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Reflections and reverberations: Images of glass and sound in the fiction of Virginia Woolf

Kurtz, Marilyn, Ph.D.

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U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Reflections and Reverberations: Images of Glass and Sound in the Fiction of Virginia Woolf

by

Marilyn Kurtz

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Date

Marvin Magalaner
Chair of Examining Committee

April 7, 1989
Date

Martin Stevens
Executive Officer

Professor David Gordon

Professor Norman Kelvin

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Marvin Magalaner

Virginia Woolf uses images of glass and sound in her fiction in a variety of ways. Mirrors and windows, for example, are used as distancing devices, barriers and, paradoxically, as unifiers for epiphanic revelations. Various truths are revealed through these images, representing modern epistemology and ontology in their fragmented complexities.

Sounds are used in Virginia Woolf's earlier works to recall characters from trance-like reveries--which may represent a death-wish--to the vitality of everyday life. In the later works, conversely, the sounds themselves resonate with an aura of death in the form of hollow, repetitive echoes or fragmented, disruptive discourse.

There is a great deal of "watching" and "seeing" in the fiction which ultimately becomes visionary in a final, apocalyptic sense where earlier vital life-impulses give way to the sounds and sight of shattering glass--a metaphor for the frenzied, war-torn, modern world and disjointed human condition.

This dissertation will look at the progression of images and their implications.

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Introduction

Leon Edel in The Psychological Novel describes Virginia Woolf's method and style in mirror metaphors:

> In Mrs. Woolf the odour bounces off the flowers and reaches the reader as a sharp, distinct but refracted sensation. One has indeed an effect of the bouncing-off of light and sound throughout the novel from people and objects and against the receiving mind. Proust touches experience directly. Mrs. Woolf's method is refraction, through a kind of high, tense awareness. The poetry is there on every page and always a synthesis--a pulling together of objects and impressions. (134)

Not only does Virginia Woolf give the effect of refraction and the "bouncing-off of light and sound;" she actually uses mirrors, windows, and echoes as basic, omnipresent objects and tropes in all her work. Images of glass are everywhere in Virginia Woolf's fiction and are used to reveal the nature of things--glass is something concrete through which the abstract can be shown. Mirrors and windows provide ways of seeing--modes of perception--as well as structural form to the novels. This dissertation will look at Virginia Woolf's artistic vision as it is revealed through her pervasive and varied use of images of glass (particularly mirrors and windows); and sound (particularly fragments and repetitions) in her fiction. It will examine this imagery as it is used to express some of the themes and motifs of modernism, for through this imagery, Virginia Woolf realizes the world in which she

lives and projects her vision of it.

Virginia Woolf's writing style, form, and content reflect the spirit of her age--a time of unrest, experiment, and exploration of the complexities of man's mind and universe. Other writers, as well as painters, psychologists, philosophers, and scientists were realizing similar concerns in attempting to capture various aspects of man's complex mind and his universe.

The sense of the fluid, the shifting, the fragmented in life was becoming one of the main characteristics of fiction. Virginia Woolf captures this attitude and awareness, and she creates a new atmosphere in her fictional world. Most important in this creation are the images and rhythms she uses. They are what, above all else, give beauty, sensitivity, and significance to her work. As in poetry, the images and rhythms evoke and enlarge meanings. Through them she conveys a sense of the motion of the mind and the movement of life's experiences.

One of the themes of modern literature is the anxiety about identity in a fragmented world of lost values. In Virginia Woolf's fiction, a sense of the modern fragmentation of the individual self and consequent frustrated relationships with others is depicted through her use of imagery. The artist, Virginia Woolf, deliberately has the imagery itself break down, both literally and metaphorically, and a process can be traced through her fiction whereby the images express both the search for

identity, especially through the use of mirrors, and the ultimate failure of the quest. Allied with images of glass are the sounds--fragmented, repetitive, insistent, sometimes unintelligible--which are part of the theme of quest and failure. They are modern sounds, of airplanes and automobile horns, and they are the sounds of language striving to create new ways of communicating, straining to be heard and understood. They are the fragmented sounds like those in The Waste Land which jar the reader and depict the emptiness of modern life. Virginia Woolf's early novels use the imagery, I will try to show, in a hopeful, transcendent way; the later novels express an apocalyptic vision in which the glass and sound images reflect the visual and audible shattering of the world.

While various critics have recognized Virginia Woolf's use of this special imagery, they have done so in limited ways. (No fully detailed, developmental study, such as I project here, has been done). For example, Harvena Richter sensitively analyzes (in The Inward Voyage) Virginia Woolf's modes of perception through the use of the reflecting capacity of mirrors. However, while Richter discusses many images presented by Virginia Woolf, she does not recognize the mirror itself as an icon frequently used.

Gerhard Joseph and Jennifer Gribble focus on mirrors and "all that Lady of Shalott business" in Victorian literature. Virginia Woolf's transition from Victorianism to modernism is depicted in the way she uses glass imagery.

The difference between the two eras can be seen in a comparison of what the Lady of Shalott does and what Virginia Woolf's characters do. The Lady of Shalott moves away from the mirror to the window. This is a dramatic action with consequences that effect a resolution in the Tennyson poem. For many of Virginia Woolf's characters there are no dramatic resolutions. Instead, they move back and forth between mirrors and windows in an anxious, unresolved quest for understanding of life, reality, and their selves.

James Naremore's concentration upon Virginia Woolf's interest in the consciousness of self and the merging of self with a world outside can be applied to the thematic aspects of Virginia Woolf's fiction. Naremore recognizes the importance of windows in Virginia Woolf's writing (The World Without a Self 241). He sees the room-window symbol as a metaphor for the artist's relationship to the world and quotes from Virginia Woolf's "Letter to a Young Poet" to demonstrate this:

> All you need now is to stand at the window and let your rhythmical sense open and shut, open and shut, boldly and freely, until one thing melts in another, until the taxis are dancing with the daffodils, until a whole has been made from all these separate fragments ... your task--to find the relation between things that seem incompatible yet have a mysterious affinity, to absorb every experience that comes your way ... to rethink human life into poetry ... (Collected Essays 2:191)

This advice represents what Virginia Woolf achieves in her own writing: a blending of the objects of the world, transformed by and expressed through the artist's imagination. Windows also lead to a desire to embrace the world in a suicidal way, Naremore says (243). Sometimes the wish to foresake the ego and to attain the "mysterious affinity" with all things leads to death--Septimus Smith jumps through a window to death; Mrs. Ramsay also, for a moment, wants to die as she broods on the lighthouse outside her window. Naremore believes that Virginia Woolf often seems to be striving to work out some kind of compromise between a basic inclination to inhabit the world and a spontaneous impulse to depart from it. "The recurrent room-window symbolism is simply another way for Mrs. Woolf to state the unresolved tension between two worlds of experience that is the source of her art" (245).

Finally, Allen McLaurin's illuminations about repetitions and echoes in Virginia Woolf's fiction will form a part of this dissertation's closing look at the hollowness of sounds and their mechanical repetitions in her last novels.

While these critics have understood the importance of mirrors and windows and repetitive, fragmented language in Virginia Woolf's fiction, they have not explored the pervasiveness of this special imagery. Perhaps the reason for this omission is that this imagery is so much a part of everyday life--for example, it is natural for people to look

into mirrors or stand at windows.

Mirrors, of course, have been used as metaphorical devices since Plato's time. Today, mirrors are used inventively by contemporary writers and cinematographers to give a sense of reflexiveness and indeterminacy. Virginia Woolf goes even further; she uses mirrors in an extraordinary variety of ways as:

- metaphors (particularly for the modern world)
- framing devices
- reflecting devices
- objects of everyday reality
- vehicles for mimesis
- vehicles for perception
- en abime reflectors (projecting images ad infinitum)
- distancing devices
- distorting devices
- conveyors of concepts of doubles and multiples
- probing devices
- metaphysical symbols
- psychological protective aids (to avoid direct confrontation)
- layers of reality to reveal hidden and partial truths
- barriers or separations standing between two worlds or realities
- settings for imaginary landscapes
- dwelling-places for primitive spirits and souls.

This dissertation will look at mirrors and windows in

all these varied roles, at what they are and what they represent. (The number of times Virginia Woolf uses images of glass is note-worthy. For instance, there are more than 162 pages of The Years which mention windows, mirrors, or other images of glass in various and significant ways).

Glass imagery is so pervasive in Virginia Woolf's writing that an entire novel--The Voyage Out--may be elucidated solely by tracing this imagery as it is employed throughout the book. Furthermore, some of the strongest scenes of the book involve watching: peeping in windows to look at others; having premonitions which look into the future; gazing at oneself in the mirror; viewing life with both an outer and inner eye; and finally, during the death-watch at the end of the book, seeing death.

The inner and outer worlds of consciousness and objective reality reflect each other as Virginia Woolf moves back and forth between the thoughts of her characters and their relationships to people and objects outside themselves. The imagery she uses captures the essence of that movement. Mrs. Dalloway reflects about herself, her past, her relationships, her future, as she sees her reflections in multiple mirrors at her dressing table. She sees her many selves. Mrs. Ramsay, in To The Lighthouse, is usually seen associated with a window. She sits at the window trying to protect her family inside from the dangers of the world she sees and imagines outside.

Characters continually ask epistemological questions at

windows--what better place than where they can literally, as well as metaphorically, look both outward and inward. They stand above the street scene, looking at the sky and universe as they reflect inwardly. At the same time, they sometimes withdraw from an uncomfortable social circumstance within the room.

Virginia Woolf is concerned with two realms; subject and object, inside and outside, interior and exterior, boundaries and merging of the two worlds. It is therefore natural for her to use the two objects of everyday life--mirrors and windows--which provide the metaphors for these double states of mind and existence.

Mirrors have implications: they give the impression that there is more than what meets the eye; they invite exploration to look within and beyond as they both deepen the view and focus the vision. Mirrors and windows represent doubleness or ambiguity. In a modern world of lost values where nothing is solid or clear-cut, the mirror is an appropriate trope to reflect ambiguity. The modern person cut off from God, coherence, an ordered society, strives to merge with something other than the self. In Virginia Woolf's fiction this may be represented in transcendent death as a union with an eternal force. A desire to reach another self or selves in the mirror or the other world outside the window is also expressed repeatedly. At the window and at the mirror there is constant double motion: separating and merging as windows and mirrors

become both unifiers and dividers. The window stands between two realms: the inner landscape of the room and the outer landscape of the scene outside, as well as between the inner landscape of the mind and the outer physical world perceived by the mind.

Various concepts of duality and doubling of characters play important roles in Virginia Woolf's fiction. Her interest in binarism as well as her projections of characters as "doubles" has been recognized by numerous critics but, again, the large extent to which she employs these has not been realized. (This dissertation will look at various concepts of duality and doubling as they appear in her fiction).

Virginia Woolf often uses the glass and sound imagery to express philosophical speculation and shows the influence of the Cambridge philosopher G. E. Moore whose philosophical observations and approach to life strongly affected her. Some of his notions about the nature of reality and illusion are transformed imaginatively by Woolf's fiction. His beliefs in the values of love and art are adopted by Virginia Woolf and expressed throughout her work.

Virginia Woolf has a sense of universal space; the mirrors and windows she employs suggest that which is beyond the self and here and now: they point to what is other, to what is outside and beyond. Woolf's concerns are larger than social or feminine; they are all-encompassing and limitless. The fact that mirrors and windows are

omnipresent in her work attests to her larger-than-life interests.

Although Virginia Woolf is viewed today primarily as a feminist writer, her writing expresses much more than problems related to women. She is concerned with ontology, with the nature of being not just a woman, not even just as a human being, but as part of the flux of existence in the endless, timeless universe.

She is primarily an artist, an experimenter, and the metaphors she uses of glass and sound best depict the smashing of the past forms in fiction which she and others as modern experimentalists try to break. In her essay, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," (in The Captain's Deathbed and Other Essays) she speaks of "the sound of breaking and falling, crashing and destruction. It is the prevailing sound of the Georgian Age ..." (115)--the breaking and smashing of the old traditional ways by the Georgian writers like E. M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence as opposed to the Victorians and Edwardians: Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy. As for breaking with the old ways: the sound of their axes is, she says "a vigorous and stimulating sound in my ears ... " (117).

In her story, "The Mark on the Wall" (in A Haunted House 37), Virginia Woolf's character muses about two levels of reality: that of the inner self, represented by a reflection in a mirror, and that of the external world of appearances. "As we face each other in omnibuses and

underground railways we are looking into the mirror ... And the novelists in the future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number; those are the depths they will explore" (41). Virginia Woolf as a Modernist is looking inward and wants to break with the traditional outward-gazing novel.

Virginia Woolf is behind her characters at the windows meditating and looking out, at the mirrors looking inward and looking outward; she is, in her art, breaking metaphorical glass and struggling with the broken pieces and reverberations from the act of smashing. The forms of framed windows and mirrors will eventually be transformed into the shattered fragments of the modern world. Here the modern novel appropriates the form of the modern world: formlessness.

Although mimetic in this overall sense, Virginia Woolf does not try to imitate reality; she, instead, projects her perceptions and vision of the world and the process whereby that world is apprehended. She does not seem to be part of what Abrams (The Mirror and the Lamp) describes as the long mimetic tradition, Platonic in origin, in which the secondary symbols of art imitate a primary reality. As Gerhard Joseph points out, ("Victorian Frames" 85) Abrams's mirror depends upon the mimetic artist's first having a transparent, unrefracting window upon a stable, knowable universe which he can approximate in his work. In

discussing the Victorian poets, Joseph says they have cognitive doubts about what is "out there"--beyond the window. The doubts, it would seem, become anxiety and apprehension in Virginia Woolf and the Moderns. Mrs. Ramsay, as a character in point, looking out the window from inside her home, is filled with fears.

As surely as Echo and Narcissus are aligned in the mythological world, so are sound and sight, vision and resonance, literally and figuratively associated with each other in the literary world as well as the everyday world. For example, when Michael presents Adam with the future history of mankind in Paradise Lost, he does not only tell Adam about it, he shows him a vision from a mountain-top. Indeed, Milton is famous for invoking both echolic sounds and prophetic visions throughout Paradise Lost.

All poetry combines visual imagery with sound images. In his book, The Figure of Echo, John Hollander traces different types of poetic echoing such as allusion, quotation, and resonance, as well as inter-textual echoing from the classical poets up through the moderns. He shows, for example, how Tennyson will echo lines of Milton who has echoed lines of Virgil (111).

Virginia Woolf's fiction is often referred to as "poetic." It is because her work is resonant with echoing repetitions and rhythmic sound imagery as well as visual imagery that this effect is created. Her fiction is also filled with echoing lines from Shakespeare, Milton,

Tennyson, and many other poets. Mr. Ramsay is always quoting "We perished each alone" from Cowper's "Castaway," and "Someone had blundered" from Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade." "Fear no more the heat of the sun"--lines from Shakespeare's Cymbeline--haunt Mrs. Dalloway. And characters echo each other's thoughts in The Waves and The Years. The latter book also has schematic repetitions within the text itself where historical patterns of the generations repeat themselves. Both The Years and Between The Acts are replete with broken repetitions and echoing fragments. The trope of echo comes to stand for crucial questions about language itself; this is apparent in The Waves which is about itself: about creating form and using language.

When echoes are unanswered, questions about communication arise and a tone of "modernism" is invoked. Also part of modernism is the use of literary allusiveness. John Hollander has this to say about it: "the influence of literary modernism on academic research gave allusiveness another kind of credential power. It becomes in Eliot, in Pound, and in the way in which they in turn read Joyce, a mode of ironic distancing from the romanticism they spurned and craved. Indeed, the tendency of modernism was almost to claim this ironic mode of allusiveness as purely its own." (72). Virginia Woolf surely partakes of the allusive movement, especially in Between the Acts with its recapitulations of literary history.

Echoes in Virginia Woolf's fiction, like mirrors, function as images of duality and repetition. They form part of the thematic quest for knowledge, identity, and communion. They contribute to the lyrical, poetic qualities of Woolf's work. Along with quotations and allusions, echoes create rhetoric. They are the tropes and the mythic underpinnings. Finally, echoes as fragmented, shattered sounds, express, along with the splintered glass, Virginia Woolf's vision of modern life.

The change in overall tone of the earlier novels--The Voyage Out, Night and Day, Mrs. Dalloway, To The Lighthouse--as compared with the later ones--The Waves, The Years, Between The Acts--will be demonstrated in this dissertation through the changes which take place in the glass and sound imagery. A process of disintegration will be traced.

Mirrors and windows are the stuff of life--objects of everyday reality. So are wine-glasses and cars honking and birds calling; they are the objects and noises of life with which Virginia Woolf is deeply concerned. But when the glass cracks and breaks and the cars screech and the birds squawk, the everyday stuff of life is coming apart.

Similarly, the windows and mirrors, which are there for the characters to come into contact with in their search for self-knowledge, are no longer solid and whole in the later novels. In the final scene of Between The Acts, the actors in the village pageant flash mirrors at themselves and the

audience in an inexplicable frenzied activity. This seems to represent a kind of apocalyptic vision of the world in wild fragments. It is a haunting scene, and one written shortly before Virginia Woolf's suicide during World War II. Some of the lines are very disturbing:

> The young, who can't make, but only break; shiver into splinters the old vision; smash to atoms what was whole ... And the mirror-that I lent her. My mother's. Cracked. What's the notion? Anything that's bright enough to reflect, presumably ourselves? ... the looking-glasses darted, flashed, exposed ... hand glasses, tin cans, scraps of scullery glass, harness room glass, and heavily-embossed silver mirrors ... And the audience saw themselves, not whole by any means ... (183-185)

Virginia Woolf seems to be saying that when the objects of life can no longer remain whole, when they fail, then life itself fails. It is more than a metaphor; it is the stuff of life itself coming apart.

Matthew Arnold said of Sophocles: he "saw life steadily and saw it whole" (To a Friend-1849). Perhaps we may say of Virginia Woolf: she saw life perceptively and saw it shattered.

Chapter One

Duality, Reality and G. E. Moore

Inherent in the image of the window, the mirror, and the echo is the concept of duality. The simple act of looking into a mirror or out of a window involves the idea of duality, as does the repetition of a sound. In other words, a split of the self and its image at the mirror, or the separation of interior and exterior landscapes at the window represent a basic binarism.

Virginia Woolf uses duality as a primary force in her work. While many critics have recognized the importance of binarism in her fiction and have seized upon various aspects of the scheme in their studies of Virginia Woolf's work, they have underestimated the extent to which she operates through this concept. This chapter will give an idea of the pervasiveness of duality in Virginia Woolf's fiction since the binary notion is central to this study of the images of glass and sound with their reflections and reverberations. Chapter Three will look at duality as it relates to sounds and auditory perceptions in the early fiction, (an area heretofore unexplored).

The duality of image representation--in mirror visions and echo sounds--reverberates throughout Virginia Woolf's work: in the life and death impulses in Mrs. Dalloway, for example, as well as in the antithesis of night and day in her novel by that title, in light and dark, unity and

dissolution, being and nothingness, masculine and feminine principles, waxing and waning, rhythms of systole and diastole, youth and old age, positive and negative forces, volatile and fixed, spiritual and corporeal, brother and sister or doubles of characters. The constant duality she represents suggests that no truth is ever complete or whole, but only one-half of a reality. Each form has its analogous counterpart: man/woman; movement/rest; evolution/involution; right/left--and total reality embraces both.[1]

Many critics have entered Virginia Woolf's novels through what Alice van Buren Kelley calls a "double door"--a dualistic approach such as flux versus permanence, or masculine versus feminine. Kelley points out that Bernard Blackstone, for example, finds a series of counterpoints in Virginia Woolf's novels: life and death, the solitary mind and society, individual insight as opposed to predisposed patterns of ideas (Virginia Woolf: A Commentary). Jean O. Love discusses a dialectic between subjective thought and objective reality (Worlds in Consciousness: Mythopoetic Thought in the Novels of Virginia Woolf). James Hafley sees Woolf's main theme as the need for a blending of the social and inner worlds (The Glass Roof). The novels lend themselves naturally to a dualistic approach. Kelley looks at Virginia Woolf's double concerns with fact and vision. Through facts (objective reality), Kelley contends that poets or those characters with poetic sensibilities leap to

vision (The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision).

Virginia Woolf does indeed create a double world; the omnipresent mirrors and windows, while part of the objective world of everyday reality, provide access to a timeless, visionary, mystical, other-world. The mirrors and windows are intermediaries between the world of facts and the world of vision; they are at the gateway between the two realms.

According to Kelley, some of Virginia Woolf's characters dwell exclusively in the realm of fact (the fact-driven men like St. John Hirst, Mr. Hilbery, Peter Walsh, and Mr. Ramsay), while some characters experience moments of unity and vision, and others are purely visionary. The man in Mrs. Dalloway who stands for total vision is Septimus Warren Smith who, significantly, is "mad." He does not recognize limits to objects or communication. He has an inability to achieve any concrete subject-object relationship: his sense of a definable self is missing, so that instead of coming into contact with the external world, he literally feels himself one with it. Kelley points this out (98) and says that it reflects a vision that reveals the unity of man and the world. Septimus's fantasies about trees and birds and the beauty of the universe carry with them a sense of vision that Virginia Woolf is intent upon presenting in all her novels. However, the pure visionary Septimus Smith cannot exist in society. His lack of definable, separate selfhood is incompatible with life in the factual world. Vision without fact, like

fact without vision, marks an incomplete existence (Kelley 100).

Septimus is not defined through mirrors, significantly; he is identified with trees and organic growth: "the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body ... " (Mrs. Dalloway 32). Although he is joined to Clarissa as her double, especially through the concept of the window in the theme of life-and-death, (to be discussed in another chapter), he lacks his own sense of identity and is, therefore, not associated with mirrors.

Clarissa, on the other hand, comes as close as possible, Kelley says, to achieving a life in which fact and vision are delicately harmonized (101). (Clarissa therefore "sees" through mirrors). She is capable, at moments, of apprehending "a force that unites the entire world beneath the splintered factual surface, a source that she can use on a more universal plane to bring all of life together in her parties" (Kelley 103).

Herbert Marder in Feminism and Art also comments on the dualism of Virginia Woolf:

> Virginia Woolf saw the universe as the scene of an eternal conflict between opposites, corresponding, roughly speaking, to masculine and feminine principles. Her main concern was to find ways of reconciling the warring opposites .... for Virginia Woolf, feminism and mysticism converged in the doctrine of androgyny. (125)

Marder, like Kelley, notes that a consensus of the critics sees Virginia Woolf's books marked by a striking

dualism. He mentions David Daiches as an example who finds an antithesis in the novels "between the city and the shore, between London and Cornwall" which to Daiches represent a conflict between "reason, London, and her paternal heredity on the one hand, and intuition, Cornwall, and the legacy of her mother's family on the other. The combination of these two sets of opposites produced her unique kind of vision" (Virginia Woolf 3).

In her novels, Virginia Woolf uses symbolic equivalents for the dualistic mind. Night and Day poses problems between solitude and society, between conventional outer life and the inner life of the individual. Katharine Hilbery, in conflict, wonders:

> ... as in her thought she was accustomed to complete freedom, why should she perpetually apply so different a standard to her behavior in practice? Why, she reflected, should there be this perpetual disparity between the thought and the action, between the life of solitude and the life of society, this astonishing precipice on one side of which the soul was active and in broad daylight, on the other side of which it was contemplative and dark as night?

There is also a fundamental dualism in Virginia Woolf's work concerning the old and the new. For example, her commitment to the new Modernism in writing is modified by her need to preserve ties with the past and tradition. In her fiction, The Years is devoted to presenting the old and new generations of family, while Between The Acts, in pageant form, recalls the historical past.

Another aspect of Virginia Woolf's dualism is her double interest in the practical side of life and the mystical. She presents both "granite and rainbow," the factual, solid elements of life as well as imaginary or visionary flights.

Lucio Ruotolo (The Interrupted Moment) sees a dichotomy in the characters bent on trying to create unity like Bernard in The Waves and Mrs. Ramsay in To The Lighthouse as opposed to others who welcome interruption because it signals change.

Alternating patterns of creation and destruction reverberate throughout the novels. This is best exemplified in the tripartite structure of To The Lighthouse where the middle section depicts chaos and the first and third parts mirror each other in their sense of unity and order. When Mrs. Ramsay dies in the middle part, dissolution and decay replace the unity and order that she has established in the first part. With her symbolic resurrection in the third section, order and unity are restored: the lost paradise is regained.

In The Waves both creative and destructive impulses within the consciousnesses of the characters mirror similar processes in the natural world where the ebb and flow of the tide itself is a dual motion. The dual rhythms of the book correspond to natural rhythms of life just as the interlude sections counterpoint the character-consciousness sections.

Confronting the dualistic impulse behind the need to

create form out of shattered formlessness, Virginia Woolf writes in The Waves:

> It is the effort and the struggle, it is the perpetual warfare, it is the shattering and piecing together--this is the daily battle, defeat or victory, the absorbing pursuit. The trees, scattered, put on order; the thick green of the leaves thinned itself to a dancing light. I netted them under with a sudden phrase. I retrieved them from formlessness with words. (269-270)

Bernard, like Virginia Woolf, tries to order life and the universe with language. They seek "among phrases and fragments something unbroken" (266). When they fail, a sense of being turns into nothingness: "the world seen without a self" (Waves 287). Bernard who has tried to link himself with others and the world descends into loneliness and emptiness:

> So the landscape returned to me; so I saw fields rolling in waves of colour beneath me, but now with this difference; I saw but was not seen. I walked unshadowed; I came unheralded. From me had dropped the old cloak, the old response; the hallowed hand that beats back sounds. Thin, as a ghost, leaving no trace where I trod, perceiving merely, I walked along in a new world, never trodden ... without shelter from phrases--I who have made so many; unattended, I who have always gone with my kind; solitary I who have always had someone to share the empty grate ... (286-287)

Being and nothingness.

As light and dark alternate with the strokes of the lighthouse beams, so does the dialectical opposition between Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay in To The Lighthouse. Her

intuitive approach to life opposes his pedantic emphasis on empirical reality. Antagonistic as they seem, Virginia Woolf recognizes both principles as necessary. Michael Rosenthal (Virginia Woolf) puts it well:

> Ramsay's principles are as life-giving in their own way as Mrs. Ramsay's instincts are in quite another. His insistence that people honor the facts clashes with her maternal desire to protect everybody from them, and although Mrs. Ramsay's view is obviously more comfortable, Woolf sees both as crucial.

