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VIRGINIA WOOLF's USE OF DISTANCE AGAINST PATRIARCHAL
CONTROL OF WOMEN, DEATH, AND CHARACTER

Rice University

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VIRGINIA WOOLF'S USE OF DISTANCE AGAINST
PATRIARCHAL CONTROL OF WOMEN, DEATH, AND CHARACTER

by

Beth Rigel Daugherty

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

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HOUSTON, TEXAS

May, 1982
ABSTRACT

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S USE OF DISTANCE AGAINST
PATRIARCHAL CONTROL OF WOMEN, DEATH,
AND CHARACTER

BETH RIGEL DAUGHERTY

Virginia Woolf's novels, as Frank Kermode indicates, were not immediately received into the canon. In fact, some critics still consider her a minor author. Many of the negative judgments of Woolf, however, reveal prejudice, prejudice stemming from fear. Critics deny her importance rather than face the implications of her work.

This study, focusing on the characters of Rachel Vinrace in The Voyage Out, Clarissa Dalloway, Peter Walsh, Septimus Smith, and Sir William Bradshaw in Mrs. Dalloway, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay, and Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, Louis, Neville, and Bernard in The Waves, and Miss La Trobe in Between the Acts, shows that Woolf uses distance against the patriarchal control of women, death, and character to reveal a dualistic reality under hierarchical appearances. This feminist perspective frightens readers accustomed to a patriarchal perspective.

Woolf establishes distance between her novels and her readers by using distance in her work. Her female characters use distance to resist patriarchal definitions
of themselves and thus reveal their complexity. Her
artists use distance to contradict the patriarchal denial
of death and thus affirm the presence of death within life.
Woolf herself creates distance by breaking four conventions
of character. Unlike traditional characters that express
patriarchal attitudes about women and death, Woolf's
characters express her feminist and dualistic attitudes,
thereby resisting the reader's urge to control them.

Woolf's distance, then, affirms both the presence and
the value of women and death in reality, suggests that
patriarchal hierarchies do not describe reality but attempt
to control it, exposes the damage such control does to
individual lives, and makes her readers aware of their own
attempts to control both reality and fiction.

Because Woolf's novels resist control, they threaten
the reader's usual way of dealing with the world and make
him or her uneasy. Woolf risks her reader's fear, however,
and uses the distance of her characters and her
characterization to communicate her own vision of an
obdurate reality, a reality in which women cannot be defined
as inherently inferior, death cannot be denied, and "life
itself" cannot be controlled.
For Gary,

who stood by,

steadfast
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I regain the sense of the complexity and the reality and the struggle, for which I thank you.

--Bernard,
The Waves
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Chapter One

THE FEAR OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

George: Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf . . . ?
Martha: I . . . am . . . George,
       I . . . am . . .

-- Edward Albee, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

The truth is, I often like women. I like their unconventionality. I like their subtlety. I like their anonymity.

-- Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own

Life is as I've said since I was 10, awfully interesting—if anything, quicker, keener at 44 than 24—more desperate I suppose, as the river shoots to Niagara—my new vision of death; active, positive, like all the rest, exciting; & of great importance—as an experience.

"The one experience I shall never describe" I said to Vita yesterday.

-- Virginia Woolf, Diary

To disagree about character is to differ in the depths of the being.

-- Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown"

Virginia Woolf was not immediately invited to join the exclusive club of great modern novelists; in fact, only in 1978 could Frank Kermode write that Woolf "is being received
into the canon." He also notes that readers, discovering the novels again, are finding "that at any rate two of them, To the Lighthouse and Between the Acts, are among the greatest of the century. They may then reflect upon the prejudices that delayed this recognition." Skeptics might point to Woolf's position in Bloomsbury and as leading woman of letters and scoff at those who suggest Woolf has not been sufficiently recognized. But while it is true Woolf's name has always been prominent, her literary eminence has been more imagined than real. Paul West complains, for example, that Woolf "has been grudgingly admitted into literature without, however, being taken seriously. . . . The plain fact is that, as a creative artist, she has been tolerated . . . ." Michael Rosenthal also notes the "obligatory if slightly stale respect inevitably accorded her." Until recently, her fiction has rarely appeared in anthologies for university students, and essays about her work have not been routinely included in studies of the great modern novelists.

Some criticism of Woolf's work, though presented in a calm and rational tone, leaves no doubt that Kermode's choice of the word prejudice is accurate. Annette Kolodny, writing about male readers who do not read female texts well, provides a good definition of such prejudiced responses: "blaming the difficulty on what was read rather than on how it was read, they accorded the text--and not themselves--
diminished status." In Woolf criticism, most of the blame is placed on Woolf's class and gender. For example, some critics, revealing their own class consciousness, link what they call her faults with the sin of being "born into an established upper middle class literary intelligentsia . .
. ." Other critics practice what Mary Ellmann calls "phallic criticism," using subtle slurs, such as calling The Waves "tea-room modernism," or making blatantly sexist comments, such as Desmond MacCarthy's backhanded compliment:

female novelists should only aspire to excellence by courageously acknowledging the limitations of their sex (Jane Austen and, in our own time, Mrs. Virginia Woolf, have demonstrated how gracefully this gesture can be accomplished) . .

Sometimes, however, the process of diminishing extends beyond the text to the author herself, with comments taking a particularly vicious turn. Critics have attacked Woolf's sexual life, her mental illness, and even her childlessness. Labeling such attempts to diminish Woolf and her importance to English literature prejudice, however, reveals little about the reasons for such scorn.

Some possible explanations surface in Woolf's own exploration of the struggle between writers and readers and the emotions hidden by readers' comments:

For we have our own vision of the world; we have made it from our own experience and prejudices, and it is therefore bound up with our own vanities and loves. It is impossible not to feel injured and insulted if tricks are played and our private harmony is upset. Thus when Jude the Obscure appears or a new volume of Proust, the
newspapers are flooded with protests. Major Gibbs of Cheltenham would put a bullet through his head tomorrow if life were as Hardy paints it; Miss Wiggs of Hampstead must protest that though Proust’s art is wonderful, the real world, she thanks God, has nothing in common with the distortions of a perverted Frenchman. Both the gentleman and the lady are trying to control the novelist’s perspective so that it shall resemble and reinforce their own. But the great writer—the Hardy or the Proust—goes on his way regardless of the rights of private property; by the sweat of his brow he brings order from chaos; he plants his tree there, and his man here; he makes the figure of his deity remote or present as he wills. In masterpieces—books, that is, where the vision is clear and order has been achieved—he inflicts his own perspective upon us so severely that as often as not we suffer agonies—our vanity is injured because our own order is upset; we are afraid because the old supports are being wrenched from us; and we are bored—for what pleasure or amusement can be plucked from a brand new idea? Yet from anger, fear, and boredom a rare and lasting delight is sometimes born.13

In this passage, Woolf gives some reasons for prejudice—anger, fear, and boredom—and although all three emotions contribute to readers' prejudices against Woolf’s work, fear plays the largest role. Avrom Fleishman observes, for example, that a "peculiar mixture of eeriness and pleasure . . . emanates from Woolf’s fiction," Mitchell Leaska notes how "we are rarely at ease" when reading Woolf’s novels, Paul West says that Woolf "consternates" in the ways Laurence Sterne and Samuel Beckett do, and William Empson puts his criticism of Woolf into terms of danger and safety:

If only (one finds oneself feeling in re-reading these novels), if only these dissolved units of
understanding had been co-ordinated into a system; if only, perhaps, there was an index, showing what had been compared to what; if only these materials for the metaphysical conceit, poured out so lavishly, had been concentrated into crystals of poetry that could be remembered, how much safer one would feel [my emphasis].

Empson's desire for a system illustrates Woolf's point: confronted with novels that make them fearful, readers try to control the author's perspective so that it will resemble or reinforce their own. But the exceptionally harsh criticism of Woolf, the evasion of some of the more favorable criticism, the long delay in canonizing Woolf's fiction, and the prejudice against her all result from readers' inability to make Woolf's perspective resemble their own; faced with that prospect, readers turn her different perspective into a flaw and, thus, can only control her work by dismissing it altogether.15

Such a reaction reflects what Woolf identifies as society's patriarchal view of the world, a view that transforms oppositions into hierarchies and difference into inferiority,16 values the control such transformations achieve, and expresses that value by establishing and maintaining the resulting control as the natural order of things. Woolf can identify these patriarchal hierarchies as a way of seeing the world only because her feminism gives her distance from her society. Unquestionably, she was a feminist--statements reflecting her feminist perspective appear
throughout her essays, letters, diaries, pamphlets, and fiction, and the following examples represent only a small selection. Woolf hosted the Richmond Branch of the Women's Co-operative Guild and provided a speaker for monthly meetings over a period of four years; she wrote to Margaret Llewelyn Davies, organizer of those Guilds, that she was becoming "steadily more feminist ..." she wrote in her diary on February 17, 1922, that rich feminists should be encouraged and that "its the feminists who will drain off this black blood of bitterness which is poisoning us all" [Diary, II, 167]; she consistently called her society patriarchal; she wrote two avowedly feminist books, A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas; in 1938, she hoped her society had finally arrived at a time when women could burn the word "feminist" [TG, 101-03]; and she claimed, in 1940, that her detachment from the patriarchy and its hierarchies was still growing.  

Woolf's work itself, then, elicits a feminist approach. But Rosenthal, to name just one such critic, says that feminism, although important to Woolf, cannot possibly be seen as a key to her work because her novels do not preach. However, such a statement implies that feminism can be expressed only in overtly political, polemical, or militant ways and, thus, reveals a misunderstanding of Woolf's feminism. For Woolf, feminism was simply a private way of seeing that quite naturally evolved
into a fictional perspective. As she herself recognizes, the private life and the public life overlap [TG, 142], and if, as she notes in the following passage, masculine values affect both life and art, then surely her feminist values can be expected to do the same:

    And since a novel has this correspondence to real life, its values are to some extent those of real life. But it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex; naturally, this is so. Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. Speaking crudely, football and sport are "important"; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes "trivial." And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction [AR00, 76-77; my emphasis].

Both Woolf's often-expressed feminist views and her awareness that private views influence artistic views, then, validate a feminist approach to her work.²¹

In fact, Woolf's feminism, similar to James Joyce's exile from Ireland, Marcel Proust's cork-lined room, and D. H. Lawrence's hatred of England, puts Woolf in the position of an outsider [TG, 106-20], thereby giving her the distance from society that is necessary if one is to see that society. As Lily Briscoe notes, when painting her picture, "So much depends, then, . . . so much depends, . . . upon distance . . . [TtL, 284]: Able to step back, Woolf uses her feminist distance to see not only the patriarchy's use of hierarchies to control, but also the dualities existing underneath that societal control.²²
This distance, which results in a perception of dualities, can be seen most clearly in Woolf's portrayal of women and death. Whereas the patriarchy sees men as superior to women and tries to deny seeing death at all, Woolf portrays men and women as equally valuable to society and death as an inherent part of life. Woolf's feminism, then, in its recognition of reality's dualities, tends to be inclusive rather than exclusive. In fact, feminism, for Woolf, comes close to being "a system that [does] not shut out;" because Woolf saw preaching as an attempt to control through the use of hierarchies, she inextricably joins feminism and not preaching. 23 Therefore, although she sees authority as male and questions that authority, she refuses, as Lee Edwards points out, to "imprison the world in a code of feminism lest she be guilty of a crime on the order of Holmes's or Bradshaw's . . . ."24 Rather than use her feminism in a patriarchal way to control reality, Woolf uses it to create distance, to see the dualities in reality, to recognize complexity, and to acknowledge difference without employing hierarchies.

Thus, Woolf uses the distance her feminism gives her to portray dualities and, therefore, reveal, resist, and challenge patriarchal control of women and death. Woolf uses her feminist distance against patriarchal control in all of her novels. But this study will focus on The Voyage Out, because as she herself wrote, "the first novel is always apt to be an ungarded one . . . ." [CE, I, 225], and on
Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves, and Between the Acts, because first, they, along with The Voyage Out, span Woolf's career; second, the tension between feminist distance and patriarchal control appears most clearly in these novels; and third, these novels represent Woolf's greatest achievement. Within these five novels, an examination of Woolf's feminist assumptions about women and death will center around the following characters: Rachel Vinrace in The Voyage Out; Clarissa Dalloway, Peter Wash, Septimus Smith, and Sir William Bradshaw in Mrs. Dalloway; Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay, and Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, Louis, Neville, and Bernard in The Waves; and Miss La Trobe in Between the Acts.

Woolf communicates both her feminist distance from patriarchal control and her resulting dualistic assumptions about women and death through her characters and her characterization. Woolf sees characters as crucial to the novel because novelists make readers see "whatever they wish us to see through some character" [CE, I, 325-26]. Woolf confronts her readers with her feminist perspective by having her characters use distance: her female characters use distance to resist patriarchal definitions, and her artists use distance to affirm the presence of death within life. Distance, for these characters, may be physical, emotional, social, or aesthetic. In addition, Woolf's characterization places distance between her characters and
her readers. Realizing that aesthetic conventions of character reflect social assumptions about people, Woolf believed patriarchal assumptions about women and death were expressed through traditional, realistic characters. As a result, Woolf broke four conventions of character—character as knowable, as object, as product, and as revealed by plot—in order to express her feminist and dualistic assumptions about women and death. Unable to easily control Woolf's characters, the reader experiences distance from them, begins to perceive dualities instead of hierarchies, and, thus, becomes strongly aware of women's complexity and death's presence.

The distance Woolf derives from her feminism and uses to see the existence of dualities, then, also creates distance between her novels and her readers. Woolf, by creating such distance, hopes to expose the reality underneath patriarchal definitions and appearances. Not a withdrawal from life, Woolf's distance confronts life and, in turn, urges the reader to confront life. Woolf's distance portrays the separation between human beings and the world, rejects patriarchal control and evasion, and posits responsibility for the seer and freedom for the thing seen. Thus, Woolf resists patriarchal control by enabling the reader to acknowledge reality, not by giving the reader a way to control reality. Indeed, Woolf's distance confronts the reader with his or her own urge to control.
Thus, distance gives Woolf a position from which to mount a massive critique of the patriarchy's definition of reality and to communicate her own sense of reality. As a result, Woolf wrenches the old supports from us. Accustomed to the patriarchy's use of hierarchies to control reality, we react with fear and perhaps prejudice when Woolf uses dualities to resist our control and to distance us from patriarchal reality. On her own terms, then, without using patriarchal modes of control, Woolf portrays women as complex human beings, portrays death as inherent to life, and acknowledges a reality in which women are not inferior and death cannot be denied. Through her characters' use of distance and through her reinforcement of that distance with her characterization, Woolf performs a feminist act: her distance questions, resists, and ultimately undermines the patriarchy's use of hierarchies to control women, death, and character.
Footnotes for Chapter One


3Robert Finis White, Jr., "The Literary Reputation of Virginia Woolf: A History of British Attitudes Toward Her Work, 1915-1955," Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1959. White shows that unfavorable reactions and equivocating responses to Woolf's work outnumbered enthusiastic comments during the years of his study, and he concludes that Woolf's literary reputation was never secure. Her reputation is hardly more secure today, although interest in her work has skyrocketed; some critics mock the feminist approach to Woolf's work, and debates still occur in English Department halls about whether or not Woolf is really a major author.


8 Barrett, p. 146. See her entire discussion of critics' use of class and gender against Woolf on pp. 145-47. E. R. Leavis provides the clearest example of class-conscious criticism, since he criticizes Bloomsbury for Woolf's supposed faults, but Barrett shows that he is not alone in this approach. My unscientific impression, supported by Stuart Hampshire and Robert White, Jr., see above, is that British critics are much less likely to call Woolf a great novelist than are American critics. The reason for such a disparity may lie in the very class consciousness and elitism with which so many British critics attack Woolf. See Morris Beja, ed., *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse: A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 18.


See M. L., Letter, *Virginia Woolf Quarterly*, 2 (1975), 203–04. Not courageous enough to sign his or her name, M. L. writes, "She could neither plot, delineate character, nor write well or interestingly. But the modern psychosis is such that we glorify as martyrs every 'sickie' who hasn't the courage to face his problems and commits suicide. Witness the new martyrs which Women's Liberation has made of Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf and Anne Sexton and any other lunatic female who goes off the brink. If Woolf lived today, nobody would read her because she is irrelevant. Joyce writes better, Lawrence and Conrad plot better, Rebecca West writes a better English sentence and Rod McKuen a more passion-filled one. Virginia is glorified for having iced-water in her veins and bats in her mind." See also Phyllis Rose's insights about Q. D. Leavis' review of Woolf's *Three Guineas in Woman of Letters*, p. 219 and n. 40 and Hermione Lee, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1977), p. 14, who says of Woolf, "Her imaginative territory is strictly demarcated by her social environment, her intellectual inheritance, her mental instability and her sexual reserve."


Hesitation or evasion can be seen in the criticism of David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 191. He says Woolf is important and impressive, but minor; similarly, Hermione Lee, p. 14, thinks that Virginia Woolf is "in the second rank of twentieth-century novelists." In Lee's opinion, Woolf, though remarkable, is not major.

James Raftery, "A Message for the Hounds," Accent (Spring, 1954), pp. 156-59, hopes that the publication of A Writer's Diary will lessen both the discussions of Woolf "as an
elegant-so-intelligent lady novelist with a talent for evoking charming but dated atmosphere" and the concentration on her "limpid prose." F. R. Leavis, for example, recognizes Woolf's beautiful writing, but connects it to a lack of moral interest. See also Herbert Muller, "Virginia Woolf and Feminine Fiction," in Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage, pp. 360-66.

See also Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage, et passim, for other examples of harsh, evasive, or sickly sweet criticism, and Michèle Barrett, pp. 145-60, for a stinging indictment of Woolf critics.

Finally, see Morris Beja, p. 18, who points out that much of the criticism directed at Woolf's supposed failure to deal with "real life" reveals a disapproval of the kind of real life she writes about.


20 Michael Rosenthal, Virginia Woolf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 36. Rosenthal quotes the passage from Three Guineas, p. 101, in which Woolf discusses burning the obsolete word, "feminist." But he does not note the sarcasm in the passage or the fact that most feminists would like to live in a world in which the word was unnecessary.

21 Herbert Marder, Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), has shown that Woolf's feminism and her art need not be mutually exclusive, and Phyllis Rose, Woman of Letters, has amply demonstrated how Woolf's feminist principles influenced her aesthetic principles and how her feminism permeates her work.

23 Woolf’s Writer’s Diary, pp. 182-83. Woolf writes, after having read D. H. Lawrence’s Letters, "But it’s the preaching that rasps me. Like a person delivering judgment when only half the facts are there . . . Art is being rid of all preaching: things in themselves: the sentence in itself beautiful . . . But in the Letters [Lawrence] can’t listen beyond a point; must give advice; get you into the system too. Hence his attraction for those who want to be fitted: which I don’t . . ."


25 See Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 263-97, for her discussion of Woolf’s passivity, lack of anger, and "uterine withdrawal." Showalter ends her chapter on Woolf’s androgyny by writing, "The ultimate room of one’s own is the grave." In a sense, reading Showalter, a feminist critic, is similar to reading F. R. Leavis. They attack her on the same grounds. See Arthur Efron, "On Learning to Evade Virginia Woolf," Paunch, 52 (1978), p. 108, for a reply to Showalter’s criticism of Woolf. For one thing, as Efron notes, Showalter almost completely ignores the novels, using Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas to attack Woolf in a book about novelists.
Chapter Two

THE DEFINITION OF WOMEN
AND DISTANCE AS RESISTANCE

Most Women have no characters at all.
--Alexander Pope

Happy you three! happy the Race of Men!
Born to inform or to correct the Pen
To proffitts pleasures freedom and command
Whilst we beside you but as Cyphers stand
T'increase your Numbers and to swell th'account
Of your delights which from our charms amount
And sadly are by this distinction taught
That since the Fall (by our seducement wrought)
Our is the greater losse as ours the greater fault.

--Anne Finch

Adam had a time, whether long or short, when he could wander about on a fresh and peaceful earth. . . .
But poor Eve found him there, with all his claims upon her, the moment she looked into the world.

--Isak Dinesen

There can be no doubt that Woolf identified her society as patriarchal. When Woolf's persona in A Room of One's Own skims a newspaper, she thinks, "The most transient
visitor to this planet . . . who picked up this paper could not fail to be aware, even from this scattered testimony, that England is under the rule of a patriarchy . . . . With the exception of the fog he seemed to control every-thing" [AR00, 33-34]. Such control, of the writing itself and of the subjects written about, has been noticed by other female characters in literature. For example, Anne Elliot in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, says, "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands."³ Men's control of the pen has been their real advantage, because with it, they have controlled the society's view of women and thus, women themselves. Terence Hewet in *The Voyage Out*, however, suggests that the generally held view of women may be inaccurate:

> Of course, we're always writing about women—abusing them, or jeering at them or worshipping; but it's never come from women themselves. I believe we still don't know in the least how they live, or what they feel, or what they do precisely . . . [VO, 258].⁴

But when a female writer picks up the pen to tell her own story, she must first confront all the male versions of woman's story. Unfortunately, many of those versions, told as neutral stories, not as male ones (control of the pen also means control of bibliography), have been completely incorporated into the female writer's sense of identity, thus making it difficult for her to determine what is indeed her self and what is the result of men's control of
the society. For the female artist, then, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar put it, "the essential process of self-definition is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between herself and herself." In other words, as numerous feminist commentators have testified, the female artist feels obstacles blocking her path, the worst ones being those within. The patriarchal view of the world thus prevents or inhibits the female artist's development of her own vision.

Woolf associated such inhibition with John Milton, saying in *A Room of One's Own* that women who want to write must "look past Milton's bogey, for no human being should shut out the view" [AROO, 118]. Woolf saw Milton as a barrier between herself and reality, an enormous impediment to her writing: "To say what one thought--that was my little problem--against the prodigious current; to find a sentence that could hold its own against the male flood." Even the manuscript of *Lycidas* represents closed doors for women: when Woolf's persona in *A Room of One's Own* attempts to enter the library at Oxbridge to examine it, she is told that "ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction" [AROO, 7-8]. In addition, Milton's ghost haunts the minds of women because of those majestic figures in *Paradise Lost*. Woolf writes that "in them is summed up much of what men thought of our place in the
universe, of our duty to God, our religion." Whether "our" refers to women or to humanity matters little, since the key phrase is "what men thought." Lionel Trilling has said that "one of the matters of assumption in any society is the worth of men as compared with the worth of women . . . ," and although one may question the compulsion to compare the worth of the two sexes, one has to admit that such a comparison indeed occupies the center of our culture and that men, not women, have thought the comparison necessary. Western patriarchy's most famous story, that of Adam and Eve, and Milton's elaboration upon it, firmly decide "the worth of men as compared with the worth of women." The myth and the poem demonstrate the result of controlling the pen as they define both the natures and the roles of man and woman, lock a powerful hierarchy into place and, what is most devastating to women, arbitrarily justify the correctness of the definitions and hierarchy; indeed, they justify the ways of men to women.

It should come as no surprise that the primary story of male domination should have had such a strong effect on Woolf. She sees the story, in the person of Milton's bogey, as a personal barrier to her, and she must understand that the assumptions underlying the patriarchal society's manners have their source in Adam and Eve, since she uses variations of their story in The Voyage Out and To the Lighthouse. The Adam and Eve myth, revolutionizing the
view of death as it transforms the victims of death into the cause of death, also revolutionizes the view of women as it names Eve the original sinner; upon Eve's shoulders lies most of the responsibility for death's appearance in paradise. In fact, one early interpretation of the story claims Adam didn't sin at all: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." In the Bible, Eve sins by thinking she can be equal to God, but in Milton's version, she sins against the "natural" order of things by wanting equality with Adam. The first woman, according to these pens, wants too much power; therefore, she must be punished. The punishment certainly fits the crime, because it transforms what would be a woman's generative power in a matriarchy into a painful curse in Genesis: the pain of childbirth becomes the price of the woman's enjoyment of her sexuality, paternity and domination become synonymous as the wife and children become possessions, and the woman desires both the pain and the domination, becoming the archetype of the masochist. Man's curse in Genesis, on the other hand, is related neither to his sexuality nor to being ruled, and in Milton, man turns the curse into power. Adam must work for his food, but that is hardly a curse: "On mee the Curse aslope/Granc'd on the ground, with labour I must earn/My bread; what Harm? Idleness had been worse . . ."
Male and female duties have been assigned: man's curse is to rule the earth, woman's is to be ruled.

The power given to Adam in the myth, to name and to rule Eve, is embodied in the telling of the myth itself. The teller of the story names Eve, defines, controls, and rules her at the same time God and Adam do so. Thus, the myth endorses more than a definition of woman as secondary, sinful, and inferior; the myth also endorses man's right to define her, a right which implies man's inherent superiority. To define woman, in fact, is exactly how one rules her; thus, the quintessential patriarchal story presents as truth both the definition of woman and man's right to define and thus control her. The story enacts its own content.

The patriarchal society enacts the same content through its manners. Trilling says that manners are "a culture's hum and buzz of implication," the part of culture in which "assumption rules. . . ." Manners, therefore, both establish and reinforce a society's values or morals, even though the values themselves are only "half-uttered or unuttered or unutterable." Woolf, a "connoisseur of social surfaces," captures patriarchal manners and values in her novels. However, she neither explores the patriarchal society as an explicit subject, investigating the masculine world of "judges, civil servants, army, navy, Houses of Parliament, lord mayors . . ." [VO, 253], nor
preaches about its ill effects. 16

By juxtaposing patriarchal manners with the reality of her female characters, Woolf exposes both the patriarchy's ruling assumption that woman is man's inferior and its mode of control, the assumption that woman is man's inferior by definition. This juxtaposition also reveals that some of Woolf's female characters, through the use of distance, consciously resist patriarchal definitions. Woolf creates tension, then, between the restrictive nature of the patriarchal society's definitions and a female character's sense of her own reality. Her female characters' use of distance reveals a disparity between patriarchal definition by hierarchy and complex individual lives; Woolf thus undermines those definitions by showing that the hierarchical definition of women does not, in fact, reflect reality, but rather, stems from a desire to control women. Woolf's novels, therefore, depict a feminist version of the classic moral confrontation between appearance and reality, accomplishing what Trilling says of the novel in general:

[its] greatness and [its] practical usefulness [lie] in [its] unremitting work of involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as his conventional education has led him to see it. 17

To construct the background presence of the patriarchy's conventional definitions, Woolf provides clues in throwaway lines, in automatic judgments the reader's
eye might pass right over. Yet once one has noticed a few signs of the patriarchal code in her novels, they appear everywhere. Indeed, by portraying the patriarchal society's manners in such a subtle manner, Woolf indicates how thoroughly ingrained they are in the society's fabric. For example, in a relatively unimportant scene from *Jacob's Room*, Woolf not only shows Mr. Dickens defining Mrs. Barfoot as inherently inferior, but also reveals the resulting condescension in Mr. Dickens' manners. Woolf sets the scene: Mrs. Barfoot clearly knows her husband is on his way to see Mrs. Flanders; Mr. Dickens, though not an invalid like Mrs. Barfoot, is certainly no longer young and healthy; and Mr. Dickens is not an important man in his home or in the community. However, the bath-chair man condescends to Mrs. Barfoot—"he took out his great silver watch and told her the time very obligingly, as if he knew a great deal more about the time and everything than she did"—and Woolf relates this assumption of superiority to "the feelings of a man" still "perceptible in his eyes."

Significantly, Woolf repeats the phrase, saying "the feelings of a man had not altogether deserted" Mr. Dickens; indeed, "he liked to think that while he chatted with Mrs. Barfoot on the front, he helped the Captain on his way to Mrs. Flanders. *He, a man, was in charge of Mrs. Barfoot, a woman*" [JR, 25-26; my emphasis]. In other words, no matter how low a man sees himself on any ladder, he always
perceives himself as higher than any woman. An automatic hierarchy governs the definitions of man and woman, then, with man defining himself as implicitly superior and woman as implicitly inferior.

Such definitions of men and women affect the way people in a society literally see, as Woolf shows when Clarissa Dalloway leaves her party to think about Septimus' death. Woolf briefly describes the setting as follows:

She went on, into the little room where the Prime Minister had gone with Lady Bruton. Perhaps there was somebody there. But there was nobody. The chairs still kept the impress of the Prime Minister and Lady Bruton, she turned deferentially, he sitting four-square, authoritatively [MD, 279].

Though a Prime Minister, the man is described as ordinary, trying to look like somebody [MD, 261], whereas Lady Bruton has a commanding, almost military, appearance [MD, 158-159]. Nonetheless, the assumption—that man is the authority and woman defers to that authority—dictates manners to such an extent that the two people probably did, in fact, sit in such a way but it also dictates, even in the absence of proof (and Woolf indicates three times in one paragraph that Clarissa is alone), the way Clarissa believes the two people have sat. Clarissa endows the position of the two chairs not only with gender but also with the hierarchy the patriarchy defines as intrinsic to gender.

The basic definition of woman as man's inferior
generates many variations on the superior/inferior hierarchy in the society, as the adverbs "authoritatively" and "deferentially" demonstrate, and as Woolf often reveals. Woolf portrays the patriarchy as a defining entity, scattering prescriptions about what to look like, wear, say, do, and be throughout the society. In the character Orlando, Woolf has the perfect vehicle for acknowledging the strength of these assumptions and for simultaneously mocking them: because Orlando changes from a man into a woman, she notices the patriarchy's assumptions in ways that Mrs. Dalloway cannot, she remembers what "she" had assumed as a man and compares it to what she knows as a woman, and she feels the restrictions of the patriarchy more severely because she did not grow up with them.

The patriarchy exerts heavy control over every aspect of a woman's life, and Orlando first learns of this power through etiquette and fashion. For example, she soon realizes that although men define them so, women are not "obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled by nature" [0, 156-157]. Indeed, that supposedly inherent feminine charm comes from the "most tedious discipline" of disguising oneself [0, 157]. Wearing a skirt also presents problems. Though Orlando can swim, she realizes that a skirt renders her incapable of doing so; if she were to fall overboard, she would have to call for help. Thus, her clothes define her as in need of protection (and,
by extension, weak) when in truth she is neither [0, 154-156]. Wearing a skirt makes her briefly consider being rescued for the pleasure of it, but it ultimately means that she'll never again be able to swear an oath, tell a man he lies, fight in wars, sit in Parliament, or receive awards; the skirt symbolizes paralysis, restricting Orlando's movement literally and figuratively, so that she cannot act in any of the ways men act. Instead, "All I can do, once I set foot on English soil, is to pour out tea, and ask my lords how they like it. 'D'you take sugar? 'D'you take cream?" [0, 158]. Furthermore, if she forgets to feel grateful for fulfilling such a function or suspects that the men for whom she pours tea have very little respect for her, her opinions, or her function, she is likely to be reprimanded "with the rough [draft] of a certain famous line in 'Characters of Women'" [0, 214], that is, Alexander Pope's opinion that "Most Women have no characters at all."

Thus, the patriarchy uses not only skirts but, if necessary, utter contempt and ridicule to keep its definitions of women intact.

The unwritten rules and regulations apply, unfortunately, to more than skirts and tea ceremonies. The patriarchy's sexual code demands, for example, that women must not initiate sexual encounters and men must not cry, or determines that women gossip whereas men discuss politics. But even more damaging to women, the patriarchy
assumes that men work and women do not. In the world of Woolf's novels, sometimes the smallest cultural details carry patriarchal messages, and a calendar educates Kitty Malone in The Years about men, women, and work. When Kitty tears a day off her calendar and reads the message for Friday, she thinks, "Calendars always seemed to be talking at you" [Y, 62]. Not surprisingly, she then feels too tired to read history for tomorrow's lesson: the message reads, "Blessed is he who has found his work" [Y, 61]. Not only does this line literally transform God's curse to Adam into a blessing, but also communicates several other assumptions. Since Jesus's blessings on the Mount were not sex-linked, one would have to assume that the anonymous writer has deliberately chosen singular and masculine pronouns. Thus, the statement implies that a man expects to work, that a man has many work possibilities from which to choose, and that a man is blessed if he finds the work suited for him and he for it; in other words, he will receive blessings--money, prestige, identity, and other rewards--for work. Women's absence from the proverb, on the other hand, suggests that they have no choices, no need to search for the right work, no rewards, and certainly, no blessings. Indeed, the writer of the calendar statement assumes either that women do not work, or that what women do is not considered work.

The narrator in Night and Day elaborates on this
curious unnamed quality of women's work when she comments on Katherine Hilbery's "occupation":

Katherine, thus, was a member of a very great profession which has, as yet, no title and very little recognition, although the labor of mill and factory is, perhaps, no more severe and the results of less benefit to the world. She lived at home. She did it very well, too [N & D, 44].

Similarly, Terence Hewet in The Voyage Out can describe the "masculine conception of life," but when he walks along a residential street, he "wonder[s] what on earth the women [are] doing inside" [VO, 258]. In this case, the patriarchy defines women's work by default, assigning it no value because the male mind cannot grasp exactly what women do. As Woolf herself points out, "Often nothing tangible remains of a woman's day. The food that has been cooked is eaten; the children that have been nursed have gone out into the world . . ."[CE, II, 146; my emphasis]. The patriarchal society, because it values what is tangible, things that can be defined, measured, put into hierarchies, and controlled, cannot understand a woman's immersion in process, in building up and tearing down, or in cycles. Instead, the patriarchal society values products, like Mr. Ramsay's books or Louis' ships, built by "[t]he heavy male tread of responsible feet" [W, 293]. In addition, "women's work," connected to slow growth but not to anything measurable, does not pay well, whereas the patriarchy rewards men's work with money, another
measurable object: "young men," notices Fanny Elmer in *Jacob's Room*, "bring out lots of coins from their trouser pockets... instead of having just so many in a purse" [JR, 117]. Women, because they do not "work," have limited monetary resources. Even the patriarchy's nursery rhymes and popular songs reveal similar definitions of men, women, and work: in *Between the Acts*, the audience hears "The King is in his counting house/Counting out his money,/The Queen is in her parlour/Eating bread and honey" four times [BtA, 115, 122, 181, 182], and in the Victorian section of the pageant within a pageant, Mrs. Hardcastle commands the girls to sing "I'd be a Butterfly" and the boys to sing "Rule, Britannia" [BtA, 170]? The patriarchal society thus defines women not as wage-earners, producers, or workers, but as consumers and flighty, decorative objects.

Naturally enough, the patriarchal society incorporates such definitions into its expectations for girls and boys. For example, Mr. Dalloway thinks, "If he'd had a boy he'd have said, Work, work. But he had his Elizabeth; he adored his Elizabeth" [MD, 172]. Mr. Dalloway, though meaning well and trying to avoid disloyalty to Elizabeth because he had wanted a boy, defines men as active workers and women as passive receivers of adoration. Furthermore, his attitude, which Mrs. Dalloway shares, has affected Elizabeth's definition of herself. For example, as
Elizabeth walks in the Strand, she feels attracted to the bustle and energy of the workers around her:

And she liked the feeling of people working . . . . It was quite different here from Westminster, she thought . . . . It was so serious; it was so busy. In short, she would like to have a profession. She would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament . . . [MD, 207].

But, by the end of the following short paragraph, she has defined herself as "of course, rather lazy" [MD, 207], thus quickly short-circuiting her ambition and dream; she must go home and dress for dinner, "and it was much better to say nothing about it. It seemed so silly. It was the sort of thing that did sometimes happen, when one was alone . . . ." [MD, 207-208]. Elizabeth's "laziness" is more than likely the result of not being encouraged to work rather than an inherent trait; certainly, being brought up on adoration has negated any chance she might have had to rule Britannia. Even when a father such as Professor Malone, in The Years, encourages his daughter Kitty to study history under Lucy Craddock and asks her to help with his history of the college, he easily falls back into the usual patriarchal condescension. When she awkwardly knocks over some ink, he says, "with his usual courteous irony, 'Nature did not intend you to be a scholar, my dear' . . . ." [Y, 81; my emphasis].

Indeed, in most of the patriarchal homes portrayed in Woolf's novels, fathers believe that nature does not
intend women to be educated at all. St. John Hirst dedicates himself to a career, but no one takes his sister seriously [V0, 213]. Ralph Denham worries about an education for a younger, less bright, brother, but never encourages his sister's intelligence [N & D, 29-35]. Similarly, when Morris Pargiter in The Years worries about the money necessary for educating himself, Edward, and Martin, it never occurs to him to worry about the Pargiter girls' lack of education [Y, 33]. Money in the patriarchal family always goes for the son's education, and Woolf embodies this automatic decision in a scene from The Years: Colonel Abel Pargiter asks his daughter Milly about her shopping trip, but interrupts her answer to ask Martin where he stands in his class; when Martin answers, "Top!" he gets a sixpence [Y, 13].

Thus, young women not only get no money for education, while young men receive education and money, but they are also commanded to be silent about the lives they do have. Clarissa Dalloway reveals the awful poverty of no education and no talk:

> How she had got through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fräulein Daniels gave them she could not think. She knew nothing; no language, no history. . . . how sheltered the life at Bourton was. She knew nothing about sex—nothing about social problems . . . Aunt Helena never liked discussion of anything . . . [MD, 11, 49].

