrait of the creation of such a moment out of the "scraps and fragments" (136) of life. At the beginning of the dinner, each member of the party feels separate from the others, trapped in his own inner world of self-consciousness and lack of feeling for the others. Only Mrs. Ramsay feels an overpowering need to break through the separateness, for she associates her own failure to communicate with death and annihilation. "She had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything...and one could be in it, or one could be out of it, and she was out of it. It's all come to an end, she thought..." (125). Mrs. Ramsay realizes that if she does not create a community, "nobody would do it" (126), because nobody else has her overpowering need to see the forces of community triumph. The other guests are annoyed by her pressure for communication, and Lily and William Bankes question why unity is even necessary. But for Mrs. Ramsay, community means survival; without it, "'life will run upon the rocks'" (138). The uncertain seas of human relations are the only ones Mrs. Ramsay navigates; at her dinner table, she is a sailor setting out across a no-man's land (127).

For Mrs. Ramsay, social conventions are the means of imposing order on the scraps and fragments of experience. The most significant conven-
"How you must detest dining in this bear garden," she said, making use, as she did when she was distracted, of her social manner. So, when there is a strife of tongues, at some meeting, the chairman, to obtain unity, suggests that everyone shall speak in French. Perhaps it is bad French; French may not contain the words that express the speaker's thoughts; nevertheless, French imposes some order, some uniformity. (135-136)

The narrative voice which describes the uses and limitations of French does not belong to any character; instead, it expresses the general Woolfian ambivalence towards language and all social conventions. French is both detrimental and useful: it is incomplete and artificial—"telling lies" (130). But its limitations create boundaries that give shape to the formless world of scraps and fragments. Mrs. Ramsay requires connection in a world of separation, form in a world of chaos, and language is the social instrument that shapes her world. Thus it is when the talk stops that she hears the voice of death in the sea.

Although the connections created by language are less than perfect, they are the best that can be made in a world in which "something is lacking" (141). Six-year-old James observes of his mother that "she alone spoke the truth" (278), but James is as yet unaware of the complexities of human relations. Mrs. Ramsay's truth is of a limited kind, able to be countered by Mr. Ramsay's truth. Moreover, the whole truth is essentially unknowable and incommunicable. Lily wonders whether "all one's perceptions, halfway to truth, were tangled in a golden mesh" (78), and she questions whether "the body...or the mind" can penetrate the "treasures in the tombs of kings" (79) which constitute the whole truth about Mrs. Ramsay. She concludes that what she can perceive in the physical world may be all there is for her to know.
"But was it nothing but looks, people said? What was there behind it—her beauty and her splendour?...Or was there nothing?" (46). Furthermore, whatever Lily may know, she doubts the ability of language to express it: "And to those words, what meaning attached, after all?" (79) And even more painful is her awareness that what she wants is not knowledge or communication at all, but a connection greater than language can create. "For it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men..." (79)

Mrs. Ramsay, like Lily, struggles to attain unity in spite of the inadequacy of language and life. At a "more expressive" moment, she and Mr. Ramsay can communicate without words, "each knowing exactly what the other felt" (144). To Lily, the moment at least seemed extraordinarily fertile" (256, my italics). But that moment may not be what it seems, and in any case it underscores what all other moments, and all other silences, are not. Mrs. Ramsay also hides in her silences, in "the extreme obscurity of human relationships" (256), while she thinks of the things she and Mr. Ramsay cannot share and cannot say. Most important of these, Mrs. Ramsay cannot say that she loves Mr. Ramsay. She can let him know without words, but words are Mr. Ramsay's kind of truth, the kind she cannot tell.

No less than anyone else, then, Mrs. Ramsay is an imperfect person in an imperfect world. Like the others at her dinner table, "skimpy" Lily (149), opium-addicted Mr. Carmichael, "dried and shrunk" Mr. Bankes (36), Mrs. Ramsay can "never reach R" (54). And so, like her counterpart Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay wishes to create a moment of
unity that will transcend the inadequacies of life and override her fears of annihilation, that will unify the world of consciousness and the world of things. She wishes for

that communion of feeling with other people which emotion gives as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically (the feeling was one of relief and happiness) it was all one stream, and chairs, tables, maps were hers, were theirs, it did not matter whose, and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead. (170-171).

Mrs. Ramsay's dinner is a gesture of completion at which the guests attain "a wholeness not theirs in life" (286). Moreover, the materials of which "the thing is made that endures" (158) are those of the physical and social world--"chairs, tables, maps." In the formless oblivion of darkness, the walls of the house and the "light of civilization" give shape to the unknown.  

Now all the candles were lit up, and the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candle light, and composed, as they had not been in the twilight, into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, waterily. (147)

Mrs. Ramsay's forces of order are not an "accurate view," as Mr. Ramsay knows. But only through such conventions, through the human will to order, can any perfection be attained in an imperfect life. The shared agreement on a world of order pitted against a world of chaos unites the guests. In the center of the table is a dish of fruit carefully arranged by Rose, "like a world." Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Carmichael view that world in different ways, but "looking together united them" (146). The moment of unity is also a moment of transformation; limitation becomes infinite possibility--anything might happen" and "some
change" (147) goes through the guests.