Rosenthal goes on to say that

> James's discovery, as he nears the lighthouse, that what had seemed in his youth 'a silvery misty-looking tower' ... was from up close 'stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white' ... suggests, among other things, his coming to terms with his father's masculine understanding, his realization that reality is not only what Mrs. Ramsay made it out to be. The trip to the lighthouse at once earns for James the praise he has always sought from his father and confirms Mr. Ramsay (and the masculine view he represents) in James's eyes. (111)

"Nothing was simply one thing" (To The Lighthouse 277).

Lily Briscoe also moves during the last section of the novel to accept Mr. Ramsay and what he represents. Again, Rosenthal, as opposed to some other critics who see only the antagonistic forces between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, recognizes that Lily needs to understand Mr. Ramsay with the same kind of loving compassion demonstrated by Mrs. Ramsay. Indeed, the completion of Lily's canvas coincides with her ability

to overcome her prior inability to "achieve that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr. Ramsay and the picture ... " (To The Lighthouse 287). As Jean O. Love says:

> The message is plain: the reconciliation of antagonistic and disruptive forces is the function of art. Through art one can effect reconciliation, can triumph over the powers of darkness, dissolution, and chaos, even annihilation and death. (Worlds in Consciousness 194)

(Although the theme of the triumph of the unifying power of art is realized in To The Lighthouse, it becomes failure in the later novel, The Waves).

Virginia Woolf believes in synthesis through art and androgyny. In A Room Of One's Own she wonders:

> ... whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness ... that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. (102)

The symbol Woolf uses for the ultimate goal of the integration of the two forces of masculine and feminine impulses is androgyny; she creates this ideal combination

figure in her book Orlando where the character Orlando alternates between being a man and a woman and is in essence both.[2]

However, while there is a fusion of opposites in To The Lighthouse and Orlando, there is, instead, a pulling apart of forces in Woolf's last novel, Between The Acts. This is symbolically realized in the characters Lucy Swithin and her brother, Bartholomew Oliver. They act out the "unity-dissolution dialectic" according to Jean Love (232) for Lucy "belonged to the unifiers; he to the Separatists" (Between The Acts 118). The sister operates on the basis of faith while the brother is a rationalist. "He would carry the torch of reason till it went out in the darkness of the cave. For herself, every morning, kneeling, she protected her vision" (206). Love points out that as with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in To The Lighthouse, the attitudes of Lucy and her brother are expressed symbolically in their anticipations of the future. Lucy prefers to think that "bad weather" will not interfere with the pageant and drive them "into the Barn," that they will not be reduced to the status of beasts, even when objective evidence contradicts her faith. While Lucy will pray that the "weather will be fine," Bart disagrees and recommends that they "provide umbrellas" (23).

Other dualities in Virginia Woolf's fiction occur in unexpected places: for example, the woman-poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning and her spaniel dog, Flush, in Virginia

Woolf's fanciful biography Flush appear to be doubles:

> ... For the first time she looked him in the face. For the first time Flush looked at the lady lying on the sofa. Each was surprised. Heavy curls hung down on either side of Miss Barrett's face; large bright eyes shone out; a large mouth smiled. Heavy ears hung down on either side of Flush's face; his eyes, too, were large and bright: his mouth was wide. There was a likeness between them. As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I--and then each felt: But how different! Hers was the pale worn face of an invalid, cut off from air, light, freedom. His was the warm ruddy face of a young animal; instinct with health and energy. Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other? ... (31)

There are also two kinds of mirror-gazing which Miss Barrett in Flush notes as she sees Flush looking in the mirror:

> When ... Miss Barrett observed him staring in the glass, she was mistaken. He was a philosopher, she thought, meditating the difference between appearance and reality. On the contrary, he was an aristocrat considering his points. (40)

This suggests a mind-body duality: the introspection and contemplation of the mind as opposed to the Narcissus-like vain admiration of the physical presence.

The double nature of a person is revealed through the character of Clarissa Dalloway in Virginia Woolf's short story, "Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street" (in The Complete Shorter Fiction 146). Here the secret life of Clarissa is juxtaposed with her outer image. We hear the line from

Shakespeare's Cymbeline running through her mind (as it does in the novel Mrs. Dalloway)--the dirge "Fear no more the heat o' the sun"--reinforced by lines from Shelley's Adonais: "From the contagion of the world's slow stain ... and now can never mourn." Thoughts of death are in her mind but Clarissa doesn't show her fears outwardly. It is war-time and a violent explosion occurs in the street outside the shop where Clarissa is buying pearl-buttoned gloves. "The shop women cowered behind the counters. But Clarissa, sitting very upright, smiled ... " (153). Her inner anxiety has been countered by outward poise: double aspects of her personality.

* * *

Double consciousness of narration is a ramification of echo in the form of a double voice. Linda Schermer Raphael, in her 1987 dissertation, speaks of Virginia Woolf's narrator refracting, through the consciousness of the character, his or her own judgment (311). The technique of infiltrating character consciousness with narrator language reveals the subjective experience of the character at the same time that it provides an objective view. Thus, the narrator seems both inside and outside the character. Raphael gives a pointed example from Mrs. Dalloway to illustrate how Virginia Woolf shows Peter Walsh's feelings about himself with intonations of the narrator:

> There they are! he thought. Do what you like with them, Clarissa! There they are! and second by second it seemed to him that the wife of the Major in the Indian Army (his Daisy) and her two small children became more and more lovely as Clarissa looked at them; as if he had set light to a grey pellet on a plate and there had risen up a lovely tree in the brisk sea-salted air of their intimacy (for in some ways no one understood him, felt with him, as Clarissa did)--their exquisite intimacy. (Mrs. Dalloway 68)

While Peter's voice sounds angry, says Raphael, the narrator's voice uses language artistically and sensitively thereby uplifting Peter's feelings and making him more positive for the reader (313).

* * *

James Naremore sees a "divided mind" in nearly everything Virginia Woolf wrote--"a division between a feeling of selfhood and a feeling of selflessness" which may have been based on her own personal feelings. He points to her diary where she records having felt, during one of her "breakdowns," a "'loss of character and idiosyncracy as Virginia Woolf'" coupled with a sense that she was "'more attuned to existence'" (Naremore 246).

The dual impulses toward living or dying evidenced in the sound imagery of the early novels (to be examined in Chapter Three) also pertain to Virginia Woolf's own personal struggles. As Shirley Panken notes in her book about

Virginia Woolf's psychological problems: "Paradoxically, a strong wish not to die may occur along with the wish for suicide. Conflict between the desire to cling to life or destroy oneself may become intense" (270). In the earlier novels, death is an antagonist, but is also a friend.

Virginia Woolf says in her diary in 1922, referring to some of her short stories: "I meant to write about death, only life came breaking in as usual" (Diary 2, 17 Feb., 1922).

Virginia Woolf's everyday life was also governed by dualism. Phyllis Rose tells us that by her teens, she had "developed a fairly complete dual identity. Her real self read books, wrote, lived in a private world of the mind. Her false self, centered on her body, with which her real self felt little connection, got dressed in seed pearls and silk, served tea, and made polite conversation." Phyllis Rose rightly finds this significant "to indicate the mental ground in which her art flourished and to suggest why it took the distinctive forms it did" (254).

* * *

The notion of "the double" suggested by mirror imagery is often applied in Virginia Woolf's work to her characters. In one sense, characters have "doubles" in real-life: Ridley Ambrose and St. John Hirst in The Voyage Out resemble Leslie Stephen and Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf's father

and her friend. Virginia Woolf herself may be represented, as J. K. Johnstone points out in The Bloomsbury Group (321), by both Rachel Vinrace and Terence Hewet in The Voyage Out: they express two different sides of their creator's character--her dreamy, sensitive, intuitive femininity; and her active, companionable, intellectual masculinity. (These two selves are merged in the character of Katharine Hilbery in Night and Day, yet she is confused about her identity and seeks self-knowledge). Other "doubles" or mirror-images are Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith; they are "one and the same person," says Virginia Woolf in her introduction to the Modern Library 1928 edition of Mrs. Dalloway. Johnstone elaborates on this (342): like Rachel and Terence in The Voyage Out, they are opposite sides of the same personality. Throughout the novel, Clarissa and Septimus are more and more closely associated, sharing similar thoughts, feelings, and experiences; for example, Clarissa saw her sister killed by a falling tree, while Septimus was with his friend, Evans, when he was killed in the War. A merging of Clarissa and Septimus finally occurs, as it does with Rachel and Hewet. (It is interesting to note that Virginia Woolf extends the notion of "doubleness" during the scene in The Voyage Out where Rachel and Hewet stand side-by-side looking in the mirror--doubles looking at their doubles. They seek knowledge of themselves, their relationship to each other, and something outside themselves as well). Septimus and Clarissa, although they feel more intensely than the other

characters in the book, are linked in their inability to love, and they preserve their integrity by protecting themselves from the "soul-forcers" like Miss Kilman and the psychiatrist, S. P. Rosenbaum notes in "The Philosophical Realism of Virginia Woolf" (334).

Other dual characters, already mentioned, are Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. Rosenbaum, in his essay, points to the dichotomies they represent: masculine and feminine principles, reason and intuition, analysis and synthesis, farsightedness and nearsightedness, thought and action, truth and beauty, realism and idealism. These are not negative and positive poles, Rosenbaum believes, but complementary characteristics; and beneath the dichotomies is love, the fundamental value they share and in which their differences are resolved at the end of the first part of To The Lighthouse. Further duality is seen by Ralph Freedman in his book, The Lyrical Novel, in which he juxtaposes window with lighthouse: the window represents Mrs. Ramsay as her "organ of perception" through which she sees the world and behind which she is seen by others; the lighthouse represents Mr. Ramsay as an active male symbol. The two symbols are later transformed into universal symbols of shore and sea as they become reconciled in the creative, imaginative process of Lily Briscoe's painting (234).

* * *

Images seen through glass and some unintelligible sounds omnipresent in Virginia Woolf's novels suggest an unseen or unknown other world. Virginia Woolf presents two worlds or two kinds of reality: one seen and one unseen. This duality reflects many twentieth-century views. It is analogous to the idea in physics that unapparent energies lie behind the diversity of observable experience, that the most potent forces are not visible ones, but invisible. Atoms and x-rays, for example, are not visible to the naked eye. The concept here is scientific, but it is also philosophical, particularly in the Platonic sense, which Virginia Woolf projects, that there is another unseen, unheard, transcendental world. There is also "the thing behind the semblance of the thing." These concepts or double visions, of course, fit in with mirror images as they reflect or distort or project notions of what is real or ideal or illusory.

Nevertheless, Virginia Woolf is not content to express only duality, for there is more. In discussing Plato's dialogues, in her essay "On Not Knowing Greek," she says: "truth is various; truth comes to us in different disguises; it is not with the intellect alone that we perceive it" (The Common Reader 32). She presents Mrs. Dalloway in various ways: as seen from different angles of vision by the other characters, by Mrs. Dalloway herself, and symbolically when she sees fragments of herself reflected in the triple-mirror and glass bottles at her dressing-table. Also, the six

characters in The Waves have been seen by some critics to be "different facets of a single person."[3] Johnstone points out how similar to Virginia Woolf the characters are (362):

> Jinny--responsiveness to animal sensations of the body.
>
> Susan--affinity with the impersonal world of nature.
>
> Rhoda--awareness of the terror of life.
>
> Louis and Rhoda together--sense of the vast realms of time and space which exist beyond the individual's immediate consciousness.
>
> Bernard--aesthetic theories and artist's vision.

Yet, there is also something of Roger Fry in Bernard, Lytton Strachey in Neville, and Louis at moments suggests Maynard Keynes. They are all conceived of as individuals, but they unite and merge in the deep sea of the unconscious from which, as it were, they speak to us. Virginia Woolf implies that deep within us we, as members of the human race, are all, in a sense, one person (362). This corresponds to Jung's "collective unconscious"--the underlying patterns shared universally by all human beings.

The "split" or "multi" personality is the other side of the merged oneness. Joseph Warren Beach, in The Twentieth Century Novel, says that Virginia Woolf's Orlando is a study in multiple personality and a protest against the too narrow labeling of anyone. The point of the book (Orlando) seems to be that there is more than one person in each body and that each individual has, at least potentially, many selves (491). Virginia Woolf, as noted previously, discusses the

androgynous mind with its changing states in A Room of One's Own. The multiplicity of persons she presents suggests an endeavor to investigate an objective reality, that is, according to Auerbach in Mimesis, the "real" Mrs. Ramsay ... "there is an attempt to approach her from many sides as closely as human possibilities of perception and expression can succeed in doing. The design of a close approach to objective reality by means of numerous subjective impressions received by various individuals (and at various times) is important in the modern technique" (536). Auerbach goes on to say that the method is also a "mirror to the decline of our world" (after World War I), but in representing fragmentation, Virginia Woolf also depicts the reality and depth of life in her concern with the random occurrence: the elementary things which men have in common (552).

* * *

Whether it be through dualism or multiplicity, Virginia Woolf relentlessly searches for meaning and truth in her work; in this quest she is strongly influenced by the Cambridge philosopher and mentor of the Bloomsbury group, G. E. Moore. His influence seems to have been subtle and pervasive. Paul Levy discusses his influence on Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury in his book, G. E. Moore and the Cambridge Apostles: "Moore's influence upon the Bloomsbury

group was not importantly doctrinal at all, but personal ... they wished to show their allegiance to him as a person by acknowledging the importance and even the grandeur of his ideas ... Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey and Maynard Keynes, for example, could hardly have been aware of how much of their ingrained patterns of thinking were the result of a shared intellectual upbringing" (7). Levy says that Virginia Woolf had cultivated an interest in Moore's writing before her marriage to Leonard Woolf and that at the urging of her brother-in-law, Clive Bell, she began reading Moore's Principia Ethica in 1908 (274). Levy, in describing an interview he had with Leonard Woolf, says that the latter maintained strongly that Moore was the only philosopher who had any influence upon his wife's work--meaning specifically to exclude Bergson--and he thought that Moore's was the only modern philosophy Virginia Woolf ever read (275). He quotes Leonard Woolf in Beginning Again saying that Virginia Woolf was "deeply affected by the astringent influence of Moore and the purification of that divinely cathartic question which echoed through the Cambridge Courts of my youth as it had 2300 years before echoed through the streets of Socratic Athens: "What do you mean by that?" Artistically, the purification can, I think, be traced in the clarify, light, absence of humbug in Virginia's literary style" (25).

Above all, Moore is concerned with truth and makes objection to philosophers who search for "unity" and "system" at the expense of truth--so he states in his

Principia Ethica (222). He goes on to say that errors are made chiefly in "the attempt to answer questions, without first discovering what questions it is which you desire to answer ... "--hence the question most frequently posed by Bloomsbury: "What exactly do you mean?" This carries over into Virginia Woolf's fiction as her characters (usually at windows or looking-glasses) question their identities and the nature of reality--as Rhoda asks in The Waves: "What is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing? ... let me see the thing" (163). This appears to be a Platonic idea--about the ideal reality behind illusory appearances. Although not an idealist, Virginia Woolf is concerned about mystical matters. Moore himself, immersed in common sense, practical searching, does not discount spiritual matters. Johnstone, in The Bloomsbury Group, says that Moore's ideal is spiritual and that there is a certain mysticism associated with his rational, scholastic method; the contemplation of the good Moore describes is disinterested and unworldly. And Maynard Keynes believes that Moore's philosophy has some relation to neo-platonism (31). Johnstone says that Bloomsbury believes that love gives almost everyone glimpses of the Ideal; that though it may have a physical basis, it is a spiritual exercise and is the most direct way to "reality" (35). Moore does not refute the idealists' (philosophers) contentions that reality is spiritual--he says in "The Refutation of Idealism" that he devoutly hopes it is. (His argument with them is different,

concerned with the notion of "being" and being perceived).

The problematic nature of what is real as opposed to what is illusory arises in Moore when he discusses some of our perceptions; for example, when we see the sun, we are not seeing it at the moment we think we are because of time and distance involved in the journey of light. Internal changes happen; yet outward appearance is the same, he says in his chapter on "Sense-Data, Events and Change" in Lectures on Philosophy:

> We can recognize the same object; we've seen it before. My face is the same face you saw on Tuesday, and you know it's the same. And yet it has almost certainly changed internally. The only question is, in what sense it's the same; and this seems to me a really difficult question. Recognizing things is quite different from recognizing qualities. (64)

As for illusion and reality related to mirrors, this is what Moore has to say:

> ... in a so-called "double" image, there is no doubt whatever that the one "image" is not identical with the other. They are in different places ... and an image which is in one place cannot be identical with an image which is at the same time in another, even if it is exactly like it in color, shape and size ... in looking at the looking-glass opposite I see a reflection ... which looks to be behind the glass ... in a physical place,[4] but is not in any physical place.

Virginia Woolf deals with these problems imaginatively in her fiction. For instance, when Mrs. Ramsay (in To The Lighthouse) covers the boar's head in the children's room

with her shawl, she reassures one child, James, that it is "really still there," at the same time letting 7-year-old Cam who is frightened by it know that it is transformed (171-3). In other words, by "magic" it is both there and not there. In other instances, characters question whether their feelings of love for each other are real or illusory; and Bernard in The Waves knows that a sense of reality is not fixed: "The illusion is upon me, that something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed." Always present in this fictional world where reality and illusion are juxtaposed are mirrors creating more illusions.

While mirrors are objects for conjuring--tied to legendary beliefs in souls,[5] and other essences--they are also no-nonsense, practical objects of ordinary, everyday life which reflect real images; and Virginia Woolf uses them in both senses, for she deals with two worlds: the imaginary one which includes the irrational and hallucinatory, and the common-sense one of which her Bloomsbury friend, G. E. Moore, is an advocate. In addition to the element of mysticism in both, they share deep concerns about the material world of objects and the metaphysical life of consciousness--or states of mind. In connection with glass imagery, it is interesting to note that the word, "reflection"--to think--is a key-word for Virginia Woolf's characters: their reflections are presented as their states of consciousness. The author does not give her versions of characters but, instead, shows them

as they are reflected in each other's eyes and thoughts. There are reflections in the mind, in a shifting point-of-view, as well as reflections from external objects, and actual reflections in real mirrors. Auerbach speaks of the "mirroring of Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness" (537) and says that in Virginia Woolf's fiction, things "are not seen directly but by reflection" (541). Thus, reflections are presented in a metaphysical sense, in a metaphorical sense, and in a literal sense as well.

When Lily Briscoe asks Andrew Ramsay (in To The Lighthouse) what his father's books are about:

> "Subject and object and the nature of reality," Andrew had said. And when she said Heavens, she had no notion what that meant. "Think of a kitchen table then," he told her, "when you're not there." (38)

S. P. Rosenbaum points out that this is an account of G. E. Moore's philosophical realism, where kitchen tables exist apart from our perceptions of them (339), and that Mr. Ramsay suggests G. E. Moore rather than Leslie Stephen in several aspects such as in his attempts "to arrive at a perfectly clear understanding of the problem." This is like the method of no philosopher Virginia Woolf read or knew of so much as Moore (56).

The "subject and object and the nature of reality" is brilliantly mixed by Virginia Woolf at the dinner-table scene in To The Lighthouse in Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts and actions:

> There it was, all round them. It partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a special tender piece, of eternity; as she had already felt about something different once before that afternoon; there is a coherence in things, a stability; something; she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) ... (158)

Mrs. Ramsay is helping Mr. Bankes to a piece of her Boeuf en Daube, but the way it is placed in Virginia Woolf's sentence, it almost seems as if she is helping him to a "piece of eternity"--so close are all the things which impinge on consciousness. And Moore states the importance of all: " ... material qualities are a necessary constituent of the Ideal ... to deny and exclude matter, is to deny and exclude the best we know" (Principia Ethica, 207).

One of the central ideas of Moore's Principia Ethica is that an organic whole "bears no regular proportion to the sum of the values of its parts" (27). Virginia Woolf translates this into her presentation of characters. Johnstone remarks that "Mrs. Dalloway is a character whom we can sum up no more than Virginia Woolf can, but who is completely convincing, because she has about her the reality, the infinite diversity, the essential unity, of life" (339). Furthermore, when Moore affirms the existence of material, physical objects, Virginia Woolf goes even further by emphatically affirming presences in a super-real existence, as in the case of Mrs. Dalloway: "there she

was"--the final statement about her in the novel--indicates that her presence is very strongly felt, as is Mrs. Ramsay's even after her death. And Virginia Woolf doubly confirms reality (i.e. physical presences) through mirrors. The physical form of the person exists not only in space (in the room), but also in the mirror. This relates to the larger-than-life reality of women in her fiction like Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay--they exist in more than the usual sense. They seem to say: of course I exist; I am real; I am here, just as Moore's philosophy confirms existence and physical being. Moore demonstrates the existence of an external world by saying, "here is one hand," then adding, "and here is another."[6] This is his argument against philosophers who state that everything is "mental"--in our perceptions rather than in the real world. Moore distinguishes fact from knowing; and certainly Virginia Woolf's fictional world is filled with the facts of everyday-life as well as states of consciousness--the dualism of perception and its objects. She moves back and forth between inner consciousness and outer reality.

Virginia Woolf is concerned in her fiction with G. E. Moore's basic beliefs: the search for truth, aesthetic emotions and personal relations--love and friendship. Both have a "philosophy" of questioning and a common-sense concern with the details of ordinary living and the perceptions shared by people. Virginia Woolf creates her literature from the things of life--of which windows,

mirrors, myriad noises and echoes are omnipresent. Through them she reaches into the highest values of contemplation and communion as set forth in the central statement of Moore's Principia Ethica:

> 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 and the enjoyment of beautiful objects. No one, probably, who has asked himself the question, has ever doubted that personal affection and the appreciation of what is beautiful in Art or Nature, are good in themselves; nor, if we consider strictly what things are worth having purely for their own sakes, does it appear probable that anyone will think that anything else has nearly so great a value as the things which are included under these two heads. (Chapter VI, "The Ideal," 113: 188-189)

These beliefs form the matrix of Virginia Woolf's work; S. P. Rosenbaum points to a significant example in To The Lighthouse:

> Lily combines Mr. Ramsay's epistemology of ordinary experience with Mrs. Ramsay's illuminations and thus is able to complete her picture at the end of the novel--this is based upon the supreme values of Principia Ethica, art and love. (346)

Another example of G. E. Moore's influence is apparent in Virginia Woolf's short story (the first of The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf, ed. Susan Dick), titled "Phyllis and Rosamond." Here Virginia Woolf conjures with reflections of selves by juxtaposing two sets of sisters who come face-to-face in a setting similar to the real Bloomsbury milieu of which Virginia Woolf was a part. The

two sisters, Phyllis and Rosamond, representing sheltered "daughters at home," meet the more worldly, free, artistic sisters, the Misses Tristram--(the name suggests legends, but they <u>really</u> are the fictional doubles of Virginia Woolf and her sister, Vanessa). The inhibited Miss Phyllis Hibbert reaches out to converse with the writer-member of the other pair, Sylvia Tristram: "Phyllis had an odd feeling, when she leant forward to speak, of searching feverishly through a mess of artificial frivolities to lay hands on the solid grain of pure self which, she supposed lay hid somewhere" (26). This earnest search for truth and the reality behind appearances reflects the spirit of G. E. Moore and the Bloomsbury group. The <u>opposite</u> sister's reaction is in the spirit of Virginia Woolf's recurrent imagery: "Sylvia who wrote and had a literary delight in seeing herself reflected in strange looking-glasses, and of holding up her own mirror to the lives of others" ... asked "What do you do?" (26). When Phyllis replies that she only orders dinners and arranges flowers because she is not free, Sylvia asks the crucial G. E. Moore-Bloomsbury questions: "'O do tell me,' broke forth Sylvia, 'exactly what you mean. I want to know. I like to know about people. After all you know, the human soul is the thing.'" (27).

After the encounter of the two young women, Phyllis, returns home and feels dissatisfied:

> ... in penetrating to her real self Phyllis had let in some chill gust of air to that closely guarded place; what

> did she really want, she asked herself? What was she fit for? to criticize both worlds, and feel that neither gave her what she needed. She was too genuinely depressed to state the case to her sister; and her fit of honesty left her with the conviction that talking did no good ... (29)

This is the end of this short story about real and thwarted potential selves--doubles of doubles--where there is no resolution; only a glimpse at two worlds: one of constrained domesticity, the other of artistic freedom. The fact that Phyllis cannot share her feelings and thoughts with her sister conveys a problem which Virginia Woolf grapples with in all her writing: the ineffectuality of verbal communication, the limitations of language, the individual cut off and isolated from others in a silent world.

These themes will persist in Virginia Woolf's work, but along with them are messages to the contrary; of hope, communion, and communication, if only for moments.

Notes to Chapter One

[1]See The Dictionary of Symbols 24-26, for its entry on duality (binary).

[2]Herbert Marder, in Feminism and Art, recognizes that Virginia Woolf was not a flag-waving feminist and that her idea of androgyny appears to be a corrective for the excesses of feminism. The opinionated mind is the opposite of the harmonious one (Marder 110).

[3]See Deborah Newton, Virginia Woolf (Melbourne UP, 1946) 51. Also E. M. Forster, quoted in The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs, Commentary and Criticism, ed. S. P. Rosenbaum (Toronto and Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1975) 209.

[4]G. E. Moore, "Double Images," Commonplace Book 1919-1953 (New York: Macmillan, 1962) 233-235.

[5]See Frazer's Golden Bough on mirrors and souls (222-3).

[6]"Proof of an External World," Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. XXV (1939) 295.

Chapter Two

Images of Glass: Early Fiction

Recognizing the artistic power of mirrors, the modern art-critic, Roger Fry, says that the frame of a mirror can turn a reflected scene from one that belongs to our actual life into one that belongs rather to the imaginative life:

> A somewhat similar effect to that of the cinematograph can be obtained by watching a mirror in which a street scene is reflected. If we look at the street itself we are almost sure to adjust ourselves in some way to its actual existence. We recognize an acquaintance, and wonder why he looks so dejected this morning, or become interested in a new fashion in hats--the moment we do that the spell is broken, we are reacting to life itself in however slight a degree; but, in the mirror, it is easier to abstract ourselves completely, and look upon the changing scene as a whole. It then, at once, takes on the visionary quality, and we become true spectators, not selecting what we will see, but seeing everything equally, and thereby we come to notice a number of appearances and relations of appearances, which would have escaped our notice before, owing to that perpetual economizing by selection of what impressions we will assimilate, which in life we perform by unconscious processes. The frame of the mirror, then, does to some extent turn the reflected scene from one that belongs to our actual life into one that belongs rather to the imaginative life. The frame of the mirror makes its surface into a very rudimentary work of art, since it helps us to attain to the artistic vision. (Roger Fry, Vision and Design 19-20)

The framing power of the "window" also emerges as a strong

artistic device. In his essay, "Victorian Frames," Gerhard Joseph recognizes the iconographic significance of the window: "the limitless blank, the deep vacancy of infinite space, achieves a measure of relevance to the human scale only through the framing power of a window" (70).