Such an "education" guarantees ignorance and dependence,
guarantees, for example, that Lady Bruton cannot write a
letter to the editor of The Times by herself; rather, she
has to call on Hugh Whitbread and Richard Dalloway for
help, because of the "mysterious accord in which they, but
no woman, stood to the laws of the universe; knew how to
put things; knew what was said . . ." [MD, 165]. The
patriarchy's definition of women's education as unnecessary
ensures women's bewilderment in the face of the universe,
thereby enforcing the assumption of innate male superiority
and keeping women under control.

Excluded from traditional "male" activities, denied
an education, women "have sat indoors all these millions
of years . . ." [AR00, 91], limited to what exists within
a house's walls. Home is not a launching pad for girls
but their permanent place. Woolf often uses, therefore,
the vocabulary of confinement, seclusion, and isolation to
describe women's lives in the patriarchy. For example,
Rachel Vinrace sees her life as "driven cautiously between
high walls . . ." [VO, 91-92], and Katherine Hilbery de-
scribes her life as "so hemmed in with the progress of other
lives that the sound of its own advance was inaudible"
[N & D, 106]. Marriage, often seen as an escape or
liberation from a stifling situation [VO, 211-212], may
mean only that a woman exchanges one set of walls for
another. For example, Susan, in The Voyage Out, so
desperately wants to escape from her family home and from
her aunt's exploitation of a single woman that she subdues her individuality for the sake of an engagement: "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" [V0, 162]. Thus, Susan must choose between a life with her family and a life with Arthur, but such a limited choice actually leaves her with no choice, because she feels pressure to hide her real self in either case.

The patriarchy, in fact, habitually limits women to very few choices, and, then, through its manners, labels women inherently limited. It decrees, for example, that women are fit for only one job, that of marriage, and then finds the inevitable competition for that job amusing. In the Victorian play in Between the Acts, Miss La Trobe portrays Mrs. Hardcastle as a silly, matchmaking mother of four daughters; a parody of Jane Austen's Mrs. Bennett, Mrs. Hardcastle is indeed ridiculous. But both Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf understand the limited opportunities women have, the desperation behind the comedy, and the pain such competition causes the daughters. In The Years, Eleanor notices the hostility between Delia and Milly when their father announces a friend's invitation to one daughter:

Which of them was to go? They both wanted to go. She wished people would not say, "Bring one of your daughters." She wished they would
say, "Bring Eleanor," or "Bring Milly," or "Bring Delia," instead of lumping them all together [Y, 18; my emphasis].

All the definitions established and maintained by the patriarchal society's manners—women are inferior, women defer, women are weak, women do not work, women cannot or should not learn, women should marry, etc., etc.—control women by lumping them all together; by reducing any individual woman's complexity to simplistic generalizations, the patriarchy lessens her value in her own eyes, thus keeping her subservient. Furthermore, whether or not women obey the prescriptions, perform the roles, and play by the rules, the patriarchy labels all of them inherently inferior.

Mrs. Ramsay, the most traditional female character in all of Woolf's fiction, best illustrates this insidious characteristic of the patriarchy's manners. Male characters in To the Lighthouse constantly generalize about women. Their comments, if put together, not only form an impressive litany of patriarchal contempt but also demonstrate the male assumption of the right to define:

The extraordinary irrationality of her [Mrs. Ramsay's] remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him [Mr. Ramsay] . . . Women can't paint, women can't write . . . [S]he [Minta Doyle] had no control over her emotions, Andrew thought. Women hadn't . . . They [women] never got anything worth having from one year's end to another. They did nothing but talk, talk, talk, eat, eat, eat. It was the women's fault. Women made civilisation impossible with all their 'charm,' all their
silliness. . . . Women can't write, women can't paint. . . . The women bored one so, . . . can't paint, can't write. . . . can't paint, can't write. . . . He [Mr. Ramsay] thought, women are always like that; the vagueness of their minds is hopeless; . . . They could not keep anything clearly fixed in their minds [TtL, 50, 75, 117, 129, 130, 136, 137, 237, 238, 249].

Nevertheless, it is a woman, Mrs. Ramsay, who defends this patriarchy the most strongly. As Woolf's most "womanly" woman—passionate (there is evidence for this in the language Woolf uses when Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are together and in the nature of the fights the two have), maternal, and beautiful—she accepts patriarchal definitions and encourages others to do the same. She enjoins all to marry and to have children, she believes wives should subject themselves to their husband's labors, and she trusts in the "admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence" to uphold the world [TtL, 93, 20, 159]. Her discomfort when Mr. Ramsay comes to her openly for sympathy results from the reversal of roles: she cannot stand to think of herself (or to have others think of her) as finer than he, and she traps herself in the hierarchical thinking of the patriarchy, unable to see that perhaps her contribution is neither higher nor lower than his, but simply equal, or even that contributions to the world need not be compared at all. Rather, she thinks that "they must know that of the two he was infinitely the more important, and what she gave the world, in comparison with what he gave, negligible"
[TtL, 62].

Bothering her even more is her suspicion that all this desire of hers to give, to help, was vanity. For her own self-satisfaction was it that she wished so instinctively to help, to give, that people . . . might . . . need her and send for her and admire her? [TtL, 65]

Evidently, a woman should not feel satisfaction, not even in fulfilling the ultimate feminine role of helping and giving. Mrs. Ramsay, however, apparently pays for any self-satisfaction she does feel by meekly effacing herself. When Mr. Ramsay curses her, for example, she bows her head in silence. Such silence, although she is outraged by his brutality, reflects her reverent attitude toward the patriarchy. Such reverence enacts the patriarchal hierarchy, because it assumes the inferior woman, or the supplicant, accepts the "divine" definition, defers to the authority, and worships the superior man. Of Mr. Ramsay she thinks, "There was nobody whom she reverenced as she reverenced him" [TtL, 51]. Her daughters may sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; . . . 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 . . . [TtL, 14].

But Mrs. Ramsay still has the whole patriarchy under her protection; for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance; finally for an attitude towards herself which no woman could
fail to feel or to find agreeable, something trustful, childlike, reverential; which an old woman could take from a young man without loss of dignity, and woe betide the girl--pray Heaven it was none of her daughters!--who did not feel the worth of it, and all that it implied, to the marrow of her bones! [TtL, 13]

Mrs. Ramsay sincerely believes in the patriarchy's values, and she supports those values by her example, with her advice, and ultimately, with her life.

Mrs. Ramsay evidently feels that she receives something in return for the reverence she gives the patriarchy in general and Mr. Ramsay in particular. But she describes men's reverence in terms of the relationship between child and mother, a reverence which often guiltily conceals hostility and contempt. 21 Woolf, in her portrayal of society, indicates that contempt for Mrs. Ramsay indeed underlies the reverence for her. Not only is there the litany of contempt mentioned earlier, but Mr. Bankes, for example, thinks at the beginning of the dinner party, "she is one of my oldest friends. I am by way of being devoted to her. Yet now, at this moment her presence meant absolutely nothing to him . . . " [TtL, 134]. Charles Tansley, who feels such pride earlier in the day at being with Mrs. Ramsay in town because she is so beautiful, later imagines saying to his friends, "The women bored one so, he would say. Of course Ramsay had dished himself by marrying a beautiful woman and having eight children" [TtL, 136].

Thus, what Tansley admires in the morning is cause for Mr.
Ramsay's ruin in the evening. In addition, Tansley labels Mrs. Ramsay's small talk silly, unable to admit its value, even though it allows him to join the conversation.

In fact, the patriarchal society rarely recognizes women or their contributions. For example, Mrs. Ramsay need not have worried that people would think her contribution to the world higher than her husband's; indeed, her view that she contributes less is actually an overstatement compared to the assessments made by male characters in the novel. Both Mr. Bankes and Mr. Ramsay, in addition to Tansley, think that Mr. Ramsay "could have written better books if he had not married" [TtL, 34–39, 106]. In their opinion, she has done worse than contribute little; responsible for the quality of his books, she has hindered Mr. Ramsay's career. The patriarchal society, then, takes Mr. Ramsay, and allows him to take himself, seriously, but criticizes Mrs. Ramsay's existence as a wife and ignores what she does accomplish. Though the novel's society praises her beauty, something for which she is not responsible, it validates neither her presence nor her work.

Thus, when Mrs. Ramsay sits down at the table before the dinner party, depressed and asking herself, "But what have I done with my life? . . .'" [TtL, 125], she reveals her incorporation of the patriarchal society's unspoken judgment of "nothing." The society prevents women from working, does not value what women actually do, and then
criticizes women for doing nothing. Consequently, although Mrs. Ramsay is almost always busy with the children (lessening strife, reading to James, calming Cam), with her husband (giving him sympathy and comfort), with her guests (taking Charles Tansley to town, asking after Mr. Carmichael), or with her patients, although she brings people together and creates the atmosphere necessary for human communication, and although she gives constantly, most of the characters in the novel do not seem to see her and, in fact, ignore, degrades, or criticize her and her role. When Mr. Ramsay thinks of his eight children as "a good bit of work on the whole" [TtL, 106], for example, he sees them entirely in relationship to himself, giving Mrs. Ramsay no credit for her part in the matter. Mr. Ramsay also thinks she cannot possibly understand the poem she is reading [TtL, 182], depletes her energy by making her responsible for his emotions, and calls her a liar when she gives sympathy and reassurance to anyone else. Charles Tansley admires her beauty but sees her as an object and thinks her attempt to communicate at dinner silly. Only the artists, Lily Briscoe and Mr. Carmichael, see her value or can balance her faults and her accomplishments, and only Lily acknowledges Mrs. Ramsay's creativity and even paints her as a triangular shape, capturing the "wedge-shaped core of darkness" [TtL, 95] that Mrs. Ramsay identifies as herself. Generally, however, Mrs. Ramsay receives little
encouragement or support for playing, and playing well, the role the patriarchy wants her to play. Indeed, she receives no credit for what she achieves; Mrs. Ramsay thinks she is revered, but, in actuality, she is hardly seen, let alone valued.

Furthermore, the patriarchy locks Mrs. Ramsay into that "valueless" role. The one time she tries to establish a different role for herself, that of an authority, her friends and family treat her as God treats Eve in the Adam and Eve story and as the flounder treats Ilsabil in "The Fisherman and His Wife," the Grimm fairy tale Mrs. Ramsay reads to James. In the story, a poor man catches a flounder who is actually an enchanted prince. When the flounder asks to be freed, the man, startled by a fish who can talk, lets him go. His wife tells him later that he should have wished for something, and she suggests a better cottage. At her insistence, he returns to the ocean and calls for the flounder, telling the magic fish of Ilsabil's wish. The flounder grants her request, but she keeps wanting more—from a cottage to king to emperor to pope. The flounder continues to give her what she wants, though the sea gets uglier and wilder at every request, until she asks to control the rising of the sun and the moon. Like Eve's in Genesis, Ilsabil's desire to be godlike brings the flounder's wrath down upon her, and nature itself rages. Ilsabil and her husband are back in their shack by the end
of the story, thrown out of paradise. Moral: it is unnatural for a woman to want power and even worse for her to have it. 22

Woolf probably chose this tale, rather than one punishing male greed, such as King Midas, for example, because of its sea setting and because of its patriarchal message. Very little of the tale appears in To the Lighthouse, but Woolf selected those sections most directly related to men, women, and power. For example, the husband keeps thinking to himself when his wife asks for a higher rank, "it is not right," and when he appears in front of the flounder, he always prefaces his remarks with "For my wife, good Ilsabil/Wills not as I'd have her Will" [TtL, 66, 87]. The man, portrayed as not wanting to participate in his wife's greed, sees her wishes as unnatural. The other part of the tale included in the novel is the description of the great storm after Ilsabil asks to be like God [TtL, 93]. Thus, Woolf includes just enough of the tale to show the Adam-like husband's non-involvement (though he follows his wife's lead), the Eve-like wife's desire for power, and the God-like flounder's anger, and she shows the husband paying for his wife's sin, as is also true in Genesis. Such a story within the novel reveals how the control of the pen reinforces the patriarchy's attitudes, and it shows how pervasive and unquestioned those attitudes are.
Moreover, the tale admirably suits the context of the novel. In fact, its message is not only re-enacted at the dinner table that evening, but also influences Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts that morning: she criticizes her own self-satisfaction, worries about her matchmaking, and immediately squelches the thought of being better than her husband. Mrs. Ramsay has learned the lessons of such tales well and never lets a conscious desire for power cross her mind; unfortunately, most of her desires remain unconscious, expressed only in manipulation.

However well she has absorbed the patriarchy's strictures, Mrs. Ramsay nevertheless thinks about cleaning up the English dairy system and thus makes the mistake of considering work outside the domestic sphere; worse yet, she talks about it. Clearly, Mrs. Ramsay knows about dairies, and she wishes she had the time to devote to cleaning them up [TtL, 89]. But the one time in the novel when she thinks about doing a job which would be recognized as an activity by the male world, knows the facts, and is prepared to argue logically to prove her charges of negligence in the English dairy system—indeed, she uses a "masculine" approach to the problem—she is mocked:

her children laughed; her husband laughed; she was laughed at, fire-encircled, and forced to veil her crest, dismount her batteries, and only retaliate by displaying the raillery and ridicule of the table to Mr. Bankes as an example of what one suffered if one attacked the prejudices of the British Public" [TtL, 155-156].
However, the prejudice Mrs. Ramsay attacks is not about milk at all, but about women. She has stepped outside her feminine role and has assumed power; consequently, the society must punish her by making her warmth, eloquence, and research look ridiculous. Mrs. Ramsay's skills at getting people to do what she wants would make her a good organizer of projects, and she talks no more about her dairies than her husband does about his boots [TtL, 156-157], but people publicly laugh at her enthusiasm, whereas the children laugh at Mr. Ramsay behind his back, and Mrs. Ramsay does not laugh at him at all. Mrs. Ramsay, in asking for more power, in asking to be seen as an authority, invites immediate ridicule. Thus, society uses humor to control her. Not the dairies, but her knowledge and passion about them, are funny; her interests, unlike those of Mr. Ramsay, cannot be taken seriously. Indeed, the unity of the dinner guests begins with this united laughter against her. Thus, Mrs. Ramsay receives no recognition for what she does do and cannot consider doing anything else. The patriarchy controls Mrs. Ramsay by trapping her in one role.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Mrs. Ramsay sometimes feels

past everything, through everything, out of everything, . . . as if there was an eddy--there--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 . . ." [TtL, 125].
Her depression stems from the hostility she refuses to let surface [TtL, 126], her hidden resentment at being in a double bind. When the patriarchal society defines the masculine as the standard against which everything else is measured, the feminine can never measure up, can never be anything except inferior. The patriarchy exerts its control over women through its hierarchy and its double bind: it prevents a woman from doing anything defined as masculine because she is inferior, and it forces her to do only those things defined as feminine and, therefore, inferior.

Mrs. Ramsay does not perceive the double bind she is in, though her depression reveals she feels it. Her conscious support of patriarchal values contributes to her own devaluation, her own erasure. Yet to question those values, even through something as innocuous as milk, is even more threatening. Mrs. Ramsay sometimes feels secondary or invisible within her role, but to step outside that role means risking ridicule or censure. The patriarchy thinks it would be unnatural for Mrs. Ramsay to accomplish something outside the home, but Mrs. Ramsay's "natural" dedication to her role kills her: since she gives to others and invests manners and rituals with meaning at the same time the society always judges those efforts secondary to men's, since she accepts, and is even devoted to, the society that judges her inferior, since she loses every time she gives because the society also judges her
gifts inferior, and since she will not allow herself to
feel any satisfaction or pride in giving, she eventually
negates herself through that very giving: "Giving, giving,
giving, she had died" [TtL, 223].

Either held in contempt or idealized as the "Angel in
the House," Mrs. Ramsay ultimately has no human value
within the patriarchy. The patriarchal control of Mrs.
Ramsay lies in its defining her as inferior and in the
acceptance of such a definition as natural. The
patriarchal society victimizes, therefore, even those women
who most fully subscribe to its values, because its values
deny women value. Thus, by playing her role so well, Mrs.
Ramsay literally disappears; for her, self-sacrifice is
more than a phrase. She, however, never sees the damage
the patriarchy does because she has incorporated the
patriarchal definitions, assumptions, and stories as true.

Thus, to avoid being completely controlled by the
patriarchy, a woman must first see the society as
patriarchal and see its methods of control. Three of
Woolf's female characters, Rachel Vinrace in The Voyage
Out, Clarissa Dalloway in Mrs. Dalloway, and Lily Briscoe
in To the Lighthouse, do, in fact, see one method of
patriarchal control: from at least Adam and Eve on, the
patriarchy has defined passion as possession; both the man's
and the woman's passion give him the right to rule her.
While Mrs. Ramsay upholds the patriarchy's definition
and embraces love and marriage fervently, Rachel, Clarissa, and Lily are reluctant to love because they see an equation between a man's passion for, and his possession of, a woman. Woolf makes the automatic patriarchal connection between the two quite clear in Night and Day when Ralph Denham leaves the Hilbery house after meeting Katherine for the first time. As though she were up on an auction block, Ralph murmurs "She'll do . . . . Yes, Katharine Hilbery'll do . . . . I'll take Katherine Hilbery" [N & D, 24; Woolf's ellipses].

Passion itself, however, is not an evil in Virginia Woolf's novels. Indeed, it is Sir William Bradshaw who is "without sex or lust" [MD, 28], and as Ellen Hawkes points out, Woolf expresses more passion in her letters than many readers want to grant her. The same is true of her novels. But Woolf does see the patriarchy's use of passion to control women as evil; after all, Mrs. Ramsay gives in to Mr. Ramsay all the time because they both believe his passion gives him the right to control her. Yet, as Phyllis Rose has pointed out,

Few writers have discussed a woman's reluctance to love without implying that this reluctance was neurotic. We assume so readily that in love and sex one finds satisfaction, and the more passionate the love, the more satisfying.

Woolf, of course, in writing about some women's reluctance to love, is also accused of being neurotic. But feminist criticism has noted that such reluctance may be in reaction
to real dangers that a woman perceives about her situation. 29

Indeed, Rachel, Clarissa, and Lily see the danger of being possessed, defined, and controlled—it means losing one's identity—and they resist such control. In resisting possession, however, they must also resist passion. Thus, their strategy is to establish distance from patriarchal possession, to in some way remain virginal. Carolyn Heilbrun has noted that virginity for a woman used to mean self-sufficiency and autonomy, 30 and although Woolf may not have been aware of such a meaning, virginity functions that way in her novels. Virginity, as for Samuel Richardson's Pamela, preserves, not some body tissue, but identity.

With varying degrees of success, then, Rachel, Clarissa, and Lily form identities of their own, and in doing so, prove the patriarchy wrong in many of its definitions of women. All three do so by establishing and maintaining distance; Clarissa and Lily achieve both distance and, as it turns out, love, but Rachel achieves distance only by losing her life.

The most confined of Virginia Woolf's major female characters, Rachel Vinrace has had information, experience, and emotion withheld from her in the name of love and protection. 31 Her parents' relationship was hardly a model one, if Helen Ambrose's suspicions are correct, 32 and, thus, Rachel knows very little about love or relationships
between the sexes. Furthermore, her mother, Theresa, died when Rachel was eleven, and her often absent father and his two maiden sisters have brought Rachel up with "excessive care" [VO, 32]. Such care means that Rachel, at twenty-four, remains dependent upon others for protection. As Hermione Lee remarks, "Rachel's ignorance about sex and her lack of a proper education stems from the same social assumptions that she is to be subservient in a masculine world."33

Certainly, Rachel has incorporated the patriarchal message of subservience for women in her relationship with her father:

He was a great dim force in the house, by means of which they held on to the great world which is represented every morning in the Times . . . . He was good-humoured towards them, but contemptuous. She had always taken it for granted that his point of view was just, and founded upon an ideal scale of things where the life of one person was absolutely more important than the life of another, and that in that scale they were of much less importance than he was [VO, 259].

Rachel, then, not only sees herself as inferior, but also accepts such a hierarchy as just. Rachel's innocence, like Mrs. Ramsay's reverence, makes her extremely vulnerable to patriarchal definitions: she cannot possibly know or see enough to question such definitions. Only Helen's intervention, for example, prevents Rachel's father from turning her into a Tory hostess; she is such a nonentity to him that he cannot imagine her thinking about a future
of her own. In fact, he thinks of Rachel as a possession, with which he can do anything he wants.

Thus, Rachel's innocence and ignorance, cultivated in the name of protection, actually support her status as patriarchal possession under control. Rather than protect her, however, her innocence places her in great danger. A definition of innocence assumes that someone will always be present to protect her from whatever she does not know, and it prevents Rachel from creating a strong identity based on experience. Consequently, she is ignorant, gullible, and easily exploited.

Because Rachel is so innocent and because she has incorporated as just the patriarchy's definition of her, she is vulnerable to the patriarchal theme of women's inferiority. In a scene reminiscent of the Adam and Eve myth, Woolf brings together patriarchal manners and a woman's response to them to portray the damage those manners can do. Such manners reflect the right, as portrayed in Genesis, to define women and to project all responsibility for sin upon them; Rachel reacts by feeling guilty about her sexuality, thus falling into the trap of feeling sinful, and by extension, inferior.

The scene, occurring early in the novel and followed by Rachel's dream and several other relevant scenes, involves Mr. Dalloway, a British politician married to Clarissa Dalloway. Rachel feels attracted to both Mr. and
Mrs. Dalloway because their elegance, sophistication, and stories enlarge her small world. Mr. Dalloway, however, takes advantage of Rachel's interest when he steps into her room to talk. A more experienced woman might have anticipated and thus avoided the scene, but in her innocence, Rachel answers Mr. Dalloway's questions about her with, "You see, I'm a woman" [VO, 84], thereby reminding him of her sex. Richard tells her that as a young and beautiful woman, she "has the whole world at her feet. That's true, Miss Vinrace. You have an inestimable power—for good or for evil" [VO, 84]. Then he kisses her passionately and says in a terrifying voice, "You tempt me" [VO, 85].

Thus, in a few minutes' time, the patriarchy seems to have changed its definition of Rachel: it first defines her as a woman needing protection from temptation and then defines her as an agent of that temptation, a variation on the reverence/contempt expressed for Mrs. Ramsay. In addition, Richard Dalloway absolves himself from all responsibility, blaming Rachel for his own feelings and behavior. Such projection, a common characteristic of the patriarchy's manners, can be seen at work in both the Adam and Eve story and the mythology built up around the angel in the house: whether the patriarchy defines woman as temptress or angel, evil or good, it makes the woman responsible for man's behavior. Women either damn or save
men, but men are not ultimately responsible for their own sins. In fact, the excessive protection of daughters is simply the obverse of the patriarchal belief that women are basically sinful and will destroy the world if left uncontrolled.

At first, however, Rachel does not feel guilty. In fact, her immediate response to the kiss, which critics often pass over in their rush to label her fearful of sexuality, is physical: she trembles, her knees shake, her heart leaps, and she feels the physical pain of emotion. After she leaves the room, she looks at the sea, first becoming numb and chilled, then peaceful and exalted: "Life seemed to hold infinite possibilities she had never guessed at." She then becomes cold and calm, but her final thought about the kiss before appearing in public is, "Nevertheless something wonderful had happened" [V0, 85]. Thus, Rachel at first feels wonder and excitement about the future, responding with pleasure to the kiss and paying no attention to Richard's words.

At dinner that evening, however, Rachel's feelings about the kiss change. Richard can hardly look at her, doing so only once, and his obvious embarrassment makes her feel uncomfortable, "as if she and Richard had seen something together, which is hidden in ordinary life . . ." [V0, 85]. His public reaction renders her private interpretation of the event incorrect. Reinforcing the idea of
women's supposedly inadequate readings, of men's control of the pen and therefore of the interpretation of events, Woolf's narrator says, perhaps reflecting Rachel's state of mind, that

Wonderful masculine stories followed about Bright and Disraeli and coalition governments, wonderful stories which made the people at the dinner-table seem featureless and small [VO, 85; my emphasis].

Masculine stories reflect masculine power, which reflects the masculine hierarchy: masculine stories of masculine government make people, especially women, look small, faceless, without identity. Rachel's interpretation of the kiss cannot withstand such an assault. Mr. Dalloway's discomfort and shame justify his blame of her, making his masculine "story" of being tempted carry more weight.

Rachel's dream, filled with guilt, follows her recognition of Richard's shame and the accusation underlying it:

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 little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering, with long nails. His face was pitted and like the face of an animal. The wall behind him oozed with damp, which collected into drops and slid down. Still and cold as death she lay, not daring to move, until she broke the agony by tossing herself across the bed, and woke crying 'Oh!'

Light showed her the familiar things: her clothes fallen off the chair; the water jug gleaming white; but the horror did not go at
once. She felt herself pursued, so that she

got up and actually locked her door. A voice
moaned for her; eyes desired her. All night
long barbarian men harrassed the ship; they
came scuffling down the passages, and stopped
to snuffle at her door. She could not sleep
again [VO, 86].

Richard's definition of her as a temptress, even though
Rachel neither tries nor intends to tempt him, traps
Rachel in her own body, because it has done something over
which she has no control. She becomes walled in by
definitions, confined by gibberish, language she does not
understand. The deformity, bestiality, and horror of the
dream all reflect Rachel's incorporation of Richard's
judgment of her. Rachel's consciousness has been invaded
by a little man spouting gibberish, but trapping her just
the same, supplanting her pleasure and excitement with a
demand for guilt.

Being attractive and desirable, then, have become
defined as sinful and thus frightening. Rachel suddenly
sees a world populated with men who desire her. Though
she has not asked for such attention, she has been told
that she is responsible for it, and her logical reaction
is to lock the door. That way, she cannot tempt men,
they cannot be tempted, and she cannot be blamed. Her
fears, then, stem not so much from her own sexuality as
from the patriarchy's definition of that sexuality.
Furthermore, she has learned to distrust her own emotions,
to believe that others feel differently from her and that
the others are right whereas she is wrong. Rachel's dream reveals that she has internalized Mr. Dalloway's definition of her and that she has moved from knowing nothing about her sexuality to feeling guilty about it.

Rachel, then, learns to distrust her own interpretations, incorporates the patriarchy's shifting of responsibility and equates being desirable with being sinful. Most damaging by far, however, she connects intimacy and sexuality with being defined and controlled by someone else. As in the Adam and Eve story, in which the telling of the story enacts the patriarchy's right to define women, the kiss Mr. Dalloway gives Rachel enacts his right to control, define, and name her. Mr. Dalloway's passion gives him the right, in other words, to possess Rachel through his interpretation of her. Although Rachel has always been trapped in a narrow definition of woman and woman's sexuality, she does not fully realize it until after Mr. Dalloway's kiss and her dream. His definition of her, which seems to place more emphasis on her potential for evil than for good, makes her conscious of her life as:

a creeping hedged-in thing, driven cautiously between high walls, here turned aside, there plunged in darkness, made dull and crippled for ever--her life that was the only chance she had . . . [VO, 92].

Her past now looks like her dream, because both her supposed need for protection and her sexuality as
temptation derive from the same definition of woman as desirable and thus sinful. Because men may find her desirable, her father and aunts never let her walk by herself; after Mr. Dalloway's kiss, Rachel locks the door herself. Because of the earlier protection, Rachel cannot withstand the later definition. Both the protection and the definition, then, accomplish what the patriarchy wants: they put Rachel's sexuality under rigid control.

Rachel's conversation with her aunt Helen does not ease Rachel's mind, either, because Helen, in not explaining to Rachel that women also feel desire and pleasure, indirectly reinforces Mr. Dalloway's interpretation of relationships between the sexes. Helen at first finds the whole thing funny [VO, 89-90], then tells Rachel that it's natural for men to desire women, but her advice about that desire is not to get it out of proportion: "It's like noticing the noises people make when they eat, or men spitting; or, in short, any small thing that gets on one's nerves" [VO, 91]. To the lesson of women tempt men, men feel passion, then, Helen Ambrose adds that women get used to such things. Thus, Helen does not contradict Mr. Dalloway's basic definition of women, since she implies that women get used to dealing with the behavior they are responsible for creating. It should come as no surprise, then, that when Rachel realizes she liked being kissed, she also realizes her feeling only adds "more difficulties to
her problem" [VO, 92]. Neither Mr. Dalloway nor Helen have included women's desires or feelings in their "explanation" of relationships between the sexes, and so liking the kiss becomes confused with Mr. Dalloway's accusation and thus, with the idea of prostitutes in Piccadilly.

Though Rachel feels violated by Mr. Dalloway's definition of her and in fact, tries to project the monstrosity she feels back on to men, labeling them brutes [VO, 92], she clearly does not succeed in rejecting it as untrue. She has always been defined by others, has few defenses against definitions, and thus falls easily into Mr. Dalloway's assessment of her. Immediate proof that his attempt to place blame on Rachel has worked lies in her thinking she has treated Clarissa Dalloway badly, "for Mrs. Dalloway had said that she loved her husband" [VO, 92]. In fact, Rachel has done nothing wrong, has not even flirted with Mr. Dalloway, and it is Mr. Dalloway who has treated his wife badly. Certainly, he has treated Rachel badly, unfairly placing all responsibility for the event on her shoulders and thus changing and ultimately controlling her self-image.

Therefore, when Helen tells Rachel that she can be a person on her own account, in spite of Helen, "the Dalloways, and Mr. Pepper, and Father, and my Aunts" [VO, 94-95], Rachel is so surprised that she stammers.
Unfortunately, the advice that she can define herself comes after the damage has been done by her father, her aunts, and Mr. Dalloway. Though Rachel subsequently sees her personality as "unmergable" [VO, 95], she has no clear idea of what constitutes that personality, has become used to accepting other opinions as right and her own as wrong, and has had no experience in maintaining her own definitions in the face of patriarchal ones. Just how badly Mr. Dalloway has damaged Rachel's sense of herself, then, becomes apparent only later in the novel when she gets engaged to a young man named Terence Hewet and is trying to balance her sense of herself as unmergeable with the underlying lesson she has learned from Mr. Dalloway, that is, that intimacy gives a man the right to possess a woman through definitions.

The society's manners reinforce Mr. Dalloway's lesson, defining love, passion, and marriage as a loss of identity for the woman, a merging that becomes submerging. Women become possessions as the result of love, their identities defined by their owners. Mr. Vinrace loves his daughter, but thinks she should be a hostess to further his political career, Mr. Dalloway desires Rachel, but calls her the seducer, and Terence loves her, but complains when he cannot pin her down satisfactorily: "There's something I can't get hold of in you. You don't want me as I want you --you're always wanting something else" [VO, 370; my
emphasis]. Even though Terence recognizes, for example, that the ordinary man is a bully [VO, 252], that women are treated unfairly [VO, 252-258], and that Helen Ambrose gives in to her husband [VO, 296], he cannot help feeling patriarchal anger when he cannot completely possess Rachel. Love and marriage threaten Rachel, then, because they threaten an already precarious identity. Consequently, Rachel will do anything to avoid such submergence; she has, after all, expressed horror at the memory of her narrow childhood and the trap of Mr. Dalloway's definition, and thus at the experience of functioning as a possession. That Rachel senses the society's equation between passion and possession and that she therefore feels both the possession and the passion as violations of her identity does not make her neurotic; on the contrary, her death indicts her society for its definition of women because it asks, in effect, how losing one's identity in death differs from losing one's identity in marriage.35

Both Rachel and Mrs. Ramsay, then, are victims of the patriarchy, though one resists patriarchal definitions and the other celebrates them. In accepting patriarchal definitions, Mrs. Ramsay duplicates Eve's course, and at first, Rachel's movement from innocence to sin to guilt also seems to echo Eve's story. In fact, Rachel conflates Mr. Dalloway's patriarchal definitions—woman is responsible for man's passion (woman is inherently sinful),
and passion equals possession (woman must pay for her sinful nature)—so that she takes the responsibility for her own possession, just as Genesis implies Eve must do. But Rachel differs from Eve and Mrs. Ramsay in that she refuses to live her life according to those terms. Rachel's death, then, though perhaps a result of her acceptance of the blame for her own plight, also expresses an extreme resistance, a determination to remain unmergeable, literally virginal, in the face of a powerful societal force demanding submergence. Unlike Mrs. Ramsay, Rachel ultimately follows the path of Antigone and denies the validity of patriarchal definitions. At first figuratively shutting herself in a vault [VO, 86, 404], Rachel then resists patriarchal control by dying, thereby literally shutting herself in a vault; consequently, Rachel, like Antigone, succumbs to that control at the same time she triumphs over it.

Rachel Vinrace, then, creates absolute physical distance between herself and patriarchal control by destroying herself, a paradoxical acceptance and resistance of that control. Clarissa Dalloway, in contrast, although she also faces patriarchal control and also resists such control by establishing distance, does so at much less cost to herself. For Rachel, marriage is not a possibility, because she sees it only in terms of possession, but for Clarissa, marriage is a happy beginning, because she
redefines it to include distance and because she chooses to marry Richard Dalloway rather than Peter Walsh.

Peter Walsh, a much more pervasive presence in *Mrs. Dalloway* than Mr. Dalloway is in *The Voyage Out*, makes many of the patriarchal assumptions in the novel. Though he sees himself as something of an iconoclast, he has nevertheless accepted without question his society's definition of woman as man's inferior, the basic hierarchy which allows him to regard Clarissa as his possession.

The pocket-knife Peter constantly opens and shuts symbolizes not only the phallus but also the patriarchal connection between phallus and the right to make sharp, quick, cutting criticisms of others, especially women. Without the power, influence, or hidden malevolence of Sir William Bradshaw, Peter defines and commands, criticizes and prescribes, as quickly as that reputable doctor diagnoses a patient. Peter's pocket-knife shreds and slices, divides and subdivides, just as the Harley Street clocks associated with Bradshaw do [MD, 154]. For example, when Clarissa reacts prudishly to the information that a woman has had a baby before marrying, Peter is annoyed with her manner:

"timid; hard; something arrogant, unimaginative; prudish. 'The death of the soul.' He had said that instinctively, ticketing the moment as he used to do--the death of her soul [MD, 89]."

His immediate "ticketing" of the moment and her soul, his
supposed ability to "always [see] through Clarissa" [MD, 90] reminds one of Sir William Bradshaw's reputation for lightning skill, and almost infallible accuracy in diagnosis . . . understanding of the human soul. He could see the first moment they came into the room (the Warren Smiths they were called); he was certain directly he saw the man; it was a case of extreme gravity. It was a case of complete breakdown--complete physical and nervous breakdown, with every symptom in an advanced stage, he ascertained in two or three minutes . . . [MD, 144; my emphasis].

Peter's similar quick judgment, his habit of seeing through people, means he often does not actually see people;37 rather, in his hurry to impose his own meaning, he denies others their reality. When he follows a young woman through the streets of London, for example, he fantasizes about her until "she became the very woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately; merry, but discreet; black, but enchanting" [MD, 78-81]. Even when he knows someone better, his desire to control and to define clouds his vision, especially of himself. Because he wants to see Clarissa's marriage to Richard as a mistake on her part, for instance, he thinks to himself that Clarissa sees everything through Richard's eyes [MD, 116]. This false interpretation stems from Peter's jealousy, his wish that Clarissa saw everything through his eyes. He unfairly criticizes her now for what he had earlier demanded from her; at Bourton, he expected her to see life as he did, understand his criticism without his having to voice it, and change herself to fit his concept of her [MD, 90-91].
Clarissa, however, neither saw through Peter's eyes then nor sees through Richard's eyes now. Yet, Peter continues to make such demands as an adult; when he visits Clarissa, he still wants everything to radiate from him, still defines his life as important and hers as trivial [MD, 65].

Peter's egotism, a quality he recognizes in Sally Seton [MD, 284], but not in himself, means that like Mr. Dalloway in *The Voyage Out*, he cannot accept responsibility and tends to project it on to Clarissa. For example, it still shocks him that Clarissa refused him [MD, 74], and characteristically, he interprets this refusal as a lack in her—she is hard, cold, prudish—rather than as any lack in himself. Consequently, he continues to try to explain her, or in other words, to criticize and to blame her, but he rarely turns his pocket-knife on himself. He blames Clarissa for the way his life has turned out, for instance, saying to Sally that his relations with Clarissa "had spoiled his life" [MD, 292]. More specifically, he blames Clarissa for his emotional outbursts, thinking "she had reduced him to—a whimpering, snivelling old ass" [MD, 121] and for his infidelity: he "tire[s] very easily of mute devotion and . . . want[s] variety in love . . ." because Clarissa "had sapped something in him permanently" [MD, 241]. In other words, his "sins" are not his at all; instead, they are the result of her "sin," which was turning him down and refusing to become his possession.
And in fact, Peter is a possessive man, admitting, for example, that he is uncontrollably jealous, would be furious if Daisy, his new love, loved anyone else, and is planning to marry her to "prevent her from marrying anybody else" [MD, 241, 121]. Significantly, Peter does not become so insistent with Clarissa until he realizes he has a rival in Richard Dalloway. His desire to possess and control Clarissa extends to her mind; he wants to know everything about her, to penetrate every nook and cranny of her consciousness, and Clarissa feels this constant intensity as a violation. With Peter Walsh, Clarissa thinks, "everything had to be shared; everything gone into" [MD, 10]. Clarissa, then, sees love, passion, and religion as horrible not in themselves but because this very desire to control so often accompanies them; similarly, she connects Peter and Miss Kilman in her mind because of their attempts to control her. Accordingly, Clarissa recognizes the grasping quality in Peter and refuses to be grasped, but Peter sees this as a lack in Clarissa, especially in comparison to Daisy, who cries that she will give him everything he wants. He describes his relationship with Daisy as coming "after all so naturally; so much more naturally than Clarissa. No fuss. No bother. No finicking and fidgeting. All plain sailing" [MD, 238]. Obviously, Peter thinks passion means that nothing should stand in the way of his complete possession of a woman;
furthermore, he also thinks any woman who tries to prevent such complete possession is unnatural.

In addition, Peter thinks Clarissa does not know what passion means to him. In a sweeping generalization about both men and women that actually refers to himself and Clarissa, he thinks, "women ... don't know what passion is. They don't know the meaning of it to men" [MD, 121]. However, Clarissa, in explaining what she sometimes feels toward women, thinks "she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt" [MD, 47]. Her description of what certainly seems to be an orgasm proves she does indeed understand the physical nature of passion; moreover, her choice of Richard over Peter proves she also understands exactly what passion means to Peter—easy, "natural," and complete possession of her, plain sailing right over her identity.

Patriarchal assumptions, then, do not always reflect reality, and as in the case just cited, Clarissa often proves Peter's definitions wrong. For example, his intentionally wounding label of her as the "perfect hostess" and his description of her parties as all for Richard [MD, 93, 116] do not come close to the complexity of Clarissa's parties, her idea of them as an offering, or her "sense of [people's] existence ...." and her desire to bring them all together [MD, 185]. Peter, however, almost always suspects some ulterior motive for Clarissa's social behavior. At the party, for instance, he and Sally suppose
that there were people of importance, politicians, whom neither of them knew unless by sight in the picture papers, whom Clarissa had to be nice to, had to talk to. She was with them. Yet there was Richard Dalloway not in the Cabinet [MD, 284].

They assume that since Clarissa is keeping them waiting, she must be doing so in the interests of Richard's career; however, Lady Bruton has earlier criticized Clarissa for not doing enough in that regard, providing evidence that Clarissa in fact has not been the perfect political wife, one who lives through her husband and climbs social ladders for him. Of course, at the same time they think she is socializing with politicians, she has actually retired to a little room where she is trying to understand Septimus Smith's suicide. According to their interpretation of Clarissa, however, her empathy for Septimus should be impossible, since her soul died on that day long ago at Bourton, and if it did not, Richard has long since stifled it [MD, 89, 114]. Finally, Peter also misreads Clarissa when he takes out his knife during his morning visit to her and makes one of his silent pronouncements:

    for there's nothing in the world so bad for some women as marriage, he thought; and politics; and having a Conservative husband, like the admirable Richard. So it is, so it is, he thought, shutting his knife with a snap [MD, 61].

His maddening certainty makes him no less wrong. Clarissa's marriage to Richard may seem bad from his own point of view, but it was the right decision for her.
Clarissa has made the decision knowing full well what she will miss as a result: gaiety. But the novel's narrator, seemingly supporting Clarissa's decision, notes in Peter's behavior with other women the very danger Clarissa herself recognizes in him:

For it was very charming and quite ridiculous how easily some girl without a grain of sense could twist him round her finger. But at her own risk. That is to say, though he might be ever so easy, and indeed with his gaiety and good-breeding fascinating to be with, it was only up to a point. She said something—no, no; he saw through that. He wouldn't stand that—no, no [MD, 237].

Although Peter sees his relationship with Clarissa as intimate, Clarissa sees the intolerant side to it, the bullying underneath the charm. The gaiety has its price, her identity, which is something she cannot risk. Thus, although his criticism of her remains part of her mental framework, she resists his definitions and his total possession by refusing to marry him.

Marriage to Peter, in fact, would have been disastrous for Clarissa. She could not have withstood his attacks on her personality and sexuality, and she might have become another Mrs. Bradshaw, beaten and cowed [MD, 152]. Instead, she has maintained her identity during her life with the more accepting Richard; because he does not hammer at her, she does not become so hard and unyielding. She wishes she felt more sexual warmth than she does, as her sense of failure reveals, but clearly, life with Peter
would have snuffed it out entirely. Clarissa's experience with Sally indicates that it is Sally's disinterested quality more than anything else which contributes to Clarissa's passion [MD, 50]. In other words, not the fear of passion itself, but the patriarchy's linking of it with power, control, and possession, has hindered Clarissa's sexual growth.

Peter, of course, has strongly reinforced that connection in his relationship with Clarissa, and thus has indirectly contributed to Clarissa's failures with Richard. But Clarissa knew that in choosing Richard, she would be living with someone who would at least not try to change her into something she was not. Indeed, though Clarissa would rather sleep in her attic room now, it is Richard who insists she do so [MD, 46]. Clarissa, long ago at Bourton, sensed Richard's tolerance and understanding, and together, they have created a marriage in which there is love, a child, wordless communication, flowers in the middle of the day, and touch, all without the destruction of either's identity. When one recalls the Bradshaws or the Ramsays—note that there are no first names for the women—the Dalloways have, after all, achieved a great deal. Richard gives Clarissa the emotional support and sexual distance she needs; he, unlike Peter, does not bitterly criticize the virginal quality she has maintained. They each give what they can, and the result has been
happiness for them both. Distance forms the basis of their marriage:

there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect, thought Clarissa, watching him open the door; for one would not part with it oneself, or take it, against his will, from one's husband, without losing one's independence, one's self-respect—something, after all, priceless [MD, 181; my emphasis].

For Clarissa, then, virginity is a way to protect her identity, remain autonomous, and respond to people on her own terms. In choosing Richard, Clarissa chose the man who said, in effect, "For there she was" [MD, 296] years before and has lived it as a belief ever since. Thus, when Peter thinks, about Clarissa,

She had a perfectly clear notion of what she wanted. Her emotions were all on the surface. Beneath, she was very shrewd—a far better judge of character than Sally, for instance . . . [MD, 114],

he is for once exactly and ironically right. Woolf, without minimizing what Clarissa has given up, or the attraction and the pain Peter and Clarissa both feel and felt, validates Clarissa's decision to resist, through the establishment of distance, the patriarchal definition of passion as possession.40

Clarissa, then, creates distance between herself and the patriarchal attempt to possess her by defining marriage on her own terms. In contrast to Rachel, who sees marriage as destructive and thinks the only way to
put distance between it and herself is by dying, Clarissa puts some distance into marriage itself, thus retaining her identity. Lily Briscoe, like Rachel, sees destructive qualities in marriage, and like Rachel and Clarissa, wants to retain her identity, but finds yet another way to use distance in order to resist patriarchal control. Lily puts distance between herself and the patriarchy's possessive habits by deciding not to marry, but like Clarissa, also puts distance into what is important to her, in her case, art.

Attempting to define Lily in patriarchal terms, Charles Tansley and Mrs. Ramsay play roles similar to those of Mr. Dalloway in *The Voyage Out* and Peter Walsh in *Mrs. Dalloway*. To give Charles credit, he is paying for his sister's education, even though he has little money to spare. Nevertheless, he makes many contemptuous statements about women. His most devastating statement to Lily occurs when he stands over her shoulder as she paints, "making it his business to tell her women can't write, women can't paint . . ." [TTL, 292]. The statement is especially degrading because it assumes universality; Tansley has not told her she cannot paint, but that no women can--or should--and in doing so, he reflects the patriarchal structures about women and work discussed earlier. Art is not women's work.

Tansley's line never ceases to haunt Lily, and it
eventually takes on an anonymous character because it so exactly reflects the society's judgment. She always remembers the line when she begins to paint, for it becomes part of her private supply of doubts. Lily realizes that Tansley does not so much believe what he says as wish it, but although Lily understands the insecurity behind such a statement, she cannot prevent incorporating it into her thoughts. Even when she uses Tansley as a whipping boy for her anger [TtL, 293], she still minds that he said it: "Why did her whole being bow, like corn under a wind, and erect itself again from this abasement only with a great and rather painful effort?" [TtL, 130]. Thus, she not only internalizes the criticism but also blames herself for not being able to ignore it. Not surprisingly, then, Lily believes her painting will never be seen, will be hung in servants' quarters or the attic, or will be destroyed [TtL, 267, 309-310]. Yet, Lily also consciously fights the statement. She sees it as a barrier, a bogey, between herself and her work, and although she cannot destroy it altogether, she continues to paint by putting distance between herself and the statement, thus banishing it at least temporarily.

The obverse of Tansley's statement is that if you can and do paint, you must not be a woman. Mrs. Ramsay sends her the same message when she says: "there could be no disputing this: an unmarried woman . . . had missed the
best of life" [TtL, 77]. Thus, Lily must also consciously resist this variation on the definition of herself as incomplete:

Oh, but, Lily would say, there was her father; her home; even, had she dared to say it, her painting. But all this seemed so little, so virginal, against the other. . . . gathering a desperate courage she would urge her own exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that; and so have to meet a serious stare from eyes of unparalleled depth, and confront Mrs. Ramsay's simple certainty . . . that her dear Lily, her little Brisk, was a fool [TtL, 77-78; my emphasis].

If the phrase "she was not made for that" refers to sex, then Lily, like Rachel and Clarissa, sees a conflict between being herself and being in love; certainly the Ramsays reflect only too well the patriarchal equation of passion with possession.

Although Lily does not love any man in particular, she finds it difficult to resist Mrs. Ramsay's urgings concerning marriage in general. Truly attracted to the Ramsays despite the problems she sees, aware of the pull of Paul Rayley's sexuality, and enjoying the Ramsay home and the community gathered in it, Lily sees love's genuine beauty, its necessity, its mythical power, and its excitement. She also sees, however, love's horror, cruelty, barbarity, and inhumaneness. And she sees that the patriarchy demands a code of behavior from men and women which exacts a high price for its implementation. As Lily
listens to the conversation at the Ramsay dinner table, she realizes that Charles Tansley wants to break into the conversation. She thinks,

There is a code of behavior, 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? [TtL, 137]

For awhile, Lily resists the impulse to help Charles, but she cannot resist Mrs. Ramsay's silent pleading with her, so

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 there--and be nice [TtL, 139].

As she feels Mrs. Ramsay's silent gratitude, Lily realizes

ah, ... but what haven't I paid to get it [a free moment] for you? She had not been sincere.

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 [if it had not been for Mr. Bankes] were between men and women. Inevitably these were extremely insincere she thought [TtL, 139].

Thus, although Lily sometimes feels attracted to the idea of marriage, she also sees a type of dishonesty at its patriarchal core. 41
Lily, then, internalizes the struggle between the two forces, Mrs. Ramsay's belief in marriage and her own observations about it:

Such was the complexity of things. For what happened to her, especially staying with the Ramsays, was to be made to feel violently two opposite things at the same time; that's what you feel, was one; that's what I feel, was the other, and then they fought together in her mind, as now [TtL, 154].

Mrs. Ramsay represents the patriarchy so powerfully that Lily remembers later

She had only escaped by the skin of her teeth though, she thought. She had been looking at the table-cloth, and it had flashed upon her that she would move the tree [in her painting] to the middle, and need never marry anybody, and she had felt an enormous exultation. She had felt, now she could stand up to Mrs. Ramsay--a tribute to the astonishing power that Mrs. Ramsay had over one [TtL, 262].

For Lily, marriage is a dilution; she cannot imitate, let alone actually feel, "the glow, the rhapsody, the self-surrender" [TtL, 154, 224] she has seen on other women's faces. She, too, sees the connection the patriarchy makes between passion and possession, but it is not until she realizes her work will give her some distance from society's expectations that she can finally say to Mrs. Ramsay, "They're [the Rayleys] happy like that; I'm happy like this" [TtL, 260].

Lily's work, then, her excitement about having such a treasure [TtL, 128], enables her to resist patriarchal control. However, the pressure upon her to marry, whether
she wants to or not, and the underlying message that if she does not, she is somehow incomplete, make Lily ambivalent about just what a woman is. When Mr. Ramsay, groaning for sympathy, comes to her after Mrs. Ramsay's death, she thinks

that any other woman in the whole world would have done something, said something—all except myself... who am not a woman, but a peevish, ill-tempered, dried-up old maid, presumably [TtL, 226; my emphasis].

The internal struggle rages on, with Lily calling herself names from the patriarchal book, but then resisting with "presumably." Resistance does not make the inward battles disappear.

Determined to make the effort, however, Lily paints only what she sees, thereby avoiding the insincerity she earlier thought was inevitable in human relations.

Necessary for integrity in both her life and her art is distance:

So much depends then, thought Lily Briscoe, . . . so much depends . . . upon distance: whether people are near us or far from us . . . [TtL, 284].

Lily, for example, loves Mr. Bankes, but she can love him because of his "disinterested intelligence" [TtL, 262-263], in other words, because of his distance from her. In her art, only when Mrs. Ramsay is distant in time and Mr. Ramsay is distant in space can Lily solve the problem in her painting and have her vision. With distance, she sees the high price of patriarchal manners and decides not to
With distance, she sees not only the mythic and miraculous nature of the Ramsays but also their reality. With her art, Lily puts distance between herself and the Ramsays, thus retaining her own individual view of reality. With the line in her painting, Lily puts distance between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, thus retaining, at least in art, Mrs. Ramsay as a complex individual rather than as a possession. Distance, then, not only enables Lily to establish her own identity but also to see Mrs. Ramsay's. For Lily, distance functions in both her life and her art as resistance to patriarchal appearances and as revelation of reality.

Rachel, Clarissa, and Lily show that when the patriarchy defines love and passion to make women possessions and to keep them under control, then virginity becomes necessary to develop psychological and emotional freedom. "[T]his being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" [MD, 14] makes intimacy problematic. Woolf makes clear that within such a society, creating an identity means keeping one's distance.

This resistance/distance enables the female characters in Woolf's novels to see reality more clearly. Indeed, when Lily steps back, becomes more detached, loses "consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance..." [TtL, 238], she confronts reality. Facing the blank space on her canvas, she thinks,
Here she was again, . . . drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers—this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her, emerged stark at the back of appearances and commanded her attention [TtL, 236].

Distance, then, is a position outside the normal, every-day routine, outside the society's manners and appearances, but not outside life itself. The distance Rachel, Clarissa, and Lily put between themselves and the patriarchal society allows them to see anew, to see the old assumptions and thus to question them; in other words, distance uncovers what the patriarchy conceals about women and about itself.

Lily realizes, for example, that Tansley's refrain, "women can't paint, women can't write," is not a truth or even a belief for him, but rather, something he wishes were true, a saying that somehow helps him [TtL, 130, 292]. Thus, distance enables Lily to see that patriarchal definitions are not given, handed down by God, always and already present, but instead, are constructs, reflections of desire, useful fictions. Such a perspective transforms other "truths," also; Eve's sinful nature, for example, becomes a useful fiction for justifying men's treatment and control of women. The patriarchy, from Eve onward, has taught women that their limits and their inferiority are inherent. Through the control of the pen and society's manners, the patriarchy repeats its fiction until women
internalize the lesson and it becomes "reality." Thus, the patriarchy avoids responsibility for the creation of its fiction and the resulting control of women. Distance, however, reveals that truths such as the inherent inferiority of women are actually imposed from without rather than already existing within.

As Lily does for Mrs. Ramsay, Woolf gives her female characters this gift of distance. Her women, then, do not speak from within the manners of the patriarchy, but from outside those manners, as Woolf gives her female characters exactly what the patriarchy tries to deny them: their own reality and voices, complexity, and value. Thus, Lily, for example, becomes aware of Mrs. Ramsay's complexity and thinks, "One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with . . . . Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get around that one woman with . . . ." [TtL, 294]. Woolf recognizes that a woman's life may be complex even when it exists within severely drawn boundaries. In contrast to the patriarchy which dismisses women with simplistic definitions, Woolf takes women seriously by acknowledging their complexity. For example, when Woolf portrays women as differing from patriarchal definitions of them, she does not suggest that they are unnatural; indeed, in Woolf's novels, women naturally resist such definitions. Thus, she questions the patriarchal definitions that would label women unnatural as a result of their complexity.
Woolf consistently shows how wrong the patriarchal definitions are, thus implicitly challenging the main patriarchal assumption, that women are inferior by nature or by definition. Woolf, by having her female characters overturn not only specific definitions of Rachel as temptress, Clarissa as cold and soulless, and Lily as incompetent and incomplete, but also more general definitions of women as all alike, simple, and less valuable than men to society, strongly suggests that definitions of women as inherently inferior are not valid, either; thus, Woolf exposes patriarchal definitions as methods of control rather than observations of reality. The characters' refusal to participate in such definitions and their detached perspectives allow the reader to see reality more clearly, without its customary overlay of patriarchal preconceptions. Woolf uses distance, which is not itself in the aggressive, controlling patriarchal mode, to weaken the patriarchy's control. By portraying ordinary women resisting patriarchal definitions, Woolf performs a feminist act: she transfers the original sin back to its source, to the patriarchy's equation of difference and inferiority.

Because she resists patriarchal control without using patriarchal methods herself, however, some critics define Woolf's work as amoral, without moral values or social convictions. Woolf, because she dislikes preaching,
abhors force, and resists control, seems amoral to those
readers used to patriarchal morality, hierarchical
definitions, and masculine assertions. However, Trilling's
description of a novel's moral task makes Woolf's moral
stance clear, since she does, in fact, force the reader
to question his or her own assumptions about women. Woolf
acts morally when she unMASKS the reality—control rather
than description—behind patriarchal definitions,
assumptions, and appearances. But her morality does not
take the usual didactic form. Rather, it questions,
suggests, discloses. Critic who assert that Woolf makes
no moral statements evade the moral questions she asks.

Simply by presenting some ordinary women as they
are, then, Woolf undermines the patriarchal edifice built
on the fiction that inferiority is intrinsic to the female
condition. In stepping back to look past Milton's bogey,
Woolf reveals the patriarchy's attempts to deny reality
in order to control women, shows the resulting damage to
women, and recognizes the complexity and resistance that
exists in women in spite of such damaging control. The
distance she uses to see women's reality and the patriarchy's
reality, she in turn gives to her female characters.
Woolf puts the pen into Eve's hand.
Footnotes for Chapter Two

1 Beverly Ann Schlack identifies this line, which Orlando mentions but does not quote in Orlando, as being the second line of Pope's Moral Essays, Epistle 2, entitled 'To a Lady' and subtitled 'Of the Characters of Women.' See Continuing Presences: Virginia Woolf's Use of Literary Allusion (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), p. 149.

2 Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's influence on this chapter extends even to the epigraphs. See The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 8-9 and 187. The first section of their book, 'Toward a Feminist Poetics,' provided me with specific data and references to support my felt but often unproven conclusions, with provocative insights and connections that led me to further speculations, and most important, with an attitude toward female writers in general and Virginia Woolf in particular that encouraged me in my own efforts to take pen in hand.


4 Josephine O'Brien Schaefer points out that for Woolf, 'Foremost among the neglected subjects was woman as a real human being, not merely as the creation of the male imagination . . . .' See The Three-Fold Nature of Reality (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), p. 23.

5 Gilbert and Gubar, p. 17.

6 Woolf herself discussed such inner obstacles in A Room of One's Own and in her essay 'Professions for Women,' CE, II, 284-89. In the latter, for example, she writes, 'Outwardly, what is simpler than to write books? Outwardly, what obstacles are there for a woman rather than for a man? Inwardly, I think, the case is very different; she has still many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome. Indeed it will be a long time still, I think, before a woman can sit down to write a book without finding a phantom
to be slain, a rock to be dashed against" (CE, II, 288).
For other excellent discussions of these intangible inner
barriers, see Tillie Olsen, Silences (New York: Delacorte
Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1978); Jean Baker Miller, M.D.,
Toward a New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press,
1976); and Gilbert and Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic.

"Announcements," Virginia Woolf Miscellany, No. 6
(Winter 1977), n. pag.

Virginia Woolf, The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume
One: 1915-1919, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York and
indebted to Gilbert and Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic,
Ch. vi, for their discussion of the link between Milton
and Woolf.

Lionel Trilling, "The Meaning of a Literary Idea,"
in The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and

Jacques Choron, Death and Western Thought (New York:

Tim. 2.13-14.

Gen. 3.16. "To the woman he said, 'I will greatly
multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall
bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your
husband, and he shall rule over you.'"

John Milton, Paradise Lost in Complete Poems and
Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: The

Lionel Trilling, "Manners, Morals, and the Novel,"
in The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and

Paul West, "Enigmas of Imagination: Woolf's Orlando
through The Looking Glass," The Southern Review, S.2, 13
(1977), 444. See also Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel:
Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf
where he insists that Woolf wanted to "convey simultaneously
a picture of life and manners and a corresponding image of
minds."


Gilbert and Gubar, writing about the hidden nature of feminist concerns in fiction and poetry, pp. 45-92, cite Elaine Showalter, p. 75, "Review Essay," Signs 1 (1975), 435, who notes that feminist criticism allows us to "'see meaning in what has previously been empty space. The orthodox plot recedes, and another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint.'"

Also see the description of Milly Brush in Mrs. Dalloway, p. 161. When women do not disguise themselves and at the same time observe "men with unflinching rectitude," they are perceived as being "entirely without feminine charm."

Jinny, an obviously sensual woman in The Waves, feels she must remain rooted, waiting for a man to summon her. See pp. 246 and 296. In Between the Acts, Bart frightens his young grandson and then labels the boy a crybaby and a coward when he cries. See pp. 13, 18-19. Men and women go to different rooms after dinner in The Years. See pp. 58 and 255.


Lucy Crane (1886; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), pp. 100-108. The message of the story remains the same no matter what translation one reads, however: if women are given even a little power, they become insatiable, demanding more and more. That is, they become uncontrollable.

23 Jean Alexander, *The Venture of Form in the Novels of Virginia Woolf* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1974), p. 115, says that the tale is an "accompaniment to thematic statements" in the novel, and she, too, sees the tale in relationship to men, women, and power: "there is an evident causal relationship between wifely insubordination and terrestrial chaos."

24 It has become a feminist commonplace to note the connection between lack of real power and the existence of manipulation, but see, in particular, Miller, pp. 9-12, on the ways subordinates act and react to dominants in a society and Schaefer, p. 123, who notes that Mrs. Ramsay employs her powers in personal domination because she has no other arena for them. Even Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers* (New York: Signet - New American Library, Inc., 1963), p. 31, after noting Mrs. Proudie's domination of her husband, also notes that "Mrs. Proudie has not been able to sit at the boards and committees to which her husband has been called by the state, nor, as he often reflects, can she make her voice heard in the House of Lords." Meant as a satiric comment about the areas Mrs. Proudie cannot manipulate, Trollope's statement actually identifies a very good reason for Mrs. Proudie's iron rule of her husband.

25 See Woolf's discussion of the "Angel in the House" in her essay "Professions for Women," CE, II, 284-89. For another example of how the patriarchy denies women any humanity, this time from the contemptuous side of the scale, see ARQ, p. 116, where Woolf quotes John Langdon Davies' warning to women, "'that when children cease to be altogether desirable, women cease to be altogether necessary.'"

says, "The body of Virginia Woolf's work gives a wealth of evidence that Woolf could accept the sex drive, within certain esthetic limitations, but only when it was not predatory. Sexuality, however, is very readily associated with the drive towards power."


30 Heilbrun, Androgyny, pp. 9 and 28. Heilbrun cites Jane Harrison, Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion (1912; rpt. New York: Meridian Books, 1962), p. 505. Harrison says that being a virgin meant "'not tied by any bonds to any male who must be acknowledged as master.'" My reading of Heilbrun first led me to the equation between distance and resistance and the suggestion of virginity as a strategy; those general ideas and my particular interpretation of Clarissa Dalloway and Peter Walsh were already formulated when I read Rose's similar discussion in Woman of Letters, pp. 142-45.

31 The patriarchy perceives women as needing protection because they are inherently sinful and/or weak. The patriarchy provides protection rather than education because the Adam and Eve myth suggests that, especially for women, knowledge is dangerous.
32 Mitchell A. Leaska, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf: From Beginning to End* (New York: John Jay Press, 1977), p. 14, notes Helen's suspicions of Willoughby Vinrace—"She suspected him of nameless atrocities with regard to his daughter, as indeed she always suspected him of bullying his wife" (VO, 20)—but sees them as characteristic of her "negativity." Leaska fails to note, however, the following passage on p. 96 of the novel, a passage in the narrator's voice: Willoughby "was always thinking how to educate his daughter so that Theresa might be glad. He was a very ambitious man; and although he had not been particularly kind to her while she lived, as Helen thought, he now believed that she watched him from Heaven, and inspired what was good in him" [my emphasis].


34 Mitchell A. Leaska, in contrast, notes the physical response but neglects to mention Rachel's sense of possibility and wonder. See p. 27. Carol S. Lashof supports my contention that critics readily interpret the dream as a neurotic fear of sexuality in "The Sententious Mr. Dalloway," *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, No. 16 (Spring 1981), p. 2. Her reading of the kiss and the dream is similar to mine in that she, too, wants to know why Rachel's response changes, asking, "But what has turned exultation to horror and expansive vision to clausrophobia?"

35 It should be evident from my discussion that I agree with Leaska's description of Rachel's death as self-willed. See pp. 12-38. But I disagree with his reasoning since I see her death as resistance, not withdrawal. Appearing after my discussion was formulated, Nancy K. Miller's analysis of women's plots, pp. 36-48, more nearly corresponds to my interpretation of Rachel. Especially pertinent is her suggestion that in much women's fiction, "a world outside love proves to be out of the world altogether" (p. 47).

36 Clarissa has been to see Bradshaw and is extremely glad when she is out on the street again [MD, 278]; significantly, she uses the same word to describe what Sir William does to life—he makes it intolerable—that she uses to describe Peter's desire to share everything [MD, 281, 10].
Peter, interested in the state of the world and the defects of Clarissa's soul, does not see the beauty of the day, the trees, and the grass. Clarissa thinks that he would look if she asked him to, but would not see [MD, 9]. Similarly, Mrs. Ramsay is astonished by Mr. Ramsay's understanding but thinks that he was "born blind, deaf, and dumb, to the ordinary things . . . did he notice the flowers? No. Did he notice the view? No" [TtL, 107]. Much has been made of Mrs. Ramsay's short-sightedness, but the far-sightedness of Mr. Ramsay and Peter Walsh can be just as blind.

William R. Mueller, "The Soul's Sad Delight," in Celebration of Life: Studies in Modern Fiction (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1972), p. 201, says "The faults Peter has always attributed to Clarissa are perhaps without exception characteristics he has seen as preventing his possession of her."


See Vivian Gornick, "On Rereading Virginia Woolf," in Essays in Feminism (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 214-217, whose interpretation of Clarissa and Lily's coldness supports my own and Robert Kiely, Beyond Egotism, pp. 119-130 for an excellent discussion of Mrs. Dalloway which focuses on Woolf's belief that "the precondition of true espousal is . . . the acknowledgment of an ultimate core of inviolability." Kiely comes to similar conclusions about Richard, Clarissa, and Peter, but his book appeared too late for me to incorporate in my study.

Lily's awareness of the insincerity of relationships between men and women recalls Terence Hewet's analysis of the Ambrose marriage in The Voyage Out: "Even the Ambroses, whom he admired and respected profoundly—in spite of all the love between them, was not their marriage too a compromise? She gave way to him; she spoilt him; she arranged things for him; she who was all truth to others was not true to her husband, was not true to her friends if they came in conflict with her husband" [V0, 296]. Terence is more inclined to see this as a flaw in Helen's
character, but Rachel's sense of human relationships would put at least part of the responsibility on the institution of marriage within the patriarchy.

42 Virginia Woolf uses her novel to achieve the same ends with her parents. See Jane Lilienfeld, "The Deceptiveness of Beauty': Mother Love and Mother Hate in To the Lighthouse," Twentieth Century Literature, 23 (1977), 345-76 for a study of To the Lighthouse's relationship to Virginia Woolf's life.


44 Alex Zwerdling, "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System," PMLA, 92 (1977), 70, writes, "As a moralist, Woolf works by indirection, subterraneously undermining the officially accepted code, mocking, suggesting, calling into question, rather than asserting, advocating, bearing witness: the satirist's art." Such an art might also be called the feminist's, particularly well-suited for the woman who wants to challenge the patriarchy without using patriarchal means. See also Michèle Barrett, "Towards a Virginia Woolf Criticism," in The Sociology of Literature: Applied Studies, ed. Diana Laurenson, Sociological Review Monograph, 26 (Keele: University of Keele, 1978), p. 151. Barrett says that "Virginia Woolf's novels contain a fundamental criticism of bourgeois patriarchal society, and although the attack is launched mainly from a feminist perspective it encompasses to some degree a left wing critique of the class system... this criticism has not been taken seriously by Woolf's literary critics, despite its continued oblique presence in her novels" [my emphasis].
Chapter Three

THE DENIAL OF DEATH AND DISTANCE AS AFFIRMATION

The lemon-coloured leaves on the elm trees, the round apples glowing red in the orchard and the rustle of the leaves make me pause to think how many other than human forces affect us.

--Virginia Woolf
Moments of Being

Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death . . .

--Mrs. Dalloway

I shall make myself face the fact that there is nothing--nothing for any of us. Work, reading, writing are all disguises; and relations with people. Yes, even having children would be useless.

--Virginia Woolf
Diary

But how describe the world seen without a self? There are no words. Blue, red--even they distract, even they hide with thickness instead of letting the light through.

--The Waves

Why is life so tragic; so like a little strip of pavement over an abyss . . . . And with it all how happy I am--if it weren't for my feeling that it's a strip of pavement over an abyss.

--Virginia Woolf
Diary

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Woolf's gift of distance to her female characters reveals that the patriarchy's hierarchical thinking does not reflect reality, but, rather, a need to control. Furthermore, the distance Woolf gives the artists in her novels indicates that the patriarchy's attempts to define women and thus control social reality result from an even greater ambition: to deny death and thus control reality itself.¹

The patriarchy, using tactics against death similar to those used against women, denies death's strength, its presence within life, and even its very existence. And as was true in its treatment of women, the patriarchy uses its control of the pen to maintain its denial.

Humanity's myths and stories have long portrayed death as an aberration. Jacques Choron notes the history of such thinking in his introduction to Death and Western Thought:

For the primitive, then, death is the result of the action or malign influence of an enemy in either human or spiritual form: one can be killed, or magic can induce a deadly sickness. But for these hostile acts, no one would ever die.

The various myths about the origin of death found among the primitives bear out the conclusion that during the long prehistory of the race, death was not considered a necessary attribute of the human condition. Man was believed to have been created deathless. Death came into the world because of the mistake made by the messenger of deathlessness, who either garbled the message out of forgetfulness or malice or did not arrive on time. It is interesting to note that, as Radin points out, nowhere can the idea be found among the primitives that man himself is responsible for death (as he is in the Old Testament); rather, the explanation often encountered is that the gods
have sent death because they are jealous of man, who has driven them from the earth.²

Although the explanation of death in Genesis shifts responsibility for its appearance from God to woman, it nevertheless still implicitly assumes that death deviates from the original plan: if it were not for Eve's sin, humanity would be in deathless Eden yet. No different from primitive myths, then, the Old Testament myth of origin as well as the Christian promise of eternal life—which simply projects the denial into the future—deny death's inevitability and its presence in human reality.

The Adam and Eve myth establishes God, man, and life as origins, as having priority in time, and thus, in the patriarchy's hierarchical way of thinking, grants God, man, and life superiority and names sin, woman, and death inferior: sin and death will be ultimately defeated by the God of life, and in the meantime, woman is inferior to man because she is responsible for both sin and death.³ The myth, then, posits human control over death's existence by portraying death as an absence which becomes a presence only as a result of Eve's actions. But death is not seen as a presence in the present, but as a future threat, a punishment. Therefore, the Adam and Eve myth assumes death was absent in the past, posits its absence in the far-off future through the existence of the tree of life (which becomes Christ), and displaces its presence in the present to an individual life's end, thus revealing a strong desire that
death not exist at all. Ostensibly recognizing death, the myth actually denies it, putting itself and its meaning between the human being and death's reality. In doing so, the myth names itself and its denial of death reality and thus provides, as Frank Kermode puts it, a "total and adequate [explanation] of things as they are and were."\(^4\)

Control of the pen, then, controls the myth, which in turn, controls death.

Robert Alter says that

Myth, folktale, fable, and romance, all the archaic forms of storytelling from which the novel was a radical historical break, overlap or sidestep death as an immediate presence in timeless cyclical of divine lives or in the teleological arc from "once upon a time" to "lived happily ever after."\(^3\)

Certainly, The Arabian Nights portrays storytelling as achieving such avoidance. The frame tale transforms the vengeful Old Testament God into Bluebeard, who can punish Scheherazade if she displeases him, and similarly portrays the woman as responsible for whether or not death appears. Scheherazade's own stories constantly evade, postpone, and displace death, and death remains a possibility but not an inevitability; in fact, Scheherazade's 1001 stories literally defend her and the other young women in the kingdom from death. Thus, the story sequence asserts some measure of human control over death, assumes that the human ordering of experience into meaning can defeat death, and implies that Scheherazade's stories are real and death is not: as long
as she finds the right words to invoke against it, death does not exist. Control of the pen keeps her safe.

From the viewpoint of modern biology, however, myths such as Adam and Eve and stories such as Scheherezade's deny humanity's origin. According to biological theories, "life developed from an inorganic state." Thus, death is the origin, the prior condition. K. R. Eissler contends that the idea of death as intrinsic to life, and hence more than origin or end, appeared first in 1910, when George Simmel wrote that death is "a formal quality of life itself, coloring all its contents." Thus, death changes from an event to a constant presence. In the 1920's, death was seen as "the precondition to life" by such different thinkers as Heidegger, the metaphysician, Ehrenberg, the biologist, and Freud, the psychologist. According to Eissler, Heidegger saw death as present in every moment of life, Ehrenberg saw it as "an expression of the essence of life" because life processes lead to structurization and death occurs when all becomes structured, and Freud saw death as the goal of all life, claiming there is a death instinct which ultimately conquers the many drives which preserve life. All of them thought death was present from the beginning of life; for all of them, "life contained its own ultimate abolition."

Myths present a god who creates life and thus project death outward, blaming its occurrence on anything
except the human condition itself. The shift in perspective effected by the thinkers in the early 1900's, however, removes death from the framework of blame or responsibility, cause and effect. Death simply is. From this point of view, mythic gods and myths themselves become human constructs used to deny our origin, to deny death itself.

Such a shift in perspective, from heavenly given to human creation, clearly parallels the shift in thinking associated with the modern literary age. The moderns had in common what Gabriel Josipovici calls "an insistence on the fact that what previous generations had taken for the world was only the world seen through the spectacles of habit . . . ." For example, as Josipovici explains, the concept of the self underwent profound questioning:

The crucial insight [of the moderns]. . . is that the self, which had seemed so firmly rooted, so much a part of nature, to the men and women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was in fact a construction.

Woolf's contention that human character changed in or around 1910 and her insistence on conventions of character also changing [CE, I, 320, 330] reflects this particular modern insight. For Woolf, reality itself exists, but it bears little or no resemblance to what human beings create and call reality. Woolf distinguishes the difference between the way humans see reality and reality itself this way: "But who knows--once one takes a pen and writes? How difficult not to go making 'reality' this and that, whereas
it is one thing" [Diary, III, 196]. And in To the Light-
house, Lily Briscoe similarly describes the difference:

What was the problem then? She must try to
get hold of something that evaded her. It
evaded her when she thought of Mrs. Ramsay; it
evaded her now when she thought of her picture.
Beautiful phrases. But what she wished to get
hold of was that very jar on the nerves, the
thing itself before it has been made anything
[TtL, 287; my emphasis].

The reality sought by Woolf and by Lily, then, exists prior
to humanity's creations.

Woolf often calls this particular reality a thing. 11

For example, when she criticizes the Edwardians in "Modern
Fiction," she writes

that for us at this moment the form of fiction
most in vogue more often misses than secures the
thing we seek. Whether we call it life or
spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential
thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be
contained any longer in such ill-fitting vest-
ments as we provide [CE, II, 105; my emphasis].

In criticizing the same Edwardians in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs.
Brown," Woolf distinguishes between the "fabric of things"
and "life itself" [CE, I, 332, 337]. And in her diary, she
describes reality as "a thing I see before me" [Diary, III,
196]. "Thing" is a fitting word for Woolf's sense of
reality, because it expresses the obdurate quality that
things have in her novels--Bernard keeps running smack into
a pillar-box, for instance. In Woolf's fiction, the reality
existing prior to humanity's creations defies any attempt to
shape it into a particular order; it is just there. 12
The world, then, exists independently of oneself and one's perceptions of it in Woolf's novels. Awareness of the "otherness" of others and the independence of the world results in the realization that there exists a separation between what one desires and what is, that there exists a distance between one's informing mind and the world itself. Furthermore, this discovery of the world's indifference may precipitate an awareness of death. As Josipovici explains, the person recognizes that the world and his or her wishes are not one and that therefore, he or she will die. When Lily looks at some far-away dunes, for example, she becomes sad because the thing was completed partly and partly because distant views seem to outlast by a million years . . . the gazer and to be communing already with a sky which beholds an earth entirely at rest [TtL, 34; my emphasis].

Such a distance is not physical but mental. One feels removed from everyday life although one may be right in the midst of it. For example, when Lily begins to paint, she feels drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers—this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her, emerged stark at the back of appearances and commanded her attention [TtL, 236].

As she stares at the blank space on her canvas, then, Lily undergoes a shift in perspective: everyday reality recedes and "this other thing," the stark reality of life and death, emerges. The shift in perspective may be gradual or sudden,
but in any case, the usual protection, one's "spectacles of habit," are ripped off. Seeing the world as it is, without mediation, a Woolf character no longer feels at ease in the world because he or she has momentarily stepped outside the comforting patriarchal explanations and myths and has seen death's presence in life.

Woolf's awareness of this distance between one's mind and what is, of the separation between desire and reality, results in her portrayal of the co-existence of life and death in her novels so that she acknowledges death's constant presence in reality through her fiction's content, prose style, language, and characters. Obviously, death is one of Woolf's main subjects--major characters die in all but three of her novels--and a diary entry about To the Lighthouse shows that she was aware of its importance to her:

This is going to be fairly short: to have father's character done complete in it; & mothers; & St Ives; & childhood; & all the usual things I try to put in--life, death &c [Diary, III, 18].

Life and death, as Bernard Blackstone says, "form the inexhaustible counterpoint of her work." Certainly, in all of Woolf's novels, she directly or indirectly suggests death's presence through her attention to war, nature's cycles, time, chaos, loss of identity, and nothingness. Even the humor of Orland's immortality, for example, does not conceal death's reality.

Formally, Woolf recognizes death within her prose. Though of course in a linear arrangement on the page, her
cyclical prose rhythm works against the traditional pattern of beginning, middle, and end. In other words, her prose does not generally build toward one climactic moment near the end of a novel, but moves toward, and then falls away from, many climactic moments; her prose's rhythm finds its source in nature's waves, not in an evolutionary or historical cause and effect pattern. In addition, as Jonathan Quick points out, even the rhythm of the waves is sometimes disrupted:

The prosaic bullies its way into the poetic; a car backfires, someone walks suddenly into the room, an inappropriate joke is cracked—thus the embryonic moment is aborted. By admitting this intractable element into her fiction, Virginia Woolf embraced a principle of realism which threatened its formal coherence.16

Thus, Woolf's prose encloses the idea of death within itself by consciously accepting a "rhythm of repeated creation and dissolution..."17 Woolf's prose accepts, acknowledges, and includes: filled with "ands," semi-colons, dashes, and "fors,"18 it tends to incorporate ("both/and") instead of exclude ("either/or"). Thus, it gathers everything into itself, including death. Furthermore, according to both Alan Warren Friedman and Terrence Doody, the use of stream of consciousness produces a gap between self and reality.19 Woolf's very technique, then, causes an awareness of death.

What's more, Woolf's vocabulary conveys death's presence.20 The word "nothing" echoes throughout her novels,21 and even though not literally referring to death,
words such as "nothing," "nothingness," "emptiness," and "silence" do in fact suggest absence and therefore death. Woolf frequently creates literal gaps in her prose with statements such as "Nothing happened," or "Nothing was said," and these fictional gaps mirror the actual gap caused by someone's death. The repetition of the word "nothing" calls attention to Woolf's using it to carry more than one meaning. For example, Bernard's thought, "The leaves and the wood concealed nothing" [W, 363], may mean that there were things to be concealed, but the wood did not do so, or that there was no thing there to be hidden, or that the living leaves masked "nothing," the nothingness of death's presence. Thus, even on the fundamental level of language itself, death pervades Woolf's novels.

However, the main way Woolf communicates her sense of death's constant presence within reality is through her characters' attitudes and responses to death. Almost all of Woolf's major characters experience distancing and thus an awareness of death at some time or another. The awareness of death in Woolf's novels is triggered whenever a character becomes aware of the separation between him or herself and the world; causing this separation may be the actual death of a friend, solitude or detachment, or nature. For example, after Percival dies in The Waves, Bernard notes how he sees the world differently: "Bodies, I note, already begin to look ordinary; but what is behind them differs—
perspective" [W, 282]. Or Mrs. Ramsay, feeling detached from her husband and all her friends before her dinner party, thinks,

She had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything, as she helped the soup, as if there was an eddy—there—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, while they came in one after another. . . . But this is not a thing, she thought, ladling out soup, that one says.

Raising her eyebrows at the discrepancy—that was what she was thinking, this was what she was doing—ladling out soup—she felt, more and more strongly, outside that eddy; or as if a shade had fallen, and robbed of colour, she saw things truly [TtL, 125-126].

This disconcerting shift in perspective may also occur in the presence of nature, when one becomes aware of the discrepancy between the permanence of what one sees and the mortality of one's self. Nancy Ramsay has such an experience when watching the sea:

And then, letting her eyes slide imperceptibly above the pool and rest on that wavering line of sea and sky, on the tree trunks which the smoke of steamers made waver upon the horizon, she became with all that power sweeping savagely in and inevitably withdrawing, hypnotised, and the two senses of that vastness and this tininess (the pool had diminished again) flowering within it made her feel that she was bound hand and foot and unable to move by the intensity of feelings which reduced her own body, her own life, and the lives of all the people in the world, for ever, to nothingness [TtL, 115].

However, not all of Woolf's characters react to this dislocating experience of becoming aware of death in the same way. In fact, her characters can be divided into three
groups according to how they respond to death's presence in reality. The patriarchal characters—Jinny, Susan, Louis, and Neville in *The Waves*, Peter Walsh and Sir William Bradshaw in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*—fear death and erect defenses between themselves and their awareness of it. They ignore what they do see about death, holding up shades to life and calling the result reality [W, 318]. They use their relationships with people, the details of their everyday lives, their children, their work, and even their "characters" and life stories to obscure "the thing itself." The victims, Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway* and Rhoda in *The Waves*, on the contrary, cannot rid themselves of their awareness of death. Indeed, what they see almost wipes them out as seers. They have virtually no defenses against their visions of death, and they eventually succumb to those visions and commit suicide. The artists—Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Lily in *To the Lighthouse*, Bernard in *The Waves*, and Miss La Trobe in *Between the Acts*—neither deny death nor are overwhelmed by it. Like the victims, the artists clearly see death as present in life, and like the patriarchal characters, they organize life in order to live. But unlike the victims, the artists create in the face of death, and unlike the patriarchal characters, they do not name their creations reality. The artists do not ignore death, and they do not see only death, either; rather, Clarissa, Lily, Bernard, and Miss La Trobe
acknowledge death as the motivator of human effort by always including its presence within their creations.\textsuperscript{22}

Woolf's portrayal of these characters' different responses to death establishes a correlation between responses to death and social behavior. Patriarchal characters, for example, control death by imposing meaning on reality. As a result, they also control individuals: in order for patriarchal defenses to be named reality, most people within a society must participate in the same defenses; such a necessity for validation, however, means that patriarchal characters must limit the ways people within the society can see. Becker explains the connection between death and society's morality this way:

\begin{quote}
Society wants to be the one to decide how people are to transcend death; it will tolerate the \textit{causa-sui} project only if it fits into the standard social project. Otherwise there is the alarm of "Anarchy!" This is one of the reasons for bigotry and censorship of all kinds over personal morality: people fear that the standard morality will be undermined—another way of saying that they fear they will no longer be able to control life and death.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

In Woolf's novels, patriarchal characters' control of others usually involves hierarchical thinking and ranges from the mild—feeling superior to other characters by labeling difference inferior, and criticizing different defenses and lives—to the severe—pressuring characters to adhere to certain world views, imposing defenses on others, demanding that others give allegiance to patriarchal
standards, and even removing from society those characters who stray too far from the "standard social project." Thus, Woolf clearly shows how the patriarchy's denial of death influences its particular reality, morality, and manners.

If the patriarchal characters want to make everybody else into images of themselves in order to conceal death, the victims see death so constantly and so vividly that they can hardly form images of their own identities. As a result, they have few relationships with others, and those they do have are unhappy. Certainly the victims' visions of death overwhelm them, but the patriarchy's refusal to confront those visions isolate them even further. The victims, in fact, are ostracized by society because they expose the patriarchy's repressed fears.

The artists neither project their identities onto others nor submerge their identities in their visions. Rather, the artists, because they use distance to acknowledge death's presence in reality, see themselves and others as separate entities. Lily, for example, realizes that she cannot actually hate the often hateful Charles Tansley: "But nevertheless, the fact remained, it was almost impossible to dislike any one if one looked at them" [TtL, 128-129].

The artists see people in their utter otherness and mystery, and as a result, they have a basic respect for humanity in its various forms. They have generally good relationships with others because they do not reduce people to sameness, but recognize and accept difference. Involved with people,
then, but feeling no need to control them, the artists' acknowledgment of death makes them Woolf's most tolerant characters. 24

The distance of Woolf's artists verifies the victims' visions of death, reveals the patriarchy's fear and barriers, and ultimately affirms the presence and value of death within life. By examining the interactions between these groups of characters and by revealing the correlation between a society's response to death and its social arrangements, Woolf condemns the high cost of patriarchal control: such avoidance of reality ultimately results in the denial of individual reality. In turn, the high cost of its control reveals how desperate the patriarchy is to deny death and, thus, how fragile the entire patriarchal edifice is. Woolf exposes the patriarchy's foundation as a blatant evasion of reality, and thus threatens to topple everything built on top of that foundation, especially patriarchal morality and manners. Indeed, by simply acknowledging death's presence and power in an intractable reality through her characters' responses, Woolf contradicts the denials of death expressed in patriarchal myths, and even more disconcerting, confronts readers with their own desires that death not exist. In Trilling's terms, then, Woolf once again depicts a moral confrontation between appearances and reality, or, according to Kermode's definitions, she portrays the conflict between a society's myths and its "conscious fictions." 25
Woolf, acutely aware of her society's myths, discusses in her diary a societal habit she wants to break, the "screen making habit" of labeling people and thus erecting barriers between self and others. She describes such screens as being "made out of our own integument" and as therefore obscuring "the thing itself, which has nothing whatever in common with a screen" [Diary, III, 104]. Woolf portrays her patriarchal characters as habitual screen makers who want to filter out the threatening presence of death in reality and who consequently put hierarchical barriers between themselves and others. As Bernard puts it in The Waves, "the being grows rings" [W, 358], or as Becker notes, a person screens out "the despair of the human condition" by building defenses; and these defenses allow him to feel a basic sense of self-worth, of meaningfulness, of power. They allow him to feel that he controls his life and his death.26

In the process of building these defenses, human beings create their characters, characters which themselves stand between the being and the overwhelming nature of reality itself.27

Thus, Woolf's patriarchal characters, those characters with strong identities such as Jinny, Susan, Louis, Neville, Peter Walsh, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, and Sir William Bradshaw, make the world and life itself familiar and safe by constructing boundaries, definitions, characters, and myths. They see the world as simply an extension of their desires.28

Living as though life were the only reality and death only
an illusion, these characters generally obscure any awareness of death they might have with their well-defined ways of seeing. These defenses against death take various forms. To Rhoda, for example, who has very few such defenses, her friends in The Waves "stand embedded in a substance made of repeated moments run together; are committed, have an attitude, with children, authority, fame, love, society. . ." [W, 330]. The activities of everyday living, then—raising children, working, making choices, obtaining possessions, creating a life style, following a routine—form a surface reality that filters out life as it is. In addition, patriarchal characters often deny aging, think in hierarchies and thus perceive themselves as superior or exceptional, or crave immortality.29

Jinny, Susan, Louis, and Neville in The Waves differ from Woolf's other patriarchal characters because they are not depicted with fixed character traits or as "finished" for the reader's eye. Instead, she portrays them in the very process of forming rings around their beings, of imposing meaning on experience, of forming defenses against death, and thus, she catches them in the very process of constructing their characters. In fact, characters in The Waves seem to exist somewhere before or beneath character. As Keith May writes of them, they illustrate the paradox of the human condition: "the sense of self is a fabrication that preserves the individual while veiling reality."30
Certainly Jinny, Susan, Louis, and Neville are patriarchal in that they use their individual perceptions of life to shut out their awareness of death, and certainly they project those perceptions and desires outward onto the world and thus sometimes criticize other characters' defenses in order to maintain their own. But because the reader watches Jinny, Susan, Louis, and Neville develop the patriarchal "spectacles of habit," put their disguises in place, and transform "external reality into the image of the beholder," the patriarchal characters in The Waves seem more involved in establishing their defenses than in forcing others to use the same ones. In comparison to Woolf's other patriarchal characters, then, these characters do not seem to control death—or other people—quite so relentlessly.

Nevertheless, the patriarchal characters in The Waves do interpose various interpretations of reality between themselves and the waves that represent "the thing itself," the existence of both life and death in reality. For example, Jinny sees life in terms of her body and of constant movement, thus shutting out any awareness she might have of decay and death. Within this novel's spectrum of characters, Jinny represents what Rollo May calls "[t]he obsession with sex" which "serves to cover up contemporary man's fear of death. . . . The clamor of sex. . . .drowns out the ever-waiting presence of death." For Jinny, "[t]here is nothing staid, nothing settled in this universe. All is
rippling, all is dancing; all is quickness and triumph" [W, 206]. Thus, death, the great stillness, the rigid skeleton, simply does not exist in Jinny's world of "no past, no future; merely the moment in its ring of light, and our bodies; and the inevitable climax, the ecstasy" [W, 351]. Yet Jinny's need for fine clothes, color, light, make-up, beauty, dancing, social conversation, and excitement and her movement from man to man ("I shall not be attached to one person only. I do not want to be fixed, to be pinioned" [W, 212]) give her supposedly honest sexuality a compulsive, frenzied air. She is not searching for the perfect man; rather, the perfection lies in the never stopping. Thus, Jinny tries to outrun death.

Indeed, although Jinny likes to think of herself as an instinctive animal with a body's imagination, her one vivid vision of death and her reaction to it reveal that she does not reside in a world of pure sensuality, nature, or movement at all; on the contrary, Jinny loves the society, civilization, and progress that conceal nature's reality. Jinny's sudden awareness of death invades her consciousness as she stands, appropriately enough, underground. As though imagining herself buried, she thinks, "Innumerable wheels rush and feet press just over my head." She then glimpses herself in a mirror and is shocked: "How solitary, how shrunk; how aged!" [W, 310]. For once motionless, Jinny realizes that her defense is literally decaying. She envisions millions of people descending downwards and admits
for one moment the soundless flight of upright bodies down the moving stairs like the pinioned and terrible descent of some army of the dead downwards and the churning of the great engines remorselessly forwarding us, all of us, onwards made me cower and run for shelter [W, 310].

Immediately after this vision, however, Jinny defiantly dismisses not only death, but also her fear of it:

But I will not be afraid. I will bring the whip down on my flanks. . . . I swear, making deliberately in front of the glass those slight preparations that equip me, I will not be afraid" [W, 310].

To dissuade herself from her fear, she thinks of civilization's triumphs—"superb omnibuses, red and yellow, stopping and starting, punctually in order. . . powerful and beautiful cars that now slow to a foot's pace and now shoot forward" [W, 310], gauzes and silks and fine embroidery, blasted tunnels through rock, elevators rising and falling, and trains stopping and starting "as regularly as the waves of the sea" [W, 311]. Jinny also refutes her earlier fear by noting "how they show off clothes here even under ground in a perpetual radiance. They will not let the earth even lie wormy and sodden" [W, 311]. Thus, Jinny praises civilization's ability to conceal the grave's location. And in response to her fright, Jinny thinks, "I will powder my face and redden my lips. I will make the angle of my eyebrows sharper than usual" [W, 311], thus praising her own ability to veil the grave's contents.

Jinny, in fact, denies the actual body, feeling
superior to "savages in loincloths, and women whose hair is dank, whose long breasts sag with children. . ." [W, 310-11], and she denies nature's actual motion, applauding instead human technological movement. Jinny, therefore, gives her allegiance to the disguised body and to the disguised earth. When Jinny thinks, "I am a native of this world" [W, 311], she means the world of powerful machines, beautiful masks, and civilized parties, the facade that covers the actual body and earth. Connected to her love of civilization, her participation in the "triumphant procession" [W, 310], is Jinny's belief in the power of the human will. Woolf repeatedly uses "I will" rather than "I shall" after Jinny's vision of death to reveal Jinny's determination to "march to victory" [W, 311]. For Jinny, such a victorious march means that she will not die: "Let the silent army of the dead descend. I march forward" [W, 312].

Another one of Jinny's recurring words is "triumph"; for example, at the second Hampton Court dinner, she thinks, "Time's fangs have ceased their devouring. We have triumphed over the abysses of space, with rouge, with powder, with flimsy pocket-handkerchiefs" [W, 334]. Her will and her triumphs, her disguises and her defense, become her belief that she is superior to other people. She criticizes Louis' world view, for example, and withholds knowledge from Rhoda [W, 329, 204]. She uses her body and its grace to control
men, and she enjoys their "bowing" [W, 311]. Jinny proudly claims, "I have only to hold my hand up" [W, 329] for a man to approach, and she never concerns herself about the feelings of the many men she has rejected. Also, although she herself hates to be still, she enjoys making others freeze whenever she walks into a room: "When I came in just now everything stood still in a pattern. Waiters stopped, diners raised their forks and held them" [W, 264]. In fact, Jinny uses her own body to make others believe that the body is all [W, 264]. Neville, however, resents Jinny's control of others; thinking,

you inflict stillness, demanding admiration, and that is a great impediment to the freedom of intercourse. You stand in the door making us notice you [W, 264].

Thus, Jinny's defense becomes her pride; clearly, she thinks her approach to life is superior to her friends':

The torments, the divisions of your lives have been solved for me night after night, sometimes only by the touch of a finger under the tablecloth as we sat dining—so fluid has my body become, forming even at the touch of a finger into one full drop, which fills itself, which quivers, which flashes, which falls in ecstasy [W, 329].

Jinny's defense against death, then, ultimately creates hierarchical barriers between herself and her friends.

Whereas Jinny uses constant movement and disguises to mask the body's decay, Susan uses possession and nature's continuity to hide the possibility of loss. For Susan, life has definite boundaries and edges, and she sees it "in
blocks, substantial, huge. . ." [W, 335]. Jinny is feverishly active, loves the city, and moves with the dance, but Susan is stolid, loves the country, and moves slowly because she is often pregnant. Susan compulsively limits life to what she can grasp—land, one man, children—because ownership defends her against death. By limiting her vision of herself and the world—Susan plants herself like one of her trees [W, 308], ties herself down with single words in contrast to Bernard's high-flying phrases, and narrows her emotions to two, love and hate [W, 185]—Susan makes sure that she can possess all she sees [W, 308].

Such "security, possession, familiarity" are the summit of Susan's desire [W, 307-08].

Susan's need to possess all she sees stems from a childhood lesson. Susan never has a startling revelation of death, but when she sees Jinny kiss Louis and realizes that people exist independently of her desires and that she cannot have everything and everybody, she experiences the separation between self and world that brings with it an awareness of death's presence. Although referring to Bernard, Susan later reveals how traumatic this experience must have been for her when she thinks, "I love with such ferocity that it kills me when the object of my love shows by a phrase that he can escape" [W, 267]. Certainly, her reaction to the event indicates that an awareness of death accompanied it, because in contrast to Jinny's attempt to
outrun death, Susan tries to bury it, repressing any possible intimations of mortality and becoming intent on having possessions. She "vindictively" tears school days off her calendar, screws them up into tight little balls, and throws them away, saying "You are dead now...school day, hated day" [W, 202]; she makes images of things she does not like—Madame Carlo, the school, the gymnasium, the classroom, the dining-room, the chapel, the red-brown tiles, and the benefactors' portraits—and literally buries them, thus figuratively burying the "thing itself" [W, 204-05]; she uses the sight of "real things," farm images, "to bury it deep, this school that I have hated" [W, 217]; and she dreams of the solitude she will eventually have "in which to unfold my possessions" [W, 211]. Thus, Susan rid[s] the world of what she dislikes, narrowing her vision in order to actually possess everything within her framework. By owning everything within a limited scope, Susan denies her earlier awareness of the separation between self and world, thereby denying death. The only clue that her defense may not always work comes in her occasional dissatisfaction, such as that expressed in her last thought in the novel, "Still I gape...like a young bird, unsatisfied, for something that has escaped me" [W, 338].

Susan's love of the land and her identification with nature also suggest she may be aware of death's presence; she knows, for example, that "heat and cold will follow each
other naturally without my willing or unwilling" [W, 266], and she sits "by the beds of dying women, who murmur their last terrors, who clutch my hand" [W, 308]. But she identifies only with the continuity she sees in nature—the light, the ground, the seasons, the mist, the dawn [W, 243]—because continuity is what she herself wants, and she ignores nature's indifference and cruelty. Her immersion in nature does not acquaint her with the force of death, then, so much as protect her from it. For example, after Percival's death, Bernard visits Susan and is angered by her submergence in nature:

When...I went to Lincolnshire that summer to see Susan and she advanced towards me across the garden with the lazy movement of a half-filled sail, with the swaying movement of a woman with child, I thought, "It goes on; but why?" We sat in the garden; the farm carts came up dripping with hay; there was the usual country gabble of rooks and doves; fruit was netted and covered over; the gardener dug. Bees boomed down the purple tunnels of flowers; bees embedded themselves on the gold shields of sunflowers. Little twigs were blown across the grass. How rhythmical, and half conscious and hateful, like a net folding one's limbs in its meshes, cramping. She who had refused Percival lent herself to this, to this covering over [W, 362-63; my emphasis].

Paradoxically, then, Susan uses living on the land to suppress nature's meaning. Susan, in fact, conceals nature's message by possessing it:

At this hour, this still early hour, I think I am the field, I am the barn, I am the trees; mine are the flocks of birds, and this young hare who leaps, at the last moment when I step almost on him. Mine is the heron that stretches its vast wings lazily; and the cow that creaks
as it pushes one foot before another, munching; and the wild, swooping swallow; and the faint red in the sky, and the green when the red fades; the silence and the bell; the call of the man fetching cart-horses from the fields—all are mine [W, 242; my emphasis].

Possession gives Susan the illusion of control. When she becomes a mother, for example, Susan translates her possession of children into the right to demand that "life shall sheathe its claws and gird its lightning and pass by . . ." [W, 295]. Susan assumes her motherhood and her possessions make her an exception, and she feels so protected that she asks "Where can the shadow enter? What shock can loosen my laboriously gathered, relentlessly pressed-down life?" [W, 308].

In addition, Susan believes that her children guarantee her immortality:

His eyes will see when mine are shut. . . I shall go mixed with them beyond my body and see India. He will come home, bringing me trophies to be laid at my feet. He will increase my possessions [W, 295].

Her defense of possessions and continuity also makes her feel superior to her friends. Susan feels threatened by her friends' defenses [W, 267], discredits Neville's lifestyle in order to be herself [W, 325], and uses her children to create a hierarchy:

My children will carry me on; their teething, their crying, their going to school and coming back will be like the waves of the sea under me. . . . I shall be lifted higher than any of you on the backs of the seasons. I shall possess more than Jinny, more than Rhoda, by the time—I die [W, 266].
Although Susan's thought contains an awareness of death, it also implies that nature will in fact raise her above the others and that this higher position plus numerous possessions will actually count for something against death. Susan, therefore, also reflects the patriarchal need to control death through defenses and its resulting creation of hierarchies.

Like Susan, Louis has a weighty, stone-like quality; in fact, Bernard calls him "stone-carved, sculpturesque" [W, 256]. Yet Louis differs from Susan in that he does not limit his vision; instead, he "unburies" things [W, 263], but then makes the unpleasant facts disappear by assimilating or reducing them. Louis sees life in terms of thousands of strands that must be brought together and subdued. Louis, then, clearly sees chaos, "discrepancies and incoherences" [W, 315], but he also sees "a chain whirling round, round, in a steel-blue circle beneath" [W, 270]. For him, chaos hides an order that can be recovered. For example, when Louis becomes conscious of "flux, of disorder; of annihilation and despair" in the eating-house, he thinks, "If this is all, this is worthless" [W, 239]. But he then immediately thinks, "Yet I feel, too, the rhythm of the eating-house" [W, 239]. Louis dedicates himself to reducing everything—differences and distinctions, the random and inexplicable, flux and disorder—to order:

My destiny has been that I remember and must weave together, must plait into one cable the
many threads, the thin, the thick, the broken, the enduring of our long history, of our tumultuous and varied day. There is always more to be understood; a discord to be listened for; a falsity to be reprimanded [W, 270].

Thus, Louis drives himself to unify, to tame chaos, to reprimand falsity and disorder, to erase difference, and to forge everything into one hammered steel ring; in other words, he uses his sense of unity and destiny to defend against death.

Louis "pursues a grand total" [W, 238], striving to synthesize the past and the present, ambition and imagination, tradition and the new, and business and poetry into "some gigantic amalgamation" [W, 211]. Desiring reason, a plot, and cause and effect, Louis consciously works to discover them. Determined to somehow submerge distinctions, Louis asks himself: "How can I reduce these dazzling, these dancing apparitions to one line capable of linking all in one?" [W, 328]. His answer is to find a reason that will explain everything, and once he makes "reason of it all," he wants to fix that understanding with words in "one poem on a page. . ." [W, 316]. By assuming that there is a meaning for everything and that such a meaning can be found, Louis can see the arbitrary or the inexplicable without accepting them; by thinking he can eventually explain the inexplicable away, Louis denies death.

The form of Louis' denial--unity--stems from his feeling separated from his friends by his differences--his Australian accent, his father who failed as a banker, his
chilblains, and his lack of money. He who feels "alien, external" desperately wants to be accepted, "taken to the arms with love" [W, 240, 293]. Even his business ambition, to "roll the dark before me, spreading commerce where there was chaos," is a way to "expunge certain stains" [W, 292] from his childhood and thus become more similar to Neville, Bernard, Rhoda, Susan, and Jinny. His desire to deny all inexplicable differences, then, reflects his desire to deny his own differences from the others and thus destroy not only the separation between himself and them, but also the separation between his desires and the world.

Such separation, of course, makes him aware of death. To not be included creates a "fissure through which he sees disaster" [W, 240]. He exerts his will on difference, then, because to allow difference to simply exist means that he would have to accept his own difference, his own separation from the world, and his own death. Added to his closeness to Rhoda, who sees death vividly, his own vision of death woven in with the violets [W, 273], and his recurring awareness of the "great beast stamping" [W, 180, 215, 221], his alienation from his friends makes him more vulnerable to death's presence than any of the other patriarchal characters in The Waves. As a result, he uses more strenuous efforts against death. For example, when he does feel a rare sense of unity with his ring of friends at the first Hampton Court reunion, he thinks,
Now once more . . . as we are about to part, having paid our bill, the circle in our blood, broken so often, so sharply, for we are so different, closes in a ring.

Something is made. Yes, as we rise and fidget, a little nervously, we pray, holding in our hands this common feeling, "Do not move, do not let the swing-door cut to pieces the thing that we have made, that globes itself here, among these lights, these peelings, this litter of bread crumbs and people passing. Do not move, do not go. Hold it for ever" [W, 275-76; my emphasis].

He does not feel as much support from his society in his defense against death; therefore, "My task, my burden, has always been greater than other people's. A pyramid has been set on my shoulders. I have tried to do a colossal labour" [W, 315], and his constant effort shows in his "pursed lips, sallow cheeks, and invariable frown" [W, 328]. But Louis' single-minded pursuit of his constantly receding goal of unity allows him to muffle the sound of the great beast stamping and to gloss over the inescapable difference between life and death.

Paradoxically, Louis does not want to be an exception, yet in striving to dilute all exceptions, he thinks he alone can accomplish the task: "The weight of the world is on my shoulders" [W, 293]. Thus, even in using a defense that would remove hierarchies, Louis creates one. He thinks of himself as "fiercer and stronger" [W, 264], he clearly disapproves of the others [W, 352], and he, as Bernard thinks about him, "has formed unalterable conclusions upon the true nature of what is to be known" [W, 327]. Neville also
perceives Louis' zeal for finding this entire and perfect truth: Louis sits down "in his office among the typewriters and the telephone and work[s] it all out for our instruction, for our regeneration, and the reform of an unborn world" [W, 313]. Louis' need to strengthen his own defense, then, results in his desire to change others, to improve the world, and thus, to control reality.

Louis, then, uses unity and a sense of destiny to suppress differences; Neville, on the other hand, uses exclusion and order to hide chaos. Similar to Louis in his love of order, Neville differs in his method of achieving it; to Neville, in contrast to Louis, distinctions connote order [W, 188], especially since he can use them to dismiss whatever he considers inferior. Thus, Neville constructs a system [W, 300], excludes what he fears or dislikes, and then sees in the world what he desires above all [W, 237]—order. By denouncing mediocrity [W, 223], by resisting change [W, 200, 237], and by being "scissor-cutting, exact" [W, 256], Neville opposes chaos:

We must oppose the waste and deformity of the world, its crowds eddying round and round dis-gorged and trampling. One must slip paper-knives, even, exactly through the pages of novels, and tie up packets of letters neatly with green silk, and brush up the cinders with a hearth broom. Everything must be done to re-buke the horror of deformity. Let us read writers of Roman severity and virtue; let us seek perfection through the sand [W, 300-01].

Neville thus consciously shuts out disorder, ambivalence, chaos. For example, he thinks of himself as one person,
"myself" [W, 235], which is an oddity in Woolf's fiction; he searches for perfection in love, trying to find a replacement for Percival, but he has only one lover at a time; and he thinks of his room as central, "scooped out of the eternal night" [W, 299], as a place where he can "[draw] his curtain; and [bolt] his door" [W, 237]. As Neville puts it, he hates "wandering and mixing things together" [W, 187]. Indeed, Neville's love of tenses that mean differently [W, 188] and his preference for the "outsides of words" [W, 207] indicate how desperate he is to conceal the fact that everybody dies.

Therefore, when the young Neville hears about a man's suicide, he is stunned into immobility as he tries to stabilize his world and locate death outside it:

I shall call this stricture, this rigidity, "death among the apple trees" for ever. There were the floating, pale-grey clouds; and the immitigable tree; the implacable tree with its greaved silver bark. The ripple of my life was unavailing. I was unable to pass by. There was an obstacle. "I cannot surmount this unintelligible obstacle," I said. And the others passed on. But we are doomed, all of us by the apple trees, by the immitigable tree which we cannot pass.

Now the stricture and rigidity are over; and I will continue to make my survey of the purlieus of the house in the late afternoon . . . [W, 191; my emphasis].

Although strongly aware of death and his doom, Neville exerts his control by fixing death in a particular context and moment and riveting it to an image of apple trees; he names and dismisses death, placing it outside his system. But
when Neville learns of Percival's death in an absurd accident, he finds it harder to brush death away. He feels "as if there were [a] gulf cut in the street" [W, 280] and as though action were futile. He notes the discrepancy between people out on the street, "determined to save their lives," and the "grinning," the "subterfuge," the "something sneering behind our backs" that suddenly appears behind everyday life [W, 281]. Again, he realizes that "We are doomed, all of us" [W, 281]. But, in keeping with his character, Neville almost immediately makes of himself an exception: "Yet you shall not destroy me" [W, 281]. "You" may refer to the pain he is feeling, the oblivious people passing outside, or his awareness of doom, but most likely, the pronoun refers to the "something sneering behind our backs" [W, 281] and therefore, death. In any case, Neville exempts himself.

In making himself an exception, Neville also makes his friends his inferiors, and he himself links his sense of self to his contempt [W, 224]. Indeed, he criticizes every other character in *The Waves*, exhibiting what Bernard calls his "astonishing fine rapier" [W, 237]. Bernard "sees everyone with blurred edges" [W, 209] and cannot finish his stories [W, 201]; Jinny inflicts stillness and demands admiration [W, 264]. Even after he realizes that human beings are not judges, he criticizes Louis and Rhoda for their belief "that beyond this welter the sun shines" and for their search for truth and virtue [W, 312-13]. And at the second
Hampton Court reunion, he searches for his credentials, or, as his description shows, his defense—"what I carry to prove my superiority"—and then proceeds to make Susan's identity crouch beneath his own [W, 323]. He realizes that he does not want to hurt Susan, "only to refresh and furbish up my belief in myself that failed at your entry" [W, 324]. Thus, Neville's defense, his exclusion of chaos and death in order to have order, governs his relations with people: he excludes rather than includes and transforms distinctions and differences into snobbery and criticism—not liking the conjunction of fine architecture and shop-girls, for example [W, 234], or railing at the "piffling, trifling, self-satisfied world" of a horse-dealer [W, 223]. Neville also takes pride in his suffering and believes that his sight—"I see to the bottom; the heart— I see to the depths" [W, 324]—is superior to his friends' world views. Thus, in excluding death to gain perfection, Neville also excludes his imperfect friends.

In summary, Jinny, Susan, Louis, and Neville all construct defenses against death: Jinny uses constant movement and civilization against decay; Susan uses possession and nature's continuity against loss; Louis uses an ideal unity and a sense of destiny against inexplicable difference; and Neville uses exclusion and the resulting order against chaos. Woolf portrays the patriarchal characters in The Waves, then, as developing ways of seeing that become not
only their selves but also their defenses, and in the
process of that development, she also demonstrates that they
use hierarchical thinking to maintain and protect those
selves and defenses. All of them attempt to abolish death,
and although none of them is a bully, each one wants his
or her friends to confirm his or her defense. As a result
of this need for similar denials of death, each character
believes that his or her defense is superior. Thus Woolf,
with the patriarchal characters in *The Waves*, clearly
suggests that the denial of death leads to ways of seeing
that divide the world into superior/inferior factions.
With three other patriarchal characters, Peter Walsh, Mr.
Ramsay, and Mrs. Ramsay, Woolf illustrates not only the
link between the denial of death and hierarchical thinking,
but also the link between such a denial and the control of
others. Peter, Mr. Ramsay, and Mrs. Ramsay, more determined
in their efforts to deny death, also impinge more on others.
Peter's domination, Mr. Ramsay's tyranny, and Mrs. Ramsay's
manipulation all stem from their more vigorous efforts
against death's power.

Peter Walsh's desire to possess and dominate Clarissa
Dalloway, his critical cast of mind, and his assumptions of
righteousness have all been discussed in Chapter Two in
relationship to his patriarchal world view. That particular
world view originates in Peter's denial of death. Peter,
who fears death much more than Clarissa does, tries to con-
trol it and his fear of it by personifying death, overlooking
its bearing on himself, projecting it on others, and denying his age. Thus, although the thought of death occurs to Peter several times during the novel, he invariably suppresses such thoughts almost as quickly as they appear.

When Peter dreams about death as he sleeps in the park, it seems attractive. Perhaps because Peter endows nature with a feminine face, he envisions a great figure of a woman dispensing "charity, comprehension, absolution" [MD, 85-86]. Believing that "if he can conceive of her, then, in some sort she exists" [MD, 85], Peter tries to create something familiar and safe. The narrator, however, compares this vision to a murmur made by "sirens lolling away on the green sea waves" [MD, 86], and then comments

Such are the visions which ceaselessly float up, pace beside, put their faces in front of, the actual thing; often overpowering the solitary traveller and taking away from him the sense of the earth, the wish to return, and giving him for substitute a general peace, as if (so he thinks as he advances down the forest ride) all this fever of living were simplicity itself . . . [MD, 86; my emphasis].

By personifying death, then, Peter makes it comforting rather than fearful, but in doing so, he evades his fear and creates a screen which cloaks the "actual thing," the reality of death.

Peter seems to edge closer to considering his own death when he hears the light bell of an ambulance:

One of the triumphs of civilisation . . . . Swiftly, cleanly the ambulance sped to the hospital, having picked up instantly, humanely, some poor devil; some one hit on the head,
struck down by disease, knocked over perhaps a minute or so ago at one of these crossings, as might happen to oneself. That was civilisation [MD, 229].

Peter's use of "oneself" instead of "myself," however, indicates his refusal to confront squarely the inevitability of his own death; likewise, his admiration of civilization's triumphs, similar to Jinny's, is actually an admiration for civilization's ability to hide all evidence of death "swiftly, cleanly . . . instantly, humanely . . . ." Nevertheless, the moment does affect him profoundly, and he feels like crying:

really it took one's breath away, these moments; there coming to him by the pillar-box opposite the British Museum one of them, a moment, in which things came together; this ambulance; and life and death [MD, 230].

Although Peter sees the conjunction of life and death for an instant, he almost immediately thinks of Clarissa's transcendent theory of death and immortality, and significantly sidesteps his own fear by thinking of her "horror of death" [MD, 231]. Even as the ambulance moves through London, Peter dismisses death by labeling his thoughts of it morbid and sentimental [MD, 229].

Peter more typically defends against death, however, by projecting it onto someone else. In the ambulance scene, for example, Peter notices the respect other men show for the vehicle, drawing aside to let it pass:

Perhaps it was morbid; or was it not touching rather, the respect which they showed this ambulance with its victim inside—busy men
hurrying home yet instantly bethinking them as it passed of some wife; or presumably how easily it might have been them there, stretched on a shelf with a doctor and a nurse . . . [MD, 229; Woolf's ellipses].

Not only does Peter quickly move from "oneself" to other men, he also imagines those men thinking of their wives' deaths before considering their own. Peter simply cannot stand to contemplate the possibility of his own death, and so he imagines it happening to anyone but himself.

Thus when he has a horrible vision of death in the novel, he envisions not his own death, but Clarissa's. When he hears St. Margaret's chiming the hour, he thinks

She has been ill, and the sound expressed languor and suffering. It was her heart, he remembered; and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life, Clarissa falling where she stood, in her drawing-room. No! No! he cried. She is not dead! I am not old, he cried, and marched up Whitehall, as if there rolled down to him, vigorous, unending, his future.

He was not old, or set, or dried in the least [MD, 75; my emphasis].

Obviously, Peter fears his own aging and death. That is why he imagines Clarissa dying. But even that displaced image of death reminds him too clearly of his own; hence, he immediately and vehemently denies his age and produces an unending future for himself. Thus, he denies altogether the possibility of his own death.

Peter consistently denies his age in order to deny death and his fear of it. The one time he admits he's growing older, he thinks of old age only in terms of a compensation—
"the power of taking hold of experience, of turning it round, slowly, in the light" [MD, 119]--and confesses that he hardly needs people any more. Yet, he deceives himself in thinking he does not need people (Peter will not, for example, ever poke around in the Bodleian to arrive at the truth of a matter or two, because he would not like the solitude [MD, 239]), thus leading to the suspicion that he does not really believe there are consolations for old age, either. Usually, however, Peter simply refuses to admit he's old enough to need compensations. Clarissa, for example, also wants to think she is not old yet, but she tends to think of her future in terms of months. She also admits that if Peter thinks she has grown older, well, "It was true" [MD, 54]. Upon seeing Clarissa, as a matter of fact, Peter does think "She's grown older . . ." [MD, 60], but without admitting that he has grown older along with her. Indeed, he often thinks to himself that he's not old or that he feels as young as ever [MD, 64, 75, 78]. Although not ancient, Peter cannot even acknowledge middle age. For example, when he leaves Clarissa, he follows a young woman through the streets of London, fantasizing about her and imagining her singling him out. Such behavior reinforces the impression that Peter wants to deny his relationship with a woman he can imagine dying and thus deny his real age. His plan to marry a twenty-four-year-old woman with two small children, to possess someone near the age of his youthful Clarissa, also
exposes his defense: to remain a young lover, "as young as ever." Peter urgently needs to ignore reality, a need made transparent when he considers what the young woman's life may be like in twenty-five years, which of course implies the possibility she may be a widow: he quickly "pooh-poohs" such concerns, thinking, "He didn't mean to die yet" [MD, 239]. By so dismissing the thought of his own death, Peter posits control over reality and evades his fear. These defensive maneuvers—his personifying, dodging, and projecting of death, plus his denial of aging—result in his possessiveness, his cutting criticism, and his domination of others.

Peter does not so much deny the existence of death itself as display an inability to confront its relevance to himself. Similarly, Mr. Ramsay, though able to confront death as a metaphysical idea, cannot face his own death. Just as Peter indicates his avoidance in his denial of aging, Mr. Ramsay reveals his evasion in his consuming desire for immortality.

Indeed, Mr. Ramsay desperately wants his books and his fame to last. As Mrs. Ramsay realizes, he is

always uneasy about himself . . . . He would always be worrying about his own books—will they be read, are they good, why aren't they better, what do people think of me? [TtL, 177]

Mr. Ramsay even gets irritated when Tansley says that "people don't read Scott any more" [TtL, 177] because any doubts expressed about anyone else's work not lasting
immediately reflect on him: "That's what they'll say of me" [TtL, 177]. Mr. Bankes' philosophy about such things—"Let us enjoy what we do enjoy!" because "Who could tell what was going to last—in literature or indeed in anything else?" [TtL, 161]—is completely foreign to Mr. Ramsay, who wants to know he will live on in other men's thought and work. Even his daydreams reveal his desire to last, to maintain some lasting control over the world of the intellect: he imagines himself the leader of a dangerous expedition, a hero who reaches a pinnacle of knowledge and presents Western culture with a bit of truth. His thought, then, his knowledge painstakingly gathered into many books, constitute Mr. Ramsay's life work, his contribution to his society, and thus, his defense against death.

Mr. Ramsay's attempt to control death by outlasting it manifests itself in the control he tries to exhibit over thought itself. As Hana Wirth-Nesher explains, "For Mr. Ramsay to feel a measure of control over the universe in his contemplation of it, he must confront something measurable." He therefore divides thought into the letters of the alphabet and sees himself conquering one letter at a time. Moreover, he imagines the letters arranged hierarchically, with the last letters more difficult and more important: "Z is only reached once by one man in a generation" [TtL, 53-54]. His hierarchical cast of mind, his belief in a progression from A to Z, his hope
for an ultimate and absolute Truth, and his own struggle
to produce something great and lasting all cause Mr.
Ramsay to compare his work unfavorably to others'. Such
monitoring and ranking of his own thought make Mr. Ramsay
constantly defensive, even about his reading preferences.
Thus, after hearing Tansley challenge the Waverley novels
at dinner, Mr. Ramsay rereads The Antiquary and then
thinks,

Well, let them improve upon that, he thought as he finished the chapter. He felt
that he had been arguing with somebody, and
had got the better of him. They could not
improve upon that, whatever they might say;
and his own position became more secure
[TtL, 180; my emphasis].

Thus, Mr. Ramsay demonstrates how the necessity to main-
tain his defense leads to his argumentative temperament,
his harshness, and his domination.

Threatening that secure position, however, is not only
reality itself, but also the content of Mr. Ramsay's
own thought. Mr. Ramsay's knowledge of the facts contra-
dicts his desire for immortality. William Bankes and Lily
Briscoe both notice this contradiction, wondering, "why
so brave a man in thought should be so timid in life; how
strangely he was venerable and laughable at one and the
same time" [TtL, 70]. As a thinker, Mr. Ramsay can face
"the waste of the years and the perishing of stars" [TtL, 56], but as a mortal man, he keeps thinking, "How long
would he be read . . . ?"[TtL, 161]. In other words, when
Mr. Ramsay contemplates subject, object, and the nature of reality, he confronts the presence of death, but he cannot face the possibility his thought may not endure; that is, he cannot face his own death. Thus, as Mrs. Ramsay notices, he cheerfully faces "all sorts of horrors" [TtL, 107], but he minds when people pass "his books over as if they didn't exist at all" [TtL, 179].

Even worse, what Mr. Ramsay uses for a defense—his thought—threatens that defense. Wanting immortality, he constructs a body of knowledge that he hopes will remain influential; but his thought questions the possibility of knowledge—he stands "on his little ledge facing the dark of human ignorance, how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on" [TtL, 68-69]—and undermines his hope for immortality—when one looks from "a mountain top down the long wastes of the ages [,] [t]he very stone one kicks with one's boot will outlast Shakespeare" [TtL, 56]. It is no wonder Mr. Ramsay is stuck on Q: his integrity forces him to ask difficult questions, but going on to R means directing those questions at Mr. Ramsay, his reputation, and his own sense of reality.\(^{35}\) He cannot admit that the implications of his own thought make his thought's immortality doubtful.

Since his thought is his only hope for immortality, but he cannot gain any comfort from the thought itself, Mr. Ramsay needs excessive amounts of reassurance and
praise from someone else. As Lily notes, "He had had doubts, she felt, or he would have asked less of people" [TTL, 232]. Indeed, he depends on Mrs. Ramsay to strengthen his defense, to "surround and protect" him [TTL, 60]. Ironically, he gets angry at his wife for flying in the face of facts, for making "his children hope what was utterly out of the question" [TTL, 50], when he himself demands that she give him both proof of his fame and hope for his immortality. He wants to be assured of his genius, even though he admits to himself that he has none, and to be assured that he is needed "not here only, but all over the world" [TTL, 59, 55]. In other words, he wants comfort. Thus, his stark knowledge, his pleasure at disillusioning others, his accuracy of judgment, his inability to tell a lie, to tamper with a fact, his belief that one never alters "a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure of convenience of any mortal being," and his belief in uncompromising facts [TTL, 10-11] all apply to everyone except himself. He wants her to tell him what he would never tell anyone else, what he cannot tell himself: a lie. Although Mrs. Ramsay is not "entirely sure . . . of the truth of what she said" to him about his genius and his books, when Mr. Ramsay demands sympathy from her, she provides it. On the one hand, then, he can call her a liar [TTL, 50, 102] and criticize her emotional support of others, and on the other hand, he can take from her the
emotional support he needs and believe it is the truth. For example, because he needs to, Mr. Ramsay believes his wife when she assures him that "If he put implicit faith in her, nothing should hurt him; however deep he buried himself or climbed high, not for a second should he find himself without her" [TtL, 60].

Mrs. Ramsay provides Mr. Ramsay with much of his defense against death, then. She does so because part of her own defense against death is to provide others with such defenses. Whereas Mr. Ramsay can contemplate death as an abstract idea but not as personal extinction, Mrs. Ramsay understands its relation to herself, but cannot face it as a possibility for others. Unable to conceal death's presence from herself, she willingly conceals it from everyone else. In so doing, she allies herself with the patriarchy's defenses and thus, defends herself.

Mrs. Ramsay keeps her awareness of death as part of life hidden from her husband, children, and friends. As Robert Kiely explains:

What gives beauty and depth to Mrs. Ramsay's small designs and reconciliations, what saves them from triviality, is her steady awareness of death in every moment and crevice of life, of life itself as "terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce." Though she bravely and gaily "brandishes her sword," Mrs. Ramsay knows that there is no question of "winning." Beneath her graceful gestures and sympathetic words is a knowledge, a realism, that makes all the other characters, including her husband, appear children by contrast.
Mr. Ramsay, although not knowing the cause, calls her pessimistic [TtL 97, 91], but in fact, Mrs. Ramsay simply understands how life and death partake of each other.

The "sternness at the heart of her beauty" is an awareness of death's power:

With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit; she knew that. No happiness lasted; she knew that [TtL, 98].

Mrs. Ramsay also knows that nature is not always friendly. When she suddenly realizes that she can no longer hear the men talking, for example, sheinstead hears

the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again as she sat with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature, "I am guarding you—I am your support," but at other times suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her mind raised itself slightly from the task actually in hand, had no such kindly meaning, but like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one 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—this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror [TtL, 27-28].

Thus, when Mrs. Ramsay experiences a sense of distance from the waves, they are suddenly independent of her, no longer under the control of her motherhood or her words.

Mrs. Ramsay’s strong awareness of death means that
when she looks at life, she thinks of herself as carrying out "a sort of transaction" with it, a transaction in which she was on one side, and life was on another, and she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was of her; and sometimes they parleyed (when she sat alone); there were, she remembered, great reconciliation scenes; but for the most part, oddly enough, she must admit that she felt this thing that she called life terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance. There were the eternal problems: suffering; death; the poor. There was always a woman dying of cancer even here [TtL, 92].

Thus, even when Mrs. Ramsay wants to make the moment something permanent and commands life to "stand still here" [TtL, 240-41], even when she expresses her own desire for immortality by imagining that everyone at her dinner will come back to the moments, "this night; this moon; this wind; this house: and to her too" [TtL, 170] for as long as they live—even then, Mrs. Ramsay sees these desires as flattery, not reality [TtL, 170].

But her harshness with herself does not apply to anyone else. Perhaps because her own knowledge of death makes it difficult for her to create a defense, or perhaps because she truly sees it as her duty, Mrs. Ramsay keeps her awareness of death to herself and works hard to support the patriarchy's defenses. She knows, for example, that anguish, chaos, and fear exist, but when "the ruin was veiled; domesticity triumphed; custom crooned its soothing rhythm" [TtL, 49], she is relieved. She suspects that when
she reassures her husband about his genius, his books, and his attachment to life that she is not telling the truth; indeed, she hides many things from her husband—expenses, "small daily things," and her fears about his last book—in order to make his life more smooth [TtL, 61-62]. Mrs. Ramsay, in fact, habitually feels it necessary to hide her own vision of life and death from others, and her constant attempts to reassure others, in direct contrast to what she knows, tire her out [TtL, 40, 232, 296]. Thus, she commits herself to rituals that ensure continuity: she insists that society's manners be followed; she proclaims beauty, marriage, and children to anyone who will listen; she shakes herself like a stopped watch and forces herself to go through the motions of creating a community, even when she does not feel like it [TtL, 126]. Woolf catches the contradiction between Mrs. Ramsay's belief that her children "were happier now than they would ever be again" [TtL, 90] and her conscious effort to fight such beliefs, "Nonsense. They will be perfectly happy" [TtL, 92], between her own hardships and her hopes for Prue, between what she knows and what she conveys to others, in the image of her shawl covering the boar's skull [TtL, 173]. She will conceal death for anybody who fears it, but she herself knows that the skeleton exists underneath the flesh.

Because of the contradiction between Mrs. Ramsay's awareness of death and her dedication to concealing it,
she manipulates people so that they will join her in the concealing efforts she considers important and will not see what she conceals. Working against her own vision, she sometimes becomes domineering. Subconsciously, she may feel that since she does so much for others, her husband, her children, and her friends owe her their loyalty to her methods. She can only hope to arrange things as well as she can and thus try to outwit life. Indeed, she realizes that her desire for people to marry is a compulsion, that "she was driven on, too quickly she knew, almost as if it were an escape for her too . . . " [TtL, 92-93; my emphasis].

In fact, Mrs. Ramsay tries to bury the contradiction between her awareness and her public suppression by getting others to follow the patriarchal ways. In using patriarchal methods of control herself and in dutifully working for patriarchal aims, Mrs. Ramsay then can rest her whole weight on patriarchal defenses:

she let it uphold her and sustain her, this admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence, which ran up and down, crossed this way and that, like iron girders spanning the swaying fabric, upholding the world, so that she could trust herself to it utterly . . . [TtL, 159].

Thus, Mrs. Ramsay trades her protection of the other sex [TtL, 13] for feeling securely upheld by that sex. She gives Mr. Ramsay emotional support, even to the point of exaggerating for him, and he gives her intellectual support, even to the point of brutality. Mrs. Ramsay gets her reassurance and defense from giving and from Mr.
Ramsay's masculine fabric of thought, its certainty and asperity. Mr. Ramsay gets his reassurance and defense from his thought and from Mrs. Ramsay's encouragement and reinforcement of his greatness. In a sense, then, Mrs. Ramsay creates her own defense by creating a defense for her husband. Indeed, Lily senses this arrangement when she watches Mrs. Ramsay pity Mr. Bankes as dinner begins:

Poor William Bankes, she seemed to be saying, as if her own weariness had been partly pitying people, and the life in her, her resolve to live again, had been stirred by pity. And it was not true, Lily thought; it was one of those misjudgments of hers that seemed to be instinctive and to arise from some need of her own rather than of other people's [TtL, 127-128; my emphasis].

Mrs. Ramsay participates in the defenses of others, whether they really need the help or not, to defend herself against death. That is why she gives Mr. Ramsay "what he asked too easily" [TtL, 71]. The traditional woman feels obligated to defend others from death because the first woman introduced death to the world. She thereby pays for the sin by saving others.

Thus, neither Mr. Ramsay nor Mrs. Ramsay have defenses that they themselves have created. Rather, they depend heavily on each other to erect barriers against death. Because there is a conflict between the content of his thought and the use of that thought as a defense, Mr. Ramsay wears Mrs. Ramsay out and tyrannizes his children. Because there is a conflict between her awareness of death
and her belief in and support of society's defenses, Mrs. Ramsay submits to Mr. Ramsay's domination of her but dominates others. Both of them, because they have such conflicts in building defenses against death, become "high-handed" [TtL, 73] and demanding [TtL, 223-27]. In other words, they control others to relieve their own insecurity. Of all the patriarchal characters, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay demonstrate most clearly how the denial of death depends on support from others and how that support must also be denied. 37

Sir William Bradshaw, in contrast to the other patriarchal characters, never experiences any awareness of death at all. Consequently, because he has death under such rigid control, he imposes on others. In Woolf, then, the character who denies death the most vigorously also has the least respect for other people. Bradshaw makes it clear that the stronger the defense, the more one tends to think in terms of hierarchies and the control of others. Although Mrs. Ramsay tries to manipulate others into using patriarchal defenses, and although Mr. Ramsay demands allegiance from his wife and children, Bradshaw enforces absolute patriarchal standards of behavior. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay do not always succeed in maintaining their defenses or their control (children rebel, Lily does not marry), but Bradshaw imposes his will so severely on others that he rarely loses control of them. Rebellion against Bradshaw
takes an extreme form because his methods of control are so severe.

Such craving for power over others, is, as Woolf points out, usually "concealed . . . under some plausible disguise; some venerable name; love, duty, self sacrifice" [MD, 151-152]. Sir William, for example, accumulates power under the guise of championing "family affection; honour; courage; and a brilliant career" [MD, 154]. Indeed, Bradshaw immerses himself in his career and uses his sense of proportion to create success and power as barriers against death; Lady Bradshaw, for example, thinks of the wall of gold, mounting minute by minute while she waited; the wall of gold that was mounting between them and all shifts and anxieties . . . until she felt wedged on a calm ocean, where only spice winds blow . . . [MD, 143].

Thus, Sir William and Lady Bradshaw feel secure behind the wall of gold, success, and power he has built. His defense never shaken, Bradshaw answers his "defenseless" patients' impious questions about life [MD, 153] with platitudes. He himself has thoroughly disposed of death, and he simply cannot understand why his patients even think about such matters.

Such control over life and death causes him to project his own sense of proportion onto others. The embodiment of hierarchical thinking and coercion, Bradshaw subtly terrorizes his wife so that her will slowly sinks,
"water-logged," into his [MD, 152]; he "makes life intolerable" [MD, 281] for others with his rigid demands for conformity; on the basis of an exercise in which he shoots out his arms and brings them sharply back to his hips, he proudly assumes he is "master of his own actions" and life whereas his patients are not [MD, 153]; and he literally forces his own "infallible" sense of proportion—"this is madness, this sense" [MD, 151]—on people by removing some of them from society. Thus, Bradshaw turns his sense of proportion, his own defense, into what Woolf calls Conversion: this goddess forces everyone to share the same defense, values, true beliefs, and goals.

Conversion . . . feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose, adoring her own features stamped on the face of the populace. At Hyde Park Corner on a tub she stands preaching; shrouds herself in white and walks penitentially disguised as brotherly love through factories and parliaments; offers help, but desires power; smites out of her way roughly the dissentient, or dissatisfied; bestows her blessing on those who, looking upward, catch submissively from her eyes the light of her own [MD, 151].

In other words, either the patient accepts Bradshaw's defenses as his or her own, or Bradshaw shuts the patient up in one of his homes.

For shutting people up in the name of proportion and thus keeping the reality of death hidden, Bradshaw receives society's "keenest gratitude" [MD, 150]. Indeed, his reputation for "sympathy; tact; understanding of the
human soul" [MD, 144] and "decision and humanity" [MD, 154] reveals how completely the patriarchal society supports him. Bradshaw supports the "police and the good of society" [MD, 154] by seeing that neither his own defenses nor those of society can be threatened, and in return, the society supports him—he makes a good deal of money, works on Harley Street, and gets invited to the best parties. When Woolf writes,

Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion—his, if they were men, Lady Bradshaw's if they were women . . . [MD, 150; my emphasis].

she makes the collaboration between Bradshaw and his society even more clear.

Bradshaw uses his sense of proportion as a weapon; he divides and then oppresses people with it. For example, his sense of proportion supports hierarchies based on class: Bradshaw asserts that his patients' despair and fear are "unsocial impulses, bred more than anything by the lack of good blood," and of course, insists that such impulses be "held in control" [MD, 154]. He diagnoses and labels people quickly; indeed, he no longer sees people as people. Rather, they, their impious questions about life itself [MD, 153], and their fears about death, are simply reflections of madness. Bradshaw shows that to keep death
under control, people must be kept under control. As a result, people who come in contact with him end up "cramped, squeezed, pared, pruned . . ." [MD, 152].

Woolf uses Bradshaw as an example of the denial of death taken to an extreme—he never experiences any kind of distance for example, and his thick armor must cover an enormous fear—but all the patriarchal characters follow a similar pattern. The patriarchy’s denial of death encourages further hierarchical and either/or thinking. Caught in a particular way of looking at the world, patriarchal characters then think that acknowledging the reality of another person means denying one’s own. Consequently, such a character clings tightly to his or her defenses, vehemently denying other defenses at the same time. The denial of death leads to a series of denials, then, one of which is a denial of our denial: as Becker explains, "We don’t want to admit that we are fundamentally dishonest about reality, that we do not really control our own lives."38 As a result, when patriarchal characters are faced with people who expose what they have worked so hard to repress, the patriarchal characters deny them, also, thereby maintaining its control of death at tremendous cost to its own society. In its refusal to recognize or confront the characters who represent its own fears and in its determination to maintain its control, the patriarchy ultimately sacrifices people.
Although patriarchal characters do not intend to victimize anyone, they do intend to control death; therefore, they will ignore those people who are not in control and will ultimately victimize them by isolating them.

Woolf portrays two such victims of the patriarchy's denial of death, Rhoda in *The Waves* and Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Both of these characters appear in novels in which characters form some sort of whole—Jinny, Susan, Louis, Neville, Bernard, Percival, and Rhoda can be seen as different aspects of one person, and Septimus is Clarissa's double. Woolf establishes, then, the relationship between the denial of death and the vision of death on two levels, within a society and within an individual. Rhoda and Septimus represent the part of ourselves that we cannot afford to recognize, the awareness within the self and within the society that individuals and societies both attempt to repress or destroy. Within a society, they are ignored or shut up in institutions, and within an individual, they are repressed by the development of identity.

All the patriarchal characters in Woolf's novels who experience distance only momentarily recognize death's presence in reality. In contrast, the victims in Woolf's novels experience such distance and its accompanying disorientation much more frequently. Thus, for the victims, death is a pervasive presence. Whereas the patriarchal
characters are firmly enmeshed in a society and have many relationships with other people, or, as Neville points out, have everything "skillfully organised to prevent feeling alone" [W, 210], the victims experience intense isolation and detachment. The patriarchal characters repress their fear in order to live out their lives with a fair measure of control, but the victims feel very little except that fear. As Becker points out, such people can barely function in the world because their visions of reality overwhelm them:

It can't be overstressed, one final time, that to see the world as it really is is devastating and terrifying. It achieves the very result that the child has painfully built his character over the years in order to avoid: it makes routine, automatic, secure, self-confident activity impossible. It makes thoughtless living in the world of men an impossibility. It places a trembling animal at the mercy of the entire cosmos and the problem of the meaning of it. 39

The victims in Woolf's novels face just such a frightening situation, and they do so alone.

For example, although Rhoda in The Waves clearly sees death's reality, some of the other characters deny that she sees at all. Neville thinks Rhoda has "blind fanatic eyes" [W, 313], and Louis thinks her eyes are "unseeing" [W, 315]. Rhoda, however, simply does not have the patriarchal "spectacles of habit" on; she cannot develop a defense to project onto the world. Rather, she feels extremely separated from the world, thus making it
difficult for her to see meaning in it. As a child, for instance, Rhoda watches her teacher write some numbers on the board and watches her friends write down the answer:

Now the terror is beginning . . . . What is the answer? The others look; they look with understanding . . . . But I cannot write. I see only figures . . . . I have no answer. The others are allowed to go . . . . I am left alone to find an answer. The figures mean nothing now. Meaning has gone . . . . Look, the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with time; it holds the world in it. I begin to draw a figure and the world is looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop; which I now join—so—and seal up, and make entire. The world is entire, and I am outside of it, crying, "Oh, save me, from being blown for ever outside the loop of time!" [W, 188-189; my emphasis]

Thus, Rhoda's perspective is one of great distance; as a result, she has a strong awareness of death, a "sense of a world continuing without us" [W, 259]. Indeed, she has to put her feet on the cold, hard rail at the bottom of the bed to remind herself that she is, in fact, in the world [W, 193]. For Rhoda, only a "thin sheet" [W, 193, 319] separates her from nothingness, from the "infinite depths" [W, 204, 319].

Rhoda, then, has almost no defense against death, and she expresses this lack in terms of having no identity. It is as though she has no skin, not even a literal barrier against the horror of the world, and in fact, she often thinks she has no face [W, 197, 203, 259, 265, 330]. Probably the oddest character in all of Woolf's fiction,
Rhoda never feels any joy, has no work, no job, no art, no activity, no duty, and thus, has no defenses. Rhoda's few defenses fail early—"Identity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell" [W, 219]—and although she holds up "shade after shade" to the life she thinks of as terrible, she never succeeds in completely covering "the blue-black blade" [W, 318]. Unlike Susan, who sees herself as part of nature's continuity, Rhoda sees herself as part of nature's dissipation—the foam on the waves [W, 249, 265]. She cannot take any comfort from being part of humanity, either; at school, as part of a large group of students, she thinks, "But here I am nobody" [W, 197]. She admires Jinny's certainty and Susan's resolute ways, and wishes she could be them [W, 193]; in fact, she imitates them [W, 204] and teaches her body tricks [W, 330], but she knows it is all a pretense: "But I lie; I prevaricate" [W, 248].

Because Rhoda has almost no identity and no defenses against death, she lives a life filled with "terror upon terror . . ." [W, 247]. As Bernard knows, to call for one's self and to have no one come would be a "harrowing experience" [W, 228]. Because Rhoda constantly lives with just that experience, life to her is an "emerging monster" [W, 219], the world is hostile [W, 286], and it would be a miracle if "we had no more to live" [W, 332]. Rhoda realizes that
If I could believe . . . that I should
grow old in pursuit and change, I should be
rid of my fear: nothing persists. One
moment does not lead to another. The door
opens and the tiger leaps. You [her
friends] did not see me come. I circled
round the chairs to avoid the horror of the
spring. I am afraid of you all. I am afraid
of the shock of sensation that leaps upon
me, because I cannot deal with it as you do
—I cannot make one moment merge in the next.
To me they are all violent, all separate;
and if I fall under the shock of the leap
of the moment you will be on me, tearing me
to pieces. I have no end in view [W, 265;
my emphasis].

All Rhoda sees are gaps and discontinuities; for her, both
no things and nothingness persist.

Rhoda is so intensely aware of death's presence that
when she occasionally does try to erect a defense against
it, she imagines herself accomplishing heroic deeds. Alone,
she can see herself leading her Armadas on the seas [W,
193, 248] or imagine herself as the Russian Empress:

The diamonds of the Imperial crown blaze on
my forehead. I hear the roar of the hostile
mob as I step out on to the balcony . . .
"I am your Express, people." My attitude is
one of defiance. I am fearless. I conquer
[W, 213].

As a child, she sees her ship sailing alone, mounting the
waves even when the other ships founder [W, 187]. To her,
only superhuman efforts can protect her from death, but
when she is among people and realizes she cannot possibly
achieve such aims, her efforts seem futile: "But this is a
thin dream . . . . It is not solid; it gives me no
satisfaction" [W, 213]. In addition, 'all effort becomes
futile: "But what can one make in loneliness?" [W, 287].

If she cannot be a heroine, she cannot be anybody. Thus, Rhoda usually perceives herself, not as an actor, but as acted upon: "I am whirled down caverns, and flap like paper against endless corridors, and must press my hand against the wall to draw myself back" [W, 265–266]. Rhoda realizes that the patriarchal society gives no value to what she sees as reality; therefore, she sees no value in fighting that reality and becomes passive in the face of her vision.

Rhoda clearly understands the patriarchy’s mode of operation. For example, when Percival dies, she feels as though her vision of reality has been validated, but her friends, she knows, will react differently:

I think of Louis, reading the sporting column of an evening newspaper, afraid of ridicule; a snob. He says, looking at the people passing, he will shepherd us if we will follow. If we submit he will reduce us to order. Thus he will smooth out the death of Percival to his satisfaction . . . Bernard, meanwhile, flops red-eyed into some arm-chair. He will have out his notebook; under D, he will enter "Phrases to be used on the deaths of friends." Jinny, pirouetting across the room, will perch on the arm of his chair and ask, "Did he love me?" "More than he loved Susan?" Susan, engaged to her farmer in the country, will stand for a second with the telegram before her, holding a plate; and then, with a kick of her heel, slam to the oven door. Neville, after staring at the window through his tears will see through his tears, and ask, "Who passes the window?"—"What lovely boy?" [W, 287].

Although not completely correct in the particulars, Rhoda does know what her friends will use as defenses. She
knows that they see meaning in the world, that the "things they lift are heavy" [W, 203], that the emotions they feel are real while she has "to look first and do what other people do when they have done it" [W, 204], and that they live "without caring in the moment" [W, 266]. Rhoda also realizes that human beings "have invented devices for filling up the crevices and disguising these fissures" [W, 219]. After Percival's death she sees the structure humanity has built:

"Like" and "like" and "like"—but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing? . . . There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible: . . . we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation [W, 288].

As Robert Collins notes, such structures hide a terror "that we accept the faulty sequence of logical meaning solely to protect ourselves from the reality of chaos." 

But Rhoda, certainly aware of how the patriarchal characters protect themselves from death's reality, cannot do likewise. She is an outsider who only pretends to have an identity, who goes through

the antics of the individual . . . . But I am not deluded. After all these callings hither and thither, these pluckings and searchings, I shall fall alone through thin sheet into gulfs of fire. And you will not help me. More cruel than the old torturers you will let me fall, and will tear me to pieces when I am fallen [W, 331].
To Rhoda, the very selves, identities, and defenses of her friends strike her as cruelty [W, 247, 258, 317, 344]. Indeed, Rhoda feels pierced by arrows of scorn and ridicule [W, 248] because she has no society; no one validates, verifies, or even accepts her vision of death's reality. The patriarchal characters intend Rhoda no harm, but she is correct when she assumes they will not help her. They cannot recognize her visions or her fears, because to do so would threaten their own defenses and equilibrium. Their resulting refusal to confront what she sees, then, leaves her alone with a terrifying vision of life and death, a vision that intensifies and eventually overwhelms her. Extremely isolated and fearful, Rhoda begins to see other people, even her friends, as enemies. For example, she dreams of being inundated by the sea:

Let me pull myself out of these waters. But they [the waves] heap themselves upon me; they sweep me between their great shoulders; I am turned; I am tumbled; I am stretched, among these long lights, these long waves, these endless paths, with people pursuing, pursuing

[W, 193; my emphasis].

Thus, Rhoda identifies people with nature and the forces that threaten to topple her, and although her friends do not literally tear her to pieces when she falls, with the exception of Bernard, who wishes he could have said "Wait" to her [W, 371], no one mourns her passing. By showing the patriarchal characters' indifference to Rhoda's plight and by also indicating the contrast between their reaction
to Percival's death and to Rhoda's, Woolf demonstrates the lengths to which the patriarchy will go to keep its denial of death intact.

Woolf portrays Rhoda as simply never developing any defenses against death. Septimus Smith, however, has defenses that he ultimately cannot maintain in the face of his experience of death in the War. Rhoda's death barely leaves a ripple in her novel, but Septimus' death does communicate something to Clarissa Dalloway. The patriarchy, however, reacts to Septimus as it did to Rhoda—it tries to suppress what Septimus sees, and in so doing, buries Septimus himself.

Septimus has defenses against death before and during the War. He patriotically enlists, for example, "to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square" [MD, 130]. Then, in the trenches, he "develop[s] manliness" [MD, 130], which helps him to react calmly when his friend Evans dies:

> When Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him [MD, 130].

Even after his friend's death, Septimus himself feels protected:
He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right there. The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference [MD, 130-131; my emphasis].

Underneath all of Septimus' defenses—love, patriotism, manliness—hides the patriarchy's main assumption about death: death can, in fact, be controlled. Patriarchal characters try to enforce this assumption about control even after Septimus becomes ill. For example, his wife, Rezia, thinks Septimus has complete control over his emotions:

[Evans] had seemed a nice quiet man; a great friend of Septimus's, and he had been killed in the War. But such things happen to everyone. Everyone has friends who were killed in the War. . . . But Septimus let himself think about horrible things, as she could too, if she tried . . . . Yet he could be happy when he chose [MD, 99-100; my emphasis].

Holmes and Bradshaw, 'Septimus' doctors, insist that he deny his suffering and pain—Holmes recommends that Septimus take bromides and find a hobby, whereas Bradshaw advises him to think about himself as little as possible [MD, 137, 138, 149]. Both, then, operate on the assumption that health (and life itself) "is largely a matter of our own control" [MD, 138]. To Septimus, in fact, Holmes represents human nature—its tendency to deny death, posit control, and then impose on others.

From the patriarchal point of view, Septimus has the responsibility to control death and his emotions by
forgetting Evans' death. When he tries to communicate his thoughts about Evans and death, for instance, both Rezia and Holmes label them nonsense [MD, 101, 141]. The patriarchy even implies that the loss of his best friend is nothing, if Bradshaw's question is any indication: "So . . . you have nothing to worry you, no financial anxiety, nothing?" [MD, 145]. The repetition of Holmes' diagnosis—there "is nothing whatever the matter with him" [MD, 31, 33, 34, 101, 137, 139, 144]—also demonstrates how thoroughly the patriarchy brushes aside both the fact and the importance of Evans' death. Ironically, Holmes also pinpoints Septimus' problem exactly: the existence of death, the possibility of nothingness. But Septimus' wife, co-workers, doctors, and the society itself expect him to deny the existence of death, to forget the War, and to go on as though it never happened, as though thousands of deaths never occurred, and as though Evans never died. 42 Septimus cannot forget, however.

On the one hand, then, Septimus has an intense awareness of death because he has seen his best friend die. Evans' death proves to him that he cannot control death's presence in the world, that even his love for Evans could not save him. At times, this painful knowledge makes existence itself seem absurd to Septimus: "It might be possible, Septimus thought, . . . it might be possible
that the world itself is without meaning" [MD, 133]. Or, Septimus sees meaning in the world, but only negative meaning. As Rezia notes, Septimus makes "everything terrible" [MD, 33]. At such times, Septimus' awareness of death taints everything; even his beloved Shakespeare, love and sex, and children playing seem corrupt and repulsive [MD, 133-135]. His belief that he is doomed "to be alone forever" [MD, 220], his vivid visions of falling into flames [MD, 213], and his conviction that the flesh has melted off the world and his body has been macerated "until only the nerve fibres [are] left" [MD, 102-103] all show that he feels distant from his surroundings and thus clearly sees the skeleton beneath the beauty and the co-existence of life and death.

On the other hand, although Septimus' knowledge of death has obviously penetrated many of his earlier defenses, it has not broken through the underlying patriarchal assumption of control; this societal expectation of control over death means that when Evans' death occurs outside of Septimus' control, he feels extremely guilty. As a matter of fact, not only does Septimus feel responsible for death's existence, he feels guilt at surviving Evans and believes he should have prevented Evans' death; although Septimus did his duty and won crosses [MD, 133], he believes that "In the War itself he had failed" [MD, 145]. Certainly, Septimus' visions and
thoughts suggest intense guilt. He imagines himself as either a helpless victim, seeing "faces laughing at him, calling him horrible disgusting names" [MD, 100] or as a savior, able to save the world if he can just communicate his secret truths: trees are alive, there is no crime, there is universal love, and "there is no death" [MD, 36, 102, 212]. Thus, Septimus wants either to be punished for his crime, that is, his lack of control—"The verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death" [MD, 137]—or to miraculously save the world, thus taking control, and bring Evana back to life—"I have been dead, and yet am now alive" [MD, 104]. The patriarchal assumption of control, then, causes Septimus to feel guilty about his knowledge of death.

Septimus, therefore, is caught; he feels both overwhelmed by death's arbitrary presence in the world and responsible for denying that presence. Thus, the patriarchy's denial of death paralyzes Septimus: he cannot repress his knowledge, and he cannot express it, either. Isolated, with no confirmation or acceptance of his awareness, he has no outlet for his confused feelings and so tries to bury them, which is, of course, what the patriarchy wants him to do. His senses become numbed: he cannot taste or feel, and beauty is "behind a pane of glass" [MD, 132]. Septimus' greatest crime—not caring when Evans was killed, and not being able to feel since—
stems directly from his being caught in this bind between his own knowledge and the patriarchy's desires. Although Septimus interprets his numbness as the cause of his being sentenced to death, his numbness actually is the result of the conflict between his awareness of death's being everyone's sentence and the patriarchy's desire that he keep quiet about such awareness.

Woolf juxtaposes Septimus' intense awareness of death with the patriarchy's equally strong denial of it to show the ultimate harm such denial can do to the individual. Septimus feels, for example, that communication is health and happiness [MD, 141] and that if he could just share his vision, he would no longer feel so numb or mad. But Holmes and Bradshaw teach him that his society does not want to see, hear, or admit in any way the existence of his vision. Septimus interprets this denial of death as a desire that he and his vision be suppressed, gone, absent, and such an interpretation is not far wrong: the patriarchy would simply rather not have reminders of death's presence around. Thus, Septimus begins to think of people as his enemy, just as Rhoda did. "Once you fall," Septimus says to himself, "human nature is on you . . . . Human nature is remorseless" [MD, 148]. And in words very similar to Rhoda's, he cries out about human cruelty, "how they tear each other to pieces. The fallen, . . . they tear to pieces" [MD, 213]. Although the patriarchal society does not intend to kill
Septimus, it does, in effect, abandon him. To Septimus, then, human beings have

neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment. They hunt in packs. Their packs scour the desert and vanish screaming into the wilderness. They desert the fallen. They are plastered over with grīmaces [MD, 135].

Septimus feels trapped between his awareness and his society's denial: "But human beings? What did they want?" [MD, 226]. They want to control death; therefore, they must control Septimus. To do so, they suggest ways for him to control or ignore his vision of death. They dare not, however, confront Septimus or his vision. Thus, Septimus hears the patriarchal insistence that he control death by concealing it like everyone else does, and he senses that if he cannot do so, the patriarchy will find other ways to suppress him and his vision. No wonder Septimus imagines the whole world clamoring, "Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes" [MD, 140].

Indeed, Rezia is so frightened by Septimus at the beginning of the novel that she thinks, "Far rather would she that he were dead!" [MD, 33]. Although the patriarchal society does not overtly encourage suicide, it does fear Septimus' and Rhoda's visions of death so deeply that it will ignore those visions until deaths actually occur. Backer believes that seeing reality as it is leads to madness, open psychosis, but Woolf indicates that another reason for the madness may lie in being so utterly isolated,
alone with one's vision. Certainly the society's inability to accept death makes it loom even larger in Septimus' imagination. Septimus, it seems, feels crazy because he feels forsaken.

When Septimus does leap from his Bloomsbury window and shouts "'I'll give it you!'" [MD, 226], he gives his society an ambiguous gift: Septimus asserts his individuality and takes the patriarchal assumption of control to its furthest extreme by deciding to die; he responds to his guilt by punishing himself; he chooses not to be controlled by the patriarchy or to participate in its evasion of death any longer; he removes his vision of death from the society; he expresses his desire to give others what Evans' death had given him, an awareness of mortality; he defies the patriarchy's denial by forcing the society to confront his own choice and his own death; and finally, he communicates his despair at being ignored and isolated. Septimus embraces death in order to break through his society's rejection. Septimus' decision to die is not his idea of a tragedy [MD, 226], but it is for those who deny death, because death's presence in life becomes harder to repress when someone chooses to die. Such an act directly contradicts patriarchal assumptions and fears. Thus, by dying, Septimus hopes to confront his society with the literal existence of death outside its control, to communicate his own awareness of death, and to expose the society's denial.
Rhoda and Septimus, then, "see what habit covers" [W, 304] almost constantly because they experience extreme distance from the world. They become victimized, partly by their visions of death, but more by the patriarchal characters' repudiation of those visions. Because they receive absolutely no verification or validation of their visions, the victims have difficulty sustaining their lives. Ostracized, with no support from the patriarchy, and unable to employ patriarchal defenses because they see through them, yet under the patriarchy's influence enough to blame themselves for their visions and to think they should be in control, they do take control, but not in the way the patriarchy would wish. As a result, the victims both resist and succumb to patriarchal control.

The patriarchal characters establish a close identification between themselves and reality, which results in their taking control of life, death, and other people, whereas the victims' extreme distance from patriarchal reality paradoxically results in their being under the control of that society. The artists, on the other hand, establish, maintain, and even cultivate a distance from society's reality that allows them to acknowledge the coexistence of life and death; in fact, they use distance to avoid both a denial of death and a submission to it. Their acknowledgment of death's presence in life fosters their tolerance for the otherness of others and fuels their art.
As Lily Briscoe says, as she painted in *To the Lighthouse*, "so much depends . . . upon distance . . ." [TtL, 284].

Woolf makes this interrelationship between distance, the balance of life and death, tolerance, and art apparent in *Mrs. Dalloway* when Septimus designs a hat. Feeling some distance from his own pain and from patriarchal pressure, Septimus' fear diminishes, he sees some beauty in nature, and real things are themselves. As a result, he can focus on another person, Mrs. Peters, see Rezia the way she is, without horror or idealization, and, as Rezia notes, "become himself" [MD, 216]. Momentarily escaping from guilt and the need to control, Septimus can use his "wonderful eye" for color and design [MD, 217] to order the chaotic contents of Rezia's workbox, indeed, to make something out of nothing. Septimus feels such pride—"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. 'Just look at it,' he said" [MD, 218]—in his design because he makes it in spite of the presence of death, of which he is strongly aware. The hat cannot defend him against death; rather, he values it so highly because he is strongly aware of the void against which it is made. The hat, because it is made, not given, demonstrates both an ordered reality and the source of the human impulse to order, death. After creating the hat, Septimus decides to confront death, its place in life, and his fear because
he has seen an alternative to both patriarchal control and being controlled. Thus, for a while, Septimus reaches an equilibrium—sustaining and celebrating life without denying death. But the appearance of the patriarchal Holmes and his insistence that Septimus evade rather than confront death overturns the fragile balance Septimus achieves.

In contrast, the artists in Woolf's novels, Clarissa Dalloway, Lily Briscoe, Bernard, and Miss La Trobe, are all able to maintain that balance between affirming death's presence in life without denying life and affirming life without denying death's presence in it. Thus, they validate the victims' visions and recognize the worth of human creation. Their use of distance means that they acknowledge death, admit its presence in reality, and grant its power in compelling humans to create. Because of their awareness and their distance from patriarchal defenses, the artists have a high degree of tolerance for difference—intent on seeing reality, that of the world's and of individual's, they do not feel compelled to control it. They neither ignore death nor succumb to it; rather, they accept its reality and acknowledge it within their art.

As Woolf points out in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," the role of hostess is similar to that of the artist [CE, I, 330-331]. Clarissa's aims—to bring people together, to make communication possible, to make an offering for the sake of offering—certainly parallel an artist's
aims. The only person in the novel able to "read" Septimus' communication, Clarissa stands between Septimus, who is overwhelmed by death, and Peter, who denies it. As a result, she holds a position similar to the other artists in Woolf's fiction and functions as the artist in Mrs. Dalloway. Indeed, the proof that Clarissa's role is an artistic one emerges when neither Richard Dalloway, the politician, nor Peter, the critic, understands Clarissa's parties, her reasons for giving them, or her excitement at creating them. To Richard and Peter, her parties are impractical, snobbish, irrelevant, useless, childish, trivial, and even threatening to her health, all the typical claims against art.

Clarissa, however, without being the conventional artist with typical works of art, does have the distance associated with art in Woolf's fiction. A participant in the patriarchal society, Clarissa still feels as though she is "outside, looking on" [MD, 11]. Her knowledge that "here was one room; there another" [MD, 193] and her dislike of love and religion, which ignore or try to dissolve such barriers, demonstrate her awareness that people are essentially separated and separate. As a young woman, Clarissa was dissatisfied with "not knowing people; not being known" [MD, 231]. But maturing meant learning to respect the fundamental aloneness of the individual, being able to see the old woman across the way as she is,
miraculous, mysterious, and private [MD, 191-193], and realizing that others operate independently of one's perceptions of them. Thus, Clarissa recognizes the horror of Sir William Bradshaw and Miss Kilman, not because they are inherently horrible, but because they attempt to control, force, or convert others. Her discomfort around Bradshaw and Kilman and her decision not to marry Peter all indicate that Clarissa, though admitting she depends on it, maintains a certain distance from the patriarchal society.

What for Clarissa is distance, "a little licence, a little independence . . . between people . . . [MD, 10], however, patriarchal characters such as Peter and Sally interpret as her coldness, prudishness, and lack. But Clarissa is simply strongly aware of an unbridgeable distance between herself and the world. Thus, even as she's enjoying life, the bustle of London streets, and the task of getting flowers, Clarissa has "a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day"[MD, 11].

Clarissa's sense of being both inside and outside her society, her absorption in life at the same time she sees life's inherent danger, and her desire to give parties at the same time she is well aware of how separated everyone is, all show her intense awareness of the co-existence of life and death in reality. Her defenses--support from
Richard, social ambition, and a diamond self composed with effort for the public—do not finally shut out her awareness of death; indeed, Clarissa senses the created quality of these defenses and thus does not avoid "the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely..." [MD, 281]. Even her hope that she will survive like a mist between the people she knows simultaneously contains some truth about the way people do live on in the minds of others and an evocation of how fragile such a survival is.

Clarissa seems to have always had an awareness of how life and death commingle, because as a young woman of eighteen, happy to be alive and enjoying Bourton, she has the feeling "that something awful was about to happen" [MD, 3]. Because she acknowledges "an emptiness about the heart of life" [MD, 45] and has become aware of how time may not continue for her, she also has a sense of making a life:

Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh... [MD, 5].

Neither obsessed with the thought of death or involved in repressing such thoughts, Clarissa does allow the thought of death to cross her mind; as a result, she senses, even early in the novel, that ultimately, life and death are
all that is important. As she sews her green dress for
the evening's party, for example, Clarissa peacefully
accepts death's part in life:

So on a summer's day waves collect, overbalance,
and fall; collect and fall; and the whole world
seems to be saying "that is all" more and more
ponderously, until even the heart in the body
which lies in the sun on the beach says too,
That is all. Fear no more, says the heart.
Fear no more, says the heart, committing its
burden to some sea, which sighs collectively
for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects,
lets fall [MD, 58-59].

Clarissa's recognition of the interaction between life and
death, her awareness and openness about her fear, and her
distance from the society she lives in, mean that when
Bradshaw brings word of Septimus' death to her party, she
does not repress his news of death; rather, she isolates
herself from her society, giving herself even more distance,
and confronts the fact of death, of Septimus himself, and
his suicide.

Moreover, Clarissa's realization that

A thing there was that mattered; a thing,
wreathed about with chatter, defaced,
obliterated in her own life, let drop every
day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he
had preserved [MD, 280].

follows a day already moving toward that conclusion.
Septimus' death gives her proof: the essential reality,
the existence of life and death, matters above all else.
Septimus' commitment to life's inviolability, which he
paradoxically throws away in order to save, and his
recognition of death's presence in life communicate the
value of both life and death to Clarissa, a communication she might have ignored if she had not already been thinking about death's part in life all day.

Because of her distance, then, and her awareness of life and death that result from it, Clarissa has more tolerance for others than anyone else in the novel, except perhaps Richard. Just as she would have stopped to talk to Septimus and Rezia if she had seen them, as Peter knows [MD, 118], so she "sees" Septimus as an individual—not a coward or some problem to be solved by legislation—after his death. More important, she "sees" his suicide as an attempt to defy, communicate, and embrace [MD, 280–281]. Though not always succeeding, Clarissa generally avoids saying of others or of herself "that they were this or were that" [MD, 11]; she wishes "everybody merely to be themselves" [MD, 191]. Her innate respect for others, even for those she hates—for example, Clarissa may be rapped by Miss Kilman, but she is also impressed by her [MD, 203]—prevents her from creating hierarchies to divide people. Indeed, Clarissa is much more generous to Miss Kilman than vice versa. And although Clarissa dislikes Miss Kilman's manner and her religion, she does not forbid Elizabeth to see her. Her anger at Miss Kilman, at Peter, and at Sir William Bradshaw stems from one source—her distaste for their compulsion to change people, to make them into carbon copies, to force their souls, to show disrespect for their
individuality. Clarissa sees people as themselves, not as necessary for her defense against death. Thus, as Peter acknowledges, Clarissa looks "as if she wished the whole world well" [MD, 265].

For Clarissa, death is not something to defend against and thus blame others for. Neither people nor gods can be made responsible for her sister's death: "no one was to blame" [MD, 118]. As a result, according to Peter, Clarissa evolves an "atheist's religion of doing good for the sake of goodness" [MD, 118]. Indeed, she continues to have parties for the sake of bringing people together, a reason that other people may not understand:

But to go deeper, beneath what people said . . . in her own mind now, what did it mean to her, this thing she called life? Oh, it was very queer. Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together, so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom?

An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. Anyhow, it was her gift [MD, 184-185].

Thus, even though people do not see the use of her parties, Clarissa creates them. Just as life for her is an art, something handed to one by parents and then requiring one to make and shape it, parties are a higher form of art to Clarissa. Rather than being a defense against death, one of Clarissa's parties actually causes her to confront
death: "Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death . . ." [MD, 279]. Indeed, Clarissa accepts the presence of death within her party so completely that for a few moments, she balances life and death, ecstasy and terror [MD, 296], within herself. For Peter, Clarissa is "there," communicating to him through her very presence, the "thing that mattered" [MD, 280]. As a result, the perfect hostess who creates parties becomes the artist who portrays, both to Peter and to Woolf's readers, the insight she has gained from Septimus, the overwhelming reality of life and death.

Lily Briscoe, a more self-conscious artist than Clarissa, transfers her vision of life and death to canvas rather than reveal it through her very being. In the process, she makes clear how death fosters art. Lily sustains a much greater distance from her society than does Clarissa—Lily does not marry, has an unconventional friendship with an older man, and often questions her society's manners—and as a result, establishes a more aesthetic distance. The distance she feels the morning Mr. Ramsay sails to the lighthouse, for example,

was all in keeping with this silence, this emptiness, and the unreality of the early morning hour. It was a way things had sometimes, she thought, lingering for a moment and looking at the long glittering windows and the plume of blue smoke: they became unreal. So coming back from a journey, or after an illness, before habits had spun themselves across the surface, one felt that same unreality, which was so startling; felt
something emerge. Life was most vivid then [TtL, 285; my emphasis].

Life takes on such vividness as a result of the observer's distance from it. In addition, death emerges, making reality seem unreal because one is not accustomed to death's presence in it. "[T]his other thing, this truth, this reality," which emerges "stark at the back of appearances" rouses Lily to "perpetual combat," challenges her "to a fight in which [she] was bound to be worsted" [TtL, 236]. Seeing reality, then, requires distance, a distance which provokes an awareness of death's presence in life and one's own ultimate impotence in the face of it.

Such distance also causes Lily to accept other people's difference from herself. She does not approve of Mr. Ramsay's domination of people, for example, yet she also recognizes his "fiery unworldliness," his rejection of trifles, and his love for dogs and his children. Lily resists Mrs. Ramsay's efforts to marry her off, yet she admires what love and Mrs. Ramsay have created at the summer home. The complexity that distance gives to people means that Lily does not think everyone should be an artist, whereas Mrs. Ramsay, in her use of patriarchal defenses, thinks every woman should marry and have children. Lily even tries to understand Charles Tansley, and in fact, she does see his complexity. Her tolerance for others does not excuse their faults, their pettiness, or their tyrannies, but it does acknowledge people's differences,
their individuality. Distance, then, in its revelation of the complexity of life and death, also reveals the complexity of every person.

Lily depends on this very distance to have her vision. When Mr. Ramsay is close to her on the lawn and Mrs. Ramsay is alive, Lily rarely sees anything except their defenses: Mr. Ramsay's coercive attempts to gain sympathy from women and Mrs. Ramsay's attempt to give things "a wholeness not theirs in life" [TtL, 286]. Only with distance can Lily see them as they really are, as part of both ordinary experience and ecstasy. Only with distance, in other words, can Lily see them as the complex human beings they are, see through their defenses, and see them well enough to paint them. Lily's task, communicating Mrs. Ramsay, is made more difficult by Mrs. Ramsay's reserve; in contrast to Septimus, for instance, Mrs. Ramsay does not try to share her perceptions about life and death. Thus, Lily must establish distance from her in order to paint Mrs. Ramsay both as herself, partaking in life and death, and as a miracle, her presence asserting itself through memory even as she herself is absent.

A vision of life and death's co-existence, then, depends on establishing distance. Lily, however, desperately wants Mrs. Ramsay to be alive and thus wants to bridge the distance. As she stands painting, facing the emptiness of the steps, she suffers:
To want and not to have, sent all up her body a hardness, a hollowness, a strain. And then to want and not to have—to want and want—how that wrung the heart, and wrung it again and again! Oh, Mrs. Ramsay! she called out silently, to that essence which sat by the boat, that abstract one made of her, that woman in grey, as if to abuse her for having gone, and then having gone, come back again. It had seemed so safe, thinking of her. Ghost, air, nothingness, a thing you could play with easily and safely at any time of day or night, she had been that, and then suddenly she put her hand out and wrung the heart thus. Suddenly, the empty drawing-room steps, the frill of the chair inside, the puppy tumbling on the terrace, the whole wave and whisper of the garden became like curves and arabesques flourishing round a centre of complete emptiness [TtŁ, 266; my emphasis].

Mrs. Ramsay's death creates an empty center in Lily's world. She tries to console herself by thinking that "'you' and 'I' and 'she' pass and vanish; nothing stays; all changes; but not words, not paint" [TtŁ, 267], but she realizes that even her art will not remain. Perhaps only the attempt remains; even that, as her tears indicate, may not last:

She had perfect control of herself—Oh, yes!—in every other way. Was she crying then for Mrs. Ramsay, without being aware of any unhappiness? . . . What was it then? What did it mean? Could things thrust their hands up and grip one; could the blade cut; the fist grasp? Was there no safety? No learning by heart of the ways of the world? No guide, no shelter, but all was miracle, and leaping from the pinnacle of a tower into the air? Could it be, even for elderly people, that this was life?—startling, unexpected, unknown? For one moment she felt that if they both got up, here, now on the lawn, and demanded an explanation, why was it so short, why was it so inexplicable, said it with violence, as two fully equipped human beings from whom
nothing should be hid might speak, then, beauty would roll itself up; the space would fill; those empty flourishes would form into shape; if they shouted loud enough Mrs. Ramsay would return [TtL, 267-268].

Distance, then, the awareness of an emptiness at the center of things, forces Lily to acknowledge that Mrs. Ramsay is really gone; perhaps for the first time, Lily cries for that loss. Lily wishes she and Mr. Carmichael could make death not so for Mrs. Ramsay, and she also wishes it would not be so for her or her paint. Thus, she cries because she too will eventually be gone and because she and Mr. Carmichael are not gods; they do not have the power to conquer death or to create substance out of emptiness.

Only when Lily faces Mrs. Ramsay's absence from the world of the living can she literally see her again, sitting on the steps, knitting. Only when Lily faces her powerlessness can she go beyond Mrs. Ramsay's beauty and see what is underneath. Thus, in facing her own evasions, Lily recognizes Mrs. Ramsay's. Lily, in fact, achieves the "jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it has been made anything" [TtL, 287] in her painting: with its relationships between masses, its line down the center, and its empty space left around that center, \(^{45}\) Lily's painting captures both the golden globe and the jar on the nerves, Mrs. Ramsay as she presented herself, and the Mrs. Ramsay who knew death, life and death, presence and absence. Lily's recognition of the emptiness at the center, similar to
Clarissa's recognition of the emptiness about the heart of life, means that she includes, rather than avoids, death in her painting. In fact, Lily paints only in response to the blankness and numbness she feels in the morning; she imagines form only in response to the blank space on her canvas; she paints only in response to the jar on the nerves; and she sees Mrs. Ramsay only in response to a center of complete emptiness. Thus, Lily's painting captures a vision of creation and that which motivates creation, death. Rather than using her creation to defend against death, Lily incorporates death within her creation, acknowledging its force in the process of creation itself. Lily's painting grows out of Mrs. Ramsay's death and Lily's admission of death's presence in life, and, rather than deny that origin and project it outside the frame of her painting, Lily acknowledges it by leaving it within the painting itself. Furthermore, Lily no longer cares what will become of her painting, whether it will last or not (in great contrast to Mr. Ramsay)—what matters is that for a moment, she has held life and death within one frame: "Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" [TtL, 310]. Having a vision of reality means more to her than making others see the same vision or than gaining immortality. Human vision and human creation are enough for Lily; she does not ask those creations to defend her against death.
In contrast to Lily, who evidently paints many pictures, Bernard never produces an actual novel or poem. Nevertheless, he is Woolf's most self-conscious artist. Bernard reveals his perspective on the co-existence of life and death through the story he tells about himself and his six friends within the frame of the "lady writing" [W, 186], or Woolf herself. Indeed, his constant observation of Percival, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, and Louis, along with his continuous examination of himself, causes Bernard's distance from the patriarchy and its defenses against death. Bernard's intense self-awareness means that in his notebook, he chronicles both his development of identity as an individual and his growing awareness of death, developments that conflict with each other.

Bernard realizes very early that there exists a division between himself and the world; as he comforts Susan after she sees Jinny kiss Louis, for instance, Bernard becomes aware of pain in being human:

"This is not to be borne," I said, as I sat beside her on the roots that were hard as skeletons. I then first became aware of the presence of those enemies who change, but are always there; the forces we fight against. To let oneself be carried on passively is unthinkable. "That's your course, world," one says, "mine is this" [W, 343].

Nature, which suggests death to Bernard here, and human suffering create in Bernard a lasting realization that he and the world are not one, a realization that later makes
him strongly aware of death's presence in reality. Rather than create a thick defense against death and try to mold reality into what he desires, then, Bernard consciously battles death all his life. A conscious battle, of course, implies knowledge of what one is battling, and Bernard's experience, in contrast to that of the victims, shows that one can acknowledge death without literally surrendering to it.

At Bernard's graduation, he again notes the separation between self and world when he becomes aware of how human concerns are mocked by nature:

One wants to say something, to feel something, absolutely appropriate to the occasion. One's mind is primed; one's lips are pursed. And then a bee drifts in and hums round the flowers in the bouquet which Lady Hampton, the wife of the General, keeps smelling to show her appreciation of the compliment. If the bee were to sting her nose? We are all deeply moved; yet irreverent . . . . The bee distracts us; its casual flight seems to deride our intensity [W, 215].

In addition to this distance from things the patriarchal characters use as defenses, Bernard sometimes experiences a more extreme distance from his society. He becomes aware of the "omnipresent, general life," becomes detached and indifferent, and resides in the "sunless territory of non-identity" [W, 253, 255]. In such a state, Bernard becomes intensely conscious of the world's instability: "Who is to say what meaning there is in anything?" [W, 256]. Consequently, he sees other people as "all impelled by some
necessity" [W, 253], keeping appointments, fulfilling routines, and thus defending against death with ceaseless activity. After Percival's death, Bernard experiences such extreme distance, living "outside the machine" [W, 282, 285] for a while, and he does not want to return to "the usual order" [W, 283] right away. So he goes to see some paintings: "I will go up these steps into the gallery and submit myself to the influence of minds like mine outside the sequence" [W, 283]. Thus, Bernard suggests the interrelationship between the awareness of death, art, and distance—the patriarchy creates sequence to impose order on chaos, but Bernard and other artists sometimes exist outside that order, seeing death, chaos, and emptiness.

Outside the society's sequence, then, Bernard notes, "I think also that our bodies are in truth naked. We are only lightly covered with buttoned cloth; and beneath these pavements are shells, bones and silence" [W, 253-254]. Bernard's feeling of distance makes him "aware of our ephemeral passage" [W, 254], and after Percival's death, in contrast to the other characters, Bernard continues to carry with him that awareness: "It is strange how the dead leap out on us at street corners, or in dreams" [W, 367]. At the second Hampton Court reunion, he becomes aware of death in another way, as he and his friends feel enlarging around them "the huge blackness of what is outside us, of what we are not" [W, 369]. But Bernard's final vision of death goes
far beyond these other experiences. When he realizes that although he can see the reality of life and death, that reality does not see him, Bernard contemplates not only the abstract presence of death in reality but also his own death:

For one day as I leant over a gate that led into a field, the rhythm stopped: the rhymes and the hummings, the nonsense and the poetry. A space was cleared in my mind. I saw through the thick leaves of habit . . . I said life had been imperfect, an unfinished phrase . . .

I spoke to that self who has been with me in many tremendous adventures; . . .

This self now as I leant over the gate looking down over fields rolling in waves of colour beneath me made no answer. He threw up no opposition. He attempted no phrase. His fist did not form. I waited. I listened. Nothing came, nothing. I cried then with a sudden conviction of complete desertion. Now there is nothing. No fin breaks the waste of this immeasurable sea. Life has destroyed me. No echo comes when I speak, no varied words. This is more truly death than the death of friends, the death of youth . . .

The scene beneath me withered. It was like the eclipse when the sun went out and left the earth, flourishing in full summer foliage, withered, brittle, false . . . I saw my own indefatigable busyness . . . always kept hard at it by some extraordinary purpose with my nose to the ground like a dog on the scent . . . Now it was done with.

The woods had vanished; the earth was a waste of shadow. No sound broke the silence of the wintry landscape . . . . A man without a self, I said. A heavy body leaning on a gate. A dead man. With dispassionate despair, with entire disillusionment I surveyed the dust dance; my life, my friends' lives . . . I, carrying a notebook, making phrases, had recorded merely changes; a
shadow, I had been sedulous to take note of shadows. How can I proceed now, I said, without a self, weightless and visionless, through a world weightless, without illusion? [W, 373-375; my emphasis].

As light and color slowly and miraculously return to the landscape, Bernard realizes that he sees the world with this difference; I saw but was not seen . . . From me had dropped the old cloak, the old response; the hollowed hand that beats back sounds. Thin, as a ghost, leaving no trace where I trod, perceiving merely, I walked alone in a new world, never trodden . . .

But how describe the world seen without a self? There are no words. Blue, red—even they distract, even they hide with thickness instead of letting the light through. How describe or say anything in articulate words again?—save that it fades, save that it undergoes a gradual transformation, becomes, even in the course of one short walk, habitual—this scene also. Blindness returns as one moves and one leaf repeats another. Loveliness returns . . . One breathes in and out substantial breath . . . [W, 375-376; my emphasis].

In these extraordinary passages, Bernard sees the essential reality of life and death with extreme clarity and understands that the world is fundamentally resistant to human desires. Bernard sees "what habit covers" [W, 304], and for a few moments, he is without a self, without a myth, without character, without defenses or screens.

Because of Bernard's awareness of death, an awareness that increases as he ages, he seems even less fixed and rigid than the other Waves characters, who are hardly rigid themselves. Bernard is the messy one, spilling tea into the saucer, trying on different roles, unable to finish
stories, keeping a notebook filled with phrases, and seeing people with blurred edges. Although Bernard says of himself that he grew a shell early to protect himself from sensations, he has fewer defenses against death than the other characters. For example, he knows he has formed the shell and later knows that it "shuts one in" [W, 377]; thus, he also recognizes the "soft soul" [W, 353], unprotected from death and fears, underneath that shell. His mind grows rings, but he notes that process [W, 355, 358]. Paradoxically, then, Bernard's distance does not protect him. Rather, Bernard is vulnerable to chaos, flux, the coexistence of life and death, and reality.

His distance and his awareness of death also make him quite tolerant of his friends. He sees them as they are, acknowledges their differences from each other and from himself, and he rarely uses those differences to criticize. He does not erect thick defenses against death or barriers against his friends, and thus he does not try to impose his will on others. Bernard's attitude about life varies greatly, but more often than not, he does not try to control it as do the others:

Thus waiting, thus speculating, making this note and then another I do not cling to life. I shall be brushed like a bee from a sunflower. My philosophy, always accumulating, welling up moment by moment, runs like quicksilver a dozen ways at once [W, 327].

Bernard thus eventually realizes he will neither find nor create the true story, questioning whether such a thing
even exists. Indeed, he questions all teachers and all systems that try to explain everything and claim to be truth: "Let a man get up and say, 'Behold, this is the truth,' and instantly I perceive a sandy cat filching a piece of fish in the background. Look, you have forgotten the cat, I say" [W, 305]. As a result, Bernard, though not indiscriminate, is "very tolerant. I am not a moralist. I have too great a sense of the shortness of life and its temptations to rule red lines" [W, 327]. He acknowledges "a little dagger of contempt and severity hidden up his sleeve," but he rarely uses it. Instead he is "apt to be deflected" because he makes stories [W, 327].

Those stories, his love of language and his notebook are Bernard's chief defenses against death. Early in his life, he believes words can heal and join people together [W, 185]. When he leaves home for the first time, for example, and must face change, loss, and fear, he reacts by thinking, "I must make phrases and phrases and so interpose something hard between myself and the stare of housemaids, the stare of clocks, staring faces, indifferent faces, or I shall cry" [W, 195]. He also tries to comfort Susan with words and the imaginary world of Elvedon. As he grows older, however, the power of words becomes problematic.

For example, he thinks,

When I cannot see words curling like rings of smoke round me I am in darkness—I am nothing.

... how lovely the smoke of my phrase is, rising and falling, flaunting and falling,
upon red lobsters and yellow fruit, wreathing them into one beauty. But observe how meretricious the phrase is—made up of what evasions and old lies [W, 267].

He battles daily to retrieve trees "from formlessness with words" [W, 364], but his awareness of that very formlessness makes words seem false. Thus, Bernard uses his art as a defense, but knows it is a defense and knows what it defends against. Differing from the patriarchal characters in his use of defenses, Bernard also differs in that he sees himself with extreme clarity. For example, although he keeps collecting phrases in his notebook, as though preparing to write "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," Bernard eventually observes his habit with irony: "It is curious how, at every crisis, some phrase which does not fit insists upon coming to the rescue—the penalty of living in an old civilisation with a notebook" [W, 303-304]. He also eventually distrusts stories. He thinks,

I have made up thousands of stories; I have filled innumerable notebooks with phrases to be used when I have found the true story, the one story to which all these phrases refer. But I have never yet found that story. And I begin to ask, Are there stories? [W, 305-306].

Later, after his intense experience of death's existence, Bernard believes that language itself distracts from reality and consequently, throws away his notebook of phrases:

My book, stuffed with phrases, has dropped to the floor. It lies under the table to be swept up by the charwoman when she comes wearily at dawn looking for scraps of paper,
old tram tickets, and here and there a note
screwed into a ball and left with the litter
to be swept up. What is the phrase for the
moon? And the phrase for love? By what name
are we to call death? I do not know. I need
a little language such as lovers use, words
of one syllable such as children speak when
they come into the room and find their mother
sewing and pick up some scrap of bright wool,
a feather, or a shred of chintz. I need a
howl; a cry. When the storm crosses the marsh
and sweeps over me where I lie in the ditch
unregarded I need no words. Nothing neat.
Nothing that comes down with all its feet on
the floor. None of those resonances and
lovely echoes that break and chime from nerve
to nerve in our breasts making wild music,
false phrases. I have done with phrases.

How much better is silence; the coffee-
cup, the table. . . . Let me sit here for
ever with bare things, this coffee-cup, this
knife, this fork, things in themselves, myself
being myself [W, 381-383; my emphasis].

Thus, words, phrases, and stories no longer come between
Bernard and things in themselves, between him and reality,
between him and the co-existence of life and death.47

Paradoxically, however, Bernard's very "summing up" is
a story. However, Bernard's inclusion of death in it pre-
vents his story from functioning solely as a defense. He
tells the story of his life but insists that the story is
not reality:

But in order to make you understand, to
give you my life, I must tell you a story
--and there are so many, and so many--
stories of childhood, stories of school,
love, marriage, death, and so on; and none
of them are true [W, 341].

Indeed, all the characters in The Waves tell stories, the
stories of themselves, but Bernard recognizes the fictive
quality of one's self and does not, in contrast to the
others, perceive his stories or his perceptions as reality. Bernard, then, sums up his own life and the lives of his friends from a different perspective, which he describes as

the contribution of maturity to childhood’s intuitions—satiety and doom; the sense of what is unescapable in our lot; death; the knowledge of limitations; how life is more obdurate than one had thought it [W, 363; my emphasis].

The perspective that includes death's presence in life makes reality, life itself, obdurate; death makes one aware of being unable to shape life, to mold it into what one desires. This perspective causes Bernard to say to the near stranger in the restaurant that when he considers his life, "The illusion is upon me that something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed" [W, 341; my emphasis]. And later, in order to continue his story, he says,

But to return. Let us again pretend that life is a solid substance, shaped like a globe, which we turn about in our fingers. Let us pretend that we can make out a plain and logical story, so that when one matter is despatched—love for instance—we go on, in an orderly manner, to the next [W, 350].

Bernard identifies, in fact, exactly what the patriarchal characters do in order to ignore the presence of death in reality. They shape life, indeed, they assume they can shape life, into what they want and call the result reality. They also assume that control of the pen, of the story, will control life and death, but Bernard recognizes
that control of the pen does not ultimately control those forces. Bernard also shapes his life, but eventually realizes that such shaping is a pretence. Thus, when he asks himself, "What does the central shadow hold? Something? Nothing?" his answer is, "I do not know" [W, 379].

But Bernard's realization that he cannot control the forces of life and death does not stop him from fighting death. In fact, his awareness that death is the enemy motivates his struggle. Thus, like Lily, Bernard comes to see death as the source for human effort, the origin of human creation. The effort "to collect, to assemble, to heap together, summon my forces, rise and confront the enemy" [W, 380] is given meaning by the very presence of that enemy: "It is death against whom I ride . . . ." [W, 383]. Bernard's incorporation of the language of the novel's interludes after he sees the world without a self effectively intensifies the strength of human effort against death because Bernard no longer observes the waves—he is the waves, he is nature, he himself is "the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again" [W, 383]. Therefore, Bernard knows that his opposition to death is part of being human rather than an opposition in which he has any chance of winning. The effort itself, Bernard seems to realize with his heroic imagery, is where human greatness lies:

It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like
a young man's, like Percival's, when he
galloped in India. I strike spurs into
my horse. Against you I will fling myself
unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!
[W, 383].

Woolf wanted such effort to be the dominant theme of *The
Waves,* and in order for effort to play such a strong role,
she had to emphasize the strength of the forces one fights
against: "*The waves broke on the shore*" [W, 383; Woolf's
italics]. Bernard knows that effort involves blindness,
ilusions, beliefs in one's unvanquished state, but he also
knows what lies underneath. He sees both death and the
human effort against it; he sees the human glory in fighting
what we know will beat us; he sees that humans create in
response to the challenge death presents us with and there-
fore, he acknowledges death within his creations, his
stories, his summing up. Thus, what the patriarchal
characters see as reality, Bernard sees as human effort and
creation. Woolf suggests with Bernard's character that
denying the power of death also means denying one's own
power to create. By admitting he must make an effort, by
admitting that he is defending himself through his efforts,
Bernard admits that he uses his effort against something,
death. As a result of his distance, then, Bernard
acknowledges the presence of death in reality and affirms
death as the source of his effort.

Miss La Trobe, similar to Woolf's other artists, makes
no great claims for her art, distances herself from her
society and thus has a strong sense of death's presence in reality, and incorporates that awareness of life and death in her art. But she differs from Clarissa, who appears before just one person, from Lily, who does not know whether anyone will ever see her painting, and from Bernard, who never produces a work of art and tells his story to a near stranger, because she has a large audience: the whole village, plus the landed gentry, either participate in or watch her pageant. Thus, for the first time in her fiction, Woolf presents not only the artist's vision, but an audience's reaction to that vision. The village people who act in the play are so "[s]wathed in conventions, they couldn't see . . ." [BtA, 64], and much of the audience also reacts to the play from a framework of patriarchal assumptions. In order to make her audience see for a few minutes, in order to "douche" them into seeing the reality underneath conventions, appearances, and assumptions, then, Miss La Trobe must create distance between the audience and herself, between the audience and their past, and between the audience and their comforting patriarchal defenses.

Woolf tells the reader very little about Miss La Trobe, and in contrast to Lily, most of what we do learn comes after the play is over. In The Waves, Woolf presents a great deal about Bernard, but he produces no art other than his summing up. In Between the Acts, however, Woolf has Miss La Trobe produce art, art that is presented to the audience
at the play and to the readers, but tells us almost nothing about her as a person. Thus, Miss La Trobe never emerges as the central figure in the novel as Bernard does in The Waves. Also, whereas Bernard needs the company of people to bring out his self, at least until the end of The Waves, Miss La Trobe is solitary from the very beginning of Between the Acts. Thus, although sometimes thinking of herself as a "slave to her audience" [BtA, 94], Miss La Trobe does not seem influenced by the people in the village. An outcast because she is a lesbian—"Nature had somehow set her apart from her kind" [BtA, 211]—she has no friends in the village: "The women in the cottages with the red geraniums always" cut her [BtA, 211]. In addition, she refuses to take part in the village gossip about other women [BtA, 64]. Even after the play has ended and Reverend Streatfield wishes to acknowledge her, Miss La Trobe will not reveal herself to her audience; as the reverend notes, she "'wishes it seems to remain anonymous'" [BtA, 194]. But it is Miss La Trobe's position as an outsider and a loner that gives her the distance necessary for her art, the distance necessary to comment on her culture, and the distance necessary to see her village's place in both nature and history.52

Woolf's use of the audience in Between the Acts puts even more distance between the reader and the novel than is apparent in her other novels, but she widens the frame of
the novel in other ways, too. After Percival's death in *The Waves*, Bernard thinks, "I was like one admitted behind the scenes; like one shown how the effects are produced" [W, 361]. Similarly, Woolf invites the reader behind the scenes of *Between the Acts*, not only of the pageant, where we learn that swabs used to scour saucepans make good silver capes, but also of the novel. The frame of the novel includes pre-human time, when the mastadons roamed England, and the farthest space, beyond even the clouds:

> Beyond that was blue, pure blue, black blue; blue that had never filtered down; that had escaped registration. It never fell as sun, shadow, or rain upon the world, but disregarded the little coloured ball of earth entirely. No flower felt it; no field; no garden [BtA, 23; my emphasis].

With such extreme temporal and spatial distance, Woolf calls attention to that reality which exists independently of our sight and which takes no notice of the human.

By making her pageant span several centuries of British history, Miss La Trobe accomplishes the same distancing with her pageant. Indeed, Miss La Trobe integrates within her play the indifferent world Woolf kept in the interludes of *The Waves*. Once, as the audience waits, the people wonder,

> Could they talk? Could they move? No, for the play was going on. Yet the stage was empty; only the cows moved in the meadows; only the tick of the gramophone needle was heard . . . . Nothing whatsoever appeared on the stage [BtA, 82; my emphasis].
Behind the play, behind the human, behind the defenses, then, lies nature, which includes life and death. Thus, Miss La Trobe's widening of perspective recognizes what humans cannot control, the forces within and about us, life and death, and thus makes her audience aware of its actual backdrop or frame. In fact, when Miss La Trobe tries to expose her audience to present-time reality by letting the swallows and cows carry the play, she soon mutters, "'Reality too strong'" [BtA, 179] and notes in the margin of her mind, "This is death, death, death . . . when illusion fails" [BtA, 180]. By outrageously breaking the conventions of art, by making only too clear the separation between art and reality, Miss La Trobe makes the presence of death known and nearly loses her audience as a result. Miss La Trobe also achieves distance and makes a point about life and death by having some of the villagers walk around and chant during the whole pageant, villagers who represent both centuries of humanity's connection to the earth and cycles of life and death:

Cutting the roads . . . up to the hill top . . . we climbed. Down in the valley . . . sow, wild boar, hog, rhinoceros, reindeer . . . Dug ourselves in to the hill top . . . Ground roots between stones . . . Ground corn . . . till we too . . . lay under g--t--o--u--n--d . . . [BtA, 78; Woolf's ellipses].

Thus, Miss La Trobe creates distance between the audience and its defenses by using nature and time's cycles as background to her play. In so doing, she subtly portrays
the stark reality of life and death underneath her audience's constructs of cultural and social reality.

In addition, Miss La Trobe tries to make her audience aware of its conventions, its way of looking at things, and its defenses against death, by parodying the conventions of other times. Miss La Trobe presents the Elizabethan Age, the Age of Reason, and the Victorian Age through representative figures and three plays within the pageant, all about love and its conventions. By showing how past ages organized their social manners, especially those manners involving relationships between men and women, Miss La Trobe hopes to jolt her audience into seeing how each age creates its reality and then erects it against the background of life and death. After the play *Where there's a Will, there's a Way*, when a voice from the audience shouts, "'All that fuss about nothing!'" [BtA, 138], Miss La Trobe glows with glory because "the voice had seen; the voice had heard" [BtA, 138-139]. Perhaps the voice refers to Woolf's belief that the patriarchal emphasis on female chastity is silly, or to the twists and turns of the plot, but more likely, it refers to the complicated overlay humans create to repress nothingness, and La Trobe is pleased that someone recognizes both human effort and the nothingness that generates it. But when Miss La Trobe portrays the Victorian policeman who represents the British Empire's rule by truncheon "[o]ver thought and religion; drink; dress; manners; marriage too
Prosperity and respectability always go, as we know, 'and' [BtA, 162] the references to the patriarchal "whole-time, white man's job" [BtA, 163] and the mockery of Victorian customs and religion are "too much, too much" [BtA, 171] for Mrs. Springett. To her, the play is "[c]heap and nasty" [BtA, 173] because she is still too close to the manners and conventions of that age to see them as creations. To her, those customs are reality, and Miss La Trobe's satire is a travesty [BtA, 170].

Thus, it comes as no surprise that when Miss La Trobe holds up mirrors to the people in the audience in an attempt to shock them into recognizing their own disguises and conventions, they become quite uncomfortable:

Ourselves? But that's cruel. To snap us as we are, before we've had time to assume . . . . And only, too, in parts . . . . That's what so distorting and upsetting and utterly unfair [BtA, 184; Woolf's ellipses; my emphasis].

Indeed, before the mirrors appear, the audience believes Miss La Trobe cannot possibly know anything about them:

"Ourselves . . . ." They returned to the programme. But what could she know about ourselves? The Elizabethans, yes; the Victorians, perhaps; but ourselves; sitting here on a June day in 1939—it was ridiculous. "Myself"—it was impossible. Other people, perhaps . . . Cobbet of Cobbs Corner; the Major; old Bartholomew; Mrs. Swithin—them, perhaps. But she won't get me—no, not me [BtA, 178-179; Woolf's ellipses].

When Miss La Trobe does capture them, however, only Mrs. Manresa can face the mirrors, but she does not actually confront herself; indeed, she uses the mirrors to freshen up
her defense and "powder[s] her nose; and move[s] one curl, 
disturbed by the breeze, to its place" [BtA, 186]. The 
others realize what Miss La Trobe is trying to do--"To show 
us up, as we are, here and now"--but they cannot face the 
mirrors. Such exposure is a "malignant indignity," and they 
all try "to shift an inch or two beyond the inquisitive 
insulting eye" [BtA, 186].

By making the audience part of the art, Miss La Trobe, 
as does Woolf, hopes to create distance between themselves 
defended and themselves "before [they've] had time to 
assume." As one person notes after the pageant, "And the 
mirrors! Reflecting us . . . I called that cruel. One feels 
such a fool, caught unprotected" [BtA, 199; Woolf's 
ellipses]. Miss La Trobe again breaks the conventional 
definitions of art and reality; she distances the people in 
the audience from their well-worn, habitual, and comfortable 
selves. Indeed, "the reticence of nature was undone, and 
the barriers which should divide Man the Master from Brute 
were dissolved" [BtA, 184]. Thus, they have been momentarily 
cought without their defenses, and as a result, become un-
easy at thinking of themselves with conventions, just like 
the Victorians or Elizabethans, at thinking of themselves as 
just another part of the pageant, another age that will be-
come parodied after it is gone. By creating distance, then, 
between the people and their age, by forcing the audience to 
look at itself in the mirrors, Miss La Trobe introduces 
death--this audience, too, will become history, art, fixed,
Thus, Miss La Trobe creates distance by using the presence of nature and the passing of time; as a result, the audience is faced not only with life and death in the abstract but also with their own lives and the possibility of their own deaths. Even though her pageant is a mish-mash of phrases, fragments, and orts, almost as though Miss La Trobe had picked up Bernard's notebook, she creates extraordinary effects with nature and mirrors. She herself calls her art "this skimble-skamble stuff" [BtA, 94], but she also sees herself as "one who seethes wandering bodies and floating voices in a cauldron, and makes rise up from its amorphous mass a re-created world" [BtA, 153]. Like Bernard, then, Miss La Trobe values her effort to create, even though she knows her creations are neither great art nor reality. She knows that civilization is just a thin painted cloth, but she values the human effort of building and rebuilding, creating and civilizing just the same. She also knows that her plays are clouds that melt into other clouds; Miss La Trobe, like Clarissa, Lily, and Bernard, is not concerned with making her art last. Rather, she enjoys the process of creating and the giving of her creation to the world, even though not in any lasting form. For example, after everyone has left after the pageant, Miss La Trobe thinks that now,

She could say to the world, You have taken my gift! Glory possessed her—for one moment.
But what had she given? . . . It was in the giving that the triumph was. And the triumph faded. Her gift meant nothing. If they had understood her meaning; if they had known their parts; if the pearls had been real and the funds illimitable—it would have been a better gift. Now it had gone to join the others.

"A failure," she groaned, and stooped to put away the records [BtA, 209].

But even though she thinks of her play as a failure, Miss La Trobe quickly begins inventing the next one. She suffers "triumph, humiliation, ecstasy, despair" [BtA, 210], but she keeps creating.

And Miss La Trobe, like the other artists, understands, at least unconsciously, the source of her continuing effort. After the pageant, she sits in the pub, has a beer,

And drank. And listened. Words of one syllable sank down into the mud. She drowsed; she nodded. The mud became fertile. Words rose above the intolerable laden dumb oxen plodding through the mud. Words without meaning—wonderful words [BtA, 212].

As the words rise from the mud, she begins to see scenes in her next play and to hear the first words. She does not attribute her creativity to a muse, a goddess, or a myth. Rather, her words descend into and then rise up out of mud. Such an origin is both within and without, and it is of the earth, nature, the forces of life and death, and human clay—the oxen plow, seeds are planted, and food is grown, but the mud also covers us when we are gone. For Miss La Trobe, then, death initiates her effort; therefore, she includes death in her art in the attempt to show other people the source of their selves, conventions, and manners.
Miss La Trobe knows that art, too, is a thin painted cloth and that it will not defend us against death, but art can communicate. Therefore, she includes death within her art in order to communicate art's ultimate impotence. She tries to balance life and death, dispersity and unity, tyranny and kindness in her art; she also tries to balance the reality she knows exists with enough illusion to get people to see the reality. Woolf, moreover, by including the audience in Between the Acts, does something she has never done before: she presents the audience's reactions to the artist's insights, to the artist's attempt to balance things as they are and things as they are shaped.

Indeed, Woolf imagines the response of patriarchal society to her own work. One person, for example, is upset because he or she has not grasped the meaning: "And if we're left asking questions, isn't it a failure, as a play?" [BtA, 200]. Two other people capture in three sentences much of the negative criticism directed at Woolf: "I thought it brilliantly clever . . . O my dear, I thought it utter bosh. Did you understand the meaning?" [BtA, 197; Woolf's ellipses]. Woolf realizes, it seems, the strong resistance to her attempt to portray the co-existence of life and death. Thus, although she has Miss La Trobe present the people in her audience with exaggerated examples of their defenses, they refuse to see their defenses as defenses or to question them in any way. Rather, the patriarchal
characters in the audience simply revise what the artist presents to them, transforming that material itself into defenses. Rather than change their way of looking at the world, they use what they see in the pageant to reinforce the way they already see. For example, Giles uses the play Where there's a Will, there's a Way to justify his lust for Mrs. Manresa:

A moral. What? Giles supposed it was:
Where there's a Will there's a Way. The words rose and pointed a finger of scorn at him.
Off to Gretta Green with his girl; the deed done. Damn the consequences.

"Like to see the greenhouse?" he said abruptly, turning to Mrs. Manresa.

"Love to!" she exclaimed, and rose [BtA, 149].

The audience uses what it wants from the pageant, and in addition, it smoothes over any complexity or disconcerting sections. For example, Reverend Streatfield ignores nature's indifference and cruelty and instead emphasizes only its glory: "'I thought I perceived that nature takes her part. Dare we, I asked myself, limit life to ourselves? May we not hold that there is a spirit that inspires, pervades . . .'" [BtA, 192; Woolf's ellipses]. Miss La Trobe may point out how the people lie to themselves and to others, but by the time they reach their cars after the pageant is over, they have begun to use the artist's lines for their own purposes and to lie again. They cannot let the complexity of reality or of the pageant stand; they must reduce it to one thing or another; they must tilt the precarious
balance Miss La Trobe achieves. Thus, whenever reality becomes "too strong" and death appears, the patriarchal characters simply erect stronger defenses.

The artist, then, tries to acknowledge death as the source of human effort and creation, but the patriarchal audience continues to deny that possibility. All four of the artists in Woolf's fiction—Clarissa, Lily, Bernard, and Miss La Trobe—admit the presence of death within their fictions; they see it as ever-present: origin, pervasive, and end. Because they see a positive side to death—including motivation—along with its negative side, fear is not the only emotion the artists feel about death. They acknowledge their fear, but then use it and acknowledge they've used it. The patriarchal characters do not admit their fear, and the victims, though admitting to it, do not know how to use it. What the artist in Woolf's novels does, then, is consciously create a fiction but refuse to call it reality. As Robert Kiely notes, "For Woolf, order is not given; it is made. And once it is made, it does not endure but is forever being dissolved." The artists value human effort highly, not because it protects them against death, but because it is achieved in the full recognition of the enemy. Thus, for them, distance is not a defense or a withdrawal, but a window, a way to see. The artists combine the need for human activity demonstrated by the patriarchal characters with the sense of the void underneath it all felt
by the victims. As a result, they create and acknowledge death within the creation.

The artists all achieve distance in some way. Clarissa leaves her party and isolates herself in a room; Lily needs time and space between herself and Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay; Bernard sees the world without a self; and Miss La Trobe is a loner. As a result, they all create order, but an order that is forged out of contact with the opposing force. They do not accept the already given order of their society, an order that protects; rather, they seek out the "jar on the nerves." Thus, the artists evolve a strong awareness of life and death out of their distance. Their awareness of death's reality results in art that acknowledges its source and elicits tolerance for other people. They do not feel it necessary to name their creations reality and then impose that view of reality on others. They do not feel a great need to have their art be immortal—Clarissa creates ephemeral parties, Lily does not care whether or not her painting survives or is even seen, Bernard throws his notebook away, and Miss La Trobe produces an open-air play every summer and then lets it fade and begins on the next. They all feel, with Clarissa, that their offerings are given simply for the sake of offering; indeed, their attitude toward art is quite similar to Becker's description of what humans do in the face of death and their fear of it: "The most that any one of us can seem to do is to fashion some-
thing—an object or ourselves—and drop it into the confusion, make an offering of it, so to speak, to the life force." As Bernard says, "one cannot despise these phrases laid like Roman roads across the tumult of our lives . . ." [W, 356]. Thus, the artists make an offering, knowing it will not change their ultimate fate.

Robert Alter, in his study of the self-conscious novel, makes the following comments about our ultimate fate and the novel:

I suspect that death in the novel might be a more useful focus for serious discussion of the genre than the death of the novel. What I have in mind is of course not the novelistic rendering of deathbed scenes but how the novel manages to put us in touch with the imponderable implications of human mortality through the very celebration of life implicit in the building of vivid and various fictions.

Woolf puts the readers of her novels in touch with death, chiefly through her characters' responses to it. Death pervades Woolf's fiction in her characters' thoughts, their reactions to the obdurate world, their shaky identities, the separation between them, their random and unexpected experiences of distance, and the actual deaths of friends. With the three types of characters she portrays—patriarchal, victimized, and artistic—Woolf confronts her readers with a wide range of attitudes about death.

The patriarchal characters in Woolf's novels—Jinny, Susan, Louis, and Neville in The Waves, Peter Walsh and Sir William Bradshaw in Mrs. Dalloway, and Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay
in To the Lighthouse—all deny their fear of death by denying death itself. As Becker says,

[The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity—activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man.]

Desiring that their wishes and the world be one, that death not exist, the patriarchal characters act as though their wishes were reality, but in fact, they deny reality.

Woolf shows that for patriarchal characters to maintain such denials and defenses, they must have collaboration from other characters; otherwise, they could not sustain the illusion that their defenses are reality. Thus, part of any patriarchal defense is the unwritten rule that one cannot admit that it is, in fact, a defense. As Kermode notes, such absolute and arbitrary explanations of the way things are are myths. The defense, then, is projected outward and named truth, authority, god, or given; in any case, it provides an unquestionable and inherent criterion for the development of meaning, hierarchies, and value. In that way, the patriarchy denies death's power, projects that power on to some outside source, while actually arrogating the power and control to itself. Out of this control grows a moral system and manners, which in turn control people's behavior and even the way they see and think.

Those who do not adhere to patriarchal systems and defenses in Woolf's novels may be criticized, oppressed, or
even removed from society. Because morals and manners stem from the patriarchal attempt to control life and death, any contradiction of such morals and manners constitutes a potential threat to the existence of that control and thus may be felt as a threat to life itself. Such hierarchical thinking means that acknowledging the validity of someone else's defense feels as though one's denying the validity of one's own. Bernard notes this phenomenon in *The Waves* when he and his friends gather at Hampton Court for their second reunion:

> Our discomfort was at first considerable, for each by that time was committed to a statement, and the other person coming along the road to the meeting-place dressed like this or that, with a stick or without seemed to contradict it [*W*, 368].

Patriarchal control of others and patriarchal morality, then, develop as ways to keep one's own defense against death intact. Indeed, the character in Woolf's novels who represses death the most thoroughly, Sir William Bradshaw, oppresses others the most severely.

The victims of patriarchal repression, Rhoda and Septimus, expose the nature of the fear the patriarchy tries so desperately to conceal: if one accepts death's presence in reality, one rejects life's. Controlled by their either/or, hierarchical way of seeing, patriarchal characters interpret the acknowledgment of death as the desire for it; one will literally die if one admits that death exists. Thus, patriarchal characters cannot possibly recognize those
who have vivid visions of death. Ironically, however, such
evasion ultimately reinforces their fear, because the
victims' isolation with their visions eventually results in
their suicides.

Woolf asserts through the portrayal of the victims'
despair and of the artists' distance that the patriarchal
denial of death, so thoroughly ensconced in its morals and
manners, costs too much: the denial conceals reality and
damages or destroys people at the same time it has not,
cannot, and will not actually protect one against death.
In contrast, Woolf's artists affirm death's presence in
reality, have a genuine tolerance for others, and lead
productive, creative lives. Woolf ultimately asks, then,
what purpose the patriarchal denial of death serves.

Woolf uses the interaction among these three groups of
characters and the distance of her artists, then, to expose
patriarchal reality as an attempt to control death and
people, to suggest the nature of the fear underlying that
attempt, to question both the high cost and the necessity
of such control, to recognize death as an origin and moti-
vator of human effort, and to indicate that acknowledgment
of death's presence in life need not kill. Woolf's
affirmation of death's presence through her artists' distance
does not attempt to make death wonderful or appealing. And
in affirming that presence, Woolf never denies the
communication people do achieve, the transcendence they some-
times feel, or the intense beauty and emotion life can have.
Indeed, Woolf affirms life even more strongly by affirming the presence of death in it. In *Moments of Being*, she writes, "The dead, so people say, are forgotten, or they should rather say, that life has for the most part little significance to any of us." Thus, for Woolf, not forgetting death means an enlarging of life's significance. In her novels, death defies, communicates, and embraces [MD, 280-281] by reminding us of life's tenuousness.

By making death overpoweringly *there* in her novels, Woolf confronts the reader with his or her defenses, fears, and evasions. She produces what Kermode calls conscious fictions, fictions that make the reader encounter oneself and the images of one's end. The value of fiction for Woolf lies in its testimony to human creation itself and not in any supposed barrier it creates between humanity and death. Woolf, therefore, uses distance to strip away patriarchal appearances, to question a morality based on an avoidance of reality, to refute Scheherezade's trust in her fictions, and to affirm a reality that includes life and death.
Footnotes for Chapter Three


2Jacques Choron, Death and Western Thought (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 14. See also Rollo May, Love and Will (New York: Delta--Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), p. 106, where he comments on contemporary ways of dealing with death: "Note that the ways we repress death and its symbolism are amazingly like the ways the Victorians repressed sex. Death is obscene, unmentionable, pornographic; if sex was nasty, death is a nasty mistake." Finally, see Becker, p. 65, where he writes, "The totality of the human condition is the thing that is so hard for man to recapture. He wants his world safe for delight, wants to blame others for his fate."

3See John T. Irwin, Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), pp. 117-26, 146, for a discussion of priority in time equalling superiority within the framework of the family, especially in the father/son relationship.


7Eissler, p. 4. Woolf also identifies 1910 as an important year in the history of human character. See "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" [CE, I, 320].
Eissler, pp. 3-8, 32. See also Robert G. Collins, *Virginia Woolf's Black Arrows of Sensation: The Waves* (Ilfracombe: Arthur H. Stockwell Limited, 1962), p. 46, where he writes, "The loss of traditional faith by the modern novelist has forced him to see through to the ultimate paradox, which traditional faith had so often disguised earlier: death and life are simultaneous and eternally opposed."

Becker, pp. 64-65. He suggests that the anger directed at parents for ruining one's childhood paradise is misplaced, since, after all, parents do not introduce death into the world. Also see Kermode's fine discussion of the difference between myth and fiction, pp. 37-43.


My thanks to Terrence Doody, who first called my attention to Woolf's odd use of the word "thing" to refer to reality.


(New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1963), p. 12, who says that "death for [Woolf] was always the illuminator of and commentator on life, so that an adequate insight into any character is only given if he is shown not only living but also in some connection with death"; Mark Spilka, *Virginia Woolf's Quarrel with Grieving* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), who sees death as "an omnipresent subject in her fiction," but thinks she confines it, for example, to parentheses in *To the Lighthouse* [p. 2], and thus reveals impacted grief; Phyllis Rose, *Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 130, who notes the creativity of the woman, making connections and relationships against "the forces of chaos and death." Critics who see life and death partaking of each other within Woolf's fiction are: Robert G. Collins, pp. 46-47, who says, "To escape from or into death is to escape life"; Lee M. Whitehead, "The Shawl and the Skull: Virginia Woolf's 'Magic Mountain'," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 18 (1972), 415, who says that the image of the shawl and the skull lead "to an elegiac vision, a celebration not of life against death, but of life with its roots in death, a completed vision both affirmative and resigned"; Bernard Blackstone, *Virginia Woolf: A Commentary* (New York: Harvest—Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1949), p. 10; and Allen McLaurin, *Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), who establishes literary connections between Woolf and Samuel Butler and who then, on p. 4, quotes from *The Notebooks of Samuel Butler*, comp. H. F. Jones (1912; rpt. London: Cape, 1921), pp. 58-59: "'Everything is so much involved in and is so much a process of its opposite that, as it is almost fair to call death a process of life and life a process of death, so it is to call memory a process of forgetting and forgetting a process of remembering.'" My own interpretation of the presence of death in Woolf's novels is closer to those made by the latter group of critics.

15 Blackstone, p. 10. Blackstone adds that "Without attempting to construct a 'philosophy of life', not accepting the religious view, she yet weaves her frail dew-splangled web across the void. And in doing so she gives us, her readers, new glimpses into life—and death . . . . Not death coming as the ending of a completed story, but death inexplicable, torturing, making life meaningless; yet also mysterious, fascinating, giving depth to life. From these two strands—a feeling for the richness and beauty of life, and a patient recognition of the sovereignty and cruelty of death—her supreme themes are woven."

17 McLaurin, p. 148.

18 William Morris, ed., The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (Boston and New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., and Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), p. 117. The difference between "because" and "for" is explained as follows: "Because is the most specific of the conjunctions used to express cause or reason and always indicates an unequivocal causal relationship . . . . For (after a comma) is less direct in indicating cause; the elements it links are more independent . . . ."


21 McLaurin, p. 36. The result of my unofficial count has the word "nothing" occurring 37 times in Mrs. Dalloway, 80 times in To the Lighthouse, and 53 times in The Waves.

22 I have applied Becker's distinctions—those who fully see reality, those who defend against that reality, and those who are aware but not overwhelmed—to Woolf's characters, but have come to somewhat different conclusions.

23 Eissler, p. 27, where he notes that Freud came to believe "man's attitude toward death bears upon all of his actions." Also see Becker, p. 46.

24 Blackstone, p. 250, says that in Woolf's fiction, "Tolerance is the supreme virtue."

26 Becker, p. 55.

27 Becker, p. 51, writes, "And so the core of psycho-dynamics, the formation of the human character, is a study in human self-limitation and in the terrifying costs of that limitation. The hostility to psychoanalysis in the past, today, and in the future, will always be a hostility against admitting that man lives by lying to himself about himself and about his world, and that character, to follow Ferenczi and Brown, is a vital lie." Or, again, Becker, p. 56: "The defenses that form a person's character support a grand illusion . . . ."

28 Webb, p. 571.

29 Becker, p. 5, says, "The hope and the belief is that the things that man creates in society are of lasting worth and meaning, that they outlive or outshine death and decay, that man and his products count."


31 Webb, p. 575.

32 Rollo May, pp. 105-06.

33 *American Heritage Dictionary*, p. 1189. "In the first person, [shall] expresses simple futurity . . . in the second and third persons it expresses any of the following: determination, promise, obligation, command, compulsion, permission, or inevitability. Will, as an auxiliary verb, is used in the opposite way: to express simple futurity in the second and third persons and to indicate one of the other conditions in the first person." Woolf uses the "I will" construction eight times on p. 311 of *The Waves*, revealing Jinny's determination to defeat death.

35. Wirth-Nesher, p. 76, says of Mr. Ramsay, "He senses, if only subliminally, that what separates him from the next letter in his construct is something prehistoric, something that belongs to a world before his alphabet and that threatens to engulf the construct itself."


37. Becker, p. 56.


40. Becker, p. 51. Again, "character . . . is a vital lie."

41. Collins, p. 22.

42. See Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth (1933; rpt. New York: Seaview Books, 1980), especially Chapter 10, "Survivors Not Wanted," pp. 467-534. Brittain's account of Oxford University's cool reception at her return after the War, pp. 475-76; her realization that others were made uncomfortable by her participation in the War, pp. 488-93 (she cannot throw off the War and realizes, "'It's always a vicious circle. It makes one tense and hard and disagreeable, and this means that one repels and antagonises people, and then they dislike and avoid one--and that means more isolation and still more sorrow.' After that, until I left college, I never publicly mentioned the War again."); and her terrible hallucinations, pp. 496-97 ("Nothing has ever made me realise more clearly the thinness of the barrier between normality and insanity than the persistent growth, like an obscene, overshadowing fungus, of these dark hallucinations throughout 1920.") testify to the reality of Woolf's portrayal of Septimus.

43. Becker, pp. 34, 50, 66.
44 Woolf may have considered Clarissa "tinselly" [See Diary, II, 272] because unconsciously, she thought the hostess role seemed silly in comparison to the artist one. However, Clarissa functions well in both roles.

45 The existence of "Time Passes" in the middle of To the Lighthouse [TtL, 189-214] provides evidence that Lily leaves some blank space in the center of her painting.

46 See Diary, III, 142-44, for Woolf's account of the sun's eclipse on June 30, 1927. This event seems to have provided Woolf with some of the imagery she uses to portray Bernard's experience of seeing the world without a self.

47 See Keith May, p. 73, and Alter, p. 243.

48 Webb, p. 573.

49 See Keith May, p. 74.

50 See Collins, pp. 45-47. Collins writes, "the paradox of the simultaneity of life and death makes escape impossible ... it is death which gives meaning—and vital beauty—to life."

51 See Diary, III, 339, where Woolf writes, "This is also to show that the theme effort, effort, dominates: not the waves: & personality: & defiance; but I am not sure of the effect artistically ... ."

52 See Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas (New York: Harbinger—Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), pp. 106-20, for a discussion of the Society of Outsiders and Woolf's belief that being an outsider enables one to see one's society more clearly.

54 See Diary, III, 302, for Woolf's thoughts upon finishing The Waves: "And, I think to myself as I walk down Southampton Row 'And I have given you a new book.'"

55 Kiely, p. 72.

56 Becker, p. 285.

57 Alter, p. 244.

58 Becker, p. ix.

59 Kermode, p. 39.


61 Kermode, p. 39.
Chapter Four

THE CONVENTIONS OF CHARACTER
AND DISTANCE AS TECHNIQUE

But it is a mistake, this extreme precision, this orderly and military progress; a convenience, a lie. There is always deep below it, even when we arrive punctually at the appointed time with our white waistcoats and polite formalities, a rushing stream of broken dreams, nursery rhymes, street cries, half-finished sentences and sights—elm trees, willow trees, gardeners sweeping, women writing—that rise and sink even as we hand a lady down to dinner.

—Bernard, The Waves

And this, Lily thought, taking the green paint on her brush, this making up scenes about them, is what we call "knowing" people, "thinking" of them, "being fond" of them! Not a word of it was true; she had made it up; but it was what she knew them by all the same.

—Lily, To the Lighthouse

If ... you think of the novels which seem to you great novels... if you think of these books, you do at once think of some character who seemed to you so real (I do not by that mean so lifelike) that it has the power to make you think not merely of it itself, but of all sorts of things through its eyes ... .

—Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown"

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Woolf clearly shows that the patriarchal society treats women and death in similar ways: patriarchal characters place definitions of women between themselves and their experience of women as they are, and they place denials of death between themselves and their sense of life as it is. As a result, both women and death are relatively absent in the society's definition of reality; both women and death, as it were, disappear. By making women responsible for death's appearance and then by assigning women inferior roles, the patriarchy keeps both women and death out of sight, and what is worse, makes women and death synonymous.

Although such a connection between women and death may seem ludicrous, Wolfgang Lederer, who has searched the world's cultures for manifestations of men's fear of women, has found that women are frequently linked with decay and death.¹ Simone de Beauvoir states the cultural assumptions more bluntly: "The Earth Mother engulfs the bones of her children . . . . Death is a woman," and she explains that maternity and mortality become linked in the realization that "From the day of his birth man begins to die: this is the truth incarnated in the Mother."² Jean Baker Miller identifies such thinking as the scapegoating process, in which the dominant culture projects into the very nature of the subordinate culture all its unresolved problems and fears; in patriarchal societies, women have "become the
'carriers' for society of certain aspects of the total human experience . . . ," which means, among other things, that women are the carriers of death.3

Woolf, in questioning both the patriarchy's definitions of women and its denials of death, also questions the patriarchal connection between women and death. In Woolf's novels, women are complex people and death is an inherent part of being human, a portrayal that threatens the cause-and-effect reasoning the patriarchal society uses to dismiss both women and death. Woolf accomplishes this task, as already shown, through her characters. Her female characters use distance to resist patriarchal definitions, and her artists use distance to affirm the reality of death. In effect, Woolf uses distance to affirm the very presence of women and death and moreover, to assert their value and importance. Furthermore, Woolf's characterization itself creates distance between her characters and her readers, thereby countering the attempt by those readers to control her characters and, thus, control her portrayal of women and death. Woolf's characterization, then, by putting distance between her characters and her readers, reinforces the use of distance by her characters—her female characters' resistance and her artists' affirmation—and therefore confronts the reader with women who resist being possessed, with death that refuses to be denied, and finally, with a portrayal of both women and death that rejects the
traditional responsibility put on women for death's presence.

Woolf's characterization thus communicates value. According to Mark Schorer, technique and style are not just embellishments on the surface of a novel but are themselves explorations and definitions of value; ⁴ obviously, then, Woolf's characterization, along with more overt expressions of value, means something. In fact, as Robert Langbaum notes,

Form is a better index of a tradition than subject matter in that subject matter is often controversial; it is often an index of what people think they believe, whereas form is an index of what is believed too implicitly to be discussed. ⁵

Woolf's mode of characterization, the conventions of character she chooses to break, express her rejection of patriarchal assumptions about women and death just as thoroughly as her characters themselves do. If characterization communicates assumptions, as Schorer and Langbaum certainly suggest, then Woolf's characterization communicates her more feminist assumptions about women and death versus the nineteenth-century traditional characterization's reflection of patriarchal assumptions.

Woolf threatens a strong tradition with her characters and characterization, and interestingly enough, criticism of her work often centers around her characters, with her critics claiming that her experiments with character are no
more than sterile exercises in virtuosity and that, therefore, her characters are not real. Beginning with Arnold Bennett, who said her characters "do not vitally survive in the mind" and connected such a flaw to Woolf's obsession with "details of originality and cleverness," critics, as Jean Guiguet has noted, "have unanimously reproached Virginia Woolf with a certain inability to create characters." Her characters have been called disembodied spirits, non-existent people, wraiths, phantoms, or puppets, and Mary McCarthy even says that Mrs. Dalloway "remains a palpitant organ, like the heroine of a pornographic novel." Some commentators on characters in the modern novel, John Bayley, Mary McCarthy, W. J. Harvey, and Charles Walcutt among them, posit the nineteenth-century realistic character as the norm against which all other characters must be judged. Naturally, then, since Woolf consciously breaks nineteenth-century conventions of character, any critic who sees those conventions as the norm reject her characters (and her novels). However, as Martin Price points out, the attack on modern characterization by those who prefer nineteenth-century characterization often "obscures the problem of art and seems to oppose art to life, mere formalism to moral awareness." In other words, modern changes in characterization are accused of having no moral meaning at all. But as Price goes on to say, there is an
inevitable artifice in the conception of character. The character we admire as the result of loving attention is something constructed by conventions as arbitrary as any other . . . 11

And, in fact, that is exactly the point of Woolf's famous essay on character, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown."

Bennett and Woolf may have quarreled for many reasons other than aesthetic ones; 12 nonetheless, their disagreement about character is real, because they disagreed about the basic nature of the self. Gabriel Josipovici captures Bennett's and Woolf's positions on character when he writes,

There is an image of the self which has been taken for granted by the majority of people in the West since the seventeenth century. The self is seen as a stronghold, clearly bounded, well defended by powerful walls, buttressed by possessions . . . . The crucial insight [of the moderns] . . . is that the self, which had seemed so firmly rooted, so much a part of nature, to the men and women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was in fact a construction. 13

Woolf, aware of this change in the image of the self, recognizes what Price calls "the inevitable artifice in the conception of character," whereas Bennett continues to see character as "clearly bounded, well defended by powerful walls." That is why Woolf's metaphor for Bennett's characterization, that he creates a house and wants his readers to assume there is a person inside, is, in a sense, accurate. That is why Woolf, in "Modern Fiction," describes the lifelike characters of the Edwardians as embalmed
[CE, II, 105-06]. That is why Woolf sees Dr. Watson, a character McCarthy might put among those she considers most realistic, minor comic characters with "their implacable resistance to change,"\textsuperscript{14} and a character Bennett himself calls real, as \textit{unreal}, "a sack stuffed with straw, a dummy, a figure of fun" [CE, I, 325]. Also fair to Bennett, however, she admits his conventions were right for his time and she recognizes character "can be treated in an infinite variety of ways, according to the age, country, and temperament of the writer" [CE, I, 325]. In breaking the conventions of the nineteenth-century realistic character, then, Woolf simply invents new ones to fit her own age, country, and temperament—in other words, to fit her own values.

Realizing, as Allen McLaurin notes, that "character is basically a convention"\textsuperscript{15} and that conventions of character convey values, Woolf knows she can not use traditional conventions: "those tools are ruin, those tools are death" [CE, I, 330]. Therefore, she breaks four major traditional conventions of character: character as knowable; character as object; character as product; and character as revealed through plot. In contrast to the traditional nineteenth-century realistic characters, Woolf's characters are unknowable, subjects, in the process of creating themselves, and revealed through being. Such characterization effectively creates distance between character and reader, thwarts the
reader's expectations about women and death, and thus makes the reader "think not merely of [the character] itself, but of all sorts of things through its eyes . . ." [CE, I, 325]. By breaking aesthetic conventions, Woolf threatens social ones.

Certainly, Woolf considered character extremely important; in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf insists that all novels begin with "an old lady in the corner opposite," enjoins both novelists and readers to never desert Mrs. Brown, and declares that in all great novels, "great novelists have brought us to see whatever they wish us to see through some character" [CE, I, 324, 337, 325-26]. Woolf's stress on the importance of character results in the function of characterization expanding in her novels; characterization, for example, is not subservient to plot. As Edwin Muir points out, "Woolf accepts her characters as ends."16 Woolf's acceptance of her characters, most of them quite ordinary people, as important in themselves, results in complex portrayals: Mrs. Brown, for example,

is an old lady of unlimited capacity and infinite variety; capable of appearing in any place; wearing any dress; saying anything and doing heavens knows what. But the things she says and the things she does and her eyes and her nose and her speech and her silence have an overwhelming fascination, for she is, of course, the spirit we live by, life itself [CE, I, 336-37].

To Woolf, then, characters are important for "not only what they are, but what life is" [CE, I, 153]. Therefore, whereas
the Victorians and Edwardians expressed much of the complexity of "life itself" through plot—their novels are often filled with many characters and a complicated tangle—Woolf expresses complexity through the characters themselves.

Woolf makes her characters complex, and thus real, by portraying them as unknowable. As Lucio Ruotolo notes, she "sought to portray the mysterious reality of character." However, many critics equate the realistic character with the knowable character. E. M. Forster, for example, says a character is real when the novelist knows everything about it, and Jean Guiguet points out that the knowable, realistic character "has the backing of the whole literary and psychological tradition." Forster explains why we equate the realism of a character with its being knowable, when, in reality, we find it impossible to know anyone:

[The novelist] may not choose to tell us all he knows—many of the facts, even of the kind we call obvious, may be hidden. But he will give us the feeling that though the character has not been explained, it is explicable, and we get from this a reality of the kind we never get in daily life [my emphasis].

In other words, characters seem realistic because they imitate a reality we desire, not the reality that is. We want characters to be knowable, because, as William Harvey points out, one of the great consolations of art is the intrinsic knowledge of someone besides ourselves. Realistic, knowable characters give us a sense of security, communicating the assumption that the world and its people are explicable.
That is, traditional knowable characters give readers control.

To know a character, the reader (and the author) must have mastery over it—be able to interpret, define, identify, and place it—which translates into being able to possess or grasp it. Consequently, the character must be accessible, open to the reader's view, so that it can be easily grasped, understood, penetrated, and remembered. The realistic author, therefore, reduces the chaos of a human being to what, in fact, can be possessed, grasped, or known. The author catalogues external details—actions, descriptions, dialogues, people's looks, clothes, and gestures, conscious thought similar to speech, eccentric or repetitive traits—and thus creates a predictable, or at least consistent, character, a character with definite, even rigid, limits or boundaries. The reality of a traditional character, then, stems from its being limited and knowable, from its fulfilling the reader's desire to control and possess. As Forster puts it, novels that contain real, knowable characters "give us the illusion of perspicacity and of power."²³

Woolf shatters that illusion by destroying what Jonathan Quick calls "the full-blown 'knowable' character."²⁴ Woolf creates characters that resist being grasped; as Mitchell Leaska says, "one does not have easy access to her fictitious people. They are created cumulatively, obliquely; through
nuance and innuendo." Indeed, Woolf's characters have imprecise, even blurred, outlines, and Woolf allows them to remain that way, elusive: "I let my Mrs. Brown slip through my fingers" [CE, I, 332]. Woolf captures this difference between her own characters and those of the nineteenth-century authors when she explains that as a child, she knew three old men and an old woman who "were very like characters in Dickens. They were caricatures; they were very simple; they were immensely alive." Although in truth she knew very little about them, she can recall certain of their traits and so remembers them as being knowable, completely real with nothing left out . . . the three old men and the one old woman are complete . . . because they died when I was a child. They none of them lived on to be altered as I altered—or as others, like the Stillmans or the Lushingtons, lived on and were added to and filled and left finally incomplete [my emphasis].

Thus, a few details about the old people in her childhood allow Woolf to hold them in her mind, to pluck them out of her memory whole, and to think that those details make them complete and real. The adult Woolf, however, does not want the same fate for her characters. Rather than let her readers possess her characters on the basis of a few character traits and thus allow those readers the illusion of knowing her characters, Woolf deliberately creates unknowable, elusive characters, ones that will resist the reader's urge to control and possess.
Woolf expresses her belief in the unknowable quality of human beings in *To the Lighthouse* when Lily leans up against Mrs. Ramsay's knees, hoping to see and know the "knowledge and wisdom . . . stored up in Mrs. Ramsay's heart" [TtL, 79]. Lily imagines how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stored, like the treasures in the tombs of the kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out, would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers? [TtL, 79]

Lily desires unity, an intimacy which is knowledge, but as she soon learns, desire does not transform reality:

Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing! as she leant her head against Mrs. Ramsay's knee. . . . How then, she had asked herself, did one know one thing or another thing about people, sealed as they were? [TtL, 79]

According to Woolf, then, there exists some kind of core, essence, or knowledge within every human being, but like "things in themselves," that core exists independently of others and cannot ultimately be known or owned. Mrs. Ramsay realizes, for example, that she never communicates her invisible self to others:

one after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by [TtL, 96].
Thus, the closest Woolf comes to "knowing" Mrs. Ramsay is to describe that core as a "wedge-shaped core of darkness" [TtL, 95] and to have Lily paint that core as a purple wedge. However, Woolf does not reveal exactly what that purple wedge is, and as a matter of fact, gives the impression that she herself does not know. Woolf, then, as Erich Auerbach notes, represents herself as

someone who doubts, wonders, hesitates, as though the truth about her characters were not better known to her than it is to them or to the reader.29

Thus, when Bernard says, "What does the central shadow hold? Something? Nothing? I do not know" [W, 379], he reflects the viewpoint of his creator, that reality is ultimately unknowable. Woolf, then, never pretends to penetrate the mystery of her characters. As a result, her readers may feel frustrated, as A. S. McDowall was after reading Jacob's Room. In one of the more honest reactions to Woolf's characters, McDowall writes, "We should have to say that [Woolf's vision] does not create persons and characters as we secretly desire to know them."30

By portraying her female characters as unknowable, Woolf automatically threatens one of the patriarchy's major assumptions about women, the assumption that women can, in fact, be easily known, labeled, defined, and then dismissed. Her female characters deny "easy access" to themselves, thus making it more difficult for readers to stereotype them. As a
result, Woolf's portrayal of her female characters as unknowable immediately gives them freedom and complexity. For example, Clarissa Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay, probably the two female characters with the most potential for being stereotyped, simply do not fit patriarchal preconceptions. Clarissa, although perhaps trivial, snobbish, and cold, also recognizes death's presence in life and Septimus' pain and worth. Mrs. Ramsay, seemingly dedicated only to her role of wife and mother, would also like to clean up English dairies. Though the critic can and does interpret these characters, no matter what the critical label, Woolf's female characters remain elusive and contradictory; they ultimately escape any definition or any schema the critic may devise.\(^{31}\) Being unknowable, then, gives the women in Woolf's fiction more resistance against the reader's control; thus, Woolf's characterization does not limit their complexity.

Just as Woolf's characterization of unknowable characters makes complexity an inherent part of women, it also makes the presence of death an inherent part of life. In its openness to the presence of death, Woolf's characterization contrasts greatly with traditional characterization. Indeed, traditional character, by its very nature, denies death. As George Levine notes, traditional character

is an imagination of order and structure that
belies the pervasiveness of change, variety, aimlessness, waste. Character, in traditional fiction, is the clearest emblem of the elect—dominating and controlling the action of the world.\textsuperscript{32}

The traditional knowable character, then, with its many external features and definite boundaries, denies death. And therein lies the reason we—readers, critics, and traditional novelists—have made knowable, predictable, and changeless characters synonymous with realism: traditional character reflects our desire that reality provide us with a changeless and therefore deathless existence.

Thus, the very traits that give people \textit{character} in traditional fiction can be seen as defenses against death. Because Woolf eschews those external traits and rigid outlines, her characters have no \textit{formal} defense. For example, Woolf does not portray Clarissa as the diamond self, "pointed, dartlike; definite" [MD, 55], that Clarissa composes for the world; rather, she shows us the Clarissa under the diamond, shows us Clarissa having to compose that self, shows us Clarissa as vulnerable. Woolf, therefore, removes the protection of the "character" one presents to the rest of the world. Moreover, even though a particular character in her novels may build defenses against death as a \textit{person}, the character as a \textit{character} remains open to it because of the lack of external details. Woolf's characterization, then, may contradict the character's view of reality. Bernard's realization—"We are only lightly covered with buttoned
cloth; and beneath these pavements are shells, bones and silence" [W, 253-54]—represents, in fact, the way Woolf presents her characters to the reader. Implicit in such formal openness is the recognition of death's presence within life, not outside it. The reader, then, similar to Julia Eliot, a minor character in Jacob's Room who sees a riderless horse in London, experiences character as transparent:

Yet five minutes after she had passed the statue of Achilles she had the rapt look of one brushing through crowds on a summer's afternoon, when the trees are rustling, the wheels churning yellow, and the tumult of the present seems like an elegy for past youth and past summers, and there rose in her mind a curious sadness, as if time and eternity showed through skirts and waistcoats, and she saw people passing tragically to destruction [JR, 168; my emphasis].

Thus, Woolf's characters make the reader see not only the character itself, but "all sorts of things through its eyes" [CE, I, 325].

Moreover, simply because Woolf portrays her characters as unknowable, their very presence constantly and subtly reminds the reader of the greatest unknown of them all, death. Indeed, characters in Woolf's novels often seem both there and not there. For example, at the end of Mrs. Dalloway, Peter realizes that Clarissa is filling him with "extraordinary excitement" and has the last words of the novel: "It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was" [MD, 296]. The reader simultaneously feels the same excitement at Clarissa's
presence and realizes that Clarissa is curiously absent. By that time, the little the reader knows about Clarissa has come from being aware of her thoughts; thus, Clarissa seems most present to the reader when the reader is inside her head. But in the scene just described, the reader is outside Clarissa, with no idea what she looks like or what expression is on her face, but most important, with no idea of what she is thinking. To the reader who gauges Clarissa's presence by following her thoughts, Clarissa seems gone. At the end of Mrs. Dalloway, then, the character of Clarissa embodies both presence and absence, both there and not there, both life and death, all because Clarissa suddenly becomes more unknowable than ever.

By breaking the convention of the knowable character, Woolf presents her readers with women who are complex and death that refuses to disappear, thereby confronting those readers with their desire to know, possess, and control. Almost every one of Woolf's characters, then, not just the women, remains in some sense, virginal; that is, they remain unknown and therefore unviolated by the reader. Paradoxically, Woolf's characters are opaque in the sense that the reader cannot ultimately know them, yet they are transparent in the sense that the reader sees through them to the reality of life and death. As a result, we do not possess them; they possess us.

In addition, Woolf's characters hold us, rather than
vice versa, because Woolf portrays them as subjects, not as objects. Their thought processes overtake our own, as Bernard Blackstone describes:

Their creator hasn't drawn a neat line round them. The life with which they live in our consciousness is an organic life, spreading and growing, and merging indeed with our own perceptions until the moments come when we find, to our surprise, that in this instant . . . we have been looking at the world through their eyes and not our own.33

Not objects to be filed away as complete, finished, absolutely and finally this or that, Woolf's characters are perceivers, not perceived.34 Woolf does not aim to penetrate the depths of the psyche, but to convey the mind's apprehension of the world. Though the reader is invited within the character's mind, the character paradoxically becomes even more inaccessible: presenting the character's emotions, thoughts and sensations makes the character more complicated, elusive, and inconsistent.

For Woolf, the complexity, elusiveness, and inconsistency that stem from portraying a character from within testify to the character's realism, whereas describing the outer traits of a human being simply makes that human being into an object. Indeed, Woolf identifies the premise behind traditional character, that external features reflect inner ones, as the materialism of the Edwardians. For her, heaping up descriptive details only works to limit character and to put emphasis upon the body. Daniel Albright points out that
As long as character is conceived as a set of quantifiable traits, good or evil, complacent or irritable, celibate or lustful, muscular or asthenic, objective description of such consistencies of behavior will be adequate; but if the novelist conceives personality as something elusive or tricky, a deep structure or consonance, too inclusive or too exclusive, perhaps something to which exterior behavior is nearly irrelevant, then he must search for new strategies. 35

Outward behavior and outward appearance do not become totally irrelevant in Woolf's fiction, but she does use a "new strategy" and goes inside character in order to expand it, to make boundaries blur, and to take emphasis off the body, off the outward aspects of life. Thus, it becomes difficult for the reader to treat Woolf's characters as though they were solid objects.

The switch from exterior to interior characterization adds to the complexity of Woolf's female characters. Giving minds to her female characters, Woolf immediately breaks the stereotype of the simple, stupid, "natural" woman. Portraying her female characters as subjects also erases the stereotypes of the woman as sexual object, woman with mind on nothing but love, and woman as looking-glass for men. 36 Woolf's essay on George Gissing precisely explains the shift in emphasis she herself effects by concentrating on the inner life of her characters:

With all his narrowness of outlook and meagerness of sensibility, Gissing is one of the extremely rare novelists who believes in the power of the mind, who makes his people think. They are thus differently poised from the majority of
fictitious men and women. The awful hierarchy of the passions is slightly displaced. Social snobbery does not exist; money is desired almost entirely to buy bread and butter; love itself takes a second place. But the brain works, and that alone is enough to give us a sense of freedom. For to think is to become complex; it is to overflow boundaries, to cease to be a 'character', to merge one's private life in the life of politics or art or ideas, to have relationships based partly on them, and not on sexual desire alone. The impersonal side of life is given its due place in the scheme. 'Why don't people write about the really important things of life?' Gissing makes one of his characters exclaim, and at the unexpected cry the horrid burden of fiction begins to fall from the shoulders [CE, I, 299; my emphasis].

Portraying her characters as subjects results in Woolf's readers seeing the women as thinkers and as the women see themselves, rather than as the objects men see and define. Thus, even when female characters in Woolf's fiction play traditional roles in their fictional lives, they still appear unconventional to the reader because they do not play traditional roles in the fiction.

Woolf emphasizes her characters' inner lives and thus lessens the sense of those characters as physical bodies. She admits, in "Professions for Women," that she has not solved the problem of "telling the truth about my own experiences as a body" [CE, II, 288]. Usually interpreted as an avoidance of sexuality, Woolf's confession does, in fact, identify a very real problem: in a patriarchal society, how does one describe a woman's body, her sexual passions, and her emotions about being a body, without that description
transforming the woman into an object? Traditional novelists focus on the body more than Woolf does, but they define women more rigidly than she does, too. By shifting the emphasis away from the body, Woolf confronts her readers with women's minds, something much more difficult to possess. Furthermore, by using very little physical description, Woolf stresses how little a woman's appearance has to do with reality.

The existence of the body also has little to do with the reality of death, although human beings try to gain some security from it by seeing the body as a literal barrier between themselves and death. Woolf, by de-emphasizing the body and by stripping character of the details that give it solidity, makes it clear that death exists within life itself and thus removes the illusory protection of the body. Because most of Woolf's characters are presented as subjects, death becomes part of their thoughts and existence instead of being something that strikes from outside. Thus, even her characterization reveals death as inherent, a constant companion. Moreover, because Woolf removes herself from omniscience and uses her characters' subjectivity to suggest an inner origin rather than an outer one, the characters become even more vulnerable to death; Woolf does not protect her characters, for example, the way Fielding does Tom Jones. Part of the characters' vulnerability stems from their unpredictability; the reader cannot predict a character's
future course and, thus, does not feel as though the author is in charge. Therefore, Woolf's characters move through the world, not knowing, as Bernard puts it,

when . . . any slate may fly from a roof, any car may swerve, for there is neither rhyme nor reason when a drunk man staggers about with a club in his hand--that is all [W, 361].

By removing herself as inherent authority, Woolf causes an undercurrent of danger to run through her fiction--her characters lack protection from death. Maintaining such a stance, Woolf threatens her readers with the possibility that no inherent authority, and no protection, either, exists outside the novels.

Woolf's particular use of characters as subjects, then, effectively enlarges the function of women in her fiction by giving them minds and intensifies the presence of death within reality by withdrawing the author's protection. Reducing the significance of the body, Woolf erects an obstacle against the reader's tendency to stereotype female characters and to defend against death. Thus, as Woolf diminishes the author's overt control over character by portraying those characters as subjects, she expands women's complexity and extends death's presence.

Woolf's move toward subjective characters and away from objective ones reflects a change in the view of the self, from a view that presupposes boundaries and, thus, the idea that one has been created by someone outside those boundaries,
to a view that presupposes the creation of one's self from within. The switch in perspective not only makes the character a subject, but also a creator of the self; indeed, Woolf's characters, instead of being products manufactured by an author, seem to be constantly in the process of creating themselves. Their identities are not given, but being discovered. The traditional novel assumes, as Charles Walcutt notes, the is-ness of character,\textsuperscript{39} thus making the character a given, a product, an object. In contrast, Woolf does not place her emphasis on a finished construction, clearly bounded, but on the process of constructing and, thus, portrays character as becoming; her characters have fluid, contradictory, inconsistent selves, with nothing ever assumed for long. In Woolf's fiction, the character as product, such as Bradshaw with his rigid boundaries and no anxiety about identity, has no inner life and imposes on others. For Woolf, "the undeniable vividness" of so many of the characters in Dickens stems from "their crudity. The character is rubbed into us indelibly because its features are so few and so prominent."\textsuperscript{40} Woolf, on the other hand, portrays her characters as changing, as moving, though not necessarily in an evolutionary line, but back and forth between different parts of themselves. Woolf's characters fluctuate; one senses movement and flux within the characters themselves, and in fact, Woolf uses verbs rather than descriptive nouns and adjectives to convey her sense of character. Although
sometimes called static, her characters are in fact always seeing, becoming, walking, painting, sewing, directing, etc.—in short, they seem to flow. In frustration, readers may want to shout at Woolf's characters, as Mrs. Ramsay asks of life, to "'stand still here . . .'" [TtL, 240], because they want to pin them down, get a good look at them, hold them complete in the mind. But the characters, in their process of becoming, resist such impulses on the part of the reader and continue to make characters for themselves, and indeed, to make characters for others. Thus, Woolf forces the reader to acknowledge that life and people are not inherently defined; we invent our characters.

As a result, the reader must confront Lily, who admits she has created her sense of the Rayleys [TtL, 258], and Bernard, who knows he must tell a story to convey his life but that the story will not be true [W, 341], and Clarissa and Peter, who think of themselves as making life up, making themselves up, and making other people up [MD, 5, 81]. And Woolf communicates exactly that impression of her characters, whether or not they are conscious of their creative abilities. Thus, Woolf has shifted the location of invention from God via the author to the human via the character. The characters, therefore, become responsible for their own beings, as Clarissa realizes:

For she was a child, throwing bread to the ducks, between her parents, and at the same time a grown woman coming to her parents who stood by the lake,
holding her life in her arms which, as she neared them, grew larger and larger in her arms, until it became a whole life, a complete life, which she put down by them and said, "This is what I have made of it! This!" And what had she made of it? [MD, 63-64].

As Keith May notes, creativity and responsibility go hand in hand: when characters create themselves, they alone are responsible for what they create. In Woolf's novels, then, characters examine themselves and their motives, and characters try to be honest about themselves.

Devising characters that constantly create themselves has several good effects for Woolf's female characters. For one thing, Woolf gives them responsibility for themselves. Other than Rachel Vinrace, who, as Woolf makes clear, has not been taught to be responsible, Woolf's female characters feel compelled to make their own lives and develop their own identities. Thus, though certainly restricted by their society, the female characters in Woolf's fiction also seems expansive. In addition, their ever-shifting views of themselves and of the world make attempts to fit them into pre-conceived stereotypes meaningless. Furthermore, simply by portraying the female characters as creating themselves, Woolf assumes that women can develop valid ways of seeing and selves that can grow independently of patriarchal manners. Seeing character as process rather than product, then, reinforces Woolf's portrayal of her female characters' resistance.

Character as process also aids Woolf in portraying death as present in life. Within process, for example, nothing
concrete is ever made to erect against death; rather, process itself includes life and death. Her characters' movement parallels that of the waves, and so the characters participate in the ongoing process of life, life which includes death. Death can no longer be projected outward onto a creator—it is simply part of what the character has to contend with in its creation of self. In addition, when one is part of process, death is always present as the alternative to life; thus, what is created by the character can never entirely block out death. Moreover, as Woolf's characters create themselves, the reader senses that they are being created against something, a struggle often hidden by the traditional character. And, finally, because the characters change their views of reality, because they continue to modify, drop, and add to their selves, the reader feels the death of previous views; as one "reading" becomes supplanted by another, the reader also becomes part of a process and must confront death.

Woolf's use of process in her characterization adds to her female characters' intelligence, independence, and complexity and increases the sense of death's being constantly part of life. It also reinforces the removal of Woolf herself as inherent authority, thus giving the female characters more responsibility and deleting much of the characters' protection from death. Woolf's female characters indirectly express their resistance to patriarchal manners,
including those of the reader, and death refuses to go away, all because Woolf steps back from her characters and creates them so that they seem to be in the midst of process, creating themselves.

Portraying character as unknowable, subject, and in process, Woolf obviously shifts the emphasis from outer to inner features. Related to this change in perspective is Woolf's concentration on character as revealed through being or becoming rather than on character revealed through action or plot. In the traditional novel, the character is an object, its is-ness, as Walcutt puts it, is assumed, and it, along with other characters, are moved around on a board called the plot. But in Woolf's novels, the character is a subject, existence is not taken for granted, and the board is gone. Her characters are not locked on a wheel of fortune; rather, they exist on a wheel of sensation. As Robert Collins notes, Woolf's novel, The Waves, expresses the view that "sensation is the permanent truth of our existence—everything else is a construct of systems posited upon it."43 Certainly, Woolf seems to have looked upon plot as unnecessary. When she was planning The Waves, she wrote that she wanted to

give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment; this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner: it is false, unreal, merely conventional [my emphasis].44
For Woolf, then, reducing plot means stripping the novel of superfluous matter and allowing the characters to present themselves as beings. In much traditional fiction, a mystery or a problem exists as part of the plot; eventually, the reader discovers the solution, and in the process, defines the characters. But Woolf, by reducing the plot, makes the characters themselves mysteries; furthermore, she leaves them unsolved. The workings of the characters' minds, rather than the author's plot, generate the sense of movement in Woolf's novels. The character is not forced to follow an already given order determined by the novelist, but uses its own mind in an attempt to create order.

Woolf's reduction of plot decreases patriarchal control and thus boosts her female characters' presence and value. As Woolf points out in "Women and Fiction," since men are the primary arbiters of convention in life, male values also prevail in literature [CE, II, 145-46]. The insistence that character be revealed through or defined by plot may appear to be a neutral concept, but, in fact, an insistence on plot inevitably limits the role of women in fiction. Because men's activities are considered the only real activities, because women's actions are considered passive or trivial, and because women were/are often forbidden to attempt men's activities, traditional plot circumscribes what a female character can do.

Indeed, insistence on plot in fiction has traditionally
limited female characters to the role of love interest.\footnote{46}

Woolf explains that in the past, love was women's "only possible interpreter," which means that "almost without exception they are shown in their relations to men" [AR00, 86-87]. Emphasizing the handicap of plot for women even more thoroughly, Scholes and Kellogg note that female characters have a long tradition of interior monologue in Western literature, but that such monologues always focus on the woman's erotic situation. In a standard plot, the monologue thus reinforces the assumption that a woman's whole life centers around love, and since it also means a literal break in the action, the monologue suggests that a woman's love is somehow passive.\footnote{47} On the other hand, if the author uses a familiar, standard literary plot and simply makes a female character the protagonist, the resulting fiction seems ludicrously removed from the reader's perception of a woman's reality.\footnote{48} Therefore, the insistence on plot to reveal character severely limits the options for female characters.

By reducing plot in her novels, then, Woolf expands the role of her female characters. Lessening the influence of plot loosens the usual control over women—love is no longer central, women do not live through men's actions or depend on men's approval, more and different kinds of relationships are possible, and "women's work" gains value. Furthermore, if action or plot defines character, then cutting back on the presence of plot also removes some of the definitions of
women supported by traditional plot. Woolf's emphasis on being, then, allows her female characters to exist outside the usual love interest; as a result, those female characters seem much less one-dimensional than female characters trapped in traditional plots. Indeed, by de-emphasizing plot, Woolf makes her female characters central to her novels.

In addition, by removing the "appalling narrative business" from her fiction, Woolf also removes a chief defense against death, one's routine, one's sense of purpose in getting from one place to the next. The emphasis on plot and action in traditional fiction attempts to dull the presence of death, whereas Woolf's emphasis on being tends to heighten that presence. By concentrating on being, Woolf removes death from the plot—no one plots it, and death as an event may occur suddenly, in the space of one sentence—and adds it to character—death simply exists. Indeed, Woolf's fiction does not take existence itself for granted, thereby portraying the existence of things, people, life and death as strange, frightening, and sometimes overwhelming. Thus, Woolf focuses on the larger plot of life and death, rather than on the smaller plots we construct to save us from that death. Life and death form the plot within a character's existence in Woolf's novels. Woolf, then, uses the reduced plot to get the reader to see life and death within character; plot details do not obscure the real plot.
The reader soon learns that the characters have no protection, that Woolf will not use plots to save them, and that living means confronting the death within one's self.

Woolf's reduction of plot and consequent emphasis on being presents readers with a portrayal of "felt" life; as she notes in "On Re-Reading Novels": "the 'book itself' is not form which you see, but emotion which you feel" [CE, II, 126]. Thus, female characters in her novels have full inner lives and almost all the characters sense the ultimate absence of plot, thus sensing life's inherent danger. Reducing plot, then, allows Woolf to emphasize both women's value and death's presence in life, and characterizing her characters through being allows her to contradict the assumption of woman's lesser place in society and to strip away the novel's usual protection against death.

Clearly, then, Woolf's characterization supports her characters in the communication of her perspective; both the content and the form of her characters express the complexity of women and the presence of death, thereby thwarting the reader's expectations. Most readers, whether born during or since the modern age, have grown up reading traditional nineteenth-century novels and enjoying traditional, realistic characters; thus, most readers have incorporated traditional attitudes about women and death. Robert Alter explains one such hidden message:
The great realist novels of the nineteenth century, though they may be filled with scenes of disease and dying, are in another sense also an implicit evasion of death because, as the paradigmatic instance of Balzac makes clear, behind the vast effort to represent in fiction a whole society, the spawning of novel after novel with crowds of personages overflowing from one book to the next, was a dream of omnipotence, the novelist creating a fantasy world so solid-seeming that he could rule over it like a god. 49

Merely by breaking four conventions of character, then, all of which represent a decrease in the author's overt control, Woolf puts distance between her characters and her readers, or, as she says of writers of merit in "Phases of Fiction," "The barrier between us and the book is raised higher. We do not slip so instinctively and so easily into a world that we know already" [CE, II, 100]. We are Victorian readers, unable to possess Woolf's modern works easily because of the distance she produces with her characterization.

Accustomed to knowable characters, created from an objective point of view, made into finished products, and revealed through plot, readers react with frustration to Woolf's characters. She uses her own conventions—the unknowable character, created from a subjective point of view, immersed in process, and revealed through being—to prevent the reader's control of her characters. By hampering the reader's usual mode of reacting to the world, exerting control, Woolf confronts the reader with the presence of women and death. The very destruction of conventions, for instance, breaks down the usual ways of seeing women and emphasizes
dying traditions. Furthermore, the particular conventions Woolf chooses to break threaten the stability of the self: the shifting, fluid selves Woolf creates mean that a woman has more than one defined self, and that death originates within. Woolf does not make character a stable fixture pinned against a background of flux; rather, she removes the protection of fiction and presents character as "life itself," not in the flux, but as the flux. Woolf's characters, then, do not become a function of our desire for control over the world and, thus, in a sense, are mimetic: they mirror the world as it is, and they produce in readers the same reaction they have to the world when they realize the world and their wishes are not one.

Yet Woolf's characters also make clear that character is a convention. Whereas nineteenth-century authors present their characters as real, that is, not created, or existing as givens, Woolf presents her characters as constructs, created by her and the characters themselves. Woolf removes herself as author of her characters, allowing them to invent order rather than using them to imitate an already given order. This detachment from her characters creates distance between characters and readers. Thus, Woolf's characterization allows her characters their autonomy. And in the absence of the usual authorial control over characters, readers suddenly become aware of their own efforts to control them. By using distance to thwart such efforts, Woolf makes
her readers aware of their urge to control, indicates that many societal controls result from such a tendency, and suggests that people themselves are responsible for creating the patriarchy's "givens." Thus, Woolf's characterization confronts her reader with patriarchal assumptions about women and death, exposes the entrenched sleight of hand that denies the latter by blaming it on the former, and reveals the reader's own desire to control not only character in fiction, but also women and death outside it. By resisting that control, Woolf undermines patriarchal control of women and death and makes her readers aware of their own complicity in that control. Blackstone describes the effect of such characterization:

We are given some new windows into reality. We are treated to new sensations, new perceptions of truth. We are, in fact, educated into heightened and broadened perception. And thus, miraculously, we are freed from certain of our limitations. 50

Woolf's characterization, then, by checking the reader's impulse to control, by locating women and death within the human, and by freeing women, death, and character from patriarchal control, attempts to free readers from their patriarchal limitations.
Footnotes for Chapter Four


7Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Harvest--Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965), p. 353. See pp. 353-55 for Guiguet's discussion of Woolf's minor characters, those who "are fixed, static in every respect" and who "correspond exactly to the traditional notion of personality, made of a bundle of more or less complex tendencies and manifested by constant reactions." He also notes that her retention of "this mode
of characterization for her secondary figures, for Dr. Crane in The Waves or Mrs. Manresa in Between the Acts, far from being a concession to the method [traditional] characterization, or a residue from it, is on the contrary an implied criticism of it . . . . In fact, these [secondary characters] have no reality, no existence of their own . . . ." Thus, Guignet makes clear that Woolf could, in fact, create traditional, solid characters, but that she chose not to do so except when inventing secondary characters. When I refer to Woolf's characters in this chapter, I mean her major ones, the ones that have, as Guignet points out, Woolf's "two essential traits to attain human reality . . . : imprecision of outline and an infinite potentiality for renewal and creation."

8 See Majumdar and McLaurin, Virginia Woolf, pp. 164, 166, 186, 284, and 397 for a sampling of the negative terms used to describe Woolf's characters. See W. W. Robson, Modern English Literature (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 100-102, for an example of the intense dislike Woolf's work and characters can provoke. He describes her characters as wraiths and says that The Waves represents a desertion of Mrs. Brown. Similar to many other critics who refer to Woolf's characters in "ghostly" terms, however, Robson discusses Clarissa Dalloway as though she were a person: "a woman who seems very limited intellectually." And see Mary McCarthy, "Characters in Fiction," in On the Contrary (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1951), pp. 276-77, for her contention that "Sensibility, like violent action, annihilates the sense of character" and for her statement about Mrs. Dalloway.


10 Martin Price, "The Other Self: Thoughts About Character in the Novel," in Imagined Worlds: Essays on Some English Novels and Novelists In Honour of John Butt,

11Price, p. 293.


19Guiguet, p. 355.

20Forster, p. 97.
21 Harvey, pp. 32-33.

22 Gabriel Josipovici, The World and the Book: A Study of Modern Fiction (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), p. 136. Josipovici describes how Proust sees the difference between traditional characters and real people: "The characters are not going to do anything we do not expect; if they do something unexpected then this unexpectedness too will turn out to have its justification. Of that we can be certain; and it is from this certainty that our pleasure derives. But how different it is in real life." Forster distinguishes between flat and round characters, pp. 103-18, but, in fact, both types have edges and are knowable.

23 Forster, p. 99.


27 Moments of Being, pp. 74-75.

28 See Albright, p. 196 and May, p. 68.


31 Joanne M. S. Frye, "Toward a Form for Paradox: Image and Idea in the Novels of Virginia Woolf," Dissertation, Indiana University, 1974, pp. 20-21. Frye writes about Woolf's elusive narrative voice in the following passage, but the description of how difficult it is for the critic to pin Woolf's meaning down applies to Woolf's characters as well: "Because of the elusiveness of Woolf's patterns of belief and unbelief, the prose of the narrative voice seems to be extraordinarily slippery: it leads us through patterns and affirmations by circling and re-circling, always refusing to arrive at a conclusion and say 'this is what I mean.' But that same elusiveness which makes the prose so slippery and which makes the critic want to quote the entire novel to show all of the conflicting viewpoints—that elusiveness is shaped and molded by the narrative voice . . . ."


33 Blackstone, p. 10.

34 Albright, p. 10.

35 Albright, p. 17.

36 Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York and London: Harvest—Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957), p. 35. See also Dinnerstein, p. 28, who cites de Beauvoir in a footnote; de Beauvoir says that for women to overcome the patriarchal link between maternity and mortality, they must declare themselves "subjects."

37 Albright, p. 18, who writes, "Marx believed that mechanical labor exactly reversed a man's sense of what is animal and what is human, and if a writer believes that the relation of self to body is that of worker to tool he will to some extent distrust the adequacy of the body as an expression of the personality."

38 Mary McCarthy, "Characters in Fiction," p. 292, who says that "An anxiety about location (the prime clinical symptom in the reader of the modern novel) precludes interest
in direction . . . ." But Woolf, of course, wants to create exactly that anxiety in the reader in order to remind the reader of death.

39 Walcutt, p. 17.


41 Frye, p. 14. Frye, on p. 24, calls this static quality a "frequent complaint."


45 See Walcutt, p. 17, where he writes that "character is a function of action, [and] that, like the quantum, it cannot be seen except in motion, where it is the motion rather than the thing itself that we see" and Marvin Mudrick, "Character and Event in Fiction," Yale Review, N.S. 50 (1960-61), 205, who says that "whereas in prose fiction the emphasis is strongly on the language that defines the action, in verse fiction the emphasis is quite as strongly on the action that defines the characters."


48 Russ, pp. 3-7.

50 Blackstone, p. 11.
Chapter Five

A SYSTEM THAT DOES NOT SHUT OUT

There was Mrs. Brown, protesting that she was different, quite different, from what people made out.

--Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown"

Most commonly we come to books with blurred and divided minds, asking of fiction that it shall be true, of poetry that it shall be false, of biography that it shall be flattering, of history that it shall enforce our own prejudices. If we could banish all such preconceptions when we read, that would be an admirable beginning . . . . If you hang back, and reserve and criticise at first, you are preventing yourself from getting the fullest possible value from what you read.

--Virginia Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book?"

And I'm the hare, a long way ahead of the hounds my critics.

--Virginia Woolf, Diary

By freeing women, death, and character from patriarchal limitations, however, Woolf frightens her readers. Indeed, her characters' use of distance within her novels and her own use of distance in her characterization make us feel the distance between us and
the world; thus, Woolf reminds us that our mastery over the world is an illusion. Although Woolf thought she did not have "that 'reality' gift" [Diary, II, 248], she portrays, in fact, the distance existing in reality, a distance we usually bury under appearances. By reminding us of the distance between ourselves and what we see, she makes clear, as Gabriel Josipovici points out, that

the act of perception or the act of consciousness itself is never a neutral one. Proust and Homer and Virginia Woolf are all aware of this, but the traditional novel appears to ignore it. As a result it implicitly assumes that the world and the world as we are made conscious of it are one. Proust and Virginia Woolf, on the other hand, by emphasizing the will to form that is characteristic of consciousness, allow us to sense both history and flux, and the gap that there will always be between them . . . our sense of the gap forces us out of the shell of habit and into the sudden awareness of reality.  

Woolf, then, thought distance absolutely necessary to communicate the reality underneath the lie of patriarchal hierarchies.  

Therefore, she gives her characters distance so that women and death will regain their rightful presence in reality, and she establishes a disconcerting separation between readers and characters so that her dualistic reality will appear. Woolf characterizes her readers, then, in the same way she characterizes her characters. That is, readers become aware of their inability to possess her work and thus become aware of their inability either to possess women (or to possess any human being, for that matter) or to deny death. Woolf's creation of distance means that her
readers, like Bernard, keep walking "bang into the pillarg box" [W, 380] of reality. She makes us face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women [AR00, 118].

Paradoxically, then, Woolf inflicts her perspective upon her readers by not inflicting it; that is, she confronts her readers with reality by using, not control, but distance. As Lily Briscoe realizes, "Distance had an extraordinary power" [TtL, 279]. Woolf's relationship with her reader, then, is characterized by respect—Woolf neither controls nor protects her reader. Like Lily, she simply presents her vision. Woolf never pretends to have found an answer, or to have found a system that will transform the world:

What is the meaning of life? . . . The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark . . . [TtL, 240].

As Daniel Albright says of Woolf, "Above all her major contemporaries she has the grace of modesty."^3

But it is just this modesty, her refusal to create hierarchies and systems, and her distance, that provoke the fear usually suppressed by traditional characters and traditional authors. Woolf's dualistic perspective threatens readers used to hierarchical perspectives. Frustrating
readers' desire to control on every level—on the social level (men do not control women), on the fundamental level (human beings do not control death), and on the artistic level (readers do not control characters)—Woolf's novels criticize the very foundations of patriarchal society. It is not surprising, then, that critics say her work has no content, no social significance, no reality: in doing so, they avoid her criticism of the patriarchy, do not confront her portrayal of hierarchies as inventions, not givens, and do not face the damage those hierarchies do to "life itself."4 Faced with mirrors reflecting patriarchal reality, these critics squirm. Faced with the fear that caused the patriarchy to suppress women and death in the first place, such critics react in the quintessential patriarchal manner: they put Woolf on the low rung of a hierarchy, call her minor, and attempt to control her work by dismissing it. In other words, these critics treat her novels exactly the way women and death have been treated by the patriarchy.

But just like the women and death she portrays, Woolf's novels resist and subvert such control; Woolf "goes on [her] way regardless of the rights of private property" [CE, I, 71]. Thus, she ultimately makes "reality too strong" [BtA, 179] for her readers to evade. Indeed, Woolf's work, her use of distance versus control, shows that hierarchies reflect the patriarchal attempt to control, not reality; indicates that patriarchal "reality" is just
another viewpoint, not reality itself; exposes the harm the patriarchal viewpoint does to individuals; and suggests that we take more responsibility for the views of reality we create. 5

Woolf is accused of being out of touch with reality because she does not see reality through patriarchal spectacles. She is accused of withdrawing from life because she confronts her readers with what is fearful—stifling assumptions, solitude, death. But as *Between the Acts* shows, Woolf knew the risk she was taking. She knew her critics would try to "control [her] perspective so that it [would] resemble and reinforce their own" [CE, I, 71].

In taking the risk, however, in presenting her dualistic and anti-patriarchal vision of women, death, and character to her readers, Woolf, in fact, is a realist, a heroic one.

As Geoffrey Hartman points out,

> It is the familiar world that must now be saved—from familiarity. Only in this light does impersonal narration find its reason. The author, staying within realism, must keep from too easy an intimacy with creation. The body of the world, the body of other persons, is a strange fact; their thoughts are a mystery; every relation includes shocks and unveilings. The impersonal mode is clearly an effort at distance, one of many. It is an effort to hold back—by placing true imaginative obstacles before—the leveling and inquisitive mind . . . . A great novel does not breed familiarity; a bad novel is simply one that betrays the mystery, rapes the past, and let us possess too quickly another person or mind. 6
Woolf's feminist use of distance against patriarchal control, her portrayal of women's complexity and death's presence in life through her characters and characterization, puts her readers in touch with, but not in control of, reality. Her novels perform a curious couching operation on the senses; one sees more intensely afterwards; the world seems bared of its covering and given an intenser life [AR00, 114].

Such is the "rare and lasting delight" [CE, I, 71] Woolf gives her readers.
Footnotes for Chapter Five


2 Bernard Blackstone, *Virginia Woolf: A Commentary* (New York: Harvest—Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1949), p. 245, points out that Woolf sees detachment as the supreme necessity for the artist. "She doesn't mean detachment from life, from men and women. She means detachment from personal prejudices, from personal end-seeking, and from the spirit of the age if that spirit is antagonistic to the kind of creation that the artist is set upon."


5 Alan Warren Friedman, *Multivalence: The Moral Quality of Form in the Modern Novel* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), p. 27. Friedman notes how modern fiction demands responsibility from its readers: "What all multivalent fiction requires is readers willing themselves to participate in the creative and ethical processes involved in rendering, willing to hold
aesthetic and moral prejudices in abeyance long enough to experience opposing appeals and to confront their irreconcilability honestly and directly."

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