Nevertheless, all this unity and possibility are fulfilled only momentarily: time, which creates the moment, also destroys it. As Mrs. Ramsay looks at the bowl of fruit, "a hand reached out, took a pear, and spoilt the whole thing" (163). As she looks at the communion she has created, "it had become...she knew, already the past" (168). As she leaves, "a sort of disintegration" (168) sets in. Because the moment is transient, it must be given permanence in some way: Mrs. Dalloway's moments gain permanence through memory; Mrs. Ramsay's gain permanence through memory coupled with art. If memory can recreate the moment in the inner world, art can perpetuate that memory in the outer. Like the moment in life, art is the imposition of order upon chaos, a momentary communication and transformation into wholeness.

And there it was, suddenly entire; she held it in her hands, beautiful and reasonably clear and complete, the essence sucked out of life and held rounded here--the sonnet. (181)

One of the journeys, then, that may or may not take place in To The Lighthouse, is the journey from life to art.

Like the moment that transforms life, the "vision" that underlies art is momentary and "must be perpetually remade" (270). The third section of the novel, "The Lighthouse," shows how, after "Time Passes" and disintegrates the moment, the vision is made that then recreates the moment in art. And Lily Briscoe creates her moment in art by remaking it first in life. She remakes that moment by reasserting the power of civilization that created the moment the first time. Mrs. Ramsay's world of time, place, and society is transmitted across time to create Lily's vision. And so the final section of To The Lighthouse records
Lily's acceptance of Mrs. Ramsay's world.

From the beginning of the novel, Lily has the self-hood that Mrs. Ramsay lacks, the love of solitude without fear of annihilation. But she also lacks what Mrs. Ramsay has, the ability to lose oneself momentarily in the creation of community and to participate completely in the social world. Lily's "skimpy" quality signifies her incompleteness; at the dinner table, she resents the conventions that foster community. She speaks to Charles Tansley, but grudgingly feels only the loss of individual integrity, not the gain of social communion.

She had done the usual trick—been nice. She would never know him. He would never know her. Human relations were all like that, she thought, and the worst...were between men and women. Inevitably these were extremely insincere, she thought. (139)

Lily is only half right; she must realize, as James does, that "nothing was simply one thing." Like all Woolf's characters who search for privacy of self, Lily learns that she cannot reject society completely. She must accept the physical and social world as much as the world of consciousness.

From the beginning Lily understands the importance of the physical and social world in her art. She knows that she cannot "etherealize" the "shape of things," that she is painting "the wall, the hedge, the tree—those masses" (221). More important, she understands that she must share her vision, that no matter how difficult sharing may be, "One must" (80). In spite of the fact that Mr. Bankes sees art differently than she does—"all his prejudices were on the other side" (82)—looking together unites him with Lily, as looking together at the bowl of fruit unites the dinner guests. The achievement of unity through art creates a moment of communication and transcendence for Lily.
This man had shared with her something profoundly intimate. And, thanking Mr. Ramsay for it and Mrs. Ramsay for it and the hour and the place, crediting the world with a power which she had not suspected—that one could walk away down that long gallery not alone any more but arm in arm with somebody—the strangest feeling in the world, and the most exhilarating—she nicked the catch of her paint-box to...

Lily's moment of sharing with Mr. Bankes is a leap of faith in art which "one must" repeat in life, but for Lily art is easier than life: she is a ficelle, an observer and interpreter rather than a participator. Thus, when Mrs. Ramsay is dead, and Mr. Ramsay seeks the same conventional female sympathy from Lily that he did from his wife, Lily refuses, thinking "she could not do it" (225). Mr. Ramsay's request for sympathy is a desire to thrust Lily into a traditional female role, and Lily, perceiving herself as "not a woman" (226), rebels against "this demand that she should surrender herself up to him entirely" (226). But Lily faces her own lack of femininity "bitterly" (226), not proudly, and so she does her best to participate in the conventional social relation with Mr. Ramsay. Choosing a via media, she protects herself from "self-surrender" (224), but she gives him "what she could" (225) by praising his boots. Her sympathy is limited, but it is genuine; and so, instead of the "complete annihilation" (229) she expects from Mr. Ramsay, she experiences its opposite, a moment of wholeness. She communicates with Mr. Ramsay not through art, but through the simple objects of Mr. Ramsay's physical world, his favorite subject, boots (156-157). Together, Lily and Mr. Ramsay examine his boots, and once again, looking together unites them. As they go together from "the waters of annihilation" to "the blessed island of good boots" (269, 230), they psychologically recreate Lily's conventional tableau of Mr.
and Mrs. Ramsay.

Furthermore, Lily's genuine participation in the social order awakens in her the genuine feminine sympathy she has lacked. "Tormented with sympathy for him" (230), she recognizes not only Mr. Ramsay's need to receive her conventional response, but her own need to offer it: "And Mr. Ramsay? She wanted him" (300). Thus, across the passage of time, Mrs. Ramsay communicates to Lily an acceptance of a world rooted in the English past, a social and external world. In order to complete her painting, Lily must understand her own ambivalence to this world; she must see herself in terms of both self and society, and "remember how she was such and such a person and had such and such relations to people" (235). Along with the solitary and inward part of herself which subdues "all her impressions as a woman to something much more general" (82), she must accept that traditional part of herself which sacrifices self for the sake of community.

Once Lily accepts her own vacillation between tradition and rebellion, she can complete the painting in which she has been struggling with those same relations. Lily's aesthetic difficulty is "that problem of the hedge" (269)--the boundary between the house and the sea, between community and solitude, between the world of things and the imagination that transforms them. She must translate the shifting relations between things that are in her mind into the physical world. She needs "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" (300). And then she must translate that feeling into the physical world: "If there, in that corner, it was bright, here, in this, she felt the need of darkness...A light here
needed a shadow there" (81, 262). As Lily paints she feels "curiously divided" (233) while she experiences "a curious physical sensation, as if she were urged forward and at the same time must hold herself back" (235). In art, too, nothing is simply one thing.

Lily culminates her artistic vision by drawing a line down the center of her canvas. The line both unifies and separates the other elements of the painting by creating a center and a division, and it emphasizes Lily's discovery that her vision consists of representing the shifting relations between things. Most important, like all the lines on the canvas, the line gives shape to the formless void around it.

And so pausing and so flickering, she attained a dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related; and so lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines which had no sooner settled there than they enclosed (she felt it looming out at her) a space...For what could be more formidable than that space? (235-236)

Lily's moment of completion is realized in life as well as in art, for her art is a form of communication. Completing her vision as Mr. Ramsay reaches the lighthouse (and readjusts his relations with his family), Lily experiences a moment of communication without words, not unlike Mrs. Ramsay's moments. She feels a completed connection with Mr. Ramsay—"Whatever she had wanted to give him, when he left her that morning, she had given him at last" (308-309). And as she looks out towards the lighthouse with Mr. Carmichael, they share a moment of understanding in which "they had not needed to speak" (309), because looking together unites them.

In order to create her moment of communication in life and art, Lily performs an act of reconciliation with the values of her past. The
fact that this task falls upon Lily, the artist, reflects Virginia Woolf's view of her own task in writing To The Lighthouse. Like earlier characters, Lily expresses Woolf's distrust of language and her difficulty in transforming a vision of life into art. Nevertheless Lily is a painter, not a writer. While she embodies her vision on the canvas, Woolf also embodied her own vision on the page. Woolf, too, laid to rest the ghosts of her past by means of an art shaped by ambivalence.62 Phyllis Rose has observed the personal element at the heart of the shifting relations in To The Lighthouse:

For Virginia Woolf, becoming an artist involved the rejection of a powerful model of femininity, one culturally endorsed, and more importantly, embodied exquisitely in her own mother. This rejection, fierce and determined one moment and ambivalent and guilt-ridden the next, underlies and animates the elegant lyricism of To The Lighthouse.63

As in all Woolf novels, ambivalence does not simply color the vision; it is the vision in this most personal of works. The more shifting and uncertain reality is, the more wholly Woolf's truth is achieved: for her, both life and art were "a little strip of pavement over an abyss."64 Moreover, though she reached her moment of vision, a transitory moment in which she held her own uncertainties "suddenly entire," she doubted her capacity to communicate that wholeness. For Woolf's artistic moment was shaped by language, the convention in which she had such limited faith. Language, her narrative voice reminds us, is incomplete; it "may not contain the words that express the speaker's thoughts"; nevertheless, it imposes "some order" upon the chaos of experience. Again and again in To The Lighthouse, voices--sometimes identified, sometimes not--question the ability of language to communicate, "to obtain unity." Such questions objectify Woolf's doubt about
the power of language to invoke her vision. For Woolf, as for Mrs. Ramsay, language is all there is, the hedge against oblivion. And Woolf's struggle with the inadequacies of language governs the prose of *To The Lighthouse*, infusing the novel with its characteristic tone of "melancholy doubt."  

The strongest element of uncertainty in the prose of *To The Lighthouse* is the ambiguity of the narrative voice. So completely does the narrative voice merge with the thoughts of the characters that it seems to be simultaneously the voice of everyone, someone, and no one. Mitchell Leaska's analysis shows that each statement in the novel can, in fact, be attributed to a specific character. But the overall impression is not of a multiplicity of minds thinking a multiplicity of thoughts; rather it is of one universal thread of thought, purposely detached from any one character and yet uniting them all. Thus, instead of projecting her doubts about language into the voice of one particular character, Woolf objectifies her uncertainty in the narrative voice that encompasses the entire novel. Like Mrs. Dalloway, *To The Lighthouse* speaks for itself. Thus, when Mrs. Ramsay questions the result of her own attempt to communicate, she seems to be referring to the prose of the entire novel:

> The words seemed to be dropped into a well where, if the waters were clear, they were also so extraordinarily distorting that, even as they descended, one saw them twisting about to make heaven knows what pattern... (84)

This universal, detached tone is intensified by the absence of external connections in the narrative. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, such devices as the airplane and the motor car help move the narrative from one point to another. Even the occasional awkward moment of creaking machinery,
such as little Elise Mitchell, sustains the reader's faith that there is a narrative mechanism which will connect one event to another. But in To The Lighthouse, the prose is more supple and less definite. It, too, makes narrative connections, but those connections are tenuous. The movement of the prose seems random and so seems to emphasize the random, disconnected nature of the human relations in the novel. A passage will illustrate:

"Jasper!" said Mr. Bankes. They turned the way the starlings flew, over the terrace. Following the scatter of swift-flying birds in the sky they stepped through the gap in the high hedge straight into Mr. Ramsay, who boomed tragically at them, "Some one had blundered!"

His eyes, glazed with emotion, defiant with tragic intensity, met theirs for a second, and trembled on the verge of recognition; but then...he turned abruptly, slammed his private door on them; and, Lily Briscoe and Mr. Bankes, looking uneasily up into the sky, observed that the flock of starlings which Jasper had routed had settled on the tops of the elm trees.

"And even if it isn't fine tomorrow," said Mrs. Ramsay, raising her eyes to glance at William Bankes and Lily Briscoe as they passed, "it will be another day." (41-42)

In the above passage, the flock of starlings provides a narrative center for the characters reminiscent of the stalled motor car in Mrs. Dalloway. But although the device places the characters in a single focus, it seems only to point out how disconnected human beings really are: Mr. Bankes and Lily look at the starlings and see Mr. Ramsay; he turns away, so the two look again at the birds while Mrs. Ramsay looks at Mr. Bankes and Lily. No one makes contact with anyone else; the unwritten subtitle seems to be, "Almost connect."

The flow of prose that demonstrates the inadequacy of human relations also demonstrates its own inadequacy; as Lily comments, "Words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches too low" (265). Lily's
frustration echoes Woolf's struggle with the limitations of words. The language of the novel seems to twist and turn, start and stop; sentences are filled with brackets, participles, semicolons, qualifiers which suggest that no sentence, and indeed, no grammar possessed by the English language can capture the complexity of the truth about human relations. Even Lily's relation with William Bankes, which she considers superior to most relations between men and women, is fraught with linguistic as well as emotional uncertainty.

I respect you (she addressed silently him in person) in every atom; you are not vain; you are entirely impersonal; you are finer than Mr. Ramsay; you are the finest human being that I know; you have neither wife nor child (without any sexual feeling, she longed to cherish that loneliness), you live for science (involuntarily, sections of potatoes rose before her eyes); praise would be an insult to you; generous, pure-hearted, heroic man! But simultaneously, she remembered how he had brought a valet all the way up here; objected to dogs on chairs; would proset for hours (until Mr. Ramsay slammed out of the room) about salt in vegetables and the iniquity of English cooks. (39-40).

As the train of Lily's thoughts suggests, even if prose can be maneuvered to capture the protean complexity of thought, it cannot surmount the problem of simultaneity. Despite the suggestive ambiguities of language, it cannot truly and concretely capture more than one event in time and space. Lily's observations are not only complex; they are also simultaneous, and the linear configuration of words on the page that attempts to capture such thoughts is inadequate. Woolf attempts to surmount this inadequacy at the end of Chapter XIII: Mrs. Ramsay asks, "'Did Nancy go with them?'" (112) and a whole chapter about Nancy, Andrew, Minta, and Paul at the beach is necessary to understand the import of Prue's "'Yes,'" which begins Chapter XV. That intervening chapter, like the bracketed news of Mrs. Ramsay's death,
attempts to remind the reader that reality is comprised of different events in different places, that nothing is simply one thing. The ending of To The Lighthouse crystallizes Woolf's struggle with time and place: she wanted to record Mr. Ramsay's landing and the completion of Lily's painting as simultaneous events, but questioned her ability to find a method to do it. "Could I do it in a parenthesis?" she wrote in her diary. "So that one had the sense of reading the two things at the same time?" Woolf did not use a parenthesis, and Lily's work of art emerges as the final act, more powerful than Mr. Ramsay's act of living. But both life and art are equal aspects of Woolf's vision.

The style of To The Lighthouse charts Woolf's struggle to devise a prose that would transcend the limitations of language. And yet, a great irony counters this endeavor: every time Woolf attempts to break through the boundaries of prose, she fashions a device that calls attention to those boundaries. In Chapters XIII through XV, for example, the presence of an entire chapter between Mrs. Ramsay's question and Prue's answer shifts the reader's consideration from the conversation itself to the literary device used to record it. No reader can help wondering why there would be a separate chapter between any question and its answer; thus the reader reflects upon a question of prose style rather than the question of whether Nancy is at the beach. Similarly, the brackets around the announcement of Mrs. Ramsay's death ironically remind the reader that Mrs. Ramsay is not parenthetical; and the perfect participial phrase, "Mrs. Ramsay having died" (194), whose grammar suggests a completed action of subordinate importance, stands out for its glaring and intentional failure to express Mrs. Ramsay's transcendent power.
While breaking through the boundaries of language, then, Woolf seems equally intent upon reminding the reader that those boundaries exist. Woolf's hedge, too, has a gap in it.

At the same time that Woolf reminds the reader that language has limits, she also places limits upon the world that her language describes. The central section, "Time Passes," again attempts to break through the limitations of prose by capturing the passage of time. But the narrative consistently transforms the abstract power of time into a celebration of the concrete world and the boundaries that shape it.

Like the Great War which is referred to in this section, "Time Passes" separates the culture of the Nineteenth Century from that of the Twentieth. It is the No Man's Land of the novel, and like the war itself, denies the power of the world that civilization has created. In "Time Passes," Woolf wanted to translate the effect of the Great War into novelistic terms by transforming the ordering capacities of language into an evocation of chaos and emptiness, "all eyeless and featureless with nothing to cling to."69 "Time Passes" was to be, "in effect, a representation of nothing happening": it was to say not more than words can say, but less.70

But although Woolf describes the beauty of time as "a form from which life had departed" (195), "Time Passes" teems with life as concrete, active, and present as ever. When the lights of civilization are "all put out" (189), the world of things takes on an ordered life of its own which captures Woolf's interest as much as any of her characters does. Writing the section, she felt "flown with words and apparently free to do exactly what I like."71 Instead of human beings, the
characters are darkness, airs, and silence (in an earlier version, "ghostly confidantes" and "nameless comforters"\textsuperscript{72}). Furthermore, while insisting that all is "nothing" (207), Woolf calls forth an ordered rhythm of seasonal time and nature. In the absence of the forces of civilization, there remains a life of things so real and palpable, so active and fecund, that it belies any assertion of nothingness.

The long night seemed to have set in; the trifling airs, nibbling, the clammy breaths, fumbling, seemed to have triumphed. Tortoise-shell butterflies burst from the chrysanthemums and pattered their life out on the window pane. Poppies sowed themselves among the dahlias; the lawn waved with long grass; giant artichokes towered among roses; a fringed carnation flowered among the cabbages; while the gentle tapping of a weed at the window had become, on winter's nights, a drumming from sturdy trees and thorned briars which made the whole room green in summer. (207)

Life is present in "Time Passes"; the only thing missing is the ordering, civilizing force of humanity. And even this force is present in a way, created by language rather than fact. While reminding the reader that human beings are absent, Woolf brings them into existence by imagining what they would be doing if they were there. Only the past tense, the signal of passing time, subtracts from the abundance of objects, actions, and human beings the immediacy of life itself.

What people had shed and left—a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes—these alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once hands were busy with hooks and buttons, how once the looking glass had held a face; had held a world hollowed out in which a figure turned, a hand flashed, the door opened, in came children rushing and tumbling, and went out again. (194)

It is no surprise that Mrs. McNab resurrects the house and the contents of civilization—"all the Waverley novels and a tea set" (209)—from oblivion, for in truth, the human force and its ordering capacity have never been completely away. In To The Lighthouse, Woolf asserts the
limitations of human life and external reality, but she also reminds us of their power. Similarly, she asserts the inadequacy of language to capture all of life, but she also demonstrates the capacity of language to create what reality lacks.

To The Lighthouse, then, like all Woolf's novels, is a statement of ambivalence towards the facts that shape the past and the language that shapes the present. It is also the preservation of a moment through memory and art. Woolf's achievement in prose is another version of Mrs. Ramsay's achievement in community and Lily's in painting: all three women can imagine a world of mental freedom in solitude, but all finally employ the materials of the physical and social world to create a moment of unity and wholeness. Even in this novel of consciousness, then, Woolf reasserts the power of time, place, and civilization; even as she departs from the conventions of the traditional novel, she reasserts them in form and language. For Woolf, the external world--the fruit in the bowl, the paint on the canvas, the words on the page--is incomplete and transient. But out of it, "the thing is made that endures."
Notes


4 Woolf, Diary, II, 207-208.

5 Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1925), 116. All citations from the novel in this section of my text are from this edition; page numbers will be cited in the text.

6 Critics have noted one or another of these images in passing, but there is no extended discussion of their function in the novel. Alex Zwerdling has pointed out the presence of images of stasis. Alex Zwerdling, "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System," PMLA, 92 (1977), 71. Jeremy Hawthorn observes that "grey is a sinister colour." Jeremy Hawthorn, Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway': A Study in Alienation (London: Sussex University Press, 1975), 59. Josephine O'Brien Schaefer and Irene Simon have observed the images of movement in the novel, relating them to Woolf's use of sea and wave images throughout her fiction. Schaefer, 103-107. Irene Simon, "Some Images in Mrs.


8 James Hafley sees Mrs. Dalloway as a conflict between "duration" and "false time." He believes that external time and spatial movement in the novel are false, and that psychological time is "the true movement of reality." Hafley, 62-63.

9 Schaefer, 95.

10 Critics disagree about whether this isolation is Clarissa's spiritual death or the quality that saves her. Schaefer believes that "her shrinking from intimacy comes perilously close to frigidity." Schaefer, 90. Phyllis Rose believes that "her creative engagement with life--specifically, her ability to bring people together--somehow depends on her core of isolation." Phyllis Rose, Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 139.


12 Woolf, Diary II, 272.
J. Hillis Miller points out that transitions such as the car and the airplane are unifying factors that define the material world in which all the characters live. "Though each person is trapped in his own mind and has his own response to external objects, nevertheless these disparate minds are unified by the fact that you and I, he and she, can all have responses, however different they may be, to the same event, for example, an airplane skywriting. To this extent at least we all dwell in one world." J. Hillis Miller, "Virginia Woolf's All Soul's Day: The Omniscient Narrator in Mrs. Dalloway," The Shaken Realist: Essays in Modern Literature in Honor of Frederick J. Hoffman, eds. Melvin Friedman and John B. Vickery (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 104.


18 Zwerdling, 71, 81.

20 Bernard Blackstone describes Septimus as "a mind so exquisitely sensitive that it has become unbalanced....It is Virginia Woolf's vision of things carried to an extreme point." Blackstone, 79. Zwerdling calls Septimus "a repository for the repressed feelings of the rigidly controlled people around him." Zwerdling, 75.


22 Fussell, 25.

23 Fleishman interprets Septimus as a ritual scapegoat and believes that Septimus' suicide and Clarissa's party are "parallel in intention and effect....Both are designed as self-sacrifice for others." Fleishman, 77. Hillis Miller agrees, but credits Clarissa's effort less than Septimus': "Clarissa and Septimus seek the same thing--communication, wholeness, and oneness of reality, but only Septimus takes the sure way to reach it." Hillis Miller, 123.

24 Allen McLaurin and Frank Baldanza agree that the essence of Septimus' problem is his inability to communicate. Allen McLaurin,

25 Hillis Miller interprets this failure in philosophical terms: "The novel seems to be based on an irreconcilable opposition between individuality and universality. By reason of his existence as a conscious human being, each man or woman is alienated from the whole world of which he is actually, though unwittingly, or at best, half-consciously, a part. That half-consciousness, however, gives him a sense of incompleteness." Hillis Miller, 107.

26 Woolf, *Diary*, II, 272.

27 Rose writes, "Loving life is equivalent to making it up, building it round one, creating it every moment afresh, and the answer which *Mrs. Dalloway* offers to the decay of the spirit, the deaths it variously records, is intense response to the moment." Rose, 128. See also T. E. Apter, *Virginia Woolf: A Study of her Novels* (New York: NYU Press, 1979), 55. Brower, 128. Baldanza, 24-30.

28 Page believes that "to control feelings may provide for a modus vivendi. Page, 121. Zwerdling at one point suggests the same solution; he writes, "Perhaps Woolf's complex attitude is paradoxically also
rooted in an ideal of Proportion, though in a form very different from the goddess Sir William Bradshaw worships...a dual commitment to self-control and self-expression." But Zwerdling seems unwilling to follow up the implications of his own statement, which contradicts his conclusion that Clarissa has been destroyed by her society. Zwerdling, 78.

Catherine S. Penner believes that Clarissa's party is an affirmation of "a restrained kind of human communion." Catherine S. Penner, "The Sacred Well in Mrs. Dalloway," Thoth 12, iii, 3-20. Hawthorn agrees that at the party, "the suppression of personal relationships allows a more general, non-exclusive and non-excluding contract to materialize," and that people "come together in a new, different, collective identity." Hawthorn, 87. Alice Van Buren Kelley agrees that only by "being able to present her vision on society's own terms does Clarissa succeed in communicating." Alice Van Buren Kelley, The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 108.

29 Hermione Lee disagrees: "Within the party, the effort to vanquish clock-time fails: the youthful idyll of life at Bourton, which has been painfully and pleasurably recollected throughout the novel, is time lost, not time regained." Lee, 111.

30 A. D. Moody excoriates Clarissa as a "living image of her society, a shallow, meaningless society." Moody, 48-49.

31 Critics disagree about the success of the novel's ending in creating a sense of community and literary unity. Alan Friedman believes the novel terminates in open-endedness and possibility. Alan Friedman, The Turn of the Novel (New York: Oxford University Press,

32 Zwerdling, 78.


34 Woolf, holograph notebook entry 11/19/22, quoted in Hoffman, 176.

35 Booth uses *To The Lighthouse* as his primary example of the "novel of sensibility" which "deliberately rejected most of the values on which the effects of older fiction were based." Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 143.


37 Virginia Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*, 263. All citations from the novel in this section of my text are from this edition; page numbers will be cited in the text.

38 Guiguet, 263.


41 Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 3

42 Novak, 137.


44 Blackstone, 99.

David Daiches believes that setting functions dynamically "to break down the apparent concreteness of character and events into that 'luminous halo' which for her was the most adequate symbol of life." Daiches, 79. Bernard Blackstone suggests that the house is a personification of consciousness: "We feel that this house, windswept, bleak, remote...has a soul of its own." Blackstone, 100.

Daiches, 83-84.

Avrom Fleishman writes, "*To The Lighthouse*, for all its genteel atmosphere and artful style, presents as intense a vision of human suffering as do much more obviously realistic works. Part of this vividness derives from the work's placement in history: although not entering into affairs of state, it tells with great immediacy what it feels like to be alive before, during, and after a cataclysmic event like World War I." Fleishman, 122.


Arnold Kettle, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Woolf" in Vogler, 95.

Naremore, 135. Hafley argues that "*To The Lighthouse* is really a contest between two kinds of truth--Mr. Ramsay's and Mrs. Ramsay's. Hafley, 82. Other critics who have observed the masculine-feminine polarity are Daiches, 86, Blackstone, 100, and Roger Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 260.

Blackstone, 112.

Naremore writes, "What she seems to want most of all...is a kind of peace and rapture that is associated with a unity so complete it entails the yielding up of life. Naremore, 136-137. Geoffrey Hartman directly associates Mrs. Ramsay's death-wish with her feminine polarization: "Mrs. Ramsay is the feminine part of the soul, with its will to bypass the will in its desire to let things be and grow in their own time, and above all...that refusal to sustain the separateness of things in an overgreat anticipation of final unity. This last is her profoundest trait...and it reveals her identification with death." Hartman, "Virginia's Web" in Vogler, 80.

Glenn Pedersen, "Vision in To The Lighthouse," PMLA 73 (1958), 585. Mitchell Leaska agrees that Woolf renders "the remoteness and isolation of a woman who does not, will not, can not share her husband's world. But more than that, she unwittingly demeans him..." Mitchell A. Leaska, Virginia Woolf's 'Lighthouse': A Study in Critical Method (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 75-76. Sharon Wood Proudfit sees the resolution of the novel as the overcoming of Mrs. Ramsay's dominance. Sharon Wood Proudfit, "Lily Briscoe's Painting: A Key to Personal Relations in To The Lighthouse," Criticism, 13 (Winter, 1971), 38. Other critics view Mrs. Ramsay's domination as as a result of Victorian social roles rather than as a personal flaw. Josephine O'Brien Schaefer observes, "Cut off from the wider world of action available to men, Mrs. Ramsay finds no range for the exertion of her
powers and inevitably employs them in personal domination." Schaefer, 123. Jane Lilienfeld analyzes in detail the Ramsays' marital relation and concludes, "The Ramsays' marriage is time-bound, founded on middle-class Victorian roles and values....Woolf's point [is] that the Ramsays' marriage is debilitating to both parties." Jane Lilienfeld, "Where the Spear Plants Grew: The Ramsays' Marriage in To The Lighthouse," New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf, ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 149.

56 Leaska, 74.
57 Lilienfeld, 152.
61 Leaska, 93.
63 Rose, 158.
64 Woolf, Diary, II, 72.
Novak, 127. Naremore observes, "She depends heavily on the traditional descriptive language and the generalized overview of the nineteenth-century novel. Notice, however, that when she does discuss her characters from the vantage point of traditional omniscience, her voice lacks the tone of certainty that one finds, for example, in George Eliot." Naremore, 126.

Leaska, 49-59.

Naremore notes, "The thoughts of the characters mingle with the thoughts of a barely defined narrator, [which] makes us aware that the whole book is the product of one voice which at times assumes the role of a given character and approximates his patterns of thought." Naremore, 123.

Woolf, A Writer's Diary, 99 (9/3/26).

Woolf, A Writer's Diary, 88-89 (4/30/26).

Henry R. Harrington, "The Central Line Down the Middle of To The Lighthouse," Contemporary Literature, 21 (1980), 381.

Woolf, A Writer's Diary, 89 (4/30/26).

Woolf, Manuscript in Berg Collection, 151-152, 155, cited in Fleishman, 125, note.
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

Woolf's first five novels trace the development of a structure and style that embodied the complex vision she had held since the beginning of her work. Once her novels reached maturity, she made each novel a new experiment in structure and language, always reaching for another form that could wholly contain her basic opposition of worlds and her ambivalence towards externality. No matter how various her novel forms and no matter what her apparent subject, her donnee remained to objectify her ambivalence and metafictionally explore her uncertainty about her own craft.

The Years, her penultimate novel, introduces two of its main characters at the tea-table. Their tea-kettle refuses to boil, a difficulty which suggests that conventions such as tea may no longer be able to kindle the community they once did. Throughout the novel, social structures crumble: the Victorian house is sold, the special dinner is poorly cooked, the party brings together people who cannot talk to one another. The social elements of The Years travesty the houses, dinners, and parties of earlier works. Nevertheless, The Years does not demonstrate the failure of Woolf's vision; on the contrary, it explores the same vision from another perspective. Once again, it demonstrates the need to transcend the limitations of past social forms in the present-day world, while at the same time it points out the loss of communion that occurs without those social forms. Kitty thinks, "...not the past--not memories. The present; the future--that was what she wanted" (421). But Patrick observes, "It seems to me that our new freedom is a good deal worse than our old slavery" (399). Moreover, The
Years, like all Woolf's novels, ends by affirming the mitigated value of social conventions, despite their inadequacy. "Must a kettle boil?" (10) Delia asks in the early passage, and Woolf's novel answers, Yes, it must. At the end of the passage, the kettle boils; and at the end of the novel, the characters gather in a moment of affirmation: "The sun had risen, and the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity, and peace" (435).

Even late in her fiction, Woolf made the tea-table the synecdoche for all of social experience, and she invested her vision in material objects such as the tea-kettle itself, "an old-fashioned brass kettle, chased with a design of roses that was almost obliterated" (10). The roses have faded but they can still be seen, suggesting that communication, though almost obliterated, can still be created in the external world. And once again, on another level, Woolf's novels continued to metafictionally explore her own difficulties with literary communication. North, a writer, reflects, "He felt that he had been in the middle of a jungle in the heart of darkness, cutting his way towards the light, but provided only with broken sentences, single words, with which to break through" (411). His doubt in language prefigures the Post-modern sensibility as he observes, "There's a gap, a dislocation, between the word and the reality" (405). Nevertheless, despite the limitations of forms such as language, Woolf's characters, and Woolf herself, never abandon the effort to communicate: "She had not said it, but she had tried to say it" (391).

The Years, Woolf's intentionally externalized novel, demonstrates more clearly than any other late work the fact that these novels
explore the same physical, social, and linguistic world as her early ones. And even her least externalized novel, *The Waves*, distills its multipersonal inward reality into a writer-character who speaks for Woolf's attachment to the world of things. At the end of the novel, Bernard says,

I, who had been thinking myself so vast, a temple, a church, a whole universe, unconfined and capable of being everywhere on the verge of things and here too, am now nothing but what you see—an elderly man, rather heavy, grey above the ears, who (I see myself in the glass) leans one elbow on the table, and holds in his left hand a glass of old brandy. That is the blow you have dealt me. (379)

Woolf's novels comprise one protean exploration of the conflict between inner and outer realities and the struggle for unity and communication. Thus, her late novels evince the same kinds of traditional elements as her earlier ones: *Orlando* takes ironic shape from the structures of the Bildungsroman and the biography, and Orlando herself physically crosses beyond the limits of time, place, and the social imperatives of sexual identity. At the end, she returns to her ancestral English house, marries, and creates a work of art. *The Waves*, like *To the Lighthouse*, seems to demonstrate the primacy of consciousness. But, as in the earlier novel, the characters' inner lives concentrate most upon how the characters function, or fail to function, in the physical and social world. Their center is Percival, the external, unselfconscious exponent of their society, the traditional hero their intense self-consciousness prevents them from being. And at the end of the novel, the characters' thoughts merge in the voice of Bernard, who unifies and translates their inner world into art.

Woolf's last two novels express stronger doubt about the efficacy
of time, place, and social forms, but, like the earlier works, they conclude by affirming the value of the external world. *The Years* overtly attempts to define reality through external phenomena and social relations. Although plotless, it is structured by time, as it chronicles the changes time makes on English culture and communication. The novel ends with a traditional novelistic gesture of social unity, a party, which Woolf makes clear is the best communion human beings can hope for.

Woolf’s final novel, *Between the Acts*, once more openly questions its characters’ relations to their physical and social world and the possibilities for communication and unity. Miss Latrobe creates her work of art, a dramatization of English culture and history, but no one understands it or feels unified by it. Woolf’s language is stark and expressionistic. Nevertheless, the novel suggests that Miss Latrobe’s art has transmitted something of social value; Isa and Giles, heirs to the ancestral house, will presumably return home, salvage their troubled marriage, and have a child.

Woolf’s late novels depict the same conflicting reality as her early ones. Furthermore, in the aggregate, just as Woolf’s vacillation structures each individual novel, it controls the overall pattern of her fiction, the figure in the carpet. Her novels in general alternate between those that emphasize internal elements and those that emphasize external elements: *The Voyage Out* weights its exploration towards the internal world; *Night and Day* towards the external; and *Jacob’s Room* tries to balance them. *Mrs. Dalloway* emphasizes external elements; *To The Lighthouse* internal; *Orlando* external; *The Waves* internal; *The Years*
external; and finally, *Between the Acts* attempts to expressionistically integrate the two.

Critics have long noted the thematic opposition of worlds in Woolf's work, but they have not noted the way that her ambivalence towards externality helps formulate this opposition, nor have they noted the extent to which external and traditional elements have contributed to her achievement as a novelist. On the contrary, critics have usually assumed Woolf's merit to lie in her treatment of elements beyond the scope of the physical world and the traditional novel. Consciousness—the escape from external reality, feminism—the escape from conventional society, and experimentation—the escape from traditional literary forms—have usually been described as her novels' significant characteristics and their raison d'être. While these critical assumptions have helped readers to identify and appreciate much of Woolf's uniqueness, they have also skewed our perception of Woolf's literary achievement by hinging her greatness on idiosyncrasy and rebellion.

In fact, Woolf's achievement depends as much upon her ties to her tradition as upon her rebellion and her difference. Her characters and their struggles in the social world humanize her novels, offering the reader a familiar fictional convention in the face of her experimental forms and internalized characterizations. Her abundant, carefully described physical phenomena endow her novels with a pictorial realism and substantiality that lend credence to the more tenuous levels of reality she explores. Above all, her constant opposition of the internal with the external, of freedom with control, of rebellion with tradition, gives her finest novels the balance, symmetry, and formal
beauty that mark them as great literature. As Woolf showed, conventions can connect as well as limit, and these endowments of the English literary past help place her works among the best in their tradition. Indeed, stressing the strong formal and traditional qualities in Woolf's fiction does mitigate her Modernism, but it does not deny it. More to the point, Woolf's greatness is not predicated upon her Modernism. No work of art is great because it characterizes an age; rather, greatness transcends any age. I have tried to show that Woolf's finest works do just that.

In her novels, Woolf rebelled, but she later returned to her traditional underpinnings. In the course of her growth, she learned to integrate and accept her opposing worlds. As critics, we, too, have had our rebellion. It is time for us to return as well and thus to broaden the context of our appreciation of Woolf. There remain many explorations still to be made of the traditional concerns in Woolf's novels: further influences of time, place, and setting, studies of characters and social relations, and connections of Woolf's work to her literary past. We owe her work no less than to see it "round, whole, and entire," as she struggled to make it. If we fail, we realize her greatest fear—that she could not transmit her vision. But if we succeed, we share with Woolf her "moment" of communication, the moment she so dearly prized.
Notes

1 Josephine O'Brien Schaefer writes, "The complex view of reality that had made Mrs. Dalloway, To The Lighthouse, and The Waves resound with a total harmony, has been found insufficient....In the end that vision which had illuminated some of the finest moments of human experience faltered." Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Three-Fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1965), 198-199.

2 Virginia Woolf, The Years (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965). All quotations from the novel are from this edition; page numbers will be cited in the text.


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