The window emerges as a central image in nineteenth-century art as Victorian poets, painters, and novelists resort increasingly to window imagery to focus on scenes of mimetic Realism or expressive Romanticism, Michael Greenstein tells us in his article, "Magic Casements and Victorian Transparencies." The window is an important post-Romantic trope simultaneously linking and separating man and his environment (269). Pictures of imprisoned characters yearning for freedom at their windows recur throughout nineteenth-century fiction. Jane Eyre, for example, sits at window-seats during her unhappy childhood looking out and reading fantasy-escape books. Wuthering Heights has powerful window imagery, as pointed out by Dorothy Van Ghent (The English Novel: Form and Function, 161): "the windowpane is the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the 'inside' from the 'outside,' the human from the alien and terrible 'other.'" Dickens's "windows" are frequently interrelated with other "glass" images such as mirrors, doors, spectacles, and drinking glasses (Greenstein dissertation 150). (This is also true of Virginia Woolf, as my dissertation will show). Dickens's mode of perception is different in each novel: the

childlike Pickwick extends his horizon while Oliver's vision never discovers the unknown beyond the key-hole (Greenstein 150). For Dickens, the multiplicity of life cannot be captured by the mimetic mirror alone; but requires, in addition, a window to frame the vision (163). This is also true of Virginia Woolf.

In his dissertation on "The Window in Post-Romantic Aesthetics," Michael Greenstein explores the uses of windows in nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction. He speaks of the shift from Gothic or pre-Victorian novels set in castles or abbeys to the post-Romantic novels set in the house: Bleak House, The Fall of the House of Usher, The House of the Seven Gables, The Angel in the House. A turning inward increases in the modern novel directed towards the room: Jacob's Room, A Room of One's Own, A Room With A View, Room at the Top. The visual outlet from these houses of fiction is the "window" (14) and the figure at the window--artist, fictional character, or critic--perceives the world outside which corresponds with his own inner thoughts. The movement toward the interior of the environment in the nineteenth century may be interpreted as a continuation of the Romantic shift towards the mind of the individual (17).

The "window" is also a common image of nineteenth-century Transcendentalism. Carlyle says: "all objects are as windows through which the philosophic eye looks into Infinitude itself" (Sartor Resartus 47). As a medium of transparency the window is used by Virginia Woolf

to create transcendental visions connecting man with the universe.

The _locus classicus_ of the "window" metaphor is Henry James's description of the "house of fiction":

> The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million ... every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will ... they are, singly or together, as nothing without the posted presence of the watcher--without, in other words, the consciousness of the artist.
>
> (Preface to _The Portrait of a Lady_)

James's conception of the "window" is surely applicable to Virginia Woolf and her concerns with relativity, subjectivity, and point-of-view. Her characters, like those of Henry James, look through the window of consciousness which frames and filters their experiences.

Greenstein points out that in the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf follows in the tradition of post-Romantic novelists who place a character at the window to reveal the character's thoughts or modes of perception. Woolf experiences nature from the subjective privacy of rooms through the medium of the window. The continual shift between external and internal seen from the window is characteristic of her view (288). Greenstein sees a movement in _Mrs. Dalloway_ from the early, bright, open window to the window of old age and death at the end

(293-4). When Clarissa looks through the window and sees the old lady, her double, going to bed, the window turns into a mirror. Later, in Between the Acts, when Isa "groped in the depths of the looking-glass," Greenstein says this is not merely a neo-classical mimetic mirror; this "looking-glass," like Alice's, becomes a window to another world (304).

The importance of the window is recognized by Jean Guiguet (Virginia Woolf And Her Works):

> It is characteristic that almost all Virginia Woolf's windows are uncurtained ... In all the novels we see a character standing in front of the window, gazing at the street, at the sky, at the landscape, and experiencing, as by some catalytic phenomenon, the mingling of his own being with the outer reality which he beholds. These are moments of both revelation and integration. (416)

Viewing the window as both a barrier and a unifier, Guiguet continues:

> That Virginia Woolf chooses, unconsciously no doubt, to interpose a screen between reality and consciousness and to restrict reality by a framework, may be considered a sign of her hypersensitivity and an instinctive desire to filter the experience of her senses ... also to an obscure need for structure and form, corresponding to that primacy of the mind that apprehends over the reality which is apprehended. The window reduces the pageant of the world to the scale of the being who contemplates it. And finally, this window, which for all its transparency serves to screen reality, is the very symbol of the imperfection of our contact and our knowledge. (417)

The recurrent window, the character at the window, and

the view from the window become an archetype in post-Romantic aesthetics, as Greenstein observes (313). During the second half of the nineteenth century vision focuses more on the window itself or on form rather than on the landscape or subject matter beyond; the process of viewing itself becomes dominant (313). Fictional form and subjective consciousness are revealed at the window--concerns of the modernists.

The larger subject of framing in narrative forms is the theme of Reading Frames in Modern Fiction by Mary Ann Caws in which she examines both perceptual and actual frames in various works. For example, she looks at one type of framing device, the inset picture: Lily Briscoe's canvas in To The Lighthouse is completed precisely when the narrative of the text itself is completed. The smaller scale work of Lily's paintings points to the process and the meaning of the larger or including picture, and indicates its major thrust (Caws 10). Moreover, the window as the frame for the lighthouse in this Woolf novel places the emphasis on seeing and vision, as on symbol (23). Caws sees Woolf's windowframe looking out on the lighthouse in To The Lighthouse and the frame of nature in The Waves as more interesting in their reading than are the things and objects and perceptions framed (263). She sees the focus turning to the focusing borders.

* * *

Windows, mirrors and other images of glass are employed by Virginia Woolf in many ways--sometimes she even uses them startlingly where they don't seem to belong. Consider the striking imagery of:

> An odd image came to his mind of a lighthouse besieged by the flying bodies of lost birds, who were dashed senseless, by the gale, against the glass. He had a strange sensation that he was both lighthouse and bird; he was steadfast and brilliant; and at the same time he was whirled, with all other things, senseless against the glass. (Night and Day 398)

What glass? There's no glass in the universe of sea, lighthouse and whirling birds! (This seems to be more than ordinary lighthouse window glass). Glass is so much a part of Virginia Woolf's world (of windows in drawing-rooms), that she cannot help but extend the imagery to the natural universe, thereby making a man-made artifice a part of nature. This "projection" creates a discordant note, which is precisely what gives the imagery its power, for it is the out-of-place, artificial, man-made glass upon which the birds slam themselves senseless.

What is suggested is that man's intrusion and participation in the universe are destructive. This has been said before by many others--but not through glass. When Andrew Marvell has a mower cut down gardens, he is showing man disturbing Nature. But this is a "natural" metaphor--men do mow gardens. Virginia Woolf's metaphor is "unnatural"--birds do not crash into glass out at sea. The

unusualness of the scene she creates startles the imagination and speaks to the unconscious mind which contains dream-like, nightmarish symbols of birds which do smash into glass.

Here, as elsewhere, Virginia Woolf exemplifies what Keats called "negative capability:" "when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (In a letter to his brothers, Dec. 21, 1817). Although Virginia Woolf is primarily concerned with rational truth, she does not suppress the unconscious, irrational, creative elements when they come through in her writing. The Bloomsbury group members, according to Quentin Bell in his book, Bloomsbury, were conscious, deeply conscious, of the dark, irrational side of life but absolutely convinced of the necessity of holding fast to reason, clarity and good sense (106). Virginia Woolf combines both dark and light powers in her work.

And she says many things through her use of glass. She implies philosophical statements such as: the world is perceived partially, not wholly, as through windows seen through windows. In Night and Day, she works this out in an extraordinary way. Here is the text:

> In his agitation Ralph rose, turned his back upon Mary, and looked out of the window. The people in the street seemed to him only a dissolving and combining pattern of black particles; which, for the moment, represented very well the involuntary procession of

feelings and thoughts which formed and dissolved in rapid succession in his own mind. At one moment he exulted in the thought that Mary loved him; at the next, it seemed that he was without feeling for her; her love was repulsive to him. Now he felt urged to marry her at once; now to disappear and never see her again. In order to control this disorderly race of thought he forced himself to read the name on the chemist's shop directly opposite him; then to examine the objects in the shop windows, and then to focus his eyes exactly upon a little group of women looking in at the great windows of a large draper's shop. This discipline having given him at least a superficial control of himself, he was about to turn and ask the waiter to bring the bill, when his eyes was caught by a tall figure walking quickly along the opposite pavement--a tall figure, upright, dark, and commanding, much detached from her surroundings. She held her gloves in her left hand, and the left hand was bare. All this Ralph noticed and enumerated and recognized before he put a name to the whole--Katharine Hilbery. She seemed to be looking for somebody. Her eyes, in fact, scanned both sides of the street, and for one second were raised directly to the bow window in which Ralph stood; but she looked away again instantly without giving any sign that she had seen him. This sudden apparition had an extraordinary effect upon him. It was as if he had thought of her so intensely that his mind had formed the shape of her, rather than that he had seen her in the flesh outside in the street. And yet he had not been thinking of her at all. The impression was so intense that he could not dismiss it, not even think whether he had seen her or merely imagined her. He sat down at once, and said, briefly and strangely, rather to himself than to Mary:

"That was Katherine Hilbery."

"Katherine Hilbery? What do you mean?" she asked, hardly understanding from his manner whether he had seen her

> or not.
>
> "Katherine Hilbery," he repeated. "But she's gone now."
>
> "Katharine Hilbery!" Mary thought, in an instant of blinding revelation; "I've always known it was Katharine Hilbery!" She knew it all now. (231-232)

Ralph, feeling agitated, has gone to the window for relief and to move away from Mary. At the window, he tries to sort out his confused feelings and thoughts. At first, the people in the street outside the window seem to form a pattern as confused as his own thoughts--the outside world reflects his inner consciousness. Then Ralph tries to bring order to the confusion in his own mind by focusing on a sign and on a shop window. He looks through his window at women who are looking through a shop window. Here are windows behind windows, visions behind visions, observers behind observers. No one focuses on a total picture of the scene; each has a limited view.

Then Katharine Hilbery steps into the picture, becomes part of the vision, a piece of the street-scene. She looks around, searchingly, and for an instant, looks up at Ralph behind his window. This represents a reflection back from the outside world to the inside world where Ralph is standing and thinking. But Katharine's view is different; it is unfocussed. She seems lost and cannot see anyone or anything around her. Ralph's sight of Katharine unnerves him; he doesn't know if he has really seen her or simply imagined her. What <u>is</u> truth or reality seems to be the

question being asked here.

All the seeing through the windows suddenly stops after Ralph catches the image of Katharine and withdraws from the window to exclaim her name to Mary. Then Mary truly "sees"--she has a "blinding revelation" and suddenly understands that it is Katharine whom Ralph loves. All the glass imagery leads up to this insight; there has been a pattern of looking through layers of glass to reveal a truth.

Jean O. Love points out that Ralph and Katharine symbolize the conflict between subjective thought and objective reality. As his romance with Katharine develops, Ralph becomes less successful in separating the dream world, mythopoetic in its construction, and the empirical-theoretical or practical world. Thus subject-object fusion increases and difficulties in distinguishing between day and night consciousness become prominent. When he is with Katharine, Ralph is unable to know whether "his eyes look at reality" or at an extension of his subjective thoughts. When Ralph and Katharine are apart, his consciousness flows unimpeded into the objective world. Katharine tries, as does Ralph, to keep her two worlds in their places, to separate day and night. Nevertheless, conflict between the two modes of thought or the two ways of organizing the conscious world occurs within her as within Ralph. The problems of sorting out the two worlds and keeping them apart are most acute when Katharine and Ralph try to

understand the nature of love since love belongs to the mythopoetic world whereas practical affairs demand empirical-theoretical thought (Love 111-114). Virginia Woolf expresses all these confusions through images of glass.

Elsewhere, Virginia Woolf demonstrates that there are many "truths" and that they are constantly changing, just as people's feelings and perceptions are always fluctuating--as the characters in Night and Day keep shifting their affections for one another. Indeed, the world Virginia Woolf explores, the language she employs, and the characters she depicts are all in fragments--fragments into which glass can splinter, for glass represents a paradox--a contradiction--it is both "hard and ephemeral" (Jacob's Room 45). Glass appears to be solid and durable, and it is; but is also can break and shatter, so it is not what it appears to be. Does glass, therefore, represent an illusion which can't be trusted? Is glass like life? Like people?

Are windows behind windows also a way of "distancing"--not only the artist's attempt to step back from her work to attain a detached objectivity--but also a psychological withdrawal whereby the character and artist as well can be separated from others and the world behind the safety and illusion of glass?

Time after time Virginia Woolf has her characters withdraw from an uncomfortable social situation to the window in the room. The character, in this action, escapes

from what is being said or done in the room; at the window, he or she observes what is outside the window: the street-scene, traffic, people walking, street-lights, the stars, the moon, the natural universe. The character then becomes introspective and withdraws into his or her own thoughts. This triple action happens so frequently that Virginia Woolf seems to be parodying herself when she says in Night and Day: "Mrs. Hilbery paused, looked unhappy, and sought inspiration from the window" (481).

Associated with the window is, of course, the symbol of the house; Herbert Marder in Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf discusses its significance:

> Virginia Woolf tended to think concretely and to visualize ideas like "domestic life" in terms of concrete images. Thus she frequently represented the Victorian family, and occasionally the social structure of which it was the center, by the image of a house. Her use of symbolism is apparent in the case of Katharine Hilbery's house. Ralph Denham, in love with Katharine, comes to look up to her windows at night. The three long windows of the drawingroom are lit, and Virginia Woolf likens them to the beams of a lighthouse. Then she continues: 'In this little sanctuary were gathered together several different people, but their identity was dissolved in a general glory of something that might, perhaps, be called civilization; at any rate ... all that stood up above the surge and preserved a consciousness of its own, was centered in the drawing-room of the Hilberys' (p. 395). Night and Day celebrates the union of Katharine, who is connected with the intellectual establishment, and Ralph Denham, who comes from an ugly, overcrowded house in the suburbs and represents new life ... Virginia Woolf,

> like her father, attributed great importance to domestic life and the influence of women. By means of images like that of the Hilbery drawing-room she often identified the feminine domain as the source of civilizing influences. (Marder 36)

Marder goes on to observe that the image of the house in the later novel, The Years, has very different implications. At the beginning of the novel, while the large family is still living there, the Pargiter house seems ample enough; it suggests permanence and stability, not unlike the Hilbery house, but after the family has broken up, it becomes a symbol of the decay of Victorian institutions. When Eleanor puts the house up for sale she sees it with new eyes, especially the basement where their old servant had lived for forty years: "she had never realized how dark, how low it was" (216) and feels ashamed.

* * *

Revelations through glass abound in The Voyage Out where a shifting of perspective gradually occurs through which the "awakening" of the characters and the process of theme and plot development can be traced. All can be seen to happen through the looking in at windows or the looking out of windows.

The first mention of windows in The Voyage Out is in connection with Rachel's sheltered upbringing and inadequate education by tutors who have taught her various subjects in

her room where "the one hour or the two hours weekly passed very pleasantly, partly owing to the fact that the window looked upon the back of a shop, where figures appeared against the red windows in winter (34). Rachel is thus established as an outsider--someone not part of the mainstream of life who derives pleasure from seeing others engaged in activity. Rachel's aunt, Helen Ambrose, aware of her niece's naivete and innocence, wants to expose her to life. She gets permission from Rachel's father to have her stay with the Ambroses at their villa in Brazil for their fall-winter-spring stay.

In the villa "there were no blinds to shut out the sun" (92) and "the dinner-table was set between two long windows which were left uncurtained by Helen's orders" (93). Helen also likes to keep the windows open. She welcomes life and experience and wants freedom rather than the English restraints of religion, tradition, and morality. She has come to Brazil for its primitive, earthy, sun-drenched, passionate civilization. Here she will introduce Rachel to all possibilities--an uncurtained existence.

On the other hand, Ridley Ambrose, Helen's husband, a literature professor, is absorbed in his work and himself: "he stood over the fire gazing into the depths of the looking-glass" (98). "We'll leave you to your vanities," Helen calls to him as she and Rachel go for their after-dark stroll through the town, an excursion they call "seeing life" (98). They look at the native people of the village

in the street and through open windows. This walk leads to one of the most memorable scenes of the book where Helen and Rachel as unobserved observers look in at the guests and servants of the resort hotel.

> They had come out upon the board terrace which ran around the hotel and were only a few feet distant from the windows. A row of long windows opened almost to the ground. They were all of them uncurtained, and all brilliantly lighted, so that they could see everything inside. Each window revealed a different section of the life of the hotel (100).

They creep around the terrace eavesdropping and looking in like voyeurs--"peeping Toms"--peculiar outsiders looking for what? secrets? evidences of sexuality? Then they run away when someone looks out at them.

The someone is Terence Hewet. "Mr. Hewet turned his full face towards the window. They could see that he had large eyes obscured by glasses; his complexion was rosy ... " (102). Mr. Hewet will turn out to be a young man who likes people and thinks that the world makes sense, until he goes through his rites-of-passage and is initiated into life, as is Rachel, and discovers pain and death and disillusionment. But at this moment, he has only a partial view of life because he seems to be wearing rose-colored glasses.

Hewet will awaken, along with Rachel, in the central portion of the novel. Here, in "moments of being" or epiphanies, they will see not through intervening glass, but

with the naked eye and the mind's eye. They will see Susan and Arthur making love in the grass and they will feel a sense of doom. Rachel will see a tree and know its "treeness"--the quiddity or essence of organic life. Rachel will see the hypocrisy of the people in church paying lip-service to God.

The outsiders are slowly stepping into life. At the scene of the dance, Rachel and Hewet are outside the hotel and see that "one by one the dark windows were uncurtained by an invisible hand and panes of light fell regularly at equal intervals upon the grass" (157). A sense of mystery (the unknown "invisible hand") is juxtaposed with order (the light fell with regularity at "equal intervals"). Rachel and Hewet feel more secure and go inside to join the others at the dance. (Earlier, Rachel has used the window as an escape to leave the dance when St. John Hirst insults her intellectual capacity (155). But now she will go back into the room with Hewet).

The only outsiders now remaining at the dance are "servants peeping in at the windows" (157). In contrast, the <u>insiders</u> lose themselves and forget time as they dance, until suddenly, instinctively, they look out the windows and realize that the night has passed. They push the windows open but then realize how dissheveled they look (167). At the windows, they have a moment of self-consciousness which they had lost temporarily with the dancing and music. The windows bring back a sense of clock-time and reality.

But there are more mysteries to be solved. Hewet, in a scene which parallels the scene of Helen and Rachel peeping in at the hotel windows, watches Helen and Rachel from outside the window of their villa. He hears parts of their conversation:

> The broken sentences had an extraordinary beauty and detachment in Hewet's ears, and a kind of mystery too, as though they were spoken by people in their sleep (187).

Hewet, too, shares the odd excitement of voyeurs--seeing and not being seen. He has a profound desire to see what people are really like because they don't reveal themselves. He can't get at his friend, Hirst, whom he describes as living "all his life in front of a looking-glass" talking about philosophy and God and his liver and his heart (156). Hirst doesn't partake of life; he is an observer, not a participant. He himself says, "I see through everything--absolutely everything. Life has no more mysteries for me" (169). Hewet, on the contrary, wants to reach people and understand communication; just as Helen wants to reveal the facts of life to Rachel: "what really goes on, what people feel, although they generally try to hide it" (164).

Rachel, finally on the inside looking out, part of the mainstream of life, immersed in feelings, is opening up and seeing with new insights. She "found herself among the people whom she had seen from the window" and she sees with "startling intensity" both the reality and the instant "as

though the dusty surface had been peeled off everything" (258-259). She sees the meanness and stupidity of people underneath their polished veneers. She sees what is ordinary in a new perspective: "the most familiar view seen framed through glass has a certain unfamiliar distinction" (233).

The movement of the novel then shifts away from the ordinary. The climax takes place in the Edenic forest, away from the sanctuaries of rooms and the protectiveness of glass; away from the trappings of civilization . Hewet and Rachel go on a river expedition into a primitive land. There, in the forest, they declare their love for each other and are exposed to passion, to disease, and to death. They see the hut where an explorer died of fever--a foreshadowing of what will happen to Rachel.

After they return to English society at the hotel, Hewet looks out the window "for ten minutes at a time; but no he did not care for the earth swept of human beings. He liked human beings ... " (291). Hewet wants communication and love, but at the end, after Rachel's death, he will look out and see only the empty universe.

When Rachel looks out the window at this same point, her feelings and visions are different from Hewet's:

> ... she wanted many more things than the love of one human being--the sea, the sky. She turned again and looked at the distant blue, which was so smooth and serene where the sky met the sea; she could not possibly want only one human being. (302)

The two lovers feel their separateness. They move away from the window towards each other and look at themselves in the mirror:

> They stood together in front of the looking-glass ... it chilled them to see themselves and in the glass, for instead of being vast and indivisible they were really very small and separate, the size of the glass leaving a large space for the reflection of other things. (303)

Their love is not enough. The glass reveals truth and dispels illusion. (Yet, paradoxically, the mirror-images themselves are illusory).

Rachel is now no longer afraid of life or love or death. She wants to see through the curtain of life, to go beyond this world, to penetrate the mysteries. Hewet doesn't understand this. He believes there is "an order, a pattern which made life reasonable" (299). He learns otherwise.

Even death comes to Rachel through imagery of glass. While Hewet reads Milton to her--the passage from Comus about Sabrina:

> Sabrina fair,
> Listen where thou art sitting
> Under the glassy, cool translucent wave

Rachel tells him she has a headache and Hewet has a sense of dismay and catastrophe as "all round him he seemed to hear the shiver of broken glass, which, as it fell to earth, left him sitting in the open air" (327). He is exposed and unprotected; while Rachel will start to slip into that "glassy, cool, translucent" other world.

Sabrina, the River Goddess in Milton's Comus, is invoked in The Voyage Out when Rachel falls into unconsciousness before her death. In Comus, Sabrina is called upon to help release the Lady from bondage. Perhaps it is bondage to life and its demands from which Rachel wants to be released. Madeline Moore in The Short Season between Two Silences speaks of Virginia Woolf's withdrawals into mysticism to provide escape from the everyday world in her fiction (22). Rachel does seem to give herself to death more passionately than to the idea of marriage. In terms of a mythic structure in The Voyage Out, Moore points out that Helen Ambrose is associated with the Goddess of earth and corn--the physical--Demeter, while Rachel is associated with Persephone--the underworld, death, and spirituality.

Both Rachel and Rhoda (in The Waves) are willing to submit to nature's oblivion in defiance of their social worlds; because neither can find places of refuge in their social worlds, they seek it in the natural world (Moore 133).

Rachel's illness is also reflected in the changing view of the windows. While she lies feverish in bed the windows appear white and the blind moves like an animal in the room. The window is becoming part of a nightmare as Rachel struggles to remember the lines from Milton, the comforting lines from another world which will cool her fever and lead her beyond this painful, insufficient world where she can see eternity through the glass.

While Rachel completes her voyage out of life, slipping through the glass, Terence Hewet looks out the window and sees the earth as hostile and sinister. "Now he knew for himself that life is hard and full of suffering":

> Never again would he feel secure; he would never believe in the stability of life, or forget what depths of pain lie beneath small happiness and feelings of content and safety. It seemed to him as he looked back that their happiness had never been so great as his pain was now. There had always been something imperfect in their happiness, something they had wanted and had not been able to get. It had been fragmentary and incomplete ... (345)

Hewet's ordered universe has been shattered and his maturation involves the realization of the elusiveness and broken quality of life. At the moment of Rachel's death, Hewet walks across the room to the window. "The windows were uncurtained, and showed the moon, and a long silver pathway upon the surface of the waves" (354). He sees the cosmos and, perhaps, for a moment, catches a glimpse of Rachel's other world.

After Rachel's death, "instead of striking upon pale white blinds, the sun shone upon dark windows, beyond which there was depth and space" (355). But then the darkness passes and Mrs. Thornbury, a guest at the hotel, looks at the windows "blazing in the sun and she thought how the soul of the dead had passed from these windows. Something had passed from the world. It seemed to her strangely empty" (357). Perhaps youth and innocence have also passed through

the windows.

The final action of the book is a retreat by the hotel guests away from the windows where a driving rain beats on the panes and lightning frightens them into the hall where they cannot see the storm. The windows, once offering protection against draughts and life's intrusions, now are a threat. However, the storm passes and the hotel guests return to their knitting and card-playing and talking. It is spring and life goes on.

* * *

As windows represent both barriers and also the means of freedom and escape in The Voyage Out, they similarly represent the paradox of the co-existence of opposites in the novel Mrs. Dalloway. The symbolic action of the book occurs often through the opening of windows. Both life and death are realized through windows: the first page of the book opens with Clarissa Dalloway flinging the window open to let in all of life; juxtaposed with this action is that of Septimus Smith who, later on in the book, will open the window to jump to his death. However, Clarissa's symbolic gesture of welcoming life and Septimus's choice of embracing death are not pure acts. The major philosophical theme of the novel is that life and death are intertwined. Clarissa and Septimus both represent a kind of life-in-death and death-in-life. Clarissa, while she plans and gives parties

and brings people together in a creative, positive, life-affirming way, is also haunted with thoughts and fears about death, aging, illness. She contemplates an idea of the soul and a transcendental life as Rachel does in The Voyage Out. And Septimus, although he commits suicide, is filled with thoughts and feelings about the vitality of life. He feels an organic life-force:

> The trees waves, brandished. We welcome, the world seemed to say; we accept; we create. Beauty, the world seemed to say ... To watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy. (104)

The force of life penetrates his thoughts about death just as, conversely, the fact of his death intrudes upon Clarissa's party at the end of the book:

> Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death she thought (279) ... What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself--but how? Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it. But why had he done it? And the Bradshaws talked of it at her party! (280)

Clarissa becomes merged with Septimus in her identification with him and his death. Both physically and emotionally, she realizes the closeness of life and death and the sacrifices involved in each. Thus, the window which allows them to give expression to both impulses is a fitting symbol

through which the polarities are joined. (In the Modern Library 1928 edition of Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf, in her introduction, states that Septimus originally did not exist and was later conceived of as Clarissa's double. "Mrs. Dalloway was originally to kill herself or perhaps merely to die at the end of the party.")

In Fiction and Repetition, J. Hillis Miller speaks of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith in mirror metaphors:

> Clarissa and Septimus seek the same thing: communication, wholeness, the oneness of reality, but only Septimus takes the sure way to reach it. Clarissa's attempt to create unity in her party is the mirror image in the world of light and life of Septimus's vigorous appropriation of the dark embrace of death in his suicide ... For Woolf, as for Conrad, the visible world of light and life is the mirror image or repetition in reverse of an invisible world of darkness and death ... Mrs. Dalloway seems to end in a confrontation of life and death as looking-glass counterparts. (198)

While life and death, realized through mirrors and windows, provide the major theme of the book, other perspectives may be seen through glass. Another theme which is interwoven into the text to become part of its structure is the communication and lack of communication between people. The characters of the novel impinge upon each other for moments during the course of the book, the action of which takes place during the span of one day in London. The characters are separate and isolated, each in his own private world (expressed through interior

monologues). They briefly reach out to touch or see one another momentarily as their paths cross; however, the contacts are usually only half-realized. There is a mystery or cloudiness surrounding the contacts indicating that complete communication is not really possible. For instance, when Septimus sees Peter Walsh walking in the park, he sees him as Evans, his dead friend, not as Peter Walsh. And Peter Walsh, although he is capable of seeing the world with an inner eye--"It was the state of the world that interested him; Wagner, Pope's poetry, people's characters eternally, and the defects of (Clarissa's) soul" (9)--he can't see the details of ordinary life (the grass, trees, people). He would put on his spectacles if Clarissa told him to look at the world (9). His vision is impaired and he needs glasses to help him see.

Glass in the form of a window is also a unifying force for all the separate points of view. Individuals form a crowd to look at the car with the curtained window. "The surface agitation of the passing car ... grazed something very profound" (26). All try to penetrate the mystery of who is in the car. They think it is probably someone like the Prime Minister who makes them think of England and all it stands for--a symbol of State, "of the flag; of Empire" (25). The focus on the car window, thus, reflects another aspect of the novel, for Mrs. Dalloway is about politics and society and traditional English people.

It is also about split-personalities--various facets of

people--particularly Clarissa Dalloway, sometimes realized as Mrs. Dalloway and sometimes as Clarissa; sometimes as a private being, other times as a social force. Clarissa is many things to different people--"to know her, or anyone, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places" (231). Her many facets come together when she sees herself reflected and refracted through glass bottles and the mirror of her dressing-table. As she sits amid the glass, she collects herself and realizes her wholeness as well as her parts:

> Clarissa (crossing to the dressing-table) plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there--the moment of this June morning on which was the pressure of all the other mornings, seeing the glass, the dressing-table, and all the bottles afresh, collecting the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the glass), seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party; of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself. (54)

Clarissa is, indeed, an image as well as a presence. She is, also, like glass itself--cold and impenetrable--"so transparent in some ways, so inscrutable in others" (117).

Other characters are also defined in terms of glass. Dr. Holmes is described as "looking in the glass" (138) for he can't see beyond himself and is, therefore, inept and vain. And Lady Bradshaw only "peeped through" life (152) because she has submitted herself to her husband and is only a pale reflection of him with little of herself left. For Septimus, "beauty was behind a pane of glass" (132). His

experiences in World War I and the loss of his friend, Evans, killed in the war, leave him so devastated that he is unable to be in touch with his feelings or to be part of life. What is behind the glass is unattainable, untouchable; glass represents an impenetrability.

The horror of war is also suggested in another way by Virginia Woolf--through the character of Dr. William Bradshaw. Michael Rosenthal (Virginia Woolf) perceptively describes what Virginia Woolf does:

> ... it is not the therapeutic failures of Bradshaw that enrage Woolf so much as his insidious lust for power over other human beings. Offering help but seeking only to control, Bradshaw turns his patients into victims, crushing them with his will into accepting his singular version of health and proportion. A callous manipulator of other men's souls, Sir William represents all that Woolf in particular and Bloomsbury in general detested ... Sir William stands as the archbully; it is his mentality which lies behind wars, quests for empires, and other forms of trespass upon the sovereignty of individuals or entire nations. Mrs. Dalloway is Woolf's strongest protest against the use of power in human affairs. The violence practiced by Bradshaw on Septimus is echoed on a larger scale by the First World War ... (95)

Thus the vanity of Dr. Bradshaw, defined by his gazing in the looking-glass, takes on sinister, megalomaniacal, global refractions.

Conversely, in contrast to the dark side, windows reveal the excitement of life, the fleeting glimpses of people going about their daily routines--"absorbing,

mysterious, of infinite richness, this life" (248). Through "windows lit up ... through the uncurtained window, the window left open, one saw parties sitting over tables, young people ..." (248). And there is the probing gaze into other peoples' lives--the looking for secrets--Clarissa watching her neighbor, the old woman, through the window of the house across the street. Yet, perhaps, she is looking at all women (the mythical eternal feminine) through the revelations of glass--or at herself projected as old and alone.

* * *

Windows serve a different function in To The Lighthouse. Here, Mrs. Ramsay is realized as a figure in the window. She sits at the window with her little boy as the embodiment of motherhood and stability, holding off all hostility and mutability of the world outside the window. Inside the window is her home with husband, friends, and eight children whom she nurtures and protects. She is their fruit-tree, their Earth-Mother, their comforter. Outside the window is a cold, slippery, elusive world. Mrs. Ramsay stands between life and death in her window. She tries to make time stand still for her family, to hold all pain and loss at bay. She wants to be "the thing that mattered;" she wants to be the center, the gravitational pull (like a moon-goddess). She wants to be and she is--for a time.

Mr. Ramsay sees his wife and their son in the window and "the sight of them fortified him and satisfied him" (53)--but he sees also "defenseless against a doom which he perceived, his wife and son, together, in the window" (53). He feels the need to protect her just as she protects him and the others. But Mrs. Ramsay, in the window, defies death and pains of life. "She flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question" (50), Mr. Ramsay thinks infuriated. For he knows that it will rain the following day and that the children cannot go to the lighthouse. But Mrs. Ramsay, eternally hopeful, has a different view: "Perhaps you will wake up and find the sun shining and the birds singing ... perhaps it will be fine tomorrow" (26) she says, smoothing her son's hair.

In reality, Mrs. Ramsay, although she tries to give permanent peace to those around her, knows that "it will end, it will end" (97). She thinks this as she looks out the window, but dismisses the idea from her mind, tries to make it go away even though "with her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base for the world to commit; she knew that" (98). Yet she feels that "the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (126). She must keep her family together, united and protected against the evils of the universe. She wants the windows of the house kept open but she sits there like a sentinel, a soldier at the gate,

protecting; and also as some kind of magical, life-giving goddess, warding off evil and death, even though she knows her attempts are futile. At the window, always at the window. (More than half the book is a section titled "The Window").

Mrs. Ramsay--who closes doors for privacy but opens windows to allow for sensibility to the world, nature and the sea--knows the moment of unity will not last. In the landmark dinner scene of To The Lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay presides at the table at the threshold between two landscapes separated by the transparent intermediary--the window:

> Now all the candles were lit up, and the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candlelight, and composed, as they had not been in the twilight, into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there outside, a reflection in which things wavered and vanished, waterily. (146-147)

A sense of solidity takes hold inside the room while outside the uncurtained windows elusiveness prevails. Once again, the window becomes the locus for dividing not only the interior landscape of the room from the exterior natural landscape, but ambivalent double emotions as well as double consciousness or sensibilities. The window itself becomes not only a vehicle for expressing these perceptions, but a symbol of the conflict between the dualities. The window

becomes the correlative for Mrs. Ramsay's position: hovering between two worlds and two emotions.

Mrs. Ramsay is not always ambivalent; the last we see of her alive, at the conclusion of "The Window" section of the novel, she is content and hopeful: "smiling she looked out of the window and said (thinking to herself, Nothing on earth can equal this happiness)--" (185-186).

The window has separated eternal time, marked by the ocean's constant flow, from temporal, domestic time. But time passes; after Mrs. Ramsay's death, Prue's, and Andrew Ramsay's in the war, "the mirror was broken" (202). Chaos tumbles through the house where "night and day, month and year ran shapelessly together" (203). The house stands empty for years while "weeds that had grown close to the glass in the night tapped methodically at the window pane" (199). The windows reflect the loss and decay.

Nevertheless, spring and light return; the house is scrubbed, opened, brought back to life to reappear "in the early sunlight with its windows green and blue with the reflected leaves" (241). A spirit of renewal and resurrection permeates the last pages of the novel as Mr. Ramsay and his children, Cam and James, venture out to make the voyage to the lighthouse not made years before. Lily Briscce, trying to find herself as a person, woman, and artist, feels the loss of Mrs. Ramsay. She cries out for her, to make life whole, to provide comfort. Lily, outside in the garden, looks up at the house and "suddenly the

window at which she was looking was whitened by some light stuff behind it. At last then somebody had come into the drawing-room; somebody was sitting in the chair" (299). Lily sees an image of Mrs. Ramsay (long since-dead) through the window; the spirit of Mrs. Ramsay shines out and illuminates Lily's mind. All comes together for Lily at this moment and, in her maturation, there is the promise that she may be a true artist and a complete woman capable of giving as Mrs. Ramsay did. As Arnold Kettle points out in his Introduction to the English Novel, Mrs. Ramsay leads Lily Briscoe to the moment of vision which is the climax of the book, and Mrs. Ramsay's presence is an essential part of that vision (Kettle 93). The vision, of course, takes place through glass.

Despite negative undercurrents, (to be discussed in the next chapter), there is a sense of unity and affirmation in the earlier novels of Virginia Woolf: for example, the resolution at the end of Mrs. Dalloway in the coming together at the party is the opposite of the end of the later novel, Between The Acts, where the audience disperses at the conclusion. And the triumph of the artistic vision embodied in Lily Briscoe's completed painting is different from the sense of the futility of art expressed in the later novels, The Waves and Between The Acts, (as a later chapter will show). Meanwhile, Mrs. Dalloway, Lily Briscoe, and Mrs. Ramsay mirror each other as they create moments of coherence and harmony.

There is a double focus in the works of Virginia Woolf. As Michael Rosenthal puts it, "Fragmented though individuals may be in themselves, they are at the same time seen as belonging to a larger pattern in which their disparate, isolated selves are part of a transcendent unity" (92). Jean O. Love sees the mythic sense of unity in Mrs. Dalloway:

> Clarissa is more than an ordinary hostess. She has powers almost like those of some mythic goddess or great earth mother, as if she were some visible manifestation of Brahma or Mana ... she is the "true believer," in pre-existent unity. Septimus's insanity is not only insanity; it is also nature worship and pantheism--an ultimate but exaggerated and unbalanced communion with the cosmos. The day of the novel is not a single day; instead, it is a mythic symbol of timelessness. London is an elaborate "room," therefore the universe, and is also the timeless city outside space .... the party is a grand, spiritual reunion, with and within the spirit of Clarissa, where the scales drop from all eyes and all illusions of separateness and individuality vanish. (146-147)

The symbolic resurrection of Mrs. Ramsay as well as the expectant hope of the regeneration of life, although embodied in myriad images such as water, light, and organic growth, are still, strikingly conveyed through glass imagery--for the windows let in and out all possibilities: windows allow for barriers between people, for divisions between opposing forces, for blocking out the unwanted; but also for looking through and reaching toward; for quests, for voyages, and for visions and illuminations. For "through

the open window the voice of the beauty of the world came murmuring ... " (219).

Chapter Three

The Duality of Sounds: Early Fiction

"So strange is the power of sounds at certain moments" (Mrs. Dalloway 47).

I

Virginia Woolf's dual concerns with inner consciousness and outer reality reach into the realm of sounds--sounds which characters hear and interpret. The dual sounds depicted often express joy or exuberance with an undercurrent of menace suggesting a counter-force--the death-in-life impulse. Life and death in their inter-relationship form the basic structural counterpoint of Virginia Woolf's work. Her juxtaposed, contrasting sounds underscore the theme, mood, and framework of the early novels, as I will try to show.

Binary sounds also evoke the essences of characters. As James Naremore aptly points out in his perceptive book, The World Without A Self, "one of Virginia Woolf's deepest concerns is the contest for life between the ego and the undifferentiated forces which threaten to dissolve or destroy it. While most of her characters seem to long for a mystic unity, they are also capable of fighting to protect their identity" (95). This chapter will attempt to show the "contest" as it takes form in each of the earlier novels.

Within the overall atmosphere of hope and expectancy is a sense of fear and loneliness with which the characters struggle. The dichotomous sounds of the early works portend the shattering sounds depicting extreme emptiness, strife, and a failure of characters to communicate in the later novels. The menacing sounds which form an undercurrent in the early fiction prefigure what will be more fully realized in the later fiction: hollow echoes and apocalyptic sounds.

The failure of some characters to find a sense of integrated self in the early novels, what Naremore says involves "a loss of personality and an intimation of death and eternity," (139) is depicted in the introspective, trance-like states of Rachel Vinrace, Katharine Hilbery, Clarissa Dalloway, and Mrs. Ramsay. This is a foreshadowing of the complete break-down of the self, particularly in the character of Rhoda, in the later novels. The desire for unity in a cosmic sense, the compulsive need to relate one's life spiritually to the vast power of nature can result, says Naremore, in the destruction of individuality (142).

In representing a double layer of consciousness, Virginia Woolf tries to convey the pattern of the minds of her characters. Subliminal feelings and moods are conveyed in various ways; one important vehicle is through the sounds they hear which often reveal their secret fears and longings. The dual sounds depicted represent the inner conflict of the characters and lend a haunting intensity to the atmosphere in the novels. The sounds are haunting

because they suggest terror underlying everyday existence: "death that surprised in the midst of life" (Mrs. Dalloway 75).

On a larger scale, the concern with duality represents the modern image of man as a conflicted creature torn by his dual yearnings for love and death while besieged by unconscious impulses. These are, of course, Freudian concepts. While Virginia Woolf does not acknowledge Freud as an influence upon her, nevertheless, she certainly was aware of his ideas. As Harvena Richter says in The Inward Voyage (64), "Freud's theories of the unconscious, of repressions, of the importance of childhood years, of sexual symbolism were in the air when Virginia Woolf was writing and, in 1922, the Woolf's Hogarth Press began publishing The International Psychoanalytic Library."

Richter also points out that, while governed by G. E. Moore's "scientific method," the Bloomsbury attitude was outwardly rational and questioning but also inward-turning in its examination of philosophical and aesthetic questions from the standpoint of intuition of "neo-mysticism" (the term used by Johnstone in The Bloomsbury Group to mean "the extension of intuition to the unseen") (19).

Virginia Woolf certainly gives a description of the workings of the subconscious mind in the following passage from Orlando:

> ... the shadow of faintness ... had deepened now, at the back of her brain (which is the part furthest from sight)

> into a pool where things dwell in darkness so deep that what they are we scarcely know. She now looked down into this pool or sea in which everything is reflected--and, indeed, some say that all our most violent passions, and art and religion are the reflections which we see in the dark hollow at the back of the head when the visible world is obscured for the time. (211)

In this chapter's explorations of the duality of sounds, it will be shown that one set of sounds belongs to the outer world of reality while another set is heard in the inner consciousness of characters. Sometimes duality takes its shape from two kinds of sounds or one sound transformed into another; at other times, the dichotomy exists between sounds and silence. Clocks and bells--mechanical sounds--and birds and insects--natural sounds--frequently counterpoint the sound of human voices or states of silence.

Whereas James Naremore concentrates on the idea of a death-wish of characters, the interruptive sounds which Virginia Woolf interposes draw the characters back to reality from their reveries, thus representing a vital force--the life-impulse--within their conflict. Similarly, the sounds of life's activities, particularly automobile horns, boat whistles, clock chimes, are more than background noises; they play a crucial role in the texture of the novels, touching themes, motifs, and counterpointing structures. Along with the visual images, the sounds speak of many things.

The undercurrent of menacing sounds and images in

Virginia Woolf's work may be likened to what Michael Brenson (in an "Art View" article for the New York Times, January 4, 1987) calls "secondary imagery" in "the faces that haunt van Gogh's landscapes." Brenson speaks of the rational and irrational being welded together in the last paintings of van Gogh where heads and faces seem to appear in the clouds and trees of his landscapes--faces which may or may not be there. This is also true of Chinese landscape painting, Brenson points out, which, inspired by natural philosophy, has been inhabited by secondary images for centuries. "The play between the more literal and the more hidden secondary images," Brenson says, "transforms a landscape into a stage of astonishing drama." Furthermore, "the secondary imagery in van Gogh suggests the force of the emotional and psychological currents running through rational channels built to contain them." Translated into the literary medium, Virginia Woolf appears to be doing something analogous to van Gogh: creating a tension between a Realist commitment to the visible world and a Symbolist commitment to an invisible world beyond or behind it. The dual sounds which Virginia Woolf's characters hear come from both worlds: the visible/audible world and the invisible/inaudible realm. We might call the inaudible sounds "secondary sounds."

II

The Voyage Out

The voyage of The Voyage Out begins, significantly, with the "sound of sirens" (24); they strike a warning note in this novel filled with underlying menace, primitivism, sexuality, and death. Rachel Vinrace's voyage--a rites-of-passage which ends in her death--is, according to Avrom Fleishman (Virginia Woolf 3) "a series of moments of vision in which she sees ... more in accord with the rhythm of life and death which underlies the lesser rhythms of daily affairs."

In South America, Rachel enters a world far removed from European culture. Like Conrad's Heart of Darkness, The Voyage Out depicts a psychological journey into the subconscious mind as well as a geographical trip to a primitive land. The basic contrasts of night and day, water and land, European conventionality and South American primitivism represent a metaphor for the divided self torn between civilized manners and passionate desires.

The setting of the central part of The Voyage Out is, crucially, a jungle--sexual and lush but also sinister and destructive. In this jungle, Rachel awakens to love and sexual passion but here, also, she contracts a disease which will culminate in her death. Juxtaposed, contrasted sounds play a symbolic part in the description of the love scene between Rachel and Terence in their Edenic jungle bower. As

Rachel and Terence "passed into the depths of the forest ... the noises of the ordinary world were replaced by those creaking and sighing sounds which suggest to the traveller in a forest that he is walking at the bottom of the sea" (270). As they walk, the trees about them "sigh" and "creak," interrupted only "by the jarring cry of some startled animal." The lovers do not speak and "silence seemed to have fallen upon the world" (271). Timelessness, the unconscious mind, primitive nature, and eternity are all invoked in this passage. The above and below counterpoint suggests both a spiritual and animalistic state. The sighing and creaking of the trees imply sexual bliss but this is interfered with by the rude, frightened, aggressive sound of the animal crying. Thus, an element of terror and violence interrupts the love passion of the two young people. It seems that there will be consequences for throwing off the inhibitions of English civilization, for flirting with primitivism, stripping naked on a boat, going into a primeval jungle and making love there: the results are disease and death for Rachel.

While the sounds of the jungle are frightening and foreboding, at the same time, they are sexually exciting.[1] Primordial rhythms and passions are evoked in the following passage describing the expedition by boat up-river to the native village where the river swirls past the characters in the darkness:

> ... the air was full of the sound of it

> ... they seemed to be driving into the heart of the night, for the trees closed in front of them, and they could hear all round them the rustling of leaves. The great darkness had the usual effect of taking away all desire for communication by making their words sound thin and small ... (265)[2]

Human voices are drowned by the sounds of river and trees which suggest not only the natural world but the watery unconscious depths of human existence--the primitive, irrational elements. Startling sounds persist until they are counterpointed with silence: the forest "echoed like a hall. There were sudden cries; and then long spaces of silence ... " (268). Frightening, harsh sounds continually interrupt moments of revery or silence as the bell's ringing in the following passage:

> Half asleep, and murmuring broken words, they stood in the angle made by the bow of the boat. It slipped on down the river. Now a bell struck on the bridge, and they heard the lapping of water as it rippled away on either side, and once a bird, startled in its sleep, creaked, flew on to the next tree, and was silent again. (289)

That a primitive, potentially destructive power is alive in the jungle is felt by Rachel's aunt, Helen Ambrose. She comments upon the "frightening things" that underlie the apparently trivial surface of life (49). Warning sounds of impending disaster are present and Helen, standing in the jungle among the native women, hears "the cries of the senseless beasts" (285-286) and during the river voyage the "harsh, unintelligible cries" "such as when a child was

beaten" or when "voices rose in song"--mixed sounds, both violent and joyful. In the jungle atmosphere, stirred by the primitive environment, Helen feels anxiety.

Despite the uneasiness created by the atmosphere, Rachel and Terence express their love. The sounds of the echoing phrases of the lovers: "'I like it'--'I like it,'--'with me'--'with you,' 'happy together'--'very happy'" approximate the rhythm of passion in sexual intercourse, as Naremore points out (48). Sex and love, though, are often associated with death and destruction. Even during moments of bliss, a destructive note intrudes, as when Rachel and Terence Hewet proclaim their love for each other: "they were in love, were happy, were content; but why was there so much pain in happiness?" (285) Rachel wonders. Love for Rachel represents "a terrible possibility in life" (176), a danger to the self either through sexual love or through a "dissolution" into something outside the self. Early in the novel, Rachel is revealed undergoing a trance-like state-of-mind as she becomes hypnotized by the midday noises from the garden mingled with the regular beat of a clock:

> Her dissolution became so complete that she could not raise her finger any more, and sat perfectly still, listening and looking always at the same spot. It became stranger and stranger. She was overcome with awe that things should exist at all ... The things that existed were so immense and so desolate ... She continued to be conscious of these vast masses of substance for a long stretch of time, the clock still ticking in the midst of the universal silence. (125)

Here, silent eternity is juxtaposed with the noise of clock-time reality. Passages like these show a sinking into a sleep-like state which is analogous to falling into a deeper sub-consciousness and prefigure Rachel's death at the end of the novel. The noise of the clock provides an anchor in reality which prevents the character from completely slipping away. Elsewhere in The Voyage Out the significance of the clock and also the newspaper are noted: "the two together seeming to represent stability in a changing world" (117).

Death offers an escape, a release from what Shelley in Adonais calls "the contagion of the world's slow stain"--the agonies and confusions of life. Rachel's desire for release will be echoed in the similar desires of Katharine Hilbery, Clarissa Dalloway, and Mrs. Ramsay. James Naremore rightly sees that "the impulse behind a great deal of Mrs. Woolf's fiction is a kind of death-wish" (106). Peter Walsh in Mrs. Dalloway is also ambiguously drawn toward a type of death and Septimus Smith, of course, completes his own death-act. The novels are all elegiac: about the death of loved ones as well as the ambivalent feelings of characters toward their own deaths.

Even Terence Hewet longs to be free from worldly pain. Anguished by Rachel's serious illness, he becomes "overcome by a desire to escape, to have done with this suffering, to forget that Rachel was ill. He allowed himself to lapse into forgetfulness of everything" (342). Now a reversal of

sounds occurs where the beats of the sea and wind calm the harsh reality of Rachel's approaching death:

> As if a wind that had been raging incessantly suddenly fell asleep, the fret and strain and anxiety which had been pressing on him passed away ... The waves beat on the shore far away, and the soft wind passed through the branches of the trees ... Surely the world of strife and fret and anxiety was not the real world, but this was the real world, the world that lay beneath the superficial world, so that, whatever happened, one was secure. (342-343)

The other world, seemingly unreal, nevertheless awakens Hewet from his escape-revery with a sudden noise--a noise in the house.

The sounds associated with Hewet undergo a transformation as he becomes caught up in the drama of Rachel's illness and death. Earlier in the novel, the sounds he hears and creates suggest mystery and beauty. In an eavesdropping scene which parallels the voyeurism of looking into windows by Helen and Rachel discussed previously in Chapter Two, Hewet stands outside Helen and Rachel's villa and listens to their conversation: "Very gentle their voices sounded, as if they fell through the waves of the sea." The realm of the subconscious mind is evoked as Hewet listens to the woman speaking: "The broken sentences had an extraordinary beauty and detachment in Hewet's ears, and a kind of mystery too, as though they were spoken by people in their sleep" (187).

When Hewet is overcome by emotion and feelings of love

for Rachel, he begins to shout out lines of poetry but "the words escaped him, and he stumbled among lines and fragments of lines which had no meaning at all except for the beauty of the words" (188). The sounds of poetry are, thus, connected with the subconscious mind and inchoate feelings. Here the words are beautiful; later on in the novel, lines of poetry, especially from Milton's Comus, become disturbing and ominous, portending Rachel's illness and death.[3]

With Rachel's illness, Terence suddenly realizes that "underneath every action, underneath the life of every day, pain lies, quiescent, but ready to devour ... " (344). He now knows the snake in the grass, the underlying menace. He is losing Rachel who, approaching death, immerses herself in water imagery and the moribund sounds of the sea: she "heard nothing but a faint booming sound, which was the sound of the sea rolling over her head" (341).

The sound of Hewet's cry at Rachel's death is piercing: "it suddenly came over him that here was a world in which he would never see Rachel again"--"'Rachel. Rachel.' he shrieked" (354). As Bonamy will cry out for the dead Jacob, Mr. Ramsay for his lost wife, Lily Briscoe for the dead Mrs. Ramsay, Terence Hewet's cry will echo through the other novels where the most intense expression of anguish is realized in these cries for the loss of another.

After Rachel's death, only the sound of someone breathing is audible "but when the sun rose it ceased, and gave place to other sounds ... and the sounds of life became

bolder and more full of courage and authority" (355). The final sounds of The Voyage Out are sounds of life.

III

Night and Day

Virginia Woolf frequently associates traffic noises with the sounds of the sea, suggesting that they are both constants--always there in the background. They are also components of two counterpointed realms: the everyday mechanical world and the everlasting natural world. When the two realms are brought together they correspond to the two aspects of the mind--the conscious and unconscious which co-exist. Near the beginning of Night and Day--a surface comedy-of-manners with touches of tragic depths--dual sounds linking both realms are heard: from the drawing-room "the booming sound of the traffic in the distance suggested the soft surge of waters ... " (15). Further on, the sound of a boat-whistle is given human characteristics: "Very far off up the river a steamer hooted with its hollow voice of unspeakable melancholy, as if from the heart of lonely mist-shrouded voyagings" (66). The steamer sound becomes a metaphor for longing.

The mood created by passages such as these intensifies the inner conflict of the characters. Katharine Hilbery, the heroine of this deceptively conventional novel, drifts back and forth between revery and reality. The sounds she

hears play a vital part in the counter-motions of her mind.

Katharine Hilbery goes to a window "to lose herself in the nothingness of night" (106). Instead, sounds intervene and prevent her from escaping into a state of withdrawal: "But with the air the distant humming sound of far-off crowded thoroughfares was admitted to the room. The incessant and tumultuous hum of the distant traffic seemed, as she stood there, to represent the thick texture of her life; for her life was so hemmed in with the progress of other lives that the sound of its own advance was inaudible" (106). Katharine yearns for silence and privacy: "She cast her mind out to imagine an empty land where all this petty intercourse of men and women, this life made up of the dense crossings and entanglements of men and women, had no existence whatever" (106). This seems like a muted death-wish.

The tug-of-war between impulses toward death and the exigencies of life is repeatedly suggested by Virginia Woolf in the earlier novels. The sounds in the later fiction will tell another story, less dualistic, more apocalyptic.

Katharine is in conflict about whom to marry or whether to marry at all. "She did not want to marry anyone. She wanted to go away by herself, preferably to some bleak northern moor, and there study mathematics and the science of astronomy" (242). Significantly, her would-be husband, William Rodney, notices that there are dead beech-leaves attached to Katharine's dress (246). Despite her leanings

away from the worldly life, she agrees to marry William. Later, she breaks the engagement with William Rodney and chooses Ralph Denham instead.

More than her conflict about marriage, Katharine is in dispute within herself; she is torn between two worlds:

> ... she was in fancy looking up through a telescope at white shadow-cleft disks which were other worlds, until she felt herself possessed of two bodies, one walking by the river with Denham, the other concentrated to a silver globe aloft in the fine blue space above the scum of vapors that was covering the visible world. (300)

Repeatedly at the window, Katharine longs to escape from the world of people:

> She looked out of the window, sternly determined to forget private misfortunes, to forget herself, to forget individual lives ... She seemed physically to have stepped beyond the region where the light of illusion still makes it desirable to possess, to love, to struggle ... She still heard the voices within the room ... She wished to be beyond their range. (352)

The voices keep her from escaping into oblivion, yet these repetitions of Katharine's desires to retreat create an intensity verging on urgency. Even at a dinner table among people, Katharine is described morbidly: " ... she thought gloomily of her loneliness, of life's futility, of the barren prose of reality ... " (376).

When Ralph Denham declares his love for her, Katharine speaks of the impossibility of their love in much the way Rachel does to discourage Terence Hewet's love in The Voyage

Out. Katharine, like Rachel, visualizes herself always alone, not with anyone else.

Katharine's descent into the unconscious mind is described metaphorically by Virginia Woolf: "her mind made excursions into the dark of the air, or settled upon the surface of the sea ... " (434). Her mind joins with the universe here; elsewhere she is drawn to the sounds of life:

> The great torrent of vans and carts was sweeping down Kingsway ... the deep roar filled her ears; the changing tumult had the inexpressible fascination of varied life pouring ceaselessly with a purpose which, as she looked, seemed to her, somehow, the normal purpose for which life was framed ... (439)

There doesn't seem to be any explanation or cause for Katharine Hilbery's wish to escape from the pain of life: her life seems comfortable and painless outwardly. What is suggested is that her sensitive nature causes her to yearn for a life beyond the worldly one. Her struggle, therefore, is within herself, between dualistic, ambivalent longings. The struggle finally becomes alarming to her and pushes her to choose; she chooses life and marriage rather than escape through death and is propelled by strong unconscious desires: "It was a desire now--wild, irrational, unexplained, resembling something felt in childhood" (442). Nevertheless, after finding Ralph, she again detaches herself and withdraws from him. Her feelings of love for him are not fixed; they come and go. Ralph tries to communicate with her after "she had sunk into one of those

dreamy states which took no account whatever of his existence" (486), but language is inadequate; the sounds of words fail to bridge the gap between them.

Notwithstanding the conflict, the novel Night and Day ends on a romantic note as Katharine escapes, not into death, but into a magic kingdom of love with Ralph: "they had entered the enchanted region" (507) and the sounds the lovers hear are of nightingales singing. Life and love appear to have triumphed in this early book.

IV

Jacob's Room

Fragmentation of form begins with Jacob's Room where the novel is designed to parallel the "shape" of life: a fragmented, discontinuous series of moments of experience. In Jacob's Room people are cut off from one another in a world which is lonely and uncertain. We learn about Jacob from various unconnected sources: from letters he writes, the books he reads, the Greece he loves, from impressions of his Mother and others who know him--but not from Jacob himself. That we can never really know Jacob--or anyone--seems to be Virginia Woolf's point.[4] The book is less about Jacob than the difficulties in knowing him. As Michael Rosenthal says, "we grope after Jacob from the evidence available about him because such, for Woolf, 'is the manner of our seeing. Such the conditions of our love.'

Jacob, of course, finally eludes our search--as all characters in Woolf's world must. There is a kind of epistemological despair in Woolf's fiction which is strongly felt here: 'Life is but a procession of shadows'--we can really know nothing" (Virginia Woolf 80).[5]

The lonely, isolated figure of Jacob Flanders is strongly conveyed in a passage in which the sound of his footsteps creates a hollow echo unshared:

> He went back to his rooms, and being the only man who walked at that moment back to his rooms, his footsteps rang out, his figure loomed large. Back from the Chapel, back from the Hall, back from the Library, came the sound of his footsteps, as if the old stone echoed with magisterial authority: "The young man--the young man--the young man--back to his rooms." (Jacob's Room 46)

Here, Jacob is connected to institutions, to tradition, to a cultural heritage, but not to human beings. His echoes bounce off the buildings symbolically while no human voices soften the sounds.

In this book, as in Mrs. Dalloway, the life-and-death theme is associated with bells tolling. Mrs. Flanders sees the connections: "sounding at the same moment as the bell, her son's voice mixed life and death inextricably, exhilaratingly" (16).

The noises of life are juxtaposed with the silence of the empty room--Jacob's room--after his death when Bonamy goes to the window and calls out for his dead friend: "Jacob! Jacob!" (176). We are never directly told that

Jacob has died; this cry of his friend conveys the message of his death. He and others are dead in the War; the sounds of the guns, like the sounds of the sea, are dull distant beats "as if nocturnal women were beating great carpets. There was Morty lost, and Seabrook dead; her sons fighting for their country" (175).

The prevailing sounds of Jacob's Room depict emptiness and loss. Jacob, at the center of the book as a man alone in his room, seems to represent man alone in the universe. Indeed, Jacob himself thinks so: standing, as he often does, at the window, he ponders and feels the human condition: "it was not that he himself happened to be lonely, but that all people are" (141).

V

Mrs. Dalloway

Clarissa Dalloway loves the noises of life:

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

Virginia Woolf's focus on the sounds and sights of life's activities is a part of what Harvena Richter calls a concentration on the phenomena of life itself, on the moment and its values--a concern of Modernist fiction in which

Virginia Woolf was a vital force (Richter 19).[6]

Clarissa Dalloway is not only exhilarated by certain sounds; she is also stimulated by other sounds which trigger her memory-response in a Proustian mode. The squeak of a hinge on the door leads to an evocation of her youth and past, setting off a chain of memories for Clarissa at the beginning of the novel. Allied with sounds are rhythms--often dual--such as the alternate motions of up and down which are proclaimed at the beginning of Mrs. Dalloway: "What a lark! What a plunge!" The exhilaration of Clarissa in thoughts concerning her past; her present excitement about London; and the anticipation of her party put her in an "up" mood. Contrasted with her mood is the despair of her alter-ego, Septimus Smith, who will literally plunge "down" to his death. However, Clarissa herself will alternate between feelings of ecstasy and terror during the course of the novel.

Counterpointed with the vibrant sounds of outer life which Clarissa hears are her inner sounds:

> It rasped her ... to have stirring about
> in her this brutal monster! to hear
> twigs cracking and feel hooves planted
> down in the depths of that
> leaf-encumbered forest, the soul; never
> to be content quite, or quite secure,
> for at any moment the brute would be
> stirring ... (17)

These sounds from the unruly forest of her mind join with the lines from Shakespeare's Cymbeline which echo and re-echo within her: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun/Nor

the furious winter's rages" (13,44,59,283). This echoing refrain keeps alive the theme of death-in-life in Mrs. Dalloway, revealing Clarissa's desire to escape from life's pain because only death can banish fears of life's fury.

Naremore points out that Clarissa is always being carried away by "flights of sensibility"--imaginative images which have very little to do with what she actually sees--and she must be forcibly returned to the real world by the explosive backfire of an automobile or the sudden ringing of a doorbell" (The World Without A Self 81). These sounds, like the chiming of Big Ben, are the audible punctuations of reality intruding upon the drifting mind. External reality is noisy; the internal landscape is usually silent, yet there is a correspondence between outer and inner, between the world and the body realized at moments such as when Clarissa hears a "violent explosion" from a motor car in the street: "The throb of the motor engines sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body" (20).

While Clarissa feels communion with others, with life, and London, indeed with the whole universe: "it spread ever so far, her life, herself" (12); she also feels isolated, lonely, and frightened. She, like Rachel Vinrace, Katharine Hilbery, and Mrs. Ramsay, drifts off from time to time as in the following passage where, in a rhythmic lull, she falls asleep over her sewing:

Quiet descended on her, calm, content,

> as her needle, drawing the silk smoothly to its gentle pause, collected the green folds together and attached them, very lightly, to the belt. So on a summer's day waves collect, over-balance, and fall; collect and fall ... (58)

Then the half-echo of the line from Cymbeline: "Fear no more, says the heart," is followed by the interruptive sounds: "And the body alone listens to the passing bee; the wave breaking; the dog barking, far away barking and barking" until Clarissa is pulled back abruptly: "'Heavens, the front-door bell!' exclaimed Clarissa, staying her needle. Roused, she listened" (59).

The ringing of bells, particularly clock chimes, plays an important part in Mrs. Dalloway. The sounds of the clock-bells provide connecting links between the characters as they respond to the same tones from their various places about town; at the same time bringing them out of their thoughts or reveries to touch outer reality. Thus, a sense of simultaneity and contiguity is established through the sound connections while the separateness and individuality of each character is maintained.

As a group gathered in the street "the sound of an aeroplane bored ominously into the ears of the crowd ... Dropping dead down the aeroplane soared straight up ... " (29). Although the War (WWI) is over, the plane is still associated with the words "dead" and "ominous." As the people look up, bells interrupt their silent revery: "in this extraordinary silence and peace ... bells struck eleven

times ... " (30). The bells are intrusive reminders of death as they tick time away relentlessly: "Big Ben strikes! There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical: then the hour, irrevocable" (5)--double sounds, pleasant and jarring, underscoring the life and death theme. As for Clarissa--"she feared time itself ... the dwindling of life ... " (44).

Time and distance come between Peter Walsh and Clarissa; the ringing of bells tells this: "the sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them ... " (71). Clarissa, feeling abandoned by Peter Walsh and her husband, Richard, cries out in her thoughts: "'Richard! Richard!' she cried, as a sleeper in the night stretches a hand in the dark for help" (70). "The sounds came thin and chill" (70). It is the same cry as that of Terence Hewet for the dead Rachel, of Bonamy for the dead Jacob, Mr. Ramsay for the dead Mrs. Ramsay. Here it is not for a dead one, but for loss and loneliness: "I am alone for ever, she thought ... " (70).

Trying to bridge a gap, Clarissa calls out to Peter "against the roar of the open air, and overwhelmed by the traffic and the sound of all the clocks striking, her voice crying 'Remember my party tonight!'" But her voice "sounded frail and thin and very far away ... " (72). She is fighting time and death here, trying to bring others together at her party.

Clarissa's cries echo within Peter Walsh as he hears

the church bell "and the sound of St. Margaret's glides into the recesses of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound ... " (74). He identifies the sound of the bell with Clarissa and her heart illness "and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life ... " (75). Here, the secondary bells--St. Margaret's--ring, echoing Big Ben's tolling and the death-in-life theme is stated vigorously as Peter Walsh's fears reverberate with Clarissa's own terrors about illness, growing old, and being alone. The sounds of the clocks are also linked with death in Septimus's suicide, as Rezia hears the clock striking after his jump. Moreover, the compelling sounds of Big Ben cause the old lady (who represents Death) to move away from the window "as if she were attached to that sound, that string ... She was forced, so Clarissa imagined, by that sound, to move, to go--but where?" (192-193).

Bells resonate with the sound of the sea:

> The sound of Big Ben flooded Clarissa's drawing-room ... the sound of the bell flooded the room with its melancholy wave; which receded, and gathered itself together to fall once more ... (178)

This echoes the passage in which Clarissa sews in revery when the rhythmic narrator-voice says "So on a summer's day waves collect, overbalance, and fall ... " (58). The sounds of bells and sea reverberate in the chambers of Clarissa's mind.

Clocks serve as a vehicle for wry social commentary

also: The clocks divide time and make people submit to the chronology of everyday reality just as the Harley Street doctor impresses his will upon his patients: "shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, upheld authority ... " (154). There are double sets of clocks--those in Harley Street as opposed to "lower class" clocks in Oxford Street which announce the time "genially and fraternally, as if it were a pleasure ... to give the information gratis, that it was half-past one" (155). The dual sounds of the clocks, thus, represent conflicting attitudes of two different classes. (This is a nice touch of Virginia Woolf's).

Various other sounds abound in Mrs. Dalloway. Significantly, Septimus Smith has trouble with sounds. Septimus hears a motor horn in the street which for him becomes "shocks of sound" combining with other sounds and confused thoughts in his mind: "the voices of birds and the sound of wheels chime and chatter in a queer harmony ... cries sounding louder, something tremendous about to happen" (104). He believes in the magical power of sound: "that the human voice in certain atmospheric conditions ... can quicken trees into life!" (32). Rezia thinks that Septimus is always hearing things "but she heard nothing" (213). She is a plain, simple girl while he is complex and "mad."

The sounds continue. When Rezia plays with a little girl visitor in one scene, Septimus hears the noises of the

game which "became fainter and stranger and sounded like the cries of people seeking and not finding; and passing further and further away. They had lost him! ... That was the doom ... to be alone forever" (220). Like Clarissa, Septimus feels isolated and abandoned; the sounds they hear tell their story. He cries out "Evans!" but there is no answer. Thus, he joins the list of characters in Virginia Woolf's fiction who cry out for lost ones.

Septimus is linked to Clarissa in many ways, most importantly through the similar sounds they hear. When Septimus hears "dog barking and barking far away" and the lines "Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more" (211), his thoughts echo those of Clarissa who feels attached to him later on when she learns of his death: "Death was an attempt to communicate ... There was an embrace in death" (290-291).

Septimus, like Clarissa, reproaches himself for being cold to his spouse. Clarissa in her nun-like retreat in the narrow-bedded attic room recalls her frigidity with Richard, while Septimus remembers that "he could not feel" (131) after the War. Following Evans's death, "when the panic was on him that he could not feel" he became engaged to Rezia. "He had not cared when Evans was killed; that was worst; but all the other crimes raised their heads and shook their fingers and jeered and sneered ... how he had married his wife without loving her ... " (137).

When Septimus hears his wife, Rezia, crying, he cannot

respond. Instead, he dehumanizes the sounds until they become like a "piston thumping":

> She cried for the first time since they were married. Far away he heard her sobbing; he heard it accurately, he noticed it distinctly; he compared it to a piston thumping. But he felt nothing. (136)

The sounds of Rezia's crying must sound like a reproach to Septimus and he divorces himself from them by re-interpreting them into something mechanical--pistons. The pistons seem to represent his aggressive, hostile feelings--perhaps towards the world, towards his wife, and towards his own feelings and situation. That he would like to divorce Rezia has been suggested when he noticed that she was not wearing her wedding ring: "Their marriage was over, he thought, with agony, with relief ... he was free ... " (101). However, he can only find freedom through death.

Perhaps Septimus cannot feel because he is afraid to feel too much: the loss in the War of his friend, Evans, may involve more than the realization of the brutalities of war, more than the loss of a friend; it probably arouses feelings of homosexual love unacknowledged by Septimus. Homoeroticism is suggested between Septimus and Evans in the way the former compares them in his thoughts to two dogs playing together on a hearth rug (130). His feelings for Evans would parallel Clarissa's affection for Sally Seton.

James Naremore perceptively points out that though Virginia Woolf's novels are often reticent about sex, they

are not sexless. On the contrary, he says, "her prose is full of erotic impulses, and sexual themes are major elements in all her books" (242). He recognizes that Virginia Woolf either hints at or explicitly portrays homoeroticism as with St. John Hirst, Clarissa Dalloway, Lily Briscoe, Neville, Orlando, and William Dodge. "When she does portray sexual emotions, she often injects an element of fear. Her nervous, barely concealed eroticism is ... related to the wish to find some permanent, all-embracing union--to the death-wish" (242-243).

It is puzzling that Naremore omits Septimus from this list of characters, for Smith seems to best exemplify the linking of Eros and Thanatos.

The ramifications of love and death are elsewhere in the novel. The sounds Peter Walsh hears also bind him to Clarissa, as previously discussed, through the clock-bells. In addition, as Jean O. Love notes, "Peter Walsh's immersion in sound is a mystic union both with transcendent consciousness and with Clarissa" (Worlds in Consciousness 155). Peter Walsh, walking while thinking of the past and Clarissa, hears something:

> A sound interrupted him; a frail quivering sound, a voice bubbling up without direction ... the voice of no age or sex, the voice of an ancient spring sprouting from the earth ... singing ... the battered woman ... singing of love ... (122)

The mythic, eternal, primeval, is expressed through sound, through an unintelligible song: "ee um fah um so/ foo swee

too eem oo." These sounds of the battered woman singing outside Regents Park Station--singing an age-old love song, indecipherable, yet somehow meaningful--suggest another world or realm of consciousness behind the world of speech and reason. The sense of a "racial memory" which Virginia Woolf often invokes is implied here: a communion between people and the past through a pre-lingual unconscious. The voice of some mythical presence "bubbling up" as if from under-water suggests a primeval life-form or the watery unconscious mind where the words are not rational but subliminal. It is "the primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment" (Between the Acts 140).

Allen McLaurin (Virginia Woolf: The Echoes Enslaved) calls the incomprehensible song of the old woman in Mrs. Dalloway and the children's song in The Years a kind of "pure poetry" when language is divested of meaning and becomes as free as music (109). It is evident that the author herself speaks like a poet; as James Naremore realizes: "She muses over the scene and imparts its meaning through symbolic landscapes and speaks to us in metaphor" (32). Leon Edel also comments on Virginia Woolf as poetic: "Her peculiar contribution to the novel of subjectivity lay in her awareness almost from the first that she could obtain given effects of experience by a constant search for the condition of poetry ... She tries to evoke a state of feeling by a kind of mental poesy" (The Modern Psychological Novel 127).

The inarticulate cries, unintelligible noises, and poetic utterances may be understood as part of a general theme running throughout Virginia Woolf's fiction: the anxious quest for understanding in relationship to others and external surroundings in a complex, changing world of unfixed realities. This theme is a "modern" one, particularly as it depicts the frustrations involved and the ultimate failure of the quest. Insistent sounds which strain for communication in the early novels become empty sounds showing a failure to communicate in the later fiction.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Dalloway accedes to a strong sense of unity and communication, especially through Clarissa's party--a symbol of communion. Furthermore, in the contest between life and death in Mrs. Dalloway, life has the final word: the death-like old lady across the way has gone to bed while Clarissa, absent from the party, returns as a significant presence which Peter Walsh proclaims in the affirmative final "secondary sounds" of his inner voice: "For there she was" (296).

VI

To The Lighthouse

Mrs. Ramsay hears two kinds of sounds: soothing rhythms of life's activities disrupted by a menacing staccato-like undercurrent:

> ... the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again as she sat with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature, "I am guarding you--I am your support," but at other times suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her mind raised itself slightly from the task actually in hand, had no such kindly meaning, but like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea, and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow--this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror. (To The Lighthouse 27-28)

Mrs. Ramsay is comforted by the repeated beats of the waves as she is soothed by the repeated strokes of the lighthouse beams. The comforting ritualistic repetition forms a pattern in the flux of life emphasizing something unchanging within the randomness of existence. Repetition and ritual have given a sense of stability to man through the ages. The rituals associated with funerals, for instance, transmit a feeling of shared grief: that you are not alone, that others feel and have felt your pain before you.[7] Mrs. Ramsay intuitively understands this.

Mrs. Ramsay also understands that she must fail, that she cannot ward off death and destruction. She feels a sense of the impeding, inevitable losses wrought by time. This awareness of loss and mortality creates an elegiac mood

in To The Lighthouse where the indifference of the cosmos is counterpointed with the rituals of daily life. The dual sounds which various characters hear or which reverberate in the background of the landscape create a sense of dislocation and doom. The death-in-life theme persists.[8]

It is puzzling that Virginia Woolf's detractors have criticized her work as being exquisite and precious. How can this be when, as Michael Rosenthal aptly understands, "her work deals with enduring human concerns without solace of illusion or sentimentality" where "Death and the anguish of isolation are the inescapable pressures felt in every book; it is always in the face of these that her characters attempt to fashion their precarious visions of order, and their fleeting successes never obscure our sense of the difficulty of the battle or the knowledge that the dangers remain. In affirming the possibility of order, she never falsifies the chaos threatening it" (Virginia Woolf 47).

Of course, recent critics have looked at the social and political ramifications of Virginia Woolf's work, but even these tend to limit the vaster implications of her fiction. While Virginia Woolf is committed to worldly issues, she is also transcendental in that she has a sense of the sublime as well as an awareness of the abyss.

Mrs. Ramsay, too, looks in both directions. She views death as a fearful antagonist, but she also, at times, yearns for eternal peace as a retreat. This dialectical pull is depicted through sounds and silences; it is evident

in Mrs. Ramsay's famous meditation:

> To be silent; to be alone ... one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others ... Not as oneself did one find rest ever ... but as a wedge of darkness. Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; ... when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke ... It will end, it will end, she said. (95-97)

She has slipped into a nirvana-like state here, mesmerized by the lighthouse beams and her desire to retreat from life's agitations. This state-of-mind recurs in another scene when she is reading, murmuring the lines to herself and becomes "like a person in a light sleep ... She was climbing up those branches, this way and that, laying hands on one flower and then another" (181). These thoughts continue from an earlier moment when she feels that "she was climbing backwards, upwards, shoving her way up under petals that curved her ... She did not know at first what the words meant at all" (179).[9] She continues reading "from one line to another as from one branch to another ... until a sound roused her--her husband slapping his thighs" (179). "Always, Mrs. Ramsay felt, one helped oneself out of solitude reluctantly by laying hold of some little odd or end, some sound, some sight" (99). Here it is the sound of Mr. Ramsay slapping his thighs which brings Mrs. Ramsay back from where James Naremore describes her as being "on the

verge of passing out of life altogether" (The World Without A Self 137). Naremore points out that Mrs. Ramsay is strongly identified with a relinquishing of self, a death-wish; that she is always described as wearing gray or black; she has no first name; her past is obscure; and Lily Briscoe associates her with a darkness: a "triangular purple shape" (Naremore 144).

The ambivalence Mrs. Ramsay feels about death is not shared by her husband: Mr. Ramsay does not see "an embrace in death;" instead, he is self-pitying and obsessively fearful of passing time, loss, and loneliness. The lines of poetry he keeps repeating: "We perished each alone" from Cowper's "The Castaway" are echoes of the Shakespeare line in Mrs. Dalloway: "fear no more the heat of the sun," but Ramsay's line expresses a fear of death while the Shakespeare line, in contrast, represents a death-wish. The last lines of the Cowper poem resonate with the death-in-life theme evident in To The Lighthouse:

> We perished, each alone;
> But I beneath a rougher sea,
> And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

The metaphor for the relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay is put forth in terms of dual sounds: Mrs. Ramsay feels a pulse within herself which seems to resonate with "two different notes, one high, one low, struck together" (61) representing herself and her husband. She hears this sound of union but, immediately afterward, she stops reading to her son and "heard dully, ominously, a wave fall" (61).

She feels doubts about her marital relationship which diminish her joy, "the pure joy, of the two notes sounding together, and let the sound die on her ear now with a dismal flatness" (62). The double sounds ringing together and then her own separate sound represent analogues to Mrs. Ramsay for both her union with her husband and her separateness and detachment from him. Here, again, Virginia Woolf is using sound to get at things; using sensory perceptions and tropes to express feelings and relationships.

What happens between people has its correspondence in the landscape. Silent scenes, like that of the deserted house in the "Time Passes" section of To The Lighthouse, become a counterpoint to scenes of communication where noises and speaking voices predominate. Within the silent scene itself, sounds become contrapuntal, as in the following passage from "Time Passes":

> ... there came later in the summer ominous sounds like the measured blows of hammers dulled on felt, which, with their repeated shocks still further loosened the shawl and cracked the tea-cups. Now and again some glass tinkled in the cupboard as if a giant voice had shrieked so loud in its agony that tumblers stood inside a cupboard vibrated too. Then again silence fell ... there seemed to drop into this silence, this indifference, this integrity, the thud of something falling. (200-201)

These sounds in the empty house seem to reverberate as though through the silent universe, and the ominous sounds of something falling find their echo in the actual fall of

Andrew Ramsay's body--blown to bits in the War--told in the next paragraph.

Yet the sounds of life persist: "Through the open window the voice of the beauty of the world came murmuring ... " (213) as Lily hears the sea after the house is cleaned and revitalized. Lily Briscoe and Virginia Woolf try to redeem, through art and love,--G. E. Moore's values--what has been lost: Mrs. Ramsay, the family, the house. They try to salvage the spiritual and physical remains of what has been engulfed by time and death. Lily shouts to the apparition she sees: "'Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!' she cried, feeling the old horror come back--to want and want and not to have" (300). The anguish of loss and need is in the cry. But spiritually, Mrs. Ramsay does return for Lily; then Lily is able to reminisce about the sense of permanence and security that had existed at times with Mrs. Ramsay and her children:

> For in the rough and tumble of daily life, with all those children about, all those visitors, one had constantly a sense of repetition--of one thing falling where another had fallen, and so setting up an echo which chimed in the air and made it full of vibrations. (295)

Life seems to have won the battle in To The Lighthouse, at least in memory.

* * *

The sounds depicted in these early novels have represented an undercurrent: a pull toward primitivism in The Voyage Out, toward retreat in Night and Day, toward emptiness in Jacob's Room, away from life's vitality in Mrs. Dalloway, and toward wave-like hypnotic rhythms in To The Lighthouse. At the same time, other impulses have come into play, while the main interaction has been a dualistic tug-of-war between drives toward life and death.

The everyday, almost cliché-like sounds and symbols Virginia Woolf uses give the battle between life and death impulses a pervasive moment-to-moment quality. The very ordinariness created is startling in its intensity. The desperate underlying struggle to maintain life in the face of death becomes part of the texture of daily existence.

It must be remembered that Virginia Woolf took her own life: this fact underscores the intense struggle between the wish to live and the desire to die expressed through the dual images of sound in her early fiction.

In the later fiction, the sounds will take on a greater complexity.

Notes to Chapter Three

[1]The attractions of primitivism are, of course, a central theme in many of the modernist writers such as D. H. Lawrence and Conrad, particularly in Heart of Darkness.

[2]This cauldron of primal energy with its darkness and light evokes a sense of animism and tree-worship described by Frazer in The Golden Bough.

[3]In the later novels, especially in Between The Acts, poetic lines become part of the fragmented fabric of the novel. This will be discussed in Chapter Five.

[4]The difficulty of knowing anyone is a Modernist idea which Virginia Woolf incorporates into her work. One of the themes of Mrs. Dalloway is that the many facets of a person make that person hard to know or understand.

[5]The epistemological despair will become stronger in the later novel, The Years, and the fragmentation of form will increase in Between The Acts.

[6]Virginia Woolf exemplifies the modern movement in many ways. The preoccupation with sensations and perceptual nuances is typical not only of Virginia Woolf but of other modern artists, particularly post-romantic modern poets. Also "modern" is the absorption with the unconscious, dreams, stream-of-consciousness, and the irrational.

[7]The negative associations with repetition and ritual will be discussed in a later chapter in connection with The Years and Between The Acts.

[8]The narrator of Orlando wonders about this death-in-life theme: "Has the finger of death to be laid on the tumult of life from time to time lest it rend us asunder? Are we so made that we have to take death in small doses daily or we could not go on with the business of living?" (44).

[9]The experience Mrs. Ramsay is undergoing in these lines bears a remarkable resemblance to what happens to Alice in Lewis Carroll's books.

Chapter Four

Discordant Sounds: Later Fiction

I

The Waves

Between the struggling sounds of life and death impulses underlying Virginia Woolf's earlier works, and the hollow, repetitive, moribund echoes of the later fiction--which finally erupt into apocalyptic sounds--lies the unique achievement of The Waves. This novel-poem seems to represent a peak--the struggle of the artist to achieve immortality.

In The Waves, Virginia Woolf chooses to use what has been considered, since classical times, a lofty form of literature--poetry--to express herself within the genre of the novel.

The poet has traditionally been acclaimed as a priest and seer. One thinks of Milton donning the poet's priestly robes and invoking the Muse to write Paradise Lost. Virginia Woolf, of course, has no robes or Epic Muse, but she does call upon the vivid array of images in her imagination to write a novel in the language and rhythms of poetry. Moreover, one of the basic beliefs about poetry put forth by the ancient Greeks underscores the structure and prominent themes of The Waves: that the chief subject of poetry is man, his life, his death, his action, his

happiness. Virginia Woolf, accordingly, takes her characters in The Waves from morning to night, from early life through progressive stages in their life-span experiences up to the moment of death, portraying their happy and despairing thoughts and their inter-relationships.

Through imagery, Virginia Woolf depicts the individual human life-spans counterpointed with interludes of nature's daily time-span as the sun rises and sets. The private or personal is juxtaposed with the universal, the ephemeral with the everlasting, man with nature, life with death. Six lives move along toward their closing against the backdrop of the movement of the sun. Along with the universal archetypes of the natural world and images rooted in myth or history, such as the tiger leaping or the women carrying red pitchers by the Nile, Virginia Woolf presents romantic grail-quest mythic symbols. Above all, however, The Waves apotheosizes the artist in his struggle to create and his desire to achieve immortality through art. Bernard feels that he will be forgotten; only his writing will live: " ... when my voice is silent you will not remember me, save as the echo of a voice that once wreathed the fruit into phrases" (134-5).

While Virginia Woolf may be drawing upon ancient roots to capture a sense of the exaltedness attached to the writing of poetry, she is also in the company of moderns like Wallace Stevens who consider poetry to be "the supreme

fiction." Poetry for Stevens and Woolf replaces the religion of past ages.

Of course, the mixing of genres--which Virginia Woolf does most pointedly in Between the Acts--is a modern, experimental notion aimed at breaking with traditional classifications. Eric Warner, in Virginia Woolf: The Waves, recognizes that while Virginia Woolf has modern tendencies, she also has reverence for the "great tradition" of English literature. This reverence, as Warner points out, is evident in her essays and diary. At the same time, she complains of some of the experiments of modernism: "It is an age of fragments ... incapable of sustained effort, and not to be compared with the age which went before" ("How It Strikes A Contemporary" 1923). Her modern "revolt" against the past is a significant aspect of her art; yet she remains rooted in the nineteenth century where her early and formative years were spent (Warner 10).

The novel, in the hands of the great nineteenth-century masters, has risen to the dominant and most popular form of literary art. The novel retained its mimetic preserve of reflecting "life," but the image of life reflected was now changeable and unsettling, eccentric, and unique. Modern fiction becomes difficult, disturbing, and disruptive, reflecting the radical tenor of the age (Warner 8). The Waves in its dual forms of novel and poem reflects the tensions and contradictions of Virginia Woolf's time. While she reaches for a classical and romantic poetic exaltation,

the underlying dissolution and skepticism of the modern age pervades The Waves.

Just before writing The Waves, Virginia Woolf writes in her diary, "I feel more and more sure that I will never write a novel again" (18 March, 1928); and on Nov. 28, 1928, she writes, "why admit anything to literature that is not poetry--by which I mean saturated? Is that not my grudge against novelists? that they select nothing? The poets succeed by simplifying: practically everything is left out. I want to put everything in; yet to saturate. That is what I want to do in The Moths." The Moths is, of course, the original title of The Waves.

Virginia Woolf states her intention for The Waves in her diary, 30 Oct., 1926: "It is to be an endeavour at something mystical, spiritual; the thing that exists when we aren't there." A metaphysical impulse is certainly evident in The Waves. Eric Warner notes that Virginia Woolf was moving, at this time, away from personal and social concerns towards larger, more abstract and philosophical issues of being, the strangeness of life and the mysteries of identity (30). Mysticism and modernism meet in the fluent texture of The Waves (33).

The work is suffused, also, with the spirit of romantic poetry. Virginia Woolf writes that "it is a general sense of the poetry of existence that overcomes me" (A Writer's Diary 56). The use of the pure present tense (I go, I see) rather than the present progressive (I am going) gives a

sense of intense concentration, of suspended time. The romantic poets use the pure present: "I fall upon the thorns of life; I bleed" (Shelley); "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet" (Keats). As Eric Warner points out (45), T.S. Eliot in "Prufrock" also uses the pure present: "I know the voices dying with a dying fall." This device as well as many others makes The Waves more poem than novel.

The characters, for example, are presented as abstract essences, seen at heightened moments of experience. They seem to be lifted out of life. The six represent types rather than individuals; they have symbolic resonance rather than detailed, factual, character-like existences. As Michael Rosenthal points out, the characters are not intended to be part of any social or psychological world. "They are sealed off in a richly textured verbal environment away from the contamination of quotidian reality" (144). Virginia Woolf never intended her creations to be fully-realized characters; as she states in her diary: "It is odd that they [The Times] should praise my characters when I meant to have none" (A Writer's Diary 175).

The characters "speak" their thoughts in highly stylized poetic language. James Naremore uses an example of a line uttered by the boy Louis about the group: "We shall not always give out a sound like a beaten gong as one sensation strikes and then another." Naremore points out that it does not seem plausible that all the characters would speak in these detached, sometimes almost prophetic

terms. "The voices suggest an intimation of immortality, an eternal presence caught for a moment in a temporal, transient world ... " (166).

We hear Virginia Woolf's voice throughout the book and this is no doubt why some readers have emphasized that she is speaking and not the characters. The language does not seem to belong to them and Virginia Woolf is not really concerned, as a novelist usually is, about enlarging her characters. This is because The Waves is Virginia Woolf's "song."

Maria Di Battista quotes from a fragment of Virginia Woolf's in her late essay on Anon (in the New York Public Library Berg Collection) arguing that at the heart of the "vast proliferation of printed pages is the song":

> The song has the same power over the reader in the twentieth century as over the hearer in the eleventh. To enjoy singing, to enjoy hearing the song, must be the most deep-rooted and toughest of human instincts. It is an instinct of self-preservation, for only when we put two and two together do we overcome dissolution.

Song is the passion of the heart, at once its natural language and its soundest instinct, the instinct of self-preservation (Di Battista 239). Song is the passion to create; it represents the desire to fight against oblivion. This passion and fight resonate in The Waves.

The Waves is a musical composition with themes and variations, repetitions, assonances, alliterations, melodies, and dissonances, says Maxime Chastaing (167).[1]

The repetitions of syllables give a melodic effect, as in the novel's opening italicized sentence (pointed to in caps by Garrett Stewart): "The SUN had not yet riSEN" (matched at the start of the last interlude by "Now the SUN had SUNk," 236), the second sentence of The Waves records how "the SEA was slightly crEASed" (7). Stewart calls this the "texturing momentum of Woolf's prose" (429) and points to another exemplary line with echoing alliteration: "loveliness returns as one looks with all its train of phantom phrases" (287). This line is in Bernard's last soliloquy when he momentarily recovers his faith in language. Bernard, like Virginia Woolf, like Pater or Mallarmé, sometimes longs for a medium that approximates music (Naremore 182). The visual effects Virginia Woolf produces are often akin to painting while the sounds are musical.

The Waves, suffused with musical sounds, lyrical songs, and harsh dissonances (to be discussed further on) is also replete with birds. They appear in all the interludes in various forms. The birds are most interesting and work significantly as part of the entire scheme of The Waves, yet critics have not paid much attention to them. An attempt to understand Virginia Woolf's birds will be made here.

The bird with its song seems like the writer using language. At the end of The Waves, Bernard will liken himself to a bird. But before we arrive at that, let us look at what Virginia Woolf does with the birds.

The interlude sections which contain the birds seem to represent the cycle of nature's drama "between the acts" of human dramas. In the first interlude, "one bird chirped high up; there was a pause; another chirped lower down ... The birds sang their blank melody outside" (8). In the soliloquy section which follows, the children notice the birds; Susan says that "birds are singing up and down and in and out all round us" (10) and Rhoda notices that "the birds sang in chorus first ... Now ... off they fly ... But one sings by the bedroom window alone" (11). The birds, together in chorus or alone, parallel the movement of the characters coming together and drawing apart--a dominant theme of The Waves.

In the next interlude, the birds "now sang a strain or two together wildly like skaters rollicking arm-in-arm, and very suddenly silent, breaking asunder" (29). Here they are compared to humans--skaters--with their song and motions abrupt and animated. The birds' movements seem to be analogous not only to those of the characters but to the waves as well.

The sounds of The Waves are the sounds of the waves--rhythmic undulations of language which imitate the ebb and flow of the sea. The sounds are about the birds singing in chorus or alone, or remaining in silence. The sounds are the inner voices of the characters "speaking." And the sounds are of the poetic language of the work itself as the artists within the work--Bernard--and outside

it--Virginia Woolf--attempt to create form and meaning.

The birds sing "blankly," suggesting that they sing without human understanding, without human consciousness; they sing instinctively. Corresponding to them, in addition to the voices of the six characters, is a chorus of schoolboys who sing in the background from time to time. Sometimes they get rowdy as the birds sometimes get shrill and sharp. All is not always harmonious.

The birds of the third interlude are observers of all nature. Their eyes become "gold beads" and they are then called the "gold-eyed birds" who savagely attack worms. They would seem to be like Yeats's golden bird on a gilt bough in Byzantium, singing beautifully of "what is past or passing or to come;" but when Virginia Woolf has them savagely attack worms, the image of Yeats's golden birds seems to be undermined. Keats's nightingale also comes to mind as the immortal singing-bird juxtaposed with the mortal poet. This would apply to Bernard who is certainly mortal and to the struggling poet, Neville, who uses bird as well as sea and horse imagery in his attempts to capture language:

> ... Now begins to rise in me the
> familiar rhythm; words that have lain
> dormant now lift, now toss their crests,
> and fall and rise, and fall and rise
> again. I am a poet, yes" ... "it
> becomes artificial, insincere. Words
> and words and words, how they gallop ...
> I cannot give myself to their backs; I
> cannot fly with them ... " (82-83)

The poet, in contrast, in Keats's "Ode To A Nightingale"

will fly "on the viewless wings of Poesy." Here, Virginia Woolf's poet is, unfortunately, grounded. As for Wordsworth's birds in the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"--they are summoned to "sing, sing a joyous song!" (line 169). However, the Wordsworthian belief in man's communion with nature does not appear to be applicable to Virginia Woolf; instead, in The Waves, man and nature exist side by side, as in the structure of the book's alternating interludes and soliloquies.

The world of The Waves is a romantic, poetic world. The opening lines of the first soliloquy section--"I see ..., " "I hear ... "--tell us that we are in a realm of heightened sensibility, of perceptions, where seeing and hearing, images of sight and sound are fore-grounded, and the staccato-like rhythms set the pace. We are in a "poetic" world. The entire book works as a poem does: with metrical patterns, rhythmic pulsations, vivid imagery, metaphoric language, repetitions of sounds (in words, phrases, and syllables), refrains, an elevated style, lulling alliterative cadences, and the use of symbolism.

The Waves gives a sense of life, time, and experience through the images and rhythms, through the emotional effects. This creates a more poem-like effect than a specific, detailed, time-bound, engaged sense of "the novel."

Reuben Brower points out that, in her essay on De Quincey (1926), Virginia Woolf comes close to defining the

poet's power of transforming actual sights and sounds: "it is only by gathering up and putting together these echoes and fragments that we arrive at the true nature of our experience." Admiring Peacock and Sterne, Virginia Woolf says they "often write as poets write, for the sake of the beauty of the sentence and not for the sake of its use, and so stimulate us to wish for poetry in the novel" (quoted by Brower 243).

The characters in The Waves are "poeticized" romantic figures. They have no surnames, are not particularized but are vague, general, sensitive types. Most romantic of all is the hero, Percival, who recalls the romantic age of chivalry. In a book that is all voice, the hero is mute. He seems silently to represent the spirit of poetry in the others. He is the centering force who unites the others in love and faith. He is their god. But he becomes an absurd figure in his death-scene, ludicrously falling off a horse in India. This seems to be, on one level, a social criticism of the pretensions of British imperialism. On another level, it is a private symbol of grief (Virginia Woolf's personal loss of her young, promising brother who died of a brief illness) which recalls the great theme of heroic elegy for the loss of a young poet (as in Milton's Lycidas). Percival's death may be seen generally as an absurd death in an absurd world. Maria Di Battista sees another aspect of absurdity connected with Percival's death and silence; she says that Percival fails because of his

silence, his repeated failure to ask the Grail questions. This represents a blindness, an incommunicability, a fatal silence (Di Battista 153). Percival's death may symbolize the death of God since he is a "god" to the others. His silence may represent a failure of The Word.

After Percival's death, the birds stop singing: "the birds sat still save that they flicked their heads sharply from side to side. Now they paused in their song as if glutted with sound, as if the fullness of midday had gorged them" (165). "For without Percival there is no solidity" (122). Prior to his death, the six characters had come together "who have sung like eager birds each his own song ... or perched solitary outside some bedroom window and sang of love, of fame and other single experiences so dear to the callow bird ... " (123); but youth is over; they are no longer callow birds, although here they have their moment together, their communion, with Percival (126): " ... the multitude cluster round him, regarding him as if he were--what indeed he is--a God'" (136). Then "He is dead, said Neville ... 'All is over'" (151). Percival is like Yeats's center that cannot hold.

In the soliloquy section which follows Percival's death, the characters, no longer united, are all concerned with their separate identities: " ... I sign my name, I, I, and again I'" (171). And "Sleep I sing--I, who am unmelodious and hear no music save rustic music when a dog barks, a bell tinkles, or wheels crunch upon the gravel. I

sing my song by the fire like an old shell murmuring on the beach" (171). The tune has changed. Sensuous Jinny who lives in the body says, "Now let us sing our love song--come, come, come ... Jug, jug, jug. I sing like the nightingale whose melody is crowded in the too narrow passage of her throat" (177). This is not Keats's nightingale but its opposite--a sexual bird which seems earth-bound. Percival is dead, causing a loss of spirit.

Chaos infuses the following interlude (7) as the sun starts to sink:

> Birds swooped and circled high up in the air. Some raced in the furrows of the wind and turned and sliced through them as if they were one body cut into a thousand shreds. Birds fell like a net descending on the tree-tops. Here one bird taking its way alone made wing for the marsh and sat solitary on a white stake, opening its wings and shutting them. (182)

This last image of the bird on a stake will be repeated (and discussed later on in connection with Bernard). The last line of this interlude begins: "All for a moment wavered and bent in uncertainty and ambiguity ... " (183). Without the god of unification and order, there is no more certainty. This is a reflection of the modern era, anticipated by Nietzsche when he proclaimed that "God is dead."

Not only is there a failure of The Word; there is a failure of <u>words</u>. Bernard, the writer, finds that language is inadequate to express the meaning and experience of life

and living. Nevertheless, he tries. Birds have been equated with language:

> Words crowd and cluster and push forth one on top of another. It does not matter which. They jostle and mount on each other's shoulders. The single and the solitary mate, tumble and become many. It does not matter what I say. Crowding, like a fluttering bird, one sentence crosses the empty space between us. (104)

The birds, naturally, represent song, and poetry is the offspring of song. Thus the birds' singing parallels the writer using language, just as Virginia Woolf frames The Waves with the bird sections running parallel to the "voice" sections of the soliloquies. The birds' singing is counterpointed with Bernard trying to use language--the artist as songster. The connections between birds, musical sounds, language, and emotions--the world of The Waves--is noted by Darwin in The Descent of Man:

> Music arouses many emotions in us ... It is probable that nearly the same emotions, but much weaker and far less complex, are felt by birds when the male pours forth his full volume of song, in rivalry with other males, to captivate the female. (879)

Darwin goes on to say that musical tones call up vaguely and indefinitely the strong emotions of a long-past age when our half-human ancestors used musical tones and rhythms to express love, rivalry, jealousy, and triumph. Musical sounds contributed one of the bases for the development of language (880).[2]

However, Bernard struggles with language; concerned

always with writing and form, he asks "why impose my arbitrary design? ... Why select this out of all that,--one detail?" (188). This is also Virginia Woolf's--and any writer's--dilemma. The Waves is reflexive: it is about itself, about creating a work of art. The frustrating attempts to find language which is adequate and form which is fitting becomes, in The Waves, like a quest for the holy grail. Bernard, again and again, longs for another kind of expression: "I begin to long for some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words ... " (238). Instead, Bernard is "wrapped round with phrases" (217).

"'Listen,' says Louis, 'to the nightingale who sings among the trampling feet; ... Believe-'" but then Louis is "twitched asunder" (218). The belief in the nightingale which suggests the immortality of art, the sweet song, is gone. "'The gold has faded between the trees,' said Rhoda" (215). It is the gold of the sun and the golden-eyed birds which have disappeared.

Bernard thinks about immortality and its loss; he says, "once Neville threw a poem at my head. Feeling a sudden conviction of immortality I said, 'I too know what Shakespeare knew.' But that has gone'" (227). Bernard is also nostalgic about "the birds who sang with the rapt egotism of youth by the window ... " (247). He says, " ... there should be music. Not that wild hunting song, Percival's music; but a painful, gutteral, visceral, also soaring lark-like, pealing song to replace these flagging,

foolish transcripts--how much to deliberate!" (250).

Music is better than language. Trying to tell the story of his friends, Bernard realizes "How impossible to order them rightly; to detach one separately, or to give the effect of the whole--again like music. What a symphony, with its concord and its discord and its tunes on top and its complicated bass beneath ... " (256). Is this symphony The Waves? It seems to be. What Bernard says he cannot do, Virginia Woolf in fact has done.

Nevertheless, there are meaningful moments for Bernard. Near the end he hears:

> ... a distant cheering, the sound of singing, as if people waved their hats and joined in some last song. The sound of the chorus came across the water and I felt leap up that old impulse, which has moved me all my life, to be thrown up and down on the roar of other people's voices singing the same song ... (279)

There is no longer a chorus of voices of the six friends, nor the chorus of birds in the interludes. There is only one sad, lonely voice (Bernard's) for which "no echo comes when I speak ... " (284). "No sound broke the silence of the wintry landscape. No cock crowed ... " (285). Bernard moves away from his inadequate phrases, feeling a new understanding of life, but the problem with language persists: " ... how describe the world seen without a self? There are no words" (287).

For a moment in his summary, Bernard appropriates the voice of the interlude section and describes the dawn of a

new day where "the birds sing in chorus" again (292), but soon after, disillusionment sets in and he says: "Disorder, sordidity and corruption surround us. We have been taking into our mouths the bodies of dead birds. It is with these greasy crumbs, slobbered over napkins, and little corpses that we have to build" (292). This--spitting out dead birds--is a far cry from the lyrical song of the nightingale. The classical and romantic echoes of The Waves have come up against the shrill discordant notes of modernism.

At the end of the book, Bernard's book of phrases has dropped to the floor. He says, again, that he needs "a little language such as lovers use, words of one syllable such as children speak ... I need a howl; a cry" (295). He wants no more "resonances and lovely echoes ... How much better is silence ... " (295). "How much better to sit by myself like the solitary sea-bird that opens its wings on the stake" (295). Bernard seems to see himself as an isolated, crucified bird--perhaps a symbol for the suffering artist. Yet the crucified bird seems an absurd symbol, in one sense, as does Percival falling off a horse. Perhaps, also, as Percival's death may represent the death of God and The Word, the crucified bird may represent the death of the Holy Spirit. (Virginia Woolf has no religion; her occasional use of religious symbolism points to this lack or absence--here it takes the form of the death of religion).

The Waves may be about many things, but it is chiefly

self-conscious, that is, it is about itself; about writing to express and communicate, all the while saying it cannot do this because language is inadequate. It, therefore, tries to use language differently and then questions its own success. The basic themes of the book are ones which underlie all Virginia Woolf's work: the tensions and strains of communication and isolation, the love of self and others, the difficulties of creating artistic form and using language. These are the basic beliefs of G. E. Moore's Principia: the highest values are art and love. Through The Waves, Virginia Woolf communicates these even as she depicts their failure. Like Neville, she "(throws) a poem at (our) head(s). Feeling a sudden conviction of immortality ... "

II

The Years

In The Years, Virginia Woolf creates a world in which God is dead and silent, where language is difficult for characters to use, causing them also to be silent. Brute force, death, and destruction resound in the background while everyday-life goes on relentlessly, repetitiously, with no hope for change in sight.

With The Years, Virginia Woolf seems to revert to a more traditional form of the novel, for this book follows chronological sequences and is patterned with sociological

and historical realism. While it seems traditional in its structure and its presentation of characters, the sounds reverberating through it are "modern" ones. The Years resounds with hollow echoes and empty repetitions which reflect the sterility, frustrations, and failures of communication of the modern era.

The Years represents the era: a time of unrest with strikes and agitations for women's rights, a time when Freud was being published and the Russian novelists with their visions and dreams of the unconscious were being translated into English. Man was seen as a complex being with discontinuities of personality--an ever-changing identity. This instability of self echoes the philosophers' view of the incomprehensibility of the universe. The certainty of previous ages was replaced by the doubt and chaos of the modern age; old truths were called into question. The change and uncertainty of the age is approximated in the literature of the period.

The very act of repeated questioning becomes a major mode of thinking in The Years. This mimics the modern age of quest and uncertainty. It also recalls G. E. Moore's philosophical questioning as well as Virginia Woolf's own personal search for truth and a sense of identity. The characters in The Years search for meaning in life, for love, friendship, art, or knowledge to provide stability in their empty lives. As Irving Howe says, "modernism is a dynamism of asking and learning not to reply. The past was

devoted to answers; the modern period confines itself to questions. And after a certain point, the essence of modernism reveals itself in the persuasion that the true question, the one alone worth asking, cannot and need not be answered; it need only be asked over and over again, forever in new ways" (18). This seems to be the modern dynamics of The Years, in which Virginia Woolf captures the spirit of modernism.

The sounds of The Years (1937) are distinctly different from those of The Waves (1931). Peggy, a modern woman in The Years, hears far-away sounds:

> The far-away sounds, the suggestion they brought in of other worlds, indifferent to this world, of people toiling, grinding in the heart of darkness, in the depths of night ... On every placard at every street corner was Death; or worse--tyranny; brutality; torture; the fall of civilization; the end of freedom. (388)

The negativity sounded in this passage and throughout The Years is metaphysical and pervasive. It goes to the source of life itself. The tone has changed in this work. It is a decided departure from the lyricism of The Waves. It has also moved away from the zest and optimism of the earlier works. The dualistic tensions of Virginia Woolf's earlier novels become hollow, repetitive sounds in the later ones, as if the struggle between the life and death impulses has abated, becoming transformed into feelings of resignation. The transformation may indicate a change in Virginia Woolf's own basic struggle for existence.

There seems to be a movement, a progression in the works of Virginia Woolf ever-increasingly towards death--an echo of the world's movement towards war and her own personal descent into suicide. There is a shift in the fiction from an early strain of transcendentalism, where there is expectation of finding unity and harmony, to a later realization of discord and emptiness. The underlying impulse of life's pull in the earlier works gives way to a moribund magnet in the later works. The Years seems devoid of the energetic sounds of life's vitality so central to the early works.

Despite the predominance of the sounds of echoing in The Years, this novel is really about the flip-side of sound: silence. Beneath all the empty repetitions is an intense silence--the silence of things left unsaid. Terence Hewet in The Voyage Out says he wants to write a novel about silence--about the things people do not say. It appears that Virginia Woolf has done this in The Years. The repetitious echoes cover up (or "parget"--from the original title of The Years, The Pargiters) the empty silence underneath. This book about silence--the things people do not say--depicts characters who don't know how to express themselves because they think they won't be understood, or because they are interrupted when about to speak. Consequently there is no communication, no understanding; no contacts are made. All rings hollow. If language in The Waves is inadequate for expressions of the artist, in The

Years it becomes inadequate for ordinary people to use to express themselves.

At the very beginning of the book, Colonel Pargiter, looking out the window, withdraws from his group of friends--"what the others were saying was of no interest to him." When he suddenly has a question to ask, his friends are gone. Thus, Colonel Pargiter shuts "his mouth on the thing he might have said" (5). This patriarch of the book also keeps silent about his mistress and leads a secret, private life unbeknown to his family.

Rose tries to talk to Eleanor but has to repeat herself because Eleanor (who at this point in the story is only aged 21) "was not attending." The characters frequently do not pay attention to what others are saying. Unfinished sentences predominate as attempts at conversations are repeatedly thwarted.

After young Rose's traumatic experience of seeing a strange man leer at her and expose himself, she runs home and hopes that "somebody would come out and speak to her. But nobody heard her. The hall was empty" (29). This silence and lack of response becomes a familiar leitmotif of the book.

At other times, there is not so much fear, but a reluctance to speak. Eleanor doesn't want to talk: "Words went on repeating themselves in her mind ... She had her dreams, her plans, of course, but she did not want to discuss them" (30-31).

The silences become intensified as the book moves on. Silence becomes "dead silence" for Rose who is alone with her traumatic experience and cannot unburden herself to anyone (40). Her personal life seems consequently to become thwarted.

At one gathering, Kitty wonders "why does nobody talk?" (68). She is about to speak when the guests hear a sound in the hall. In The Years, sounds serve as disruptive devices which abort conversations that are about to begin. For example: "I want ..." She began ... But here a bell struck" (75). The sounds here are the opposite of the life-sustaining noises in the earlier works which recall characters from their dream-like reveries. Here they evoke a death-like silence.

References to silence and death reverberate throughout the pages which follow the announcement of Parnell's death (113-115); for example: "the sound of traffic was dulled. It was very silent here ... with dead leaves falling" (114) ... "There was no sound ... paper-boys crying death ... death ... death. The leaves were falling" (115).

The famous chain of repeated questions which characters echo throughout the novel starts with the sick and dying Mrs. Pargiter; she cries, "Where am I?" (23). Delia takes up the question (25), followed by Eleanor's query (43), then Maggie asks "Am I that, or am I this? Are we one, or are we separate ...," (140) echoing Bernard in The Waves as the sounds also travel from book to book; taken up by Sara's

"What's I?" (140). Then Rose's "What is one's past?" (167); Eleanor's "And where are we going?" (213); Kitty's "What am I doing? Where am I going?" (267); Peggy's "Where does she begin, and where do I end? ... But what is this moment; and what are we?" (334); North's "But what do I mean ... ?" (410). These are the unanswered questions, the expressions of doubts and skepticism of the modern age. These questions also represent Virginia Woolf's interest in ontology and identity--philosophical and psychological concerns--asserting the desire to know what life and the self are all about. While many critics point to the sociological and political ramificatons of The Years, the overriding, most compelling interest of Virginia Woolf is in the human condition. These questions express a need to understand the nature of being. The first question asked is by a dying woman; the primary condition of man is that he is dying; everything else rebounds with this realization.

Many references to the entombment, death, and burial of Antigone are made throughout The Years. As Sara reads The Antigone, "her body dropped suddenly ... A dark wing brushed her mind, leaving a pause; a blank space" (137). Death and blankness or silence are equated here as elsewhere. The Antigone motif expresses not only the death and silence theme but the idea of buried feelings which pervades The Years. Words, like feelings, are also imprisoned. North wants to talk to Edward about poetry and the past which is "locked up in that fine head" (408); but Edward will not

release his thoughts; the words are entombed--like Antigone--by this "guardian of beautiful words" (409).[3]

Silence represents not only individual death but the demise of civilization. North realizes this: "Silence gaped. One has to egg it on, he thought; somebody has to say something, or human society would cease ... he was about to apply himself to find something to say; ... when Delia, either from the erratic desire of a hostess always to interrupt, or divinely inspired by human charity--which he could not say--came beckoning" (378-9). The chance for an attempt at some meaningful communication is again interrupted.

North looks in a book and tries to understand a latin phrase: "There the words lay, beautiful, yet meaningless, yet composed in a pattern--nox est perpetua una dormienda ... There the words floated; but just as they were about to give out their meaning, there was a movement at the door" (394). North never learns the meaning of the latin phrase. As words fail the artist, Bernard, in The Waves, they fail the characters in The Years. Perhaps this is because the underlying meaning of the words is about death, just as the latin phrase is about death--death in a "dead" language. The meaning is elusive, it seems, since death cannot be faced.

North, the observer and silent commentator of the novel, thinks of Edward: "he can't say what he wants to say; he's afraid. They're all afraid; afraid of being

laughed at; afraid of giving themselves away ... That's what separates us; fear, he thought" (414). Fear breeds silence. North for whom "religion's dead," has a sentence in his head and " ... he wanted to make other sentences. But how can I, he thought ... unless I know what's solid, what's true; in my life, in other people's lives?" (410). Language cannot express what is not there to express. "He felt that he had been in the middle of a jungle; in the heart of darkness; cutting his way towards the light; but provided only with broken sentences, single words ... " (411). Language is a connection to life and to human beings; when it fails, life fails.

The despairing observation made by North in the final section: "We cannot help each other ... we are all deformed" (380) represents the bleak view of the entire novel for, as Michael Rosenthal notes, the history of the Pargiters in society is essentially one of exploitation, restricted options, missed opportunities (173). Nevertheless, Virginia Woolf symbolically reaches beyond the story of the Pargiters to depict the entire human condition. She accomplishes this through image, symbol, and repetition with variations. It works well in her evocation of the flower-sellers, for instance. The man selling violets at the beginning of the book is replaced by a beggar woman selling violets later on (235). She has no nose, suggesting that what changes form becomes deformed.[4] The progress is, thusly, marked in The Years.

The flower-seller also exemplifies mechanical repetition, as Allen McLaurin points out (168). He is not only repetitive himself, he is also reincarnated in a form which only slightly alters from generation to generation throughout the novel:

> "Nice vilets, fresh vilets," he repeated automatically as the people passed. Most of them went by without looking. But he went on repeating his formula automatically. "Nice vilets, fresh vilets," as if he scarcely expected anyone to buy. Then two ladies came; and he held out his violets, and he said once more "Nice vilets, fresh vilets." (174)

He has made himself into a gramophone by his dehumanized repetition.

Harvena Richter speaks of the repeated images echoing in time in The Years--the thing recurring but never quite the same, a variation in feeling which conveys the passage of time and its cyclical occurrences and the sequence and movement of hours, days, and years (170). As various leitmotifs reappear such as the Antigone or the Colonel's missing fingers, and sounds and gestures are reproduced, the reader experiences, almost as in a dream, the separate moments of the past which converge in the present reality. Snatches of songs as well as repetition, rhyme, and refrain give a sense of time's transience and cyclical recurrence (Richter 173). Richter sees the repetitions as a sign of growth; although, to the contrary, they appear as evidence of lack of communication and disintegration. The tedious

reiteration of sounds is stultifying:

> Against the dull background of traffic noises of wheels turning and brakes squeaking, there rose near at hand the cry of a woman suddenly alarmed for her child; the monotonous cry of a man selling vegetables; and then far away a barrel organ was playing. It stopped; it began again. (Years 317)

Allen McLaurin points out that this passage is a slightly modified version of the descriptive passages which have gone before, and because it fits into a complex pattern of repetitions in the novel as a whole, what we hear when the barrel organ stops and then begins again is repetition itself (105); it is for its own sake; it goes nowhere. As with the street noises--"the rhythm persisted; but the words were almost rubbed out" (162). A sense of meaninglessness suffuses The Years.

Eleanor notices the boring repetitiveness of life: "I've heard all this, I've done all this so often, she was thinking ... People's faces even seemed to repeat themselves" (175).

As Allen McLaurin observes, Virginia Woolf's interest in repetition and rhythm is not only a question of artistic "technique," it is part of her interest in "life." Repetition is one of the most basic patterns of meaning or significance. Human beings in the most degrading situations can give a limited meaning to their lives through sameliness. While it can be a source of value and comfort, it can be seen, conversely, as the denial of human value,

for people can become like machines. Too intense an awareness of regular recurrences can create a sense of emptiness and disorder (McLaurin 128). This is the atmosphere created in The Years, a far different one from the comforting, repeated strokes of the lighthouse beams which Mrs. Ramsay feels in To The Lighthouse.

Certainly the repetition of war (the novel moves from World War I to World War II) is a lunatic, senseless reoccurrence. And nothing significant really changes in The Years. Michael Rosenthal says it well:

> The bastions of privilege and power endure unchanged; the intolerance of diversity, whether social or sexual, is as great as in the past; the lunacy of war is still as compelling; in a fragmented world, without any coherent center, and where the pieces can't even come together, the possibility of shared experience and genuine communication between people is as rare in 1937 as it is in 1880. (173)

Deformed by fears which lead them into silence, the characters also turn a "deaf ear" to the would-be cries of others. Peggy's conversation with her deaf Uncle Patrick at Delia's party serves as an effective symbol for the general quality of communication in the novel:

> "How's the man who cut off his toes with the hatchet?" she said ...
> "Hacket? Hacket?" he repeated ...
> "Hacket? Hacket?" he repeated. (351-2)

Characters cry out in pain in the earlier novels, as has been noted in a previous chapter. In The Years, however, the desire exists but the cry is thwarted:

" ... she could scarcely keep herself from crying out, North! North! North! But I mustn't make a fool of myself ... she said to herself" (397).

In Virginia Woolf's short story, "Three Pictures," a cry rings out--"It was as if human nature had cried out against some inequity, some inexpressible horror ... There should be lights in the cottage windows ... But no light came. No feet were heard. There was no second cry. The first had been swallowed up, and there was dead silence ... It had been merely a voice. There was nothing to connect it with" (Complete Shorter Fiction 223).

The futility of crying out against existing horrors is expressed in this short story written in 1929. The lack of response is equally horrifying. This solitary voice crying in the wilderness reverberates throughout Virginia Woolf's work. Its voice is heard in The Years: the muted cry falling on deaf ears. This at a time when "tyranny, brutality, and torture" are a reality in Europe in the 1930's.

Instead of speaking to each other, people talk to themselves. "What a fool one feels when one talks aloud to oneself," Martin says. "'But look,' says Sara, 'They all do it' ... A middle-aged woman was coming towards them. She was talking to herself. Her lips moved ... " (237).

People get together and remain in silence--the word "silent" in some form reappears obsessively. "They walked in silence ... They approached silently ... They were silent

for a moment" (242-3), for example. Silence is described as "profound" or "dead." Associated with the mention of the word "war," the word "silence" accrues with sinister meaning: "A curious mask-like expression came down over Renny's face as she said 'the war' ... He was silent. His silence oppressed her. There was something formidable about his silence" (284).

The phrase "it was impossible to talk" (235) is reiterated in various places throughout the novel. "How can one speak when one is always interrupted?" North asks (425). A voice in the street cries out again, "Death" (191). This time it is the death of the king, echoing that of Parnell. Words which are constantly restated are: "silence," "pause," "interruption," "conceal." The word "repeated" is used repetitively. Words themselves are "drowned" and "lost" (427). Half-uttered phrases and unspoken thoughts proliferate on every page. Language cannot be shared. "There was nothing to break the silence," Sara says, repeating a line from an old letter of North's (319). "They could think of nothing else to say ... and now they had nothing to say to each other" (395). The word has failed them. In futility, one character thinks, "did it matter what one said?" and looks over his shoulder "only half listening ... " (130). The sounds are not redemptive in The Years as they are in the earlier works of Virginia Woolf.

The Years, like the echoes resounding throughout it,

travels through time and space--from 1880 to 1937, from place to place, from mind to mind of the characters. The characters seem emptied out, mere repetitions of one another. Maxime Chastaing notices that, in The Waves, there are many Bernards; he is haughty and charming, feeble and energetic, humble and cynical. He represents many aspects of a human being. But the characters in The Years do not have multiple life-like qualities; they seem hollow (128). Perhaps this is because, as North says, they "hide all the things that matter."

Eleanor thinks for a moment that perhaps "there is a pattern ... a gigantic pattern, momentarily perceptible?" But then "Her mind slipped. She could not finish her thought" (369). At the end of the novel, old and confused, she wonders about the original question of the dying Mrs. Pargiter from the beginning of the book: "Where am I?" Here it is slightly changed to "But where was she?" (426). Eleanor knows that there will be "the endless night; the endless dark" (428).

Beneath the casual, ordinary incidents of everyday life lie haunting undertones of meaning and suggestiveness. A children's song at the end is filled with "distorted sounds" of "unintelligible words" which run themselves "together almost into a shriek" (430). This seems to be a voice of the future, a portent of what is to come--gibberish and meaninglessness. The "younger generation," says Peggy, "don't mean to speak"--a commentary for the future. The

strident sounds also anticipate Virginia Woolf's later novel, Between the Acts.

The last line of The Years, about the sun rising, seems to be a false, optimistic ending tacked on to a bleak-toned book.

Some biographical notes about Virginia Woolf are helpful in illuminating the sense of despair in The Years. This novel was written between World War I and World War II. The fact that Fascism had emerged is felt in "small" symbolic ways throughout The Years. Virginia Woolf was particularly sensitive to brutality and war--this is evident in all her work.

As described in her diary, she had a very difficult time writing The Years. Perhaps, like her characters in the book, she wanted to say more than she was able to. Again, in a parallel to the structure of the book itself and its themes of repetition, she repeatedly re-wrote the novel. Phyllis Rose comments upon this: "she worked it over and over again, almost driving herself into insanity with diligence (she was close to a total collapse in 1936)" (217). Phyllis Rose also notes that various readers have connected the world-weariness shadowing The Years with the deaths of Virginia Woolf's friends in the thirties. These began in 1932 with the death of Lytton Strachey. Carrington, in despair, killed herself soon afterward. Then Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson died, and in 1934, the devastating loss of Roger Fry.

The time-span of The Years coincides with that of Virginia Woolf's own life. She was born in 1882, the book begins in 1880.

Lyndall Gordon in her biography of Virginia Woolf points out that her mother's death had been a latent sorrow, not fully felt (50) and that she "could never forgive herself this frozen time" (46). Her first emotional breakdown was right after the death of her mother.

The silences which reverberate throughout her work have biographical underpinnings. As Virginia Woolf records in Moments of Being, her father's silences are an integral part of her family life:

> George Duckworth had become after my mother's death, for all practical purposes, the head of the family. My father was deaf, eccentric, absorbed in his work, and entirely shut off from the world. (146)

> I see myself as a child, roaming about in that space of time which lasted from 1882 to 1895: A great hall I could liken it to; with windows letting in strange lights; and murmurs and spaces of deep silence. (79)

Of her mother, she writes: "Until I was in the forties ... when I wrote To The Lighthouse ... the presence of my mother obsessed me. I could hear her voice, see her ... " (80). And of the silence surrounding her mother's death, Virginia Woolf writes in her memoirs, Moments of Being:

> Of course the atmosphere of those three or four days before the funeral was so melodramatic, histrionic and unreal that any hallucination was possible. We lived through them in hush, in

artificial light. (92)

Then there is Virginia Woolf's supreme, often obsessive, interest in death. Of this she says in her diary (5: 7 Aug. 1939) that she wishes to "detect every one of the gradual stages toward death which is a tremendous experience, and not as unconscious, at least in its approaches, as birth is." The sense of death reverberates through the silence in The Years.

Some critics such as John Edward Hardy think that Virginia Woolf fails because her last novels exude such a sense of despair and hopelessness. To the contrary, it seems that Virginia Woolf's brilliant, poignant depiction of the lack of communion between people who suffer feelings of alienation and loss represents a universal as well as a particular condition in a specific period of history in which it is appropriate to feel despair. Not to feel despair, for example, in the face of the rise of Nazism would have been inhuman. The sadness of The Years is strongly realized.

III

Between the Acts

Between the Acts represents a state of mind (a collective mind) and the state of the world in Virginia Woolf's time--a time when war raged in Europe and Virginia Woolf's own mind must have been distraught, just prior to

her suicide. While she projects a sense of chaos, she maintains, as always, full artistic control.

The sounds of the book are nightmarish, jarring, disruptive, and cacophonous. Voices are disembodied, a gramophone blares from out of the bushes, animals give vent to primal screams, and human characters are assaulted by a constant battery of dissonant sounds.

The main female characters, as they are depicted, seem to be projections of the unconscious mind: Mrs. Manresa is "a wild child," Miss La Trobe is surrounded by mystery, Isa's mode of thinking is irrational and disjointed, Lucy Swithin has flights of fancy. In addition, the evocation of primal sounds through natural elements and animal noises finds an analogue in the buried human mind.

Psychological elements inherent in Virginia Woolf's work are "modern" and represent the underlying belief that the world is irrational, that the unconscious mind is illogical, and that fantasy and reality can interplay. Nowhere is this more evident in Virginia Woolf's fiction than in Between the Acts.

What goes on in the novel is analogous to what is happening in the world. The pageant depicts an historical progression, ending with a flashing-mirror, strident-sound conclusion as it reaches "The Present Day" section. The world, in other words, is in a state of nervous confusion as it goes into decline. All is breaking up as form and harmony disintegrate. Civilization, says the pageant, is

coming to an end. The characters try to understand the pageant: what the author has in mind, what the meaning of it all is. They fail to comprehend; in the same way, the meaning of modern life is unfathomable. What is real or imagined merges in confusion within the novel through its juxtaposition of everyday reality with the performance of the play. A general state of anxiety and alarm in the face of the world's state of affairs is echoed in Between the Acts through the imagery and in the thoughts and actions of the characters. Dream-like images and associations serve to evoke the disturbing underside of human existence. The sounds of the real world, punctuated with the roar of bombs and guns, resonate throughout Between the Acts in its imitative, cacophonous onomatopeia. The antagonism of the countries in the outside world finds its analogue in the hostility between husband and wife, the main characters, Giles and Isa. Isa's anguished state of mind, culminating in her death wish, represents the despair which people experience when they feel frustrated and hopeless. In Giles, the feelings are of pent-up rage as they sit around drinking tea and watching plays while Germany tries to take over the world. Art and Love try to rise above all the negativity, but they fail. The artist, represented by Miss La Trobe, fails in her art and her personal life while Isa and Giles cannot love tenderly, only with a primitive, violent kind of passion. They will make love, "but first they must fight" (219), as if to say that they are more like

animals than gentle, civilized human beings. The gentle world of tea-cups and yearly pageants is being undermined--by its own people, like Isa and Giles, by the performers in the play who disrupt it by doing things like forgetting their lines, by the intrusions of the outside world in the form of buzzing warplanes overhead.

The lack of harmony in Between the Acts symbolizes that lack everywhere else. (Fragmentation in Between the Acts will be discussed in the next chapter). Nature, too, is far from harmonious. All is disturbed and disturbing in the atmosphere within Between the Acts, echoing the state of affairs outside the novel as well as, in a larger sense, the general, confusing, complex human condition.

Fears expressed are universal, familiar ones experienced in nightmares or anxiety-dreams and arouse within the reader a flicker of subliminal response. That Virginia Woolf was aware of the way dreams and fantasies reveal inner experience is clear from her essays on Lewis Carroll and De Quincey in which she comments on their dream techniques. She creates hallucinatory effects in Between the Acts--patterns which do not adhere to conscious logical thought.

The sounds in Between the Acts are no longer quiescent as in The Years. In the later novel, they take on a life of their own and become an affront, an assault. The sounds Virginia Woolf describes--noises of madness and apocalypse--particularly through onomatopeia--may be an

approximation of a frightening inner world of uncontrollable noises[5] which are an analogue for the clashing discordances of the outer world of modern life.

Maria Di Battista uses the metaphor of sound to describe Virginia Woolf's work: "to create was the dream of Virginia Woolf. It was also a dream from which she continually awoke to the loud, startling, insistent clammerings of a hostile, as yet unhumanized reality" (245).

Through the use of allusion, literary references, images, and myths, Virginia Woolf as a modern artist strives to achieve form and order. She shares the dilemma of the modern writer; as she puts it: " ... science and religion have between them destroyed belief; ... all bonds of union seem broken, yet somehow control must exist--it is in this atmosphere of doubt and conflict that writers have now to create ... " ("The Narrow Bridge of Art," CE II:219).

Virginia Woolf evokes the spirit of modernism in many ways. According to Irving Howe, "the modern writer presents dilemmas; he cannot and soon does not wish to resolve them. He offers his struggle as the substance of his testimony" (30). This is certainly true of Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts. Modernists abandon the assumption that life is knowable. Primitivism is scught by the modern as an antidote to mechanical rationality. There is no sense of purpose of progress in Between the Acts; a loss of values, loss of God, and a sense of bleakness reverberate throughout the book.

The qualities which characterize Between the Acts have much in common with those of modern poetry: the language is broken up, the rhythm is irregular, emotional intensity is heightened, obscurity is emphasized, there is a romantic preoccupation with sensations and perceptual nuances as well as a modern absorption with the unconscious, dreams, stream of consciousness and the irrational. Contemporary life is condemned by many modern poets as it is by Between the Acts while the isolation and alienation of individuals is stressed. Between the Acts not only shares this complex of qualities with modern poetry, it uses poetic lines and phrases throughout. Here the poetry does not attain lyrical heights which it does in The Waves; in Between the Acts it resonates harshly with a death-like clatter. Virginia Woolf in her last book expresses the modern anxiety of meaninglessness.

A sense of fear, tension, and terror is hidden in the sounds--just as the record-player is hidden in the bushes. While many critics insist upon seeing a sense of unity and affirmation in Between the Acts, others see desolation and despair. More than either of these dispositions is an hallucinatory sense of horror which overrides and prevails.

The modern state of mind is a nervous one; shifting attitudes produce anxieties; stability and order have given way to a complex, perplexing existence. The nervous anxiety is reproduced in the strident sounds of Between the Acts. The main character, Isa, may be seen as representative of

the instability of the age.

Shirley Panken's study of Virginia Woolf looks at Between the Acts: "Rhythmic, poetic, and repetitive, the depressive substrate of the novel, as established by Isa, informs us pungently and sharply, in consonance with Woolf's letters and diary, of the serious emotional disturbance of both author and one of her central characters" (243).

Isa is addicted to a constant stream of songs, ditties and poems. Her underlying wish is suicidal: "what wish should I drop into the well? That the waters should cover me" (103). Despair, anger, and frustration propel her desire to take her life but of these we are offered no elaboration except for the concept associated with her: "abortive." (Panken 247).

Panken points out that "Isa murmured 'this year, last year, next year, never ... ' (Between the Acts 214), again teasing us with her (and the author's) suicidal intention" (250). Indeed, the book is preoccupied with thoughts of violence, death, and suicide; it is replete with tumultuous, subterranean emotions of love, hate, and self-destruction.

Everyone and everything in Between the Acts is nervous and jittery. Even the birds are wild, darting between the trees, responding "not to music, but to the unheard rhythm of their own wild hearts" (65). The vibratory oscillations of the bird-tree passage (to be discussed further on) indicate a threatening disturbance of the atmosphere which is analogous to nervous physical palpitations of the human

body. A frenzied state of excitability is evident here as elsewhere.

The character William Dodge is very nervous and twitches (38-39). He suffers the "unspeakable" pain of being a homosexual in 1939. Mrs. Manresa is "a wild child of nature" (41), while Giles Oliver feels as if he is "manacled to a rock ... and forced passively to behold indescribable horror" (60). Giles is enraged with the others "who sat and looked at views over coffee and cream when the whole of Europe ... was ... bristling with guns, poised with planes" (53). Giles, himself, is "bristling" with pent-up anger.

Even words--in this atmosphere of tension and fear--"rose, became menacing and shook their fists at you" (59). The landscape, too, is jarring: "The flat fields glared green, yellow, blue yellow, red yellow, then blue again. The repetition was senseless, hideous, stupefying" (67). The audience, too, about to see the play, feels nervous and uncomfortable: "We're too close; but not close enough. So they fidgeted" (65).

J. K. Johnstone (The Bloomsbury Group) realizes that the main subject of Between the Acts is not the countryside or England's past; it is the impending catastrophe of war which overshadowed England in the summer of 1939. He says that Virginia Woolf's concern is not forcefully expressed in the novel: "It is as though the pain would be too great if she looked directly at the world; and so she averts her

eyes" (372). There is, however, a powerful indirect, imagistic, and symbolic force evident in Between the Acts projecting a world seen, not with the naked eye, but with the mind's eye. The vivid image, for example, of a snake choking on a toad is a symbol of the disgusting things going on in the world--a surrealistic vision for a nightmarish reality.

World War II infiltrates the characters and the drama; the war is realized as a backdrop intruding upon the illusion of the play as warplanes roar overhead. Between the Acts tries to celebrate art and love, at the same time depicting their demise through war and annihilation.

In September 1939, England declared war on Germany. London was bombed, invasion feared, and victory for the Nazis predicted. As Virginia Woolf worked on what would be her last novel, the Battle of Britain was being fought in the skies over her Rodmell cottage.

As war approaches, Virginia Woolf records her feelings and anxieties in her diary. On Sept. 5, 1938 she anticipates the war in metaphors of sound: "What would war mean? Darkness, strain: I suppose conceivably death. And all the horror of friends ... I can't spread my mind wide enough to take it in, intelligibly. If it were real, one could make something of it. But as it is it merely grumbles, in an inarticulate way, behind reality. We may hear his [Hitler's] mad voice vociferating tonight ... at any moment any accident may suddenly bring out the uproar."

Then on Sept. 10th: " ... meanwhile the aeroplanes are on the prowl ... Sirens will hoot in a particular way when there's the first hint of a raid ... " (A Writer's Diary 29).

The diary entry for April 15th, 1939 is: "... the severance that war seems to bring: everything becomes meaningless: can't plan: then there comes too the community feeling: all England thinking the same thing--this horror of war--at the same moment" (302).

She wants to " ... detect every one of the gradual stages towards death which is a tremendous experience ... " (304). She is reading Freud at this time and says, "I think there's something in the psychoanalysis idea" (Feb. 11, 1940) and sees the contemporary writer as describing, not society, but himself "as the product, or victim: a necessary step towards freeing the next generation of repressions" (315).

Again the war (May 20, 1940): "The war is like a desperate illness. For a day it entirely obsesses: then the feeling faculty gives out; next day one is disembodied, in the air. Then the battery is re-charged and again--what? Well, the bomb terror. Going to London to be bombed. And the catastrophe--if they break through ... " (320). These feelings and this atmosphere are captured in Between the Acts.

The sounds of the war in the form of air-raids assault the senses. Virginia Woolf writes in her diary (Aug. 28,

1940): "The air saws: the wasps drone; the siren ... is as punctual as the vespers ... " (331). The airplanes roar overhead. Fear mounts. "Now we are in the war. England is being attacked. I got this feeling for the first time completely yesterday; the feeling of pressure, danger, horror. The feeling is that a battle is going on--a fierce battle ... Am I afraid? Intermittently. The worst of it is one's mind won't work with a spring the next morning" (Aug. 31, 1940:332). The creative process as well as the normal flow of life is being stymied. She says, "all writers are unhappy" (Sept. 4, 1940). Meanwhile the fearsome sound of guns and bombs exploding in the distance intensifies: "Great air traffic all night. Some loud explosions" (Sept. 16, 1940:337). She speaks of "the cadaverous twanging in the sky (Oct. 2, 1940:340); "the German drone above" of war planes (Oct. 6, 1940:341). These disruptive noises of war will carry over into Between the Acts.

The sounds depicted on the very first page of Between the Acts are strange: "a cow coughed" (3) and "a bird chuckled" (3). In real life cows don't cough and birds don't chuckle; perhaps they do in dreams or fantasy.

We are in a nightmarish scene soon afterward. On pages 11-12, young George is enjoying grouting in the grass, smelling and admiring a flower when suddenly " ... there was a roar and a hot breath and a stream of coarse grey hair rushed between him and the flower. Up he leapt, toppling in his fright, and saw coming towards him a terrible peaked

eyeless monster moving on legs, brandishing arms." This terrifying, roaring image is the boy's grandfather. This is surely not a normal, pleasant family scene. Virginia Woolf creates these moments of plunges into an inner world of nightmares--the frightening underworld of human life. Sight and sound combine to create unsettling effects.

Isa has thoughts of a whirling airplane propeller which "whizzed, whirred, buzzed, till all the flails became one flail and up soared the plane away and away ... " (15).

Then Isa has what appears to be an hallucinatory fantasy that she is being raped by a soldier and screams, beating him about the face (20)--or is it the newspaper account that she is reading? What is real or imagined is not always discernible as they continually blur into one another. When Mrs. Swithin, carrying a hammer, interrupts these thoughts of Isa's, the suggestion of aggressive blows punctuates the fantasy/newspaper-reality with a carry-over into the everyday world. The imagined screams of the girl and the potential poundings of the hammer resound on the page as in the mind. Two pages later, the hammer of everyday reality is incorporated into the interior world of Isa: "The girl screamed and hit him about the face with a hammer" (22). What is happening is that Virginia Woolf is showing the violence spreading in the mind and the world--both the domestic, personal world and the distant, larger world of newspaper-articles. The real-life hammer is incorporated into the fantasy in the same way a dream will

infuse, for example, the sound of a ringing bell in the actual room into its contents. Virginia Woolf is deeply concerned with the inner life, the power of the unconscious which she projects through imagistic and semantic complexities.

In contrast to the disturbing actual or imagined sounds is an equally stressful silence: "Empty, empty, empty: silent, silent, silent. The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence" (36-37). The alliteration in these lines sets up echoes which emphasize the vacant feelings and enlarge them to suggest timeless eternity--a vast abyss. There is a frightening absence of human beings in this passage and in the room it describes.

Even the human voices when they speak appear as sounds, disembodied: "Across the hall a door opened. One voice, another voice, a third voice came wimpling and warbling ... " (37). A sense of being cut-off, alienated, is suggested by the impersonal voices, while a feeling of agitation is conveyed by the voices when they are personalized. A sense of distance and disturbance are major qualities of Between the Acts.

The device of ellipsis employed by Virginia Woolf in Between the Acts not only gives the illusion of life's disconnectedness and fragmentary quality, but also suggests to what extent we really do not have the words (Nellie

Justicia 176). Ellipses also serve to prevent closure, thus giving a sense of the inconclusiveness and enigma of human understanding. As Isa tries to resolve her conflict with Giles, both her thoughts and the sentence itself seem to dissolve into thin air, like the disembodied voices heard elsewhere: "Love and hate ... how they tore her asunder! Surely it was time someone invented a new plot, or that the author came out from the bushes ... " (215).

Also associated with the disembodied voices are references to dwindling away, laughter dying away, words dying, and the wind blowing the words away. There is an intensification in Between the Acts of the sounds of emptiness heard in her previous novels. An awareness of the limitations of language and failures of communication is evident throughout this last novel--"It didn't matter what the words were, or who said what"--"the wind blew the words away"--"we haven't the words--we haven't the words,' Mrs. Swithin protested" (55).

Sounds play a continuous part in the novel. As the play within Between the Acts is about to begin something is clearly amiss: "Chuff, chuff, chuff sounded from the bushes. It was the noise a machine makes when something has gone wrong" (76). The first performer forgets her lines, "Hear! Hear!" says an old man in reaction; but there is nothing to hear since words have failed her and only the "chuff, chuff" in the bushes persists. The villagers sing "but half their words were blown away" (78). The machine

grinds out a tune; it "brayed and blared" (79). There are ineffectual human sounds and unrelenting mechanical ones. Then the sounds of the machine become clock-like, ticking away time. While the audience laughs at another actress, playing Queen Elizabeth, who has forgotten her lines, Giles mutters to himself, "I fear I am not in my perfect mind" and an image flashes through his mind of "a stricken deer in whose lean flank the world's harsh scorn has struck its thorn" (85).

The music blares out on the machine: "Dispersed are we" (95) repeatedly as if to underscore a theme of the book--its discontinuity. Since all things take on symbolic significance in Between the Acts, perhaps the blaring record-player hidden in the bushes represents the buried unconscious mind which keeps sending out signals, while the female characters, as previously mentioned, may also stand for aspects of concealed consciousness. Miss La Trobe maintains contact with the dark underside of life: " ... She splashed into the lily pool. The criss-cross was shattered. Only the roots beneath the water were of use to her ... (64).

Furthermore, the allegorical aspect of the book is evoked when Giles kicks stones to vent his anger and frustration: "The first kick was Manresa (lust). The second, Dodge (perversion). The third, himself (coward). And the fourth and the fifth and all the others were the same" (99). The characters are thus representative of human

characteristics just as the actors represent historical figures and allegorical states like Time and Reason.[6]

The sounds and voices continue. Some of the play's lines parallel Isa's feelings; for example, "'Plunge blade!' she said. And struck. 'Faithless!' she cried. Knife, too! It broke. So too my heart,' she said" (113).

For moments, there is a belief in unity and peace: "the other voice was saying, "'How can we deny that this brave music, wafted from the bushes, is expressive of some inner harmony?'" (119). However, the moments do not last. Scraps of conversation during intermission refer to the state of the world: "D'you believe what's in the papers? ... And what about the Jews?" (121).

The chanting of a chorus of villagers is never heard since the wind always blows their words away--language is, thus, depicted as being ephemeral; understanding and communication are non-existent. The "message" of this Greek-like chorus is never received.

Cows bellow: "It was the primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment" (140). Avrom Fleishman points out that what the cows convey is the impulse that moves men and beasts alike--the erotic impulse (214). Additionally, the scene of the cows bellowing seems to be a witty parody in reversal of the idea of art imitating nature; here nature imitates art, the play, which is imitating life.

As if to say never mind the people, listen to the

sounds, disembodied voices sound again, first indoors, now outdoors: "over the tops of the bushes came stray voices, voices without bodies, symbolical voices they seemed ... " (151). The voices say: "It all looks very black" and "No one wants it--save those damned Germans" (151). Besides what is going on with the pageant, the people, and nature, is the reality of what is going on in Europe. The bushes where the background sounds come from are described as "the trembling bushes" (153) as if to suggest the fear and menace lurking in the background.

Miss La Trobe strives for the unifying powers of art: " ... she was one who seethes wandering bodies and floating voices in a cauldron, and makes rise up from its amorphous mass a re-created world. Her moment was on her--her glory" (153). The religious connotations associated with the word "mass" and the "re-created world" raise art and the "glorified" artist to a numinous level--only for brief moments though. Harsh reality intrudes as always. The sounds become threatening: "Always I hear corrupt murmurs; the chink of gold and metal. Mad music ... " (156). A reference to the Fascists is made: "Hear not the frantic cries of the leaders who in that they seek to lead us desert us" (156). "Hear rather the shepherd ... " (156) is the exhortation--again a religious one. But the tune changes on the record-player to a song of London street-cries. Thus aggrandized art has been brought down to the mundane sounds of the street.

The spiritual uplifting of art and artist (in an age in which literature takes the place of religious faith) quickly descends into the banal. The artist, feeling herself and her art to be failures, plunges into despair at the end and goes off to a bar to drown her sorrows in drink.

Miss La Trobe believes that her play, "her gift meant nothing " ... 'A failure' she groaned, and stooped to put away the records" (209). Not only art, but love as well (the two highest values of Bloomsbury and G. E. Moore) has deserted her: "Since the row with the actress who had shared her bed and her purse the need of drink had grown on her: And the horror and the terror of being alone" (211).

James Naremore aptly points out that the disappointment of art depicted in Between the Acts "goes far deeper than Bernard's criticism of words" in The Waves; "this criticism is embodied in the very form of the work, as in no other novel by Virginia Woolf (236).

The most appalling image of the book is the snake Giles sees: "choked with a toad in its mouth. The snake was unable to swallow; the toad was unable to die. A spasm made the ribs contract; blood oozed. It was birth the wrong way round--a monstrous inversion" (99). Giles steps on them and bloodies his white tennis shoes. This apparently symbolizes the nightmarish, repugnant state of the world beneath a country-club, tennis-playing veneer which has itself become contaminated.

Another "monstrous" birth image comes through in

sounds. From the "chaos and cacophony" there is some straining for melody, for unity: "The tune began; the first note meant a second; the second a third. Then down beneath a force was born in opposition ... " (189). This birth of an opposing force seems to echo Yeats's "rough beast" "slouching towards Bethlehem to be born" in "The Second Coming." Something frightening is about to happen.

Blinded by her religious devotion, Mrs. Swithin believes that all "is harmony, could we hear it" (175) in the same way that Eleanor in The Years thinks there must be a pattern--if we could just see it. However, this harmony is not heard; instead "the tick of the machine was maddening": (176) until "all their nerves were on edge" (178).

Following the Victorian Era part, the "Present Time" section of the pageant breaks forth in extremely agitating noises:

> The tune changed; snapped; broke; jagged. Foxtrot, was it? Jazz? Anyhow the rhythm kicked, reared, snapped short. What a jangle and a jingle! ... What a cackle, a cacophony! Nothing ended. So abrupt. And corrupt. Such an outrage; such an insult; And not plain. Very up to date, all the same. What is her game? To disrupt? Jog and trot? Jerk and smirk? (183)

The noises of the age are mimetic of the spirit of the times; however, the artist's intentions are not understood by the audience.

An uproar ensues: "And Lord! the jangle and the din!

The very cows joined in ... the reticence of nature was undone, and the barriers which should divide Man the Master from the Brute were dissolved" (184). Brutality is unleashed upon the earth. At this time, Hitler has turned loose his million men with arms. The uproar described in Between the Acts "has passed quite beyond control" (184) as has the pandemonium in the world.

An anonymous voice braying over "the infernal megaphone" makes a hellish disturbance. This is followed by twelve airplanes zooming overhead which interrupt the Reverend Streatfield as he tries to make sense of the pageant in a verbal interpretation. It all seems to amount to making money for church lights--for its "illumination" (Virginia Woolf is always ironic). Language fails the churchman as it does the others: "Mr. Streatfield had lost the thread of his discourse. His command over words seemed gone" (194).

The gramophone dismisses the audience at the end with its proclamation: "Dispersed are we" (197). The audience is mystified by the play. One asks: " ... if one spirit animates the whole, what about the aeroplanes?" (197). Then Mr. Streatfield answers: "One spirit animates the whole--the aeroplanes interrupted. That's the worst of playing out of doors ... Unless of course she meant that very thing ... " (200).

In a sense, it is not the airplanes which interrupt the play, but the village play which is an interruption of the

war drama going on overhead. The pageant then becomes a play "between the acts"--the hostile acts--of the oncoming war.

As for the drama of the mind, "between the acts" may be those unconscious acts which occur beneath or between the conscious ones. "Did she mean," someone asks of the pageant, "so to speak, something hidden, the unconscious as they call it? But why always drag in sex ... It's true, there's a sense in which we all, I admit, are savages still" (199). This 1939 audience-member seems to know her Freud and Frazer.

A section near the end of the book which certainly evokes Freudian and Frazerian imagery is the starling-infested tree passage. Starlings attack the tree where Miss La Trobe had concealed herself:

> Then suddenly starlings attacked the tree behind which she had hidden. So many winged stones. The whole tree hummed with the whizz they made, as if each bird plucked a wire. A whizz, a buzz rose from the bird-buzzing, bird vibrant, bird-blackened tree. The tree became a rhapsody, a quivering cacophony, a whizz and vibrant rapture, branches, leaves, birds syllabling discordantly life, life, life, without measure, without stop devouring the tree. Then up! Then off! (209)

While Avrom Fleishman sees this buzzing tree passage as an image of natural vitality (215), it seems to go beyond this to create a sense of maddening disturbance, a primitive unruliness and wild frenzy. There is too much activity here; too much noise; too much that is unsettling, just as

the overwhelming display of fecundity in nineteenth-century England depicted in Orlando (149-150) becomes unnatural and revolting.

Aggressive words are used in this section: "attacked," "pelted," "devouring." Starlings themselves are considered to be pests. The sounds are nerve-wracking: "hummed," "whizz," "buzz," "quivering cacophony," "syllabling discordantly." The tree is bird-blackened--a death-like image. Earlier, when Miss La Trobe had leaned against this tree in despair she had thought of death: " ... the stage was empty. Miss La Trobe leant against the tree, paralyzed. Her power had left her. Beads of perspiration broke on her forehead. Illusion had failed. "'This is death,' she murmured, 'death'" (140). These associations linger to combine with the effect created by the bird-infested tree passage--a nightmarish, menacing effect.

The vexing onomotopeic sounds are used elsewhere in the book, most strongly in the final mirror-flashing scene. Nellie Justicia, in her 1986 dissertation, makes the observation that these punctuations of onomotopeic language work in a manner as to suggest that the conceptual aspect of language has given way to the power of sound to evoke emotion (173).

The sounds of nature (rain, birds, mooing cows) are mixed with the sounds of the pageant and the audience. This is done in such a way as to give, not a sense of unity, but of intrusion and interruption, a disjointed discontinuity.

Attempts at unity and harmony always fail, a fact to which the harsh, dissonant sounds testify.

A. D. Moody sees Between the Acts as essentially affirmative in attitude in that it accepts life as it is. Michael Rosenthal and Avrom Fleishman, among other critics, also see this novel as life-affirming. To the contrary, the book seems to cry out at every turn in an agonizing despair. The violence of war, the failure of art, the lack of love and communication between people are in the background but they sound notes of pain and horror which resonate throughout. The novel itself does not fail; it depicts failure--the failure rampant in the "Present Age" as the last section of the pageant is called. Between the Acts speaks for the modern period.

Notes to Chapter Four

[1]Translations from the French in paraphrase are my own.

[2]Darwin also reports that "the males of most species sing so much better and more continuously than the females" (The Descent of Man 707). It is interesting to note, in connection with this, that almost all of Virginia Woolf's characters who are writers are male: Terence Hewet, Ridley Ambrose, Mr. Ramsay, Mr. Carmichael, Neville, Bernard. Feminist critics might interpret this as a statement about males being able to write professionally because they are privileged by society whereas females do not write because they are restricted. However, perhaps it suggests that the women already have a language of instinctive non-verbal communication and the men do not. Consider that Bernard (a male) seeks a language to express what is ineffable. Another male character, Terence Hewet in The Voyage Out wants to write a novel about silence, the things people do not say. He wants to, but he doesn't. Mr. Ramsay, although he can write about intellectual ideas which span the alphabet from A to Q, cannot write about "R" which obviously stands for Ramsay, suggesting that he cannot express himself and his own identity.--A recent article in the Science Times section of the New York Times (Aug. 2, 1988) tells of a study which indicates that a female cowbird (who does not sing) will lift her wing slightly to indicate to the male that she likes his song. This is her mode of "non-verbal" communication. Many of Virginia Woolf's female characters seem to have this intuitive ability.

[3]Feminist critics use the Antigone motif to point out that the suppression of women is a strong theme of The Years.

[4]There are two puns at the heart of The Years: it is about relatives who cannot relate to each other; people are literally at "a loss for words."

[5]Hearing voices is the maddening form Virginia Woolf's emotional breakdowns take. Perhaps she tries to exorcise these "voices" in the frenetic sounds of her final work--sounds which also represent a world at war again--a world gone mad. Just before her suicide, in March 1941, she writes to Leonard Woolf: "I feel certain that I am going mad again: I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shant recover this time, I begin to hear voices, and can't concentrate" (Letters VI, 1936-1941:481).

[6]In depicting allegorical characteristics, such as Mrs.

Manresa representing lust, Virginia Woolf may have been influenced by her reading of Theophrastus at the time of writing Between the Acts. On September 11, 1939, she says in her diary: "I have just read three or four characters of Theophrastus" (A Writer's Diary 306).

Chapter Five

Glass Breaking: Later Fiction

Windows and mirrors play as compelling a part in the later fiction of Virginia Woolf as they do in the earlier works. Even the short stories are infused with images of glass, for here, as in the novels, Virginia Woolf makes explorations into personal identity and the human condition through vehicles of glass in a quest for meaning.

Because of their power to separate and divide (as the self split from its image in the mirror or the external and internal division at a window), mirrors and windows are often used by Virginia Woolf as barriers or distancing devices. On the other hand, they are, paradoxically, symbols of unification since revelations or ephiphanic "moments of being" take place at these transparent vantage points. In this sense the frame of the mirror or window is used by Virginia Woolf to create a holding pattern--to capture, for a moment, that which otherwise becomes caught up in the transitoriness of life, in the fleeting condition of mortality.

Before looking at Virginia Woolf's final apocalyptic vision through broken glass in her last novel, Between the Acts, it will be interesting to view other revelations experienced through windows and mirrors in the other works.

* * *

In a story written in 1928, "Moments of Being: 'Slater's Pins Have No Points,'" (in The Complete Shorter Fiction, ed. Susan Dick 209-214), glass represents the fragile connections between the past and the present, as well as the protective barriers between people. The first page of the story draws the reader into the "cool glassy world of Bach fugues" (209). This is the detached, remote, ineffable world where Miss Julia Craye lives and plays her music to herself and occasionally to special students like Fanny Wilmot. Julia inhabits a world which preserves the past in glass cases--Roman urns and glasses to be looked at and admired--in the house she had shared with her brother, Julius, before he died. Julius, her counterpart, had been an archaeologist, an "odd" man whose "driving look" through the frosty windowpane had seemed to say "I can't reach you--I can't get at you" (210). The existence of Julia and Julius is fragile, detached, remote, and frustrating because they cannot make contact with the world and people. They are different from others; there is "something queer in Julius Craye; it was the very same thing that was odd perhaps in Julia too" (210). But Julia wants to "break the spell that had fallen on the house; to break the pane of glass which separated them from other people" (210). She wants to come out of her protective shell (she has even dressed "like a beetle compactly in its sheath") (209), and reach out to Fanny. Fanny, too, doesn't want protection, she says, when she and Julia talk about the protective value

of men (211). Fanny, indeed, seems like a reflection or mirror-image of Julia; perhaps her youthful side.

The climax of the story occurs when Julia, holding a carnation (a flower representing incarnation--flesh) "seemed to emerge out of the London night" (214) as she is suddenly revealed to Fanny in relief against the "sharp square of the window, uncurtained" (214) behind her. The window is no longer covered with frost; it is "uncurtained" in order to reveal. And Fanny has a revelation:

> All seemed transparent for a moment to the gaze of Fanny Wilmot, as if looking through Miss Craye, she saw the very fountain of her being ... she saw back and back into the past behind her. She saw the Roman vases stood in their case ... the pettiness of daily life; and slowly aging ... she saw Julia - (214)

Fanny sees through time and into essences of people and life, and then she sees Julia in the flesh when Julia kisses her. Suddenly with the kiss, the barriers of glass have been broken. Physical and metaphysical contacts have been made.

* * *

An amazing story, written in 1929, is "The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection" (Complete Shorter Fiction 215-219), in which the mirror plays an active part and comes alive: "the looking-glass began to pour over her a light that seemed to fix her; that seemed like some acid to bite

off the unessential and superficial and to leave only the truth" (219).

Mirrors reveal secrets; they expose what is private and personal. The opening line of the story is cautionary: "People should not leave looking-glasses hanging in their rooms any more than they should leave open checque [sic] books or letters confessing some hideous crime" (215).

The mistress of the house, Isabella Tyson, is spied upon in the looking-glass by the anonymous narrator of the story who wants to solve the mystery of Isabella for "There must be truth ... it was strange that after knowing her all these years one could not say what the truth about Isabella was ..." (216). The narrator imagines intrigues and passionate assignations have taken place in Isabella's unmarried life. The looking-glass makes the mysterious, enigmatic woman become "larger and larger, more and more completely the person into whose mind one had been trying to penetrate" (219).

The life in the mirror becomes organic as Virginia Woolf beautifully adjusts the imagery:

> She came so gradually that she did not seem to derange the pattern in the glass, but only to bring in some new element which gently moved and altered the other objects as if asking them, courteously, to make room for her. And the letters and the table and the grass walk and the sunflowers which had been waiting in the looking-glass separated and opened out so that she might be received among them. (219)

There is life inside the looking-glass (the spiritual kind

of life in which primitive peoples believed),[1] for something is captured there: "in the looking-glass things had ceased to breathe and lay still in the trance of immortality" (216).

The sense of an enduring spirit occurs elsewhere in Virginia Woolf's fiction: the spirit of Mrs. Ramsay lives on and is captured by Lily Briscoe in her artistic, hallucinatory vision of the dead woman through the medium of the window. In a similar vein, the spirit of Mrs. Wilcox, in E. M. Forster's Howards End, lives on in Margaret Schlegel and the house willed to her.

The notion of life taking place inside the mirror recalls a moment in William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury when the "idiot" Benjy thinks to himself: "Caddy and Jason were fighting in the mirror ... Father ... went into the mirror and fought too" (78-79). This is a pre-lingual, primitive mode of thinking and perception. There is no abstract conception of forms being reflected in the mirror; instead, there is the belief that the people are actually in the mirror. This kind of thinking leads to a magical-fantasy world in Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass and suggestions from it reverberate in Virginia Woolf's short story as well as elsewhere in her fiction.

When Alice enters the world within the looking-glass, everything becomes reversed. For example, to approach the Red Queen, Alice must walk backwards; the looking-glass cake is handed around first and then sliced. This mad logic of

the looking-glass world is based on the mirror reflection motif: in a mirror all asymmetrical objects (objects not superposable on their mirror images) "go the other way" or are seen in reverse. Therefore, in a sense, nonsense itself is a sanity-insanity inversion. (Martin Gardner points this out in his Annotated Alice). The ordinary world is turned upside down and backward; it becomes a world in which things go every way except the way they are supposed to (Gardner, Note 181). Forward and backward are reversed by a mirror: walk toward a mirror and the image moves in the opposite direction. This fact is alluded to when Alice has to walk away from the Red Queen in order to approach her.

In Virginia Woolf's story, the observer of what is going on in the looking-glass forms definite ideas and conclusions. At the end of the story, however, she finds that she has been mistaken. Her expectations, therefore, have been reversed. The person observed in the looking-glass has turned out to be the opposite of what she appeared to be. There is, indeed, a topsy-turvy world of illusion/reality in Virginia Woolf's story as there is in Alice's world and, as implied in both literary works, in the world we all live in.

Echoes of Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass appear to be elsewhere in Virginia Woolf's fiction. Woolf uses nonsense verse in several places: the song of the old woman in Mrs. Dalloway, the children's indecipherable lines in The Years, as well as the enigmatic skywriting message in Mrs. Dalloway, for example. These bring to mind what Alice

says of the nonsense Jabberwocky poem: "it seems to fill my head with ideas--only I don't know exactly what they are." Although the strange words have no precise meaning, they chime with subtle overtones (Annotated Alice 191). Martin Gardner in his notes also points out the similarity between nonsense verse like Jabberwocky and abstract painting. The words Lewis Carroll uses suggest vague meanings, like an eye here and a foot there in a Picasso abstraction, or they may have no meaning at all--just the play of non-objective colors on a canvas (192). Virginia Woolf seems to be doing the same thing.

Of course, Virginia Woolf is very concerned with the concept of doubles which is a dominant theme of the looking-glass world as Tweedledum and Tweedledee are the mirror-image forms of each other.[2]

In Virginia Woolf's "looking-glass" story, the search for truth is paramount (reflecting the modern writer's quest for understanding). Because of the powers of the looking-glass, the narrator uses it to find truth: the inner reality of the mysterious woman reflected in it. She seems almost obsessed by the pursuit of solving the mystery: "surely one could penetrate a little farther into her being" (218). This relentless desire to expose the naked soul of another person is reminiscent of Conrad's Marlow trying to understand Jim in Lord Jim and again, to penetrate the secrets of Mr. Kurtz in Heart of Darkness. Nick Carraway, in The Great Gatsby, also tries to probe the mystique around

Jay Gatsby. In Virginia Woolf's story, the mirror does reveal the truth--a harsh, empty one:

> Here was the woman herself. She stood naked in that pitiless light. And there was nothing. Isabella was perfectly empty. She had no thoughts. She had no friends. She cared for nobody. As for her letters, they were all bills ... she did not even trouble to open them. (219)

The looking-glass becomes a dangerous, powerful weapon in that it does expose the woman. (This part brings to mind the Henry James story, "The Beast in the Jungle" in which John Marcher is revealed as a man to whom nothing has ever happened or ever will). The vision is a horrible one of nothingness and emptiness. Yet, in the Virginia Woolf tale, the suggestion is that there is some kind of life outside the person and the room--in the looking-glass--where there is a transcendent, other-world appeal. There is also order, form, and truth, within the looking-glass. This, in contrast to the woman's emptiness, is meaningful.

What appears in the mirror is artistically selected, arranged, and enclosed. C. Ruth Miller, in her dissertation, sees Virginia Woolf's frequent use of the frame as a consequence of her association with painters, particularly Roger Fry, and aestheticians (2). For Fry, the frame confers artistic significance, a "visionary quality." In "The Lady in the Looking-Glass," what is framed in the glass becomes important by the very fact that it is framed. However, C. Ruth Miller also recognizes that

Virginia Woolf is more concerned with apprehending the true nature of reality than with achieving a unified artistic vision. Like G. E. Moore, Miller notes (50), Virginia Woolf disapproved of unified systems that are the products of wish-fulfillment pursued instead of what is real. In Principia Ethica, G. E. Moore wrote that "to search for 'unity' and 'system' at the expense of truth, is not, I take it, the proper business of philosophy, however universally it may have been the practice of philosophers" (G. E. Moore 222).

Naturally, with modern writers, there is no one truth to be apprehended wholly; truths are multiple and must be seen fragmented in time and perspective or, with Virginia Woolf, through the medium of glass. The "Looking-Glass" story reflects Virginia Woolf's vision of modern life as elusive, enigmatic, complex, and subjective.

Both reality and illusion are to be seen in the mirror; it all depends on the viewer, this story seems to be saying. The Lady of Shalott had to move away from her mirror to escape from illusion to the reality outside the window. In Virginia Woolf's story, the mirror represents the mind; all takes place within the mirror just as everything takes place within the mind, the mind which probes and penetrates to find a truth. There is no reality outside or separate from the mind's subjective perceptions, just as nