

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

STRUCTURE AS INTERPRETATION IN THE  
WORK OF VIRGINIA WOOLF:  
THE INNER SUBSTANCE OF OUR LIVES

by

Helen Kruger

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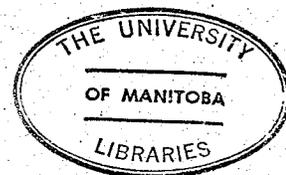
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THE INNER SUBSTANCE OF OUR LIVES  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE SHAPING OF A VISION:

#### THE TRANSLATION OF FEELINGS AND IMPRESSIONS

A critical approach based on a preconceived set of beliefs and system of values, or on a fixed structure of created characters, constructed plot and connected incidents, will find the work of an artist such as Virginia Woolf unsatisfying and inconclusive. It assumes a measuring stick which allows the critic to express himself in terms that describe a relation between himself and the work of art, but not necessarily the relation between the artist and his purpose. The intrinsic truth or merit of an artistic creation lies in the relation of the creation to the creator: the integral expression of a vision. This is not to say that these artists have a 'message' or 'something to say', and find a way of expressing it; rather, it is "an exploration which itself creates its own significations, as it proceeds,"<sup>1</sup> because the artist is subordinate to his vision.

Obviously, original means of expression adapted to

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<sup>1</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, For a New Novel (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p. 141.

the artist's inner vision will result in the creation of new forms. These forms and techniques can only be adequate or inadequate inasmuch as they serve or disserve the artist's purpose. For the critic a certain amount of courage is required to approach the work of art on this basis. It is a daring of the intellect which opens up new modes of thought, willing to be relative to the work of art, with a measure that changes as the art form varies. This will involve more than merely categorizing or classifying, it will be rather a "sensitive tracing out of the converging relationships that accumulate into form and become meaning,"<sup>2</sup> allowing the critic to follow behind the artist in tracing out the design of the pattern for others to see.

The early twentieth century was perhaps especially suited to a new literary form, for it saw the "final dissolution of that common background of belief and attitude"<sup>3</sup> of religion and philosophy which earlier writers and critics could take for granted. No longer was the cosmos understood as a great chain of Being, from highest to lowest, with a corresponding hierarchical scale of values. Without a community of belief, artists were faced with the problem of providing their own philosophic and emotional background;

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<sup>2</sup>R. G. Collins, "Divagations on the Novel as Experiment," Mosaic 4 (Spring, 1971): 4.

<sup>3</sup>David Daiches, Virginia Woolf, (New York: Vail-Ballou Press, 1963; New Directions Paperbook), p. 39.

the ladder to higher reality was gone, as Yeats put it. The artist must explain an inexplicable world where "the movement of the spirit is no longer vertical but only horizontal,"<sup>4</sup> and formal art structures must change correspondingly.

Virginia Woolf came to recognize that old rules and conventions interposed a screen in front of the reality that she wanted to express. After the nineteenth century novel of sociological implications, and that century's art of realism, she rejected the novel that lead to external action and deliberately sought a self-contained quality of art, as did the artists who were associated with her in the Bloomsbury Group. The shared intellectual experience of contemporary artists and literary friends stimulated her own vision of reality and of man, through criticism "spoken over wineglasses and coffee-cups late at night, flashed out on the spur of the moment by people passing who have no time to finish their sentences . . . ."<sup>5</sup> But if on the one hand she seemed revolutionary, she was also part of the contemporary movement that ended a long tradition of aesthetic and Romantic writers. Artistic temperament based on feeling and intuition had been carefully cultivated and prepared by

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<sup>4</sup>William Barrett, Irrational Man (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1958; Anchor Books, 1962), p. 49.

<sup>5</sup>Virginia Woolf, The Death of the Moth and other Essays (London: Hogarth Press, 1942), p. 100.

the Romantic movement, with roots in Coleridge. The passion for the life of the imagination in poets and painters from Ruskin onwards showed a constant tendency to turn from the interests of common life to art as the highest value, with imagination as the central and dominating seat of the human faculties.

E. M. Forster, a contemporary of Virginia Woolf and a "spiritual" writer as opposed to "materialist" in her own classification, was one of the last Romantic novelists to attempt to achieve some kind of balance between the individual and social interest. In Howards End the child of two classes offers hope for the future society, while the reconciliation of intellect and emotion between Margaret and Helen restores personal values. Nevertheless, the final impression remains one of personal values which cannot solve the problems of society, and a society which cannot tolerate personal values.<sup>6</sup> In Forster's final novel, the meaninglessness of the universe echoes in the Marabar caves, but the sensitivity and mutual sympathy of the characters finally connects two cultures. In Virginia Woolf social interest is dimmed to a shadow; in the later novels especially it is absent, though it still exists. Though her novels certainly say something about society, her primary

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<sup>6</sup>Mark Schorer, The Novelist in the Modern World (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1957), p. 17.

purpose is not social commentary. She attempted novels of pure sensibility based on "the spirit we live by," spontaneous revelation of freshness, wonder and surprise. "Moments of being," "myriads of impressions" were presented, not against a social background but against cosmic forces bounded by life and death. The ultimate questions are always asked: "What is life?" "What is death?" "What does it all mean?"

The year 1910 was heralded as a new epoch by Virginia Woolf' "in or about December, 1910, human character changed."<sup>7</sup> It was the year of the exhibition of the Post-Impressionist paintings, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Picasso. Her somewhat startling statement related as much to the technique of expressing character as to a new view of man's nature itself. In a universe without hierarchical order, inanimate objects assume a greater importance, man becomes less significant, human relations change. The artist, from his vantage point, can depict what he sees in a particular mood and at a particular moment, but even more he seeks to create the concept of mind, its sensations and feelings, taking the responsibility for the outline his work assumes. The actions of his characters spring from impressions of reality rather than prejudice, or habit, or dogma. What is this

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<sup>7</sup>Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" Collected Essays I, ed. Leonard Woolf (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co. Ltd., 1966), p. 320.

reality?

It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable--now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech--and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates.<sup>8</sup>

A character or a man's nature is expressed when, in a work of art, the artist creates some kind of harmony from the chaos of impressions, revealing thereby the inner essence or spirit of the man.

The translation of the great nineteenth century Russian novels into English, with publication beginning about 1912, had a profound effect on Virginia Woolf. In her essay "The Russian Point of View," she showed how deeply it affected her, and how her own vision was taking form.

The novels of Dostoevsky are seething whirlpools, gyrating sandstorms, waterspouts which hiss and boil and suck us in. They are composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul. Against our wills we are drawn in, whirled round, blinded, suffocated, and at the same time filled with a

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<sup>8</sup>Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (First published 1928; reprint ed., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: C. Nicholls & Company Ltd., 1945; Penguin Books, 1970), p. 108.

giddy rapture.<sup>9</sup>

Again "nothing is solved, we feel; nothing is rightly held together. On the other hand, the method which at first seemed so casual, inconclusive, and occupied with trifles, now appears the result of an exquisitely original and fastidious taste."<sup>10</sup> The Russian novel seemed to deal with the essentials of life--such as common suffering and happiness. The inner world of emotions, feelings, and intuitive beliefs were shown as possessing universal interest and as being far more important than that which could be measured by science or naturalism (e.g., Dmitri in The Brothers Karamazov). If this had been implied by other writers, it was finally the Russians who dared to state its sadness and inconclusiveness. "It is the sense that there is no answer, that if honestly examined life presents question after question which must be left to sound on and on after the story is over . . ."<sup>11</sup> The flux of life presented by the inner spiritual world of the emotions and the anguish and uncertainty of unanswered questions, inconclusive and often apparently meaningless, this was the reality Virginia

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<sup>9</sup>Virginia Woolf, "The Russian Point of View," The Common Reader I, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1968), p. 226.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 224-25.

<sup>11</sup>Woolf, "Modern Fiction," The Common Reader I, p. 194.

Woolf wanted to present. Her novels took on a form which presented the consciousness of her characters in a state of becoming, the exploring of the spiritual life and psychic states. The novels deal with those exceptionally sensitive human beings who search for meaning always aware 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 . . ."12

If the human spirit in its solitude is the center of her works, the area of human relations, that sharing and communication for which the individual yearns but which he perhaps can never totally achieve, grew out of the search for meaning and identification. "She would never know him. He would never know her. Human relations were all like that, . . ."13 says Lily Briscoe, the painter. Can one live with other people and still be free to live as oneself? That is the question asked by Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay. Human beings obviously need one another, for moments of perception are intensified if they are held in common. "By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse

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<sup>12</sup>Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1927; Harvest Books, 1955), p. 98.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

and the enjoyment of beautiful objects,"<sup>14</sup> said G. E. Moore, whose Principia Ethica influenced Virginia Woolf and her Bloomsbury friends. The freedom to follow intuition, subject to the intellect and good taste, in the search for beauty in nature, art and human relations: this defines Virginia Woolf's aesthetic and also her ethics as it relates to the interrelationship of people; conduct will look after itself if men know what is good. It was through the world of the mind, the inward stream deep within the nature of things that an understanding of oneself and one's outward relationships could be achieved. The artist must find his own way to express that vision, or "intuition, of life, and in finding that he will find the form of his work."<sup>15</sup> Intuition demanding its own form will result in harmony and truth of insight.

A writer contemporary with Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, was also experimenting at this time with the use of technique to simulate the form of life itself. Though his three major novels were literary fragments, making it tempting for critics to speculate on their meaning--'had they been completed', it was even more fitting that they were not concluded; the probing and exploration which is the technique of his novels came close to the experience of

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<sup>14</sup>J. K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954), p. 23.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

life itself. It was a deliberate stylistic technique to investigate reality by all possible means. Kafka did not like figurative language and spoke with near despair of the ineffectiveness of words, even his own writing, at communicating essential meaning. His method was to transpose inward states of mind into material beings and proceed on that image (The Metamorphosis, for example). He mirrored effectively the inner spiritual life--the anguish, guilt and suffering reflected in physical realistic details. The world of sensations and impressions was translated into thought and recreated into art. For him, as well as Virginia Woolf, Dostoevsky expressed the process: "Special methods of thinking. Permeated with emotion. Everything feels itself to be a thought, even the vaguest feelings," (Dostoevsky).<sup>16</sup>

The problem faced by spiritual writers who dwell on thinking and feeling rather than on action, is how to give external form to untranslatable qualities. Word arrangements translate feelings and thoughts into a different medium than they possess, but paradoxically they cannot be communicated at all until they find expression in words. If they are to retain a perceptual impression of life, they cannot follow verbal structures, or logic,

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<sup>16</sup>Max Brod, ed., The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-1913, trans. by Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 291.

or tense, or the laws of cause and effect.<sup>17</sup> Simply setting down what arises in the consciousness, in the order in which it arises is not artistically satisfying; there must be something of universal significance or value, in an aesthetically pleasing arrangement: ". . . merely to repeat one's emotions, merely to look into one's heart and write, is also merely to repeat the round of emotional self-bondage. If our books are to be exercises in self-analysis, then technique must--and alone can--take the place of the absent analyst."<sup>18</sup>

Virginia Woolf used the same principle as that of the Romantic poets: the subjective perception of the artist projecting on the world an inner eye of imagination. The process of transforming impressions into writing begins with the writer's own sensations and experiences. In A Room of One's Own, she describes a significant moment of her own: she was looking out of her window when,

as so often happens in London, there was a complete lull and suspension of traffic. Nothing came down the street; nobody passed. A single leaf detached itself from the plane tree at the end of the street, and in that pause and suspension fell. Somehow it was like a signal falling, a signal pointing to a force in things which one had overlooked. It seemed to point to a river, which flowed past,

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<sup>17</sup>A. A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel (London: Peter Nevill, 1952), p. 207.

<sup>18</sup>Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," Critical Approaches to Fiction, eds. S. K. Kumar and Keith McKean (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1968), p. 274.

invisibly, round the corner, down the street, and took people and eddied them along . . . . Now it was bringing from one side of the street to the other diagonally a girl in patent leather boots, and then a young man in a maroon overcoat; it was also bringing a taxicab; and it brought all three together at a point directly beneath my window; where the taxi stopped; and the girl and the young man stopped; and they got into the taxi; and then the cab glided off as if it were swept on by the current elsewhere.

The sight was ordinary enough; what was strange was the rhythmical order with which my imagination had invested it; and the fact that the ordinary sight of two people getting into a cab had the power to communicate something of their own seeming satisfaction.<sup>19</sup>

A moment like this and many other similar ones combine to make a world of their own in the artist's subconscious. All the impressions, sights and sounds, at least the important ones, remain in the memory. Then after reflection, when the 'upper-mind' is at peace, the unconscious puts them together. When they are wanted--there they are--in rhythmical order. When writing, the artist matches each word as closely as possible to this vision in his subconscious.<sup>20</sup> If he is successful, there will be glimpses of reality in his art which far transcend the counterpart in his life because they have a new relation. The novelist feels emotions, names them and ranges them in final order by feeling their right relatedness to one another.

The use of the detail to represent inner meaning

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<sup>19</sup> Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 95.

<sup>20</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Leaning Tower," The Moment and other Essays (London: Hogarth Press, 1947), pp. 109-110.

was analogous to the use of the moment as a substitute for normal time sequence. A moment contains life of the past, present and future; it is a "moment of being" which is life at its fullest, and must substitute for days, months and years. Thus the past is seen from the present, and everything before the novel takes place is given only as it arises in the character's mind, or as it becomes a part of his present. Clock time is abolished and replaced by the real time that makes up the inner substance of our lives. The central factor of the novel becomes the interplay of things, persons and atmosphere within a moment, rather than a character. Characters are analyzed and projected by perception, but fundamentally they remain different aspects of the author's mind.

Virginia Woolf sought and found a new way of expressing life, an original perspective of a vision of experience.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RELATION OF FORM TO MEANING

The aesthetic emotion produced by a work of art is the reaction to a relation. "It 'is not an emotion about sensations, however necessary a responsive sensualism may be for our apprehension of aesthetic wholes. Nor is it an emotion about objects or persons or events' [Roger Fry]." <sup>1</sup> It is an emotion about the harmony that exists between these things in a work of art. The artist borrows from life events, persons and objects which he builds into a structure, but the meaning of each one of these individual things represented is not as important as the interrelation and harmony established between them.

The artist must pierce beneath the surface appearances of an object to come to an intimate understanding of its internal rhythms. To come to this understanding he must have a vision of the universe. The Bloomsbury Group believed that rationalism and sensibility, reason and intuition, could establish first principles; they trusted in the ability of the intellect to examine the findings of

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<sup>1</sup>Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group, p. 50.

intuition, while they rejected convention, tradition and authority.

The artist expresses what he sees in forms that are related to each other. He may experience emotional and spiritual meaning in objects or nature which he wants to communicate; in the work of art he externalizes his experience and communicates it. "Art--[says Roger Fry]. . . is 'the only means by which human beings can communicate to each other the quality and quiddity of their experiences'. This, together with its power to help us understand the universe, is its *raison d'être* [reason for being]." <sup>2</sup>

Art discovers emotional harmonies--sensations and feelings and their significance. The form of the objects presented by the artist's imagination will have inherent emotional elements expressed in an order which is beyond their natural capabilities. The final form will not be just a pleasing object, but the outcome of an endeavor to express an idea. "It is the idea, the state of mind, behind a work of art that gives it its significance, and causes us to feel, if the idea is well expressed, that everything is in its appointed place, that not a color could be changed or an object disturbed." <sup>3</sup> This is the emotional harmony or unity of a work of art.

As a novelist, Virginia Woolf attempted to build

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

structures that had internal harmony, and were self-contained works of art. In her comments about the novel in the essays "Modern Fiction" (1919) and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924), she criticizes the Edwardian novelists, calling them "materialists" because they are concerned with the body (form) rather than the spirit. Referring to the little old lady, Mrs. Brown, she says that they, i.e., Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy, would describe the carriage, clothes, cushions, buttons, or the outward circumstances of society, or a Utopia where a real view of such women does not exist. Their books lacked completion; they call for some kind of action, such as "joining a society or writing a cheque." For her, the novel was emotion in and for itself, not a device to bring about action.

Realistic details should be used to serve aesthetic demands; "fact and vision" must be combined. She felt that Defoe managed to embody a spiritual experience in what at first seems only realistic representation. There is "truth of insight" in Robinson Crusoe, but the Edwardians, she felt, did not achieve a similar result. Their vision being superficial, they inevitably neglected Mrs. Brown, who is "human nature," the spirit we live by, life itself. The Russian novelists, however, pierced through the flesh to reveal the soul. And if we do not have as complete a vision, at least, she says, we still know Mrs. Brown.

. . . she is just as visible to you who remain

silent as to us who tell stories about her. In the course of your daily life this past week you have had far stranger and more interesting experiences than the one I have tried to describe. You have overheard scraps of talk that filled you with amazement. You have gone to bed at night bewildered by the complexity of your feelings. In one day thousands of ideas have coursed through your brains, thousands of emotions have met, collided, and disappeared in astonishing disorder.<sup>4</sup>

All this "life itself," the inner life, is Mrs. Brown. It is individual, yet common to all. The novelists' subject must be Mrs. Brown. "'The proper stuff of fiction' does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought, every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss."<sup>5</sup>

She protests against the traditional novel because it has become too far removed from real life, that is, inner life. The form seems interposed between us and the book as we know it. "Must novels be like this?" she asks.

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this'. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions--trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday and Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be

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<sup>4</sup> Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," p. 336.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, "Modern Fiction," p. 194.

no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?<sup>6</sup>

"Let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance," she continues. She was not saying that a novel should have no form, but that the conventions of novel-writing would not do. Though the chapters of a novel make something as formed as a building, the novel should be a work of art, its beauty in its words and rhythms, not in its formula. A novel "should be self-contained, . . . should come from the deepest part of its author's being, should be more real than life, and should at once surprise us and convince us that it is true."<sup>7</sup> She was determined to explore the inner life and present it in such a way that the reader would feel the emotion rather than see the form.<sup>8</sup> The internal rhythm or order of events would replace the conventional external form of them.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>7</sup>Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup>Woolf, "On Re-Reading Novels," The Moment and other Essays, p. 130.

However, in her first novel, The Voyage Out, she did make relatively traditional use of the external forms of plot and development. Still, above the form and interposing on the chronological story line, the world of feelings and reality is developed. After the first few chapters it is obvious that the interest of the novel does not lie in characters or events. Willoughby, Ridley, Mr. Pepper--they come on the stage and are off again. But their disappearance is not noticeable, for as we go along, the questions of utmost importance become--"What is love?" implying the more basic question "What is life?"--and everything shapes itself about this question. The characters are related to each other according to their representation of a way of life. For Mrs. Dalloway, life is a perpetual conflict: she would like to shut herself up in a little artist's world with pictures and music and everything beautiful, but then she goes in the streets and sees the poor, hungry, dirty little faces and she cannot. Her contrast to Helen Ambrose who intuitively loves beauty gives us the author's opinion on that subject. Mr. Pepper, whose heart is a "piece of old shoe leather" is dismissed with the question "Has he ever been in love?" Ridley with his Pindar, Miss Allen with her "Introduction to English Literature," even St. John Hirst with his exceptional intelligence--all are confined in narrow limits, in their own chalk-drawn circles. In an Edwardian

novel they would possess possibilities for character. But for Virginia Woolf they serve to show a way of life which is contrasted to that of Helen, Rachel and Terence. Terence Hewett lives in a fluid world, his vision is dynamic and irrational. "I see a thing like a teetotum spinning in and out--knocking into things--dashing from side to side--collecting numbers--more and more and more, till the whole place is thick with them. Round and round they go--out there, over the rim--out of sight."<sup>9</sup>

And finally there is Rachel. We hardly visualize her, yet her interaction and relatedness to the other characters make her the center of the picture. She embodies the question "What is life?" It is primarily her complementary relationship to Terence which brings about the conflict of the inner and outer worlds of reality and leads us to moments of reflection, which break down action and turn it into something which it did not seem to be.

The incident of Richard Dalloway's kiss leaves Rachel leaning on the side of the ship, cold and shaking with emotion.

Far out between the waves little black and white sea-birds were riding. Rising and falling with smooth and graceful movements in the hollows of the waves they seemed singularly detached and unconcerned.

'You're peaceful', she said. She became

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<sup>9</sup>The Voyage Out (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: C. Nicholls and Company Ltd., Penguin Books, 1970), p. 106.

peaceful too, at the same time possessed with a strange exultation. Life seemed to hold infinite possibilities she had never guessed at. She leant upon the rail and looked over the troubled grey waters, where the sunlight was fitfully scattered upon the crests of the waves, until she was cold and absolutely calm again. Nevertheless, something wonderful had happened.<sup>10</sup>

From passion and turmoil we move to detachment and peace. And somewhere in the relation of the two emotions there is reality, life. These glimpses of reality which keep interrupting the chronology of events, constitute the "luminous fog" of life itself. The sea, the sky, inanimate objects such as trees and patches of light are part of the world of reality. And through it all is the intense desire for communication. Terence and Rachel achieve a few perfect moments of communion, a few islands amid vast spaces of uncertainty and yearning. But always it is a mere moment, then their separateness intrudes. The final fusion with that which is other than oneself, is obtained in death, where time and space can no longer divide: "It was happiness, it was perfect happiness. They had now what they had always wanted to have, the union which had been impossible while they lived."<sup>11</sup>

Jacob's Room continued the attempt to represent sensations and impressions in a form which would not stifle

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 358-359.

them.

The story proceeds in episodic fashion. The episodes are beautiful and effective, but not always linked together in such a way as to make their relation close and inevitable. We begin to feel the "recording of atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall," a series of impressions, sensations, and emotions in this chaotic and illogical form; however, they do not always possess an emotional interrelatedness which would give them order and artistic unity.

The novel opens with a scene on a beach in Cornwall. We move from the mind of one character to another, from Betty Flanders to Charles Steele, to Jacob. While we share their thoughts, the author fills in the scene around them with description. Through Mrs. Flanders' tears we see the quivering of the bay and the mast of the yacht "bending like a wax candle in the sun"; with Charles Steele we see his grey and lavender painting; and with Jacob we watch the crab at the sandy bottom of the hollow full of water in the rock. And while we see all this, real time has replaced ordinary time with the dramatic substance of life; the scene before us is set in the clarity and relationship of a painting. Through the author, the elements are brought together and centered in a relationship. "The gaze or the consciousness which is at the center of every paragraph, is a cohesive force creating

what one might call group-objects, bringing together various elements of reality which are normally separated to underline their relationship."<sup>12</sup>

Later in the day of that first scene, we see the few objects and images which describe Jacob's universe. While he sleeps a streak of light reveals the sheep's jawbone and a looking-glass; outside in the darkness of the storm the aster is beaten to the earth, and the opal-shelled crab found on the rock tries again and again to climb the steep sides of the bucket. These are only a few details, but they foreshadow the last chapter, and contain the meaning of the whole: the struggle is a fight for life, a continual striving which mirrors the energy and restlessness of Jacob, but also goes on to speak of death in the midst of life.

Jacob's external social life is given a loose structure through the use of the room symbol. The child's room is succeeded by the adolescent's with its collection of butterflies. The room at Cambridge is that of an undergraduate, with books and essays, a place for discussions. The room in London shows the love-making of Jacob, with Florinda, or Fanny Elmer, or another, while his letters are unopened. When his travels begin, the

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<sup>12</sup>Jean Guiguet, *Virginia Woolf and Her Works*, trans. by Jean Stewart (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), p. 221.

room cannot keep him, and all that is left is his chair, his letters, an old pair of slippers and that invisible being called "Jacob! Jacob!"

The essence of Jacob is something elusive, and yet vibrantly alive. We see him as a shy, young man through the eyes of Mrs. Norman; we feel his reaction to the orderly service in King's College Chapel; we yearn with him for the freedom from the artificial conversation and society at the Plumers. We feel for him, and with him and this is all we know. "Nobody sees anyone as he is . . . They see a whole--they see all sorts of things--they see themselves."<sup>13</sup> Further, "It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done" (p. 154). The impression remains as the author intended--"all crepuscular, but the heart, the passion, humour, everything as bright as fire in the mist."<sup>14</sup>

Within each chapter there is a sense of discontinuity: a series of paragraphs reveal the same moment but different points in space. Or a name calls forth a series of thoughts and images; or a certain object or sensation, fills the experience of the character with a

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<sup>13</sup>Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room and The Waves. Two novels in one volume. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1959; Harvest Books), p. 30. All subsequent page numbers incorporated in text.

<sup>14</sup>Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), p. 23.

section of the past. Thus, in Chapter Five, a series of scenes past and present: a little girl on tiptoe at the mailbox; eighteenth century women with satin skirts; the scrubbing woman, Mrs. Lidgett, sitting beside the Duke's bones in St. Paul's Cathedral; back to Jacob and Betty Flanders in his childhood; in and through these scenes goes Jacob--Jacob in the present with a book in hand, or standing before a bookcase, or reading with Bonamy.

In any case life is but a procession of shadows, and God knows why it is that we embrace them so eagerly, and see them depart with such anguish, being shadows. And why, if this and much more than this is true, why are we yet surprised in the window corner by a sudden vision that the young man in the chair is of all things in the world most real, the most solid, the best known to us--why indeed? For the moment after we know nothing about him. (p. 72).

Now we understand the flashes and scenes of the chapter--this is all we can know of anyone. These moments are the form of life. But Jacob has become part of the stream of life, past and present.

Jacob's Room was still an experiment in translating impressions into art form. There are many authorial comments and passages of description which are eliminated in later novels because they were to come from within the characters' consciousness, integrally related to their own intuition as well as to the effect they had upon others. While Jacob peruses his mother's letter, we consider a digression on letters, ". . .how they come at breakfast,

and at night, with their yellow stamps and their green stamps, . . ." (p. 92). As we ponder the problem of communication, we are led back to Mrs. Flanders' letter, and the description of letters that the various characters write. Which brings us to Florinda's shallowness and Jacob's disillusionment. There is a relation between these emotions, but they are considered from the outside. We hesitate to enter his mind--we only observe. "Granted ten years seniority and a difference of sex, fear of him comes first; this is swallowed up by a desire to help-- . . . . Even while you speak . . . , destiny is chipping a dent in him. He has turned to go. As for following him back to his rooms, no--that we won't do" (pp. 94-95).

The description of the environment takes the form of a collection of images whose function is indicated by the author. Following Jacob's disappointment in Florinda, we are told of Jimmy's death in the war; then after Jacob's fruitless reading of the newspaper, we read:

The stream crept along by the road unseen by anyone. Sticks and leaves caught in the frozen grass. The sky was sullen grey and the trees of black iron. Uncompromising was the severity of the country. . . . A load of snow slipped and fell from a fir branch. . . . Later there was a mournful cry . . . . Spaces of complete immobility separated each of these movements. The land seemed to lie dead. . . .(p. 98).

The scene conveys to us the bleakness and barrenness of the emotion that is related to Jacob. But growing on us is the distinct feeling that Jacob, whatever or whoever

he is, is very much alive, and always has been. He is part of life, part of the people and history that surround him. "The brief portions of time and limited segments of space so clearly depicted are enveloped, as it were, by eternity, and surrounded by all space."<sup>15</sup> As night falls on Jacob in France (Chapter Eleven) we are taken back to Scarborough to Mrs. Flanders and Mrs. Jarvis, who have taken an evening walk to the Roman camp above the town. While the clock strikes the hours, we roam the moors through real time, amidst rusty swords, ghosts of 1780 and a church seemingly full of dead people: "a ship with all its crew aboard." In the next chapter while Sandra and Jacob meet in Greece, we are taken over much of Europe and the Middle East, Bonamy with Clara in Sloane Street, the battleships over the North Sea, Paris, London, Betty Flanders' bedroom, and back to the Acropolis. (Jacob and Sandra are no longer there). However, while Sandra ponders her latest affair and asks "What for?", we do not enter Jacob's mind but judge his reactions by the fact that he has gone on as usual lacing his boots and shaving himself and sleeping soundly. "But who, save the nerve-worn and sleepless, or thinkers standing with hands to the eyes on some crag above the multitude, see things thus in skeleton outline, bare of flesh?" (p. 162).

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<sup>15</sup> Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group, p. 330.

We have transcended space and time and are left with the impression of timelessness--all this has happened before--real life (Jacob's, that is) exists outside the limitations of space and time. Especially in the last chapter we do indeed feel, for the moment at least, that all this has happened before--it comes from the repetition of Mrs. Flanders' presence, sentences repeated from earlier descriptions of Jacob's room, and finally the call "Jacob! Jacob!" which puts the picture in focus.

If the previous chapter focused the relation of feelings and impressions, Chapter Thirteen also shows the developing technique of the author in relating scenes organically in a meaningful form. In fact this chapter foreshadows the technique perfected in Mrs. Dalloway. From Jacob's admission to falling in love, we are shifted to Clara Durrant (who is not the object of Jacob's love). From Mr. Bowley and Clara's view of the runaway horse, we shift an hour ahead in time to Mr. Bowley's lack of concern, then to the scene of the runaway with Julia Eliot. Julia remembers she must meet Lady Congreve at five. As the clock strikes five we are with Florinda who notices someone who resembles Jacob, and we are taken to Jacob in the Park reading a letter. The letter is from Sandra, and we move to her. Sandra thinks of Jacob and we return to him. As Jacob talks to the ticket-collector, we move to Fanny Elmer who is thinking of Jacob talking to just such

people. As Fanny boards the bus, Big Ben strikes five and we enter the political world of the Prime Minister and the clerks in Whitehall, one of whom is Tim Durrant. People are gathering to hear news of the war. Jacob leaves the Park, while Mrs. Flanders writes about him in a letter to Archer at Singapore, that he is working hard. As Jacob passes through Piccadilly, Reverend Andrew Floyd recognizes him--and we are back to Jacob's childhood. While Clara and Mrs. Durrant are on their way to the theater with Mr. Wortley in a motor car, Clara sees Jacob walking on the street. Night falls. Life goes on in Greece while Mrs. Pascoe looks out to sea. And Betty Flanders hears the dull sounds of booming but thinks of nocturnal women beating carpets rather than the sound of guns.

The structure of clock time relates the characters to one another externally. It facilitates the movement from character to character as well as from place to place. But flowing in and around this technique is the inner stream of life, that real time which is connected by emotions and consists of feelings and impressions which branch out beyond time and space.

When we learn from Mrs. Flanders and Bonamy that Jacob has been killed, we are somehow left with the sense that life goes on, for Jacob has become a part of everything living around him, and in the face of death, the struggle for life remains.

In Mrs. Dalloway Virginia Woolf finally achieved organization of a novel which was like life itself. The novel takes place on a day in June, and is contained by the West End of London. The morning-to-evening structure is the external reality about which the reality of inner consciousness moves. As we dwell in the present, past and future within the thought of a character, or move to London, India or Bourton within that mind, the novel expands into a lifetime, and even beyond. Behind this presentation of experience there is a unified vision; and scenes and characters are combined to express unity within the relation of one part to another. Each individual has a certain ability to reflect life--especially Mrs. Dalloway.

As the clock strikes and "leaden circles dissolve in the air," particular places are united with a given hour. As the hours proceed, we move forward in the stream of inner time, in the meantime allowing each hour to move us about in space as time stands still. Thus the inner order is integrated into the structure, the technique begun in Jacob's Room. As the clock strikes and places and objects are rearranged, we become aware of the effect of death striking in the midst of life.

As well as the striking of the clock, certain objects unite surrounding elements. For example, a

mysterious motor car with drawn blinds, containing a royal personage or public dignitary, attracts the attention of all the people in the neighborhood. It signifies the 'spirit of religion' or 'the voice of authority,' but more importantly, it links Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith emotionally. Clarissa is startled by the explosion from the car--she thinks of a pistol shot; for Septimus "The world has raised its whip; where will it descend?"<sup>16</sup> Later, an airplane which is skywriting attracts the simultaneous attention of people: "All down the Mall people were standing and looking up into the sky. As they looked the whole world became perfectly silent, and a flight of gulls crossed the sky, . . .in this pallor, in this purity, bells struck eleven times, . . ." (p. 30). It moves Septimus to tears for its beauty; it becomes the symbol of a man's soul to Mr. Bentley and it brings us back to Clarissa at the door of her home. It has been a single moment of time in which we have moved through the consciousness of several characters: to past days in Italy with Rezia, to Mrs. Dempster's youth, to thoughts of religion with the man on the steps of St. Paul's, and into the world of color, sound and beauty where trees and leaves are alive for Septimus. It is a moment which con-

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<sup>16</sup>Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co. Inc., 1925), p. 20.  
All subsequent page numbers incorporated in text.

tains the whole panorama of life. "The result of all this is a keen awareness . . . of that 'emotional significance in time and space' which art creates. The unity of design and the unity of texture have combined to form the vivid sense of life itself."<sup>17</sup>

This special technique of following a character's thoughts back and forth in time and space, meanwhile exploring his inner consciousness, is the new factor of unity in this novel. The author called it 'tunnelling': ". . . I dig out beautiful caves behind my character: I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humor, depth. The idea is that caves shall connect and each comes to daylight at the present moment."<sup>18</sup> Corresponding to the surface design and structure, there is an inner unity and design. It is characterized by the relationship of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith, though the two never actually meet. The "surface" Clarissa is a happy, respected society matron, surrounded by beauty, in love with life. Septimus seems the exact opposite: an insane, odd, lonely, repudiator of life. But in the intimate depths of these characters, to which we are admitted, the "caves connect." Clarissa and Septimus are opposite sides

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<sup>17</sup>John Hawley Roberts, "'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf" PMLA 111 Pt. I (1946): 841.

<sup>18</sup>Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 60.

of the same personality. Through identical emotions they not only communicate with one another, but seem imposed on one another to the point of identity.<sup>19</sup>

The first glimpse we have of Clarissa's capacity for fear and sorrow is in front of a shop window where she reads the words:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun  
Nor the furious winter's rages. (p. 13)

Thoughts of death, sorrow and courage are in her mind. Later in the day she has a deep pang of fear. Her husband has been asked to lunch by Lady Bruton: "'Fear no more,' said Clarissa. Fear no more the heat o' the sun; . . . as a plant on the river-bed feels the shock of a passing oar and shivers: so she rocked: so she shivered" (p. 44). Her thoughts dwell on her coldness to her husband, her fear of old age, her passion for Sally, and her loneliness. Finally in the drawing room mending her green dress, a peace comes to her "Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins collects, let fall" (p. 59). It is quiet; it is the calmness of death. At her own party, Clarissa must face death in the midst of life when Sir William brings the news of the young man's suicide. Her capacity for life and emotion allow her to surrender herself to this feeling of death. She lives

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<sup>19</sup>Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 234.

through the sensations of Septimus' death--she figuratively embraces him--feels the attempt to communicate and knows that in some sense it is her death. As the refrain "Fear no more the heat o' the sun" comes once more, she is glad that he has done it--thrown it away like the shilling she threw into the Serpentine.

Septimus is much like Mrs. Dalloway in his yearning for beauty and love. For him too, the greatest terror is loneliness, lack of love, fear of death. But he has lost the power to feel, and this is what terrifies him. Just before he leaps to his death, the refrain "fear no more" comes to him: "Outside the trees dragged their leaves like nets through the depths of the air; the sound of water was in the room, . . . far away on shore he heard dogs barking . . . . Fear no more, says the heart . . . . He was not afraid" (p. 211). He shares Clarissa's love of life and beauty at the moment of death: "He did not want to die. Life was good." Then "The sun was hot. Only human beings?" (p. 226)--what did they want? Life, death, 'fear no more the heat o' the sun,' they all merge in Clarissa and Septimus. Opposites expressing the same thing and sharing each other's qualities; it is a communion like the final moment of death and life had been for Rachel and Terence.

The structure of the relationship between Clarissa and Septimus can be seen by the use of the old lady going

upstairs as Clarissa looks out of the window when she hears of Septimus' death, and the old gentleman going downstairs staring at Septimus as he hurls himself down on the railings. There is a balance of detail here like the first scene of Jacob's Room: shapes and lines balance to create form. Septimus tossing his life away is the counterpart of the coin Clarissa threw into the Serpentine. The inter-relatedness of the parts creating a unity and balance provide an aesthetic experience which creates meaning and significance.

Virginia Woolf's next novel, To The Lighthouse achieved an even finer degree of unity of design and meaning. Events and characters based on emotional inter-relatedness attain that "luminous halo" of life, while the ideas of Lily Briscoe, the painter, seem to symbolize the author's own ideas of art. The novel moves forward on two planes, that of human relationships (life) and formal relationships (art).<sup>20</sup> The former finally comes together in the latter to achieve harmony.

The three parts of the novel's framework are intrinsic to its meaning. The first section "The Window" centers around Mrs. Ramsay, her family and guests on an

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<sup>20</sup>Roberts, "'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf," p. 846.

island in the Hebrides. The scene is a September evening, a few years before the first World War. The background is a natural setting: sea, sand and rocks. As we move in and out of the minds of the characters, we see their reactions and interactions. Individual scenes again become miniatures of the whole. "So that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball . . . For Mrs. Ramsay was wearing a green shawl, and they were standing close together watching Prue and Jasper throwing catches. And suddenly the meaning . . . making them symbolical, . . . came upon them, . . . Then after an instant, the symbolical outline which transcended the real figures sank down again, . . ." <sup>21</sup> For a moment we look through a window as it were, see the design, then it is lost again.

While the action in this first section takes place in the present, the movement is toward an anticipated trip to the Lighthouse. The second section, "Time Passes," looks backward over the past ten years. It marks the death of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue and Andrew and describes the ravages of time on the house; it links the family's history to England and the war; and finally it seems to indicate the triumph of time and relentless facts:

Moreover, softened and acquiescent, the spring with

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<sup>21</sup> Woolf, To The Lighthouse, pp. 110-111.  
All subsequent page numbers incorporated in text.

her bees humming and gnats dancing threw her cloak about her, veiled her eyes, averted her head, and among passing shadows and flights of small rain seemed to have taken upon her a knowledge of the sorrows of mankind.

(Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said, everything, they said, had promised so well.) (p. 199).

The final section "The Lighthouse," brings past, present and future together. The lighthouse with its flashes corresponds to the three-part structure of the novel: a long flash, a dark interval and another short flash. Mrs. Ramsay claims the long flash as her stroke, sitting and observing it at the window until she becomes attached to the thing itself, ". . . she was beautiful like that light. It was odd, . . . how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; . . . felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself" (pp. 97-98). The movement of the flashes corresponds to the change and flux of life itself, and its continual change is the only constant. The lighthouse itself seems to form a dimension in the novel which is like an ideal. It has different meanings or suggestions for various people: a moment of delight for Mrs. Ramsay, an ideal aspiration for James, and a moment of insight for Mr. Ramsay.

In the same way that Clarissa and Septimus are the forms that bring together the various elements of

Mrs. Dalloway, so Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe bring about unity between the personal and structural relationships. Mrs. Ramsay emerges as a strong personality, able to influence others while quite aware that 'human relationships are inadequate' (p. 62). Her whole sense of being is to bring about permanent, satisfying relationships among her family and guests. Her husband is concerned with factual truth and logical procedures: "For if thought is like the keyboard of a piano, divided into as many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, . . ." (p. 53). Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand is guided by an inward order, an intuition, an instinct for truth, ". . .--she knew without having learnt. Her simplicity fathomed what clever people falsified. Her singleness of mind made her drop plumb like a stone, alight exact as a bird, gave her, naturally, this swoop and fall of the spirit upon truth which delighted, eased, sustained-- falsely perhaps" (p. 46). Her truth is not proven, but she follows the intuitive spirit within her. So Mr. Ramsay returns to her for assurance, for sympathy. And she is able to communicate to him that "If he put implicit faith in her, nothing should hurt him; . . ." (p. 60). Nevertheless, Mr. Ramsay remains egotistical and Mrs. Ramsay cannot communicate with him as she would like, nor can she

stop James from hurting his father. She brings about the engagement of Paul and Minta, and hopes for Prue's happy marriage. But for the most part she is unsuccessful in her attempts to bring people together, and she herself dies.

But she achieves glimpses of the form of a solution, "little daily miracles," "matches struck unexpectedly in the dark" (p. 240). When she presides at the dinner table, in the candlelight the faces on both sides of the table seem composed, and inside the room with the darkness of the outside shut off, there seems to be order. A sense of coherence and stability which is immune to change comes to her through the abstract pattern. It is a moment of peace. "Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures" (p. 158).

The bowl of fruit on the table is a miniature design of the way in which things might be ordered.

Her eyes had been going in and out among the curves and shadows of the fruit, among the rich purples of the lowland grapes, then over the horny ridge of the shell, putting a yellow against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape, without knowing why she did it, or why, every time she did it, she felt more and more serene until, oh, what a pity that they should do it--a hand reached out, took a pear, and spoilt the whole thing (p. 163).

On another occasion, when the children are in bed and she feels particularly futile for not having been able to reconcile James and his father, she seems to find a solution in the privacy of her own self.

To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. Although she continued to knit, and sat upright, it was thus that she felt herself; and this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless (pp. 95-96).

The wedge of darkness which brings things together to peace within her (a moment of eternity) is like the candlelight which brings about a peaceful pattern of co-existence about the table. It is life transformed into an abstract pattern, or art.

Throughout the first part of the novel, Lily Briscoe is trying to capture reality in a painting. Mrs. Ramsay is to be represented abstractly as a triangular purple shape; Lily wants to paint the real Mrs. Ramsay. Her problem is one of form: the relation of masses, of light and shadows; how to connect the mass on the right with that on the left. As she sits at the dinner table she is frustrated with human relationships (Charles Tansley in particular), but she is able to dispel the frustration with laughter as she realizes that her problem of design, of art relationships, may be solved by moving the tree, that is the salt-cellar, to the middle of her picture to obtain unity.

However, ten years later (Part III) her problem has still not been solved. "For whatever reason she could not achieve that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr. Ramsay and the picture; which was necessary.

There was something perhaps wrong with the design?" (p. 287). Something seems always to have interfered with her vision.

As Lily paints the involvements of life are exchanged for the concentration of painting. She remembers Mrs. Ramsay bringing them together and making of the moment something permanent. As she loses consciousness of herself and goes on thinking about Mrs. Ramsay, she is finally able to merge herself with the spirit of Mrs. Ramsay, and she too can say "Life stand still here." She achieves balance of design; Mrs. Ramsay becomes the center of the masses to achieve form--"in the midst of chaos there was shape"--at the same time achieving unity of human relationships. Lily completes her design with the line in the center, as Mr. Ramsay drops his vanity and reaches the lighthouse. The inner spiritual design is complete: intuition has balanced the design, of which facts and reason are also a part; past and present are one; the artist has "had her vision." Time, space and human relationships have merged into a pattern of order on the canvas, and art has triumphed over life.

The structure of this novel gives that unity of effect which explains the artist's technique: "Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric

must be clamped together with bolts of iron. It was to be a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses" (p. 255).

It explains at the same time the author's idea: a common element beneath all diversity, making a unity of time, place, person, self and objects. ". . . it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, . . . intimacy itself, which is knowledge, . . ." (p. 79).

## CHAPTER III

### THE WAVES

If the harmony of human and formal relationships was attained through an artist's brush in To The Lighthouse, The Waves rises to a height of lyrical prose in which the human relationships are absorbed into the art structure itself, existing wholly in the fabric of the design. The characters are separate from each other and live individual lives, but they are also joined to each other through states of mind and "qualities of feelings,"<sup>1</sup> dramatized in images or motifs which create the design of the novel. They are arranged and illuminated in such a way that they form a complete picture of a man's life: each one existing in relationship to the total design of the work of art.

While the movement and rhythm of recurrent motifs suggest a musical composition, the abstract mode of presentation and the impersonal formal style of this novel resemble the form of poetry. The use of imagery to contain events and action, the rhyme and rhythm of the prose,

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<sup>1</sup>R. G. Collins, Virginia Woolf's Black Arrows of Sensation: The Waves The Modern Novelist and the Modern Novel (Devon: Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd., 1962), p. 10.

gives the novel the unique power of suggestion often reserved for poetry.

The prose chapters of the novel reveal the characters by a particular use of images. The images contain the past, present, and future at any particular moment, yet serve as narrative progression as their meaning unfolds and we perceive the experiences of each character. Each personality has particular qualities which emerge as they experience different sensations to which each reacts differently. The interweaving of motifs and images which characterize these different sensations and impressions by "qualities of feelings," actually develop the novel. In fact, the images contain, rather than describe, the events of the novel, because they are based on the experiences of each individual.

'I see a ring,' said Bernard, 'hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light.'

'I see a slab of yellow,' said Susan, 'spreading away until it meets a purple stripe.'

'I hear a sound,' said Rhoda, 'cheep, chirp, cheep, chirp; going up and down.'

'I see a globe,' said Neville, 'hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill.'

'I see a crimson tassel,' said Jinny, 'twisted with gold threads.'

'I hear something stamping,' said Louis, 'a great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps.'<sup>2</sup>

Each image is specifically attached to a certain

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<sup>2</sup>Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room and The Waves. Two novels in one volume. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1959; Harvest Books), p. 180. All subsequent page numbers incorporated in text refer to this edition.

experience of the character, revealing (rather than developing) the character himself. At the same time the images are connected and interrelated in various ways to the other five personalities.

Rhoda's motif, the chirping of a bird, contains in it a present state of mind, that of listening to something outside herself, but it also contains a note of anxiety, her dread of being pierced by a bird's beak (eventually she commits suicide). The bird motif connects the two characters, Susan and Rhoda, for while Rhoda is afraid of being pierced, Susan is seen by Louis as one who pierces those she loves. "To be loved by Susan would be to be impaled by a bird's sharp beak, to be nailed to a barnyard door" (p. 258). The bird motif is also related to the lyrical prose sections (as will be seen later), where they assume various life functions related to the prose section which follows.

Susan is revealed by the two colors which speak of her love of the land and grain, but also of anger. She loves and hates, and does so violently. She longs to sink her roots into the soil and possess it, which contrasts her to Jinny who surrenders herself to golden moments. But there is a similarity in Susan's motif to Louis' who feels with his sense of history the "roots of the human race." While Susan has maternal instincts, and Jinny delights in her body, Rhoda negates both maternity

and love.

Louis' motif is terror and anxiety characterized by the great beast stamping; his desire for security links him to Neville who is as insecure as Rhoda and Louis, though his symbol, the globe, speaks of totality. Neville has a consuming desire for wholeness, he shares with Jinny the search for "one" in sexual relationships.

Bernard attempts to unify and bring together though he is also confined individually by the ring. He says to Susan, ". . . we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an insubstantial territory" (p. 185). Bernard is capable of creating sequences, a type of unity, with phrases, but he must eventually face the reality of an isolate self.

With these six character abstractions, each with a symbol of his own identity, a view of life is presented. It is a total view of the human situation which combines all the characters in one, seen in different forms of sensory experience, the actual events of which are explained later, but are contained in the image throughout. Bernard's image of the ring, for example, is actually the sun shining on the brass handle of the cupboard in the nursery.

The seventh character, Percival, exists as an ideal to which each of the six personalities responds. He creates a symbol of unity for the novel, for he is

meaningful to all the characters. He is a symbol of order and meaning for which they all strive but for which he does not need to strive for he has no self-awareness: he just accepts and understands.

In her diary, Virginia Woolf said she was not seeking to create characters with voices; she was seeking to give voices to a single being, a "she" away from exact place and time and set "against time and the sea."<sup>3</sup>

And this reality was to be "something abstract poetic."<sup>4</sup> Thus we have characters who are abstract presentations who do not give a rational statement about life but rather experience it, and allow the reader to participate in the experience of a mind perceiving the basic conditions of experience, dramatized in images, and making some kind of order out of the chaos of sensations and impressions as they are received at the base of formation. What the characters "say" is of course not actual speech; sound and action is only implied. We do not experience the sensation, but the thought and quality of feeling provoked by it. This is not realism, or stream-of-consciousness; rather, as the intellectual unchanging quality of speech denotes, an omniscient perspective is illuminating a total view of life as individuals

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<sup>3</sup>Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 143, 149.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

become aware of each other and themselves. The perspective is both beneath and above that which expresses itself fluently in speech. We participate in ". . . thoughts only in the sense of articulated feelings. The feelings themselves are intellectualized into thought images without losing their tie to the stimulus; that is they are . . . feelings wrapped around objects of pain and joy."<sup>5</sup> The sensations as pictured in the images is the method of presentation, but also the reality itself. Its uniqueness lies in the fusion of technique and meaning.

The art of transition which in Jacob's Room was still episodic becomes a complete structure. The transition from mind to mind and from one moment to another is accomplished by complete emotional relatedness aided by the relationship of interlocking images and motifs. One of the first experiences, which is a moment of the characters meeting and reacting to the same external stimulus or experience, is the kiss which Jinny bestows on Louis. Jinny's aggressiveness (future sensuality) shatters Louis' isolation; Susan's jealousy of Jinny and Louis is expressed with, "Now I will wrap my agony inside my pocket-handkerchief. It shall be screwed tight into a ball" (p. 183). Bernard who is curious about Susan's rage, follows her, while Neville remains alone and feels

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<sup>5</sup>Collins, Black Arrows of Sensation, p. 9.

neglected. Bernard begins to make phrases and tell stories, for he sees Susan's anguish spread on the roots of the beech tree.

This type of shared incident is recalled at various times by each individual with different implications, but its place in each person's mind ties them together into one consciousness and is thus a unifying factor of the narrative.

The occasion of their childhood bath by Mrs. Constable is another external stimulus where the images reveal the feeling and sensations evoked by an individual experience. "Water pours down the runnel of my spine. Bright arrows of sensation shoot on either side. I am covered with warm flesh . . . . Water descends and sheets me like an eel. . . . Rich and heavy sensations form on the roof of my mind; down showers the day-- . . . ," says Bernard (p. 192). This event is recalled on several other occasions and incorporated into their shared experiences. Again the actual experience which occasioned the sensation, that of a bath, is not revealed until Bernard's summary in the final chapter. But we know Bernard and his identity through his reception of sensation. At the end of his life, heavy and weary with experience, facing his own individual self, he says, "Sometimes . . . where a child has been born, I could implore them not to squeeze the sponge over that new body" (p. 342). Sensation is an

individual truth which can never be completely shared with another making the individual self isolate in its experience, but also the final reality.<sup>6</sup>

Several characters have individual traumatic experiences which are woven through the narrative linking them to a basic sensation. Neville has a childhood memory of a conversation between servants describing a man whose throat was cut. Unable for terror to lift his foot on the stairs he is climbing, he associates the man with his throat cut, to the apple tree which he sees through the window. "I shall call this stricture, this rigidity, 'death among the apple trees' for ever" (p. 191). Susan has the experience of seeing the boot-boy making love to the scullery-maid among the blown-out washing.

Through these individual sensations the characters gain identity. But as each individual consciousness is revealed, their shared experiences and their longing for communion cause them constantly to adhere to one another. Susan's perception of her experience takes place in the presence of the others at the table and though her sensation is perceived in the isolate self, the others are also a part of the experience within her. They are all part of each other's consciousness and there is one occasion on which this synthesis attains perfection. The

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

occasion is the meeting of the six friends to say good-bye to Percival.

The dinner is reminiscent of Mrs. Ramsay's table, but there is unity of the consciousnesses all functioning as one mind in a moment when individual sensations of isolation are laid out to be shared. "A single flower . . . now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, . . .--a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution" (p. 263).

'Here is Percival,' said Bernard, . . . . He is a hero . . . We who have been separated by our youth . . . now come nearer; . . .--sitting together now we love each other and believe in our own endurance.'

'Now let us issue from the darkness of solitude,' said Louis.

'Now let us say, brutally and directly, what is in our minds,' said Neville, 'Our isolation, our preparation is over' (p. 260).

Then follows a period of intense sharing of sensations. They are expressed in the presence of Percival--the deepest emotional qualities of their sensations: Rhoda's fear of people and reality itself, Louis' solitude, Neville's sensation of the experience of death, Susan's sensation of sex, ". . . remembering, when we met," said Louis. When they are with Percival they pierce through to reality, and with it union with one another. As the dinner ends, Jinny says, "Let us hold it for one moment, . . . love, hatred, by whatever name we call it, this globe whose walls are made of Percival, of youth and beauty, and something so deep sunk within us that we shall

perhaps never make this moment out of one man again" (p. 276). Love for Percival has created a perfect moment. Percival can unite them because he symbolizes life in its fullness in a moment.

Moments of awareness come to each individual in the novel, as for example Jinny's monologue in the heart of the London underground station. It is a moment in which Jinny comes to the facing of her own self, at the same time uniquely united to the whole world in her experience. As she is preoccupied with herself and her aging body standing before the mirror, the wheels and feet pass over her head, and it is not just Jinny who moves on to the inevitable end, death--but the whole procession of people, the whole of civilization, moves down to the world below. The images and figures expand until they include the whole of life, but still relate to one being.

As mentioned earlier, there is no actual speech, conversation is understood from the interlocking experiences and interrelatedness of the characters; their awareness of each other is like speech. For the reader, events and characters become known through the rhythm of motifs and the network of images which expand in the depth and intensity as they reveal experience. Because the inner self is the final reality Virginia Woolf wanted to explore, everything in the novel is seen from this base. Everything that is recorded is totally the individual's

impression; there is no purely factual or objective account about anything. Everything is an attempt to portray pure perception. Objects of the external world exist only as the "inner self projected outward."<sup>7</sup>

Rhoda in her isolation and fear observes, "Look at the street now that Percival is dead. The houses are lightly founded to be puffed over by a breath of air. Reckless and random the ears race and roar and hunt us to death like bloodhounds" (p. 286). Earlier, she describes the table in terms of her emotional involvement, "'Look at the table-cloth, flying white along the table,' said Rhoda. 'Now there are rounds of white china, and silver streaks beside each plate'" (p. 182).

Time itself is purely subjective; there is no chronological time sequence in the novel itself. Outside the consciousness of the individuals, time has no reality. A certain day becomes an important point in time because emotions converge about a particular person, or happening. The day on which they leave school is not of chronological significance, but it marks an emotional point of transition which allows individual identities to emerge. Without any emotional significance a whole period of time may be considered meaningless. "'I have torn off the whole of May and June,' said Susan, 'and

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

twenty days of July. I have torn them off and screwed them up so that they no longer exist, save as a weight in my side. They have been crippled days, . . .'" (p. 211).

The external time sequence which served as a connecting line in Mrs. Dalloway has disappeared. Past, present and future merge in a moment, not in anticipation or as history but as existing in the present. On her lonely farm Susan says, "'I hear the traffic roar in the evening wind. I look at the quivering leaves in the dark garden and think, 'They dance in London. Jinny kisses Louis'" (p. 244). That early childhood experience exists in this present moment. Louis' image of women carrying red pitchers to the banks of the Nile, and his roots which go down to the depth of the world, express the past in the present flow of time.

These latter two moments also express the concept of space. Spatial reality has ceased to exist except as a certain place is related to the consciousness of the character. The banks of the Nile exist because Louis finds through them an order in history. Hampton Court exists because love for Percival became a point of communion. Elvedon was visited through the imagination of Bernard as he 'explored' with Susan and they melted into each other with phrases. These places are not geographical locations; they merge with the sensations of the

individuals who see them as reality. Jinny's room, Susan's farm, the café of Bernard's last monologue exist in reality as they are perceived by the mind. Bernard finally expresses a total unconsciousness of space. "What city does that stretch of sky look down upon? Is it Paris, is it London where we sit or some southern city . . . . I do not at this moment feel certain" (pp. 376-377).

Space, time, objects are external; everything is viewed from the basic source of motivation--from the impressions which the mind receives. In a moment of experience it is the impressions which remain in the mind; all that is superfluous to that sensation is discarded. Time, space and events are extensions of that basic response to sensation. What is dramatized is the formation of attitudes and values.<sup>8</sup>

What I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea . . . . The poets succeeded by simplifying--practically everything is left out. I want to put practically everything in: yet to saturate.<sup>9</sup>

By making events, time, space, objects and the formation of character extensions of the basic response to sen-

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<sup>8</sup>Benjamin Francis Weems III, "Virginia Woolf's Use of Imagery in Her Search for Values" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1962), p. 120.

<sup>9</sup>Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 139.

sation, Virginia Woolf could take a moment and beginning with pure sense impressions as the mind perceived them, fill the moment with past, present and future, multiple consciousness, external objects and relate them solely to that inner consciousness of awareness.

While the novel is organized about a succession of moments which bear emotional relatedness and expand into the characters' awareness of themselves and each other, the forward movement of the novel comes from the progress of the lyrical sections which form the background of the novel. These interludes move parallel to the lives of the characters. The foundation of form which for other novelists had been a social conviction, a religion, an accepted world view, is here the simple progress of a day. The movement from day to night, from spring to fall, and from life to death, provides a background which mirrors the whole life cycle from the first awareness to the end. The imagery of the inanimate objects--sun, waves, birds, trees, house--foreshadow according to the time of day, the physical and inner states of mind of the characters.

The first interlude parallels the awakening action of the sun with the beginning of the birth of awareness in the six children. As the day progresses and the sun rises higher, its "broader blades" against the house with the light growing fuller, "a bud here and there split asunder and shook out flowers, green-veined and quiver-

ing" (p. 179). This is a scene of preparation; the children are at school. Gradually the objects such as house, trees, birds and waves become a significant part of the development. The house is only visible by its walls in the first interlude, "all within was dim and unsubstantial" (p. 180). But as the interludes progress, objects within the house become differentiated and the sun "began to bring out circles and lines." In the fourth interlude objects are clearly seen, "the veins on the glaze of the china, the grain of the wood, the fibres of the matting became more and more finely engraved. Everything was without shadow . . . shapes took on mass and edge" (p. 251). At this point the individual characters seem to have gained separate identities.

While the house in the changing light of the sun seems to mirror inward mental awareness of the characters, other images parallel their relationship with each other. The birds in the first interlude sing "their blank melody." In the second interlude, they "sang a strain or two together, wildly . . . ," progressing to song ". . . in chorus, shrill and sharp, now together, . . . now alone . . ." and finally climaxing in "each alone" to correspond with the increasing identity of the characters.

The movement of the waves also parallels the development in awareness. At the beginning, "the wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper

whose breath comes and goes unconsciously" (p. 179).

As personality is revealed, "the waves breaking fell with muffled thuds, . . ." (p. 194). They gain in strength and sound drumming on the shore until by noon this rhythmic movement has become a "concussion of horses' hooves on the turf" (p. 250).

In the fifth chapter the sun burns uncompromising. The birds are mating and building nests; the tide is at farthest point out; the sun reaches out to encompass the whole world. As the characters attain a level of maturity (and unity) they reach out beyond their own selves to establish new relationships. Following the death of Percival, the house becomes mysterious again (Chapter Six), the birds pause in their song, and the tide begins to return.

The next interlude sees the sun drawn over the clouds; petals falling in the garden, a dead leaf blown against a stalk. "All for a moment wavered and bent in uncertainty and ambiguity. . ." (p. 303). Each character is heavy with questions of his identity. "Are there stories?" Bernard asks (p. 306). ". . .who will come if I signal?" Jinny asks. And Rhoda has fled to Spain to give up the burden of attempting relationships.

The eighth interlude makes us aware that the progress of seasons has paralleled the movements of the characters to old age. "Now the corn was cut. Now only a

brisk stubble was left of all its flowing and waving . . . the tree, that had burst foxy red in spring and in mid-summer bent pliant leaves to the south wind, was now black as iron, and as bare" (p. 321). This image is completed in the last chapter with the tree shaking its branches, ". . . and a scattering of leaves fell to the ground." (p. 340). The waves break on the shore making sky and sea indistinguishable. The realization of failure and old age has caused the objects which were clear and distinct at the height of day to become dim and without substance again.

The progression of time as evidenced by the passing of the sun and the coming and going of the tide symbolizes that which is changeable and in a state of flux. Yet the unchangeable pattern of that which is changeable continues. Each world, the inanimate and the human, contains the same basic elements of change and unchangeableness, creating a perfect balance of design.

Natural time symbolized by the interludes, represents the conflict of the characters with the external world of time and order. They have each attempted to create an external self which will cope with the social order. However, reality or real time exists in the sensate, inner world. Bernard says, "So we shared our Pecks, our Shakespeares; which are now and again broken by a few words, as if a fin rose in the wastes of silence

. . ." (p. 366). For a moment Neville and Bernard experience durational time of the mind, unified by their common intellectual interest, the image of the fin seems to be that of sensation turned into thought, which lifts them out of natural time and chaos. But then a clock ticks. "We who had been immersed in this world became aware of another . . . . It was Neville who changed our time. He who had been thinking with the unlimited time of the mind, which stretches in a flash from Shakespeare to ourselves, poked the fire and began to live by that other clock which marks the approach of a particular person" (p. 366). That other time which is marked by the intrusion of another destroys the unity achieved by a harmony of relationship and brings them back to their individual selves and the order of the world.

The latter half of the novel shows each person's attempt to escape the disorder of the isolate self by creating an external social self. Each one is striving to create some discernible order from the series of fragments which make up his life. But the failures of the external social selves is symbolized by Percival's death. There is no harmony achieved in an order outside themselves. And each parting is symbolic of that final failure which is death. Each character must come to the point of recognizing the inner self as the final reality with its real time; however, Rhoda must commit suicide to

find this final reality of the self (like Rachel Vinrace), and only Bernard achieves the total awareness of his isolate inner self--there can be no denial of this substantial territory.

While the pattern of change and flux remains constant for the reader, who is aware of the parallel progression of both sections, the six characters must make their own individual attempts to work out an order from the chaos of impressions and sensations of their inner awareness, conflicting with the order of the world.<sup>10</sup>

Jinny seeks an order outside her self through physical fulfillment. The image of gold threads twisted into crimson tassels is that of moments of sexual communication, which she seeks again and again to escape the isolation of self. "But my imagination is the bodies. I can imagine nothing beyond the circle cast by my body. My body goes before me, like a lantern down a dark lane, bringing one thing after another out of darkness into the ring of light. I dazzle you; I make you believe that this is all" (p. 264).

Time is especially cruel to her, for with the

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<sup>10</sup>Michael Payne, "The Eclipse of Order: The Ironic Structure of the Waves," Modern Fiction Studies 15 (Summer, 1969): 209-10.

coming of old age, her body shrinks and fails her. There is no permanence in sensualism. However, she says,

I will not be afraid . . . I too, with my little patent-leather shoes, my handkerchief that is but a film of gauze, my reddened lips and my finely pencilled eyebrows march to victory with the band. . . . Crimson, green, violet, they are dyed all colours. . . . I am a native of this world, I follow its banners.

. . . perhaps it will not be Bernard, Neville, or Louis, but somebody new, somebody unknown, somebody I passed on a staircase and, just turning as we passed, I murmured, 'Come'. . . . Let the silent army of the dead descend. I march forward (p. 310-312).

When Jinny reaches her moment of awareness-death in the midst of life--she faces it without fear. She finds value in the moment's sensation--beauty, color, sex. This is her weapon against the natural order of time, and with it she is able to go on.

Susan perceives sensations through the instincts: "I love; I hate." She escapes her self by giving herself totally and becoming part of the natural world--"I think I am the field, I am the barn, I am the trees; mine are the flock of birds, . . ." (p. 242). Susan lives by her emotions, and though she comes to question her existence saying, "Who am I?", she loses the question by projecting herself into the lives of her children. Her natural happiness does not satisfy.

. . . Sometimes I am sick of natural happiness, and fruit growing, and children scattering the house with oars, guns, skulls, books won for prizes and other trophies. I am sick of the body, I am sick of my own craft, industry and cunning, of the unscrupulous ways

of the mother who protects, who collects under her jealous eyes at one long table her own children, always her own.

. . . Life stands round me like glass round the imprisoned reed. (p. 308-309).

Somehow she is not a part of the essential human reality which is life. At the reunion dinner she is a disruptive force, until the others finally absorb her into the identity of the group.

Rhoda is very much aware of the chaos and disorder of sensations within her. The image of herself outside the circled loop (the world) pictures her utter isolation.

I hate all details of the individual life. But I am fixed here to listen. An immense pressure is on me. I cannot move without dislodging the weight of centuries. A million arrows pierce me. Scorn and ridicule pierce me . . . . The tiger leaps. Tongues with their whips are upon me . . . . I must prevaricate and fence them off with lies. What amulet is there against this disaster? What face can I summon to lay cool upon this heat? (p. 248).

The disordered world which Rhoda perceives through her senses, and the world which exists as the external world, is a conflict which she cannot resolve. Those about her seem to have peace, if only she could reach them. But in her failing to communicate with them, they become a threat to her. Sometimes, like at the dinner for Percival, she achieves a moment of peace. Like Septimus she sees beauty and light, but life continues chaotic. "One moment does not lead to another . . . I am afraid of the shock of sensation that leaps upon me, because I can-

not deal with it as you do--I cannot make one moment merge in the next" (p. 265). When Percival dies, terror descends on her; she cannot cross the puddle; faces, people and life terrify her. She longs to recover beauty and impose order on her raked, dishevelled soul (p. 287). She wanders into a concert-hall and as she listens to the music, she finally grasps "the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing"--the sensation pictured in a shape.

Percival, by his death, has made me this gift, let me see 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 . . . The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation (p. 288).

In this aesthetic expression of her feeling, Rhoda sees the relation of the two forms. Art has achieved a moment of permanence and reality at the point of her awareness of death. She throws her bunch of withered violets into the waves as an offering to Percival. Soon the waves will receive her for she cannot live in the fear of isolation.

Neville begins life with an early experience that gives him an awareness of death. He is aware of discontinuity and strives to find order. "Each tense . . . means differently. There is an order in this world; there are distinctions, there are differences in this world, upon whose verge I step. For this is only a be-

ginning" (p. 188). He enjoys the intellectual world of the school and hopes to discover a larger order in the world. He has a sense of separateness and is unwilling to commit himself to the disorder of unity and communion. "I hate dangling things; I hate dampish things. I hate wandering and mixing things together" (p. 187). He has a clear perception of total experience (the globe) but his insight and awareness increase his emotional detachment. "I will sit still one moment before I emerge into that chaos, that tumult . . . My sense of self almost perishes; my contempt. I become drawn in, tossed down, thrown sky-high" (p. 224). As an individual wave, though part of the total sea, Neville is quite capable of clear intellectual insight into the essential reality of facing oneself. Though he cannot find an order beyond that of the mind, still he is able to perceive the quality of sensation as it exists within and for itself.

'In a world which contains the present moment,' said Neville, 'why discriminate? Nothing should be named lest by so doing we change it. Let it exist, this bank, this beauty, and I, for one instant, steeped in pleasure . . . Far away a bell tolls, but not for death. There are bells that ring for life. A leaf falls, from joy. Oh, I am in love with life!' (p. 231).

With Percival's death, Neville's hope to have a being whom he can worship, seems thwarted. His homosexual relationships are unsatisfying and each parting is like a symbol of death. While he still reads poetry in

his room and sees some hope for art imposing order on the fragments of his life:

The lines do not run in convenient lengths. Much is sheer nonsense. One must be sceptical; but throw caution to the winds and when the door opens accept absolutely. . . . let down one's net deeper and deeper and gently draw in and bring to the surface what he said and she said and make poetry (p. 314).

He has found a way of creating order through words, but he cannot explain or answer the problems of his own existence.

Louis is insecure and uncertain because of his social origins, fearing the tramping and trembling he hears. Like Rhoda he is afraid and withdraws from the other children. He feels they are disdainful of him. "Jinny and Susan, Bernard and Neville bind themselves into a thong with which to lash me" (p. 188). Beginning with Jinny's kiss which shatters his self-reflection, he reveals himself as being influenced by others.

Because he cannot integrate his inner and external self, he tries to impose order on the chaos and disunity in the world. He tries to convince himself that his external role gives him an identity.

'I have signed my name, . . . already twenty times. I, and again I, and again I. Clear, firm, unequivocal, there it stands, my name. Clearcut and unequivocal am I too.  
. . . all the furled and close-packed leaves of my many-folded life are now summed in my name; incised cleanly and barely on the sheet' (p. 291).

For a time Rhoda, with whom he has the greatest affinity, is his mistress. When she withdraws into isolation, he has a series of cheap love affairs. His heart yearns toward others, yet he keeps himself separate from people (retiring frequently to an attic room) and he is happiest alone. For others, history has created order for their individual lives, but Louis for all his material and economic success and order, must continue to find a reason for it all. At the reunion dinner in memory of Percival, in the presence of Rhoda beside the urn (art), he feels for a moment the absence of death. "'All seems alive,' said Louis, 'I cannot hear death anywhere tonight.'" (p. 336). But then division returns, the moment of reality passes and he continues to seek an answer to his fragmented self.

Bernard rises above the other characters because he has an artist's vision. His chosen identity as phrase-maker or storyteller puts him in the position of arranging the lives of others. At the same time he stands by, watching himself as a biographer. Bernard achieves a deeper communion with the others because he imposes the pattern of words (or art) on them. "'Louis and Neville . . . both feel the presence of other people as a separating wall. But if I find myself in company with other people, words at once make smoke rings . . . I do not believe in separation. We are not single.'" (p. 221). Bernard finds

that his creativity ceases when he records impressions of others because he integrates with them. So he is caught in the middle: he "half-knows everybody and really knows no one, at times not even himself. . . . Bernard through his phrases finds 'sequences everywhere'. Eventually, all of the sequences fail, for Bernard is constantly folded into new experience; the sensations of each succeeding moment require adjustment of the whole."<sup>11</sup>

So the last section of the novel embraces Bernard as the "intellect" summing up the meaning of life, as it is filtered through moments of being, of sensations and impressions of a total life including the representations of the other six personalities. Each of the experiences which happened separately to the others calling forth different responses and patterns, affected them permanently, causing suffering because they could not totally share those sensations. One of Bernard's moments of awareness comes with the news of the death of Percival: in one great moment he knows the miracle of life (the birth of his son) and the pain of death. And though he also has sought to escape himself by merging with others, he comes face to face with himself. Having experienced fear with Rhoda, terror with Neville, ecstasy with Jinny, and so on, yet "the mere process of life" (p. 358) was

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<sup>11</sup>Collins, Black Arrows of Sensation, p. 37.

satisfactory even though its progress was a lie (p. 353). Face to face with chaos, he too asks "why?" His instinct is to fight the battle of chaos against the enemy death. But like the others, he explores for a moment the permanence that art can give, ". . . two figures standing with their backs to the window appear against the branches of a spreading tree. With a shock of emotion one feels, 'There are figures without features robed in beauty, doomed yet eternal.' . . . Time has given the arrangement another shake . . . The true order of things--this is our perpetual illusion--is now apparent" (p. 365).

The answer one finds in art is that of a moment of beauty captured permanently in form. He could share that experience with Neville, but always the moment ends and he remains in isolation. When Bernard as an aged man finally comes face to face with his self, he discovers a weary, old man, "A heavy body leaning on a gate. . . . with entire disillusionment . . . ; my life, my friends' lives, . . . the willow tree by the river-- . . . How can I proceed now, . . . without a self, weightless and visionless, through a world weightless, without illusion?" (p. 374-75).

Miraculously he can still respond to sensation.

It hangs like a glass cage . . . There is a spark there. Next moment a flush of dun. Then a vapour as if earth were breathing in and out, once, twice, for the first time. Then under the dullness some one walks with a green light. Then off twists a white

wraith. The woods throb blue and green, and gradually the fields drink in red, gold, brown. Suddenly a river snatches a blue light. The earth absorbs colour like a sponge, slowly drinking water. It puts on weight; rounds itself; hangs pendent, settles and swings beneath our feet (p. 375).

The beauty of life perceived through the senses breaks a new reality upon him. He is able to accept his own self "in that infinite sensibility to experience."<sup>12</sup> Bernard is in the end able to face himself. Though life will go on in its sequence of "must, must, must," he can walk in the solitude of self, accepting it with its desires and passions, not afraid of sensation, "the shock of the falling wave," he can now face the moment as it comes. Bernard alone has been able to change: he can face the reality of self without fear. He is done with phrases: "Nothing that comes down with all its feet on the floor" (p. 382). Art is not final. Reality itself, life with its moments of sensation, love, death, the moon, a cry, is the final truth. No external order can mar this inner reality of the mind; it is pure sensation with its own duration. The full realization of it is the achieving of form.

As Bernard perceives this reality, he completes the pattern of the novel. "There is a sense of the break of day" (p. 382); Bernard prefers to call it renewal.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

"Another day . . . eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again" (p. 383). The pattern of change and renewal complete, Bernard has accepted his part in the experience as the voice of the experience of all six; the design is complete with the experiencing of the last line "The waves broke on the shore." Life released continues triumphant and immortal. As the waves (characters) move with a rise and fall, the impetus which characterizes all of life, triumphant even in the face of death, goes on and on and on. The creation of a vision from the exploration of awareness and sensibility comes to an end in the inner world of the unconscious reaches of silence.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INNER SUBSTANCE

The mark of a truly great artist lies in the ability to develop or change as his work progresses. This paper has sought to show the development of Virginia Woolf's perfecting of a technique which portrayed the inner life of the mind in a form which was close to that of life itself. Not "life as it really is" in the sense of mere realism, nor a journalistic reporting of thought, feeling, and sensation, but an original vision of life: the non-human world of inanimate objects, the formation of character, men and women in solitude and relating to each other,--all this and more--a vision that was original and integral to her own woman's intuition, interpreted in a form and served by a technique that brought the relation of parts into an aesthetic harmony. It was her desire to evoke the feeling of reality from the realm of words and language, and as one views the progression of the novels and senses the feeling of growth as her vision finds direction and outline, undoubtedly her greatest achievement is mastery of form.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf A Commentary (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 243.

From the example of contemporary Russian novelists like Turgenev and Dostoevsky, and in a novelist tradition that stemmed from Laurence Sterne, Virginia Woolf was most concerned with the inner world of passion, thought and feeling. Part of Sterne's fascinating quality for her was the pattern of associations by emotional relatedness rather than chronological time sequence, and the "interest in silence rather than in speech."<sup>2</sup> Feelings and sensations rendered as images became the fabric of her novels as well. In the progression towards greater inwardness in the novel, away from action to illustrate ideas and illuminate characters, Mrs. Woolf plunged into the heart of the perceiving mind and its reactions to the moment. From the intellectual approach (Kant) to intuition by imagination (Coleridge) it was her desire to reach the unintelligible and silent recesses of the mind.

Her concept of the imagination varied somewhat from Coleridge's primary imagination, in which subject and object are brought together in a moment of illumination. Her moments bear resemblance to Proust whose involuntary memory brings together the 'real' inner world with the external; for her, form is made of the relations between mind and object rather than their fusion: the

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<sup>2</sup>Virginia Woolf, "The Sentimental Journey" The Common Reader II, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), p. 81.

image and experience unite, but remain independent; they take on a life of their own, yet remain facts of life. In Defoe she praised "fact and vision"; for her, fact and imagination combined the intensity of poetry with realistic details of the novel.<sup>3</sup>

The use of poetry in language expressing feelings and sensations in the Sternian tradition became the basis for her moments: acts of awareness between the inner sensibility and corresponding facts in the outer world. This type of insight became the permanent form of her art, the moment filled to saturation with words, colors and shapes, always open and fluid but achieving beauty through harmony. The discontinuity of the pattern of moments was overcome by the coherence which her mind supplied with atmosphere and background.

In the first novel The Voyage Out it becomes clear that the voyage "in" is Rachel's discovery of herself. Terence's love brings her to a glorious moment of illumination after which she shuts out the social world; she discovers her self only to find out her own reality is fatal. But the striking thing is that life goes on. St. John Hirst, the intellectual, discovers that Terence's way of adopting his own world to the outside world carries

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<sup>3</sup>Ralph Freedman, The Lyrical Novel (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 200-201.

in it the impetus of life--in the midst of death St. John is secure in the life of people who knit, read, talk and play chess. This ongoing life in the face of death is the vision which surrounds all of being.

Virginia Woolf's aesthetic, which was much like that of the Bloomsbury group, especially Roger Fry, is clearly illustrated in the two novels Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse. In the former the joy we experience is that of the relation of its parts, the rightness of its basic design; Clarissa's love of life against Septimus' rejection of it. The unity comes from the recognizable fact that the two are in some way one and the same person; in fact, and this is the pleasure we find in its integral idea and construction, they are not necessarily individual characters, just opposite poles of the whole idea of life itself. Our response to this internal order recognizing intrinsic form is the response to aesthetic harmony.

To The Lighthouse is like a painting in novel form. It represents a "self-contained" unit of value which is made up of the relations of its parts. The marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay is a combination of fact and imagination which expands in relations to other persons and finally to all of life itself. Mrs. Ramsay's moments of insight seem to come in the presence of inanimate objects, or in the privacy of her self: a perfectly arranged bowl

of fruit is the pattern of unity, a purple wedge the shape of isolation. It is only through art that the human relationships are finally brought into order and communion.

In this life it is not possible to escape wholly from loneliness and honor to gain a clear and constant vision of reality. 'Our penitence deserves a glimpse only; our toil respite only,' she says in To The Lighthouse. But, if we are artists, we may fix forever the glimpses we are given as we walk in the street or through the countryside, as we contemplate the impersonal world or muse upon our experiences and sink into the subconscious, as we love and talk and enjoy the companionship of others.<sup>4</sup>

Art is indispensable because it is a permanent expression of man's spiritual life.

Jacob's Room illustrates Mrs. Woolf's use of inanimate objects as expressions of true reality, and particularly as showing the workings of consciousness both within and without the human mind. In fact, as has been stated earlier, objects actually serve to define that illusive being which is Jacob; not only is he defined by his impressions on others, but his relations with objects also define him; things illustrate his relationship with people. Where the human realm is one of confusion, chaos and incompleteness, the natural order of things seemed sheer enjoyment for Mrs. Woolf--the being of things themselves was happiness: not proof, or reason, just being--life as we know it. In Bernard's final moments (The Waves), without a self, when words and phrases

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<sup>4</sup>Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group, p. 147.

fail, it is the ordinary things, colors, sounds of the woods, the moon, the waves breaking--these basic sensate things remain. It points out a characteristic that William Barrett has said of modern art: the flattening out of all planes, climaxes and values.<sup>5</sup> If large and small objects are treated as of equal value, characters and objects also assume equal status and importance.

It was in fact, Mrs. Woolf's express purpose to make characters merely views.<sup>6</sup> Her whole striving was to reach essential impulses. It was in The Waves where she finally attained this. The actions of a human tell us nothing about him, she said, unless we know why he did it. At the same time the relations of a person "are not only with another person but with the weather, food, clothing, smells, with art and religion and science and history and a thousand other influences."<sup>7</sup>

In the history of the novel, the picaresque tales and episodic narratives of Defoe, Smollet and Dickens judge people from the outside by what they do; with Fielding action illustrates an idea and illuminates the character; Henry James took this one step further to the

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<sup>5</sup>Barrett, The Irrational Man, p. 56.

<sup>6</sup>Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 59.

<sup>7</sup>Virginia Woolf, "Phases of Fiction" Granite and Rainbow, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1958), p. 124.

inner mental struggle of the character. Virginia Woolf went to the basic foundation of motivation--the why, attitudes and values, which goes on in the mind and for which an "actual event practically does not exist--nor time either."<sup>8</sup> In The Waves we see moments of identity in which the basic sensations of the individuals help them attain identity. Character becomes dependent on the situation of the moment and is relative to surrounding objects or persons. Motivations change with the moment in the same way events fall on the mind in no coherent pattern. Human nature becomes relative, and though it may find value and meaning, it can hardly be neatly summed up or defined in a stable pattern.

It was in this novel, The Waves, that the synthesis of human beings with each other and things was attained. In his final solitude Bernard says, ". . . 'Who am I?' I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know. We sat here together . . . . This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome."<sup>9</sup> In his solitude, he has yet attained unity with others. For Virginia Woolf there is something deep within everyone which in a sense implies that

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<sup>8</sup>Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 102.

<sup>9</sup>Idem, Jacob's Room and The Waves, p. 377.

we are all one person. It is that infinite sea which absorbs the individual wave.

Technique finally is not just a given way to organize or manipulate experience, it is the result of and involves all of that which constitutes a vision. Technique is like a measure. The form of a work of art must suit like the shell of a snail: grown into its own peculiar form, self-contained within itself and everything in it must have a reason for being so and not otherwise.<sup>10</sup> Precise technique and the determination to make the prose work in the service of the subject is a measure of accomplishment. "The greatest works of art are not so because of an external notion of form, but because their form is exactly equivalent to their subject, and because the evaluation of their subject exists in their style."<sup>11</sup>

. . . the great writer . . . 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

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<sup>10</sup>Mendilow, Time and The Novel, p. 234-35.

<sup>11</sup>Schorer, "Technique As discovery," p. 281.

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.<sup>12</sup>

The meaning of her books can be measured by the technique. The answer to the questions she posed throughout her writing, "What is reality?" "What is life?" "What is death?" are borne out by her total approach to writing: it is the process of life that matters, i.e., not the discovery itself but the process--the painstaking, perpetual, integral process. Her values could be summed up by saying that life is sacred and that one's honesty to one's own self and vision is the highest virtue.<sup>13</sup>

Virginia Woolf dared to reach beyond any assumed body of assumptions, and wove a pattern for her novels which by themselves and only on their own merit furnished proof for what they said. The Waves especially became a work of art in which "subject justifies form and form intends subject."<sup>14</sup> In the succession of experimental novelists, Virginia Woolf has done us that greatest of all services--broken our habits and caused us to rethink what

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<sup>12</sup>Woolf, "'Robinson Crusoe'," The Common Reader II, pp. 53-54.

<sup>13</sup>Blackstone, Virginia Woolf A Commentary, p. 251.

<sup>14</sup>James Hafley, The Glass Roof (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1963), p. 127.

reality is all about. For after all, true knowledge is achieved not by answering, but by raising questions.<sup>15</sup>

E. M. Forster said that the novelist must cling to the idea of expansion. "Not completion. Not rounding off, but opening out."<sup>16</sup> It is tempting and human to round things off, to complete them. And certainly we must have beginnings and endings. Yet, the greatest novels have had the power to suggest and increase meaning and expand to endless possibilities. The world is in a state of becoming, each life is a new experience, and every novel an experiment.

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<sup>15</sup>Collins, "Divagations on the Novel as Experiment," p. 8.

<sup>16</sup>E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (Aylesbury, Bucks, England: Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd.; Pelican Books, 1962), p. 170.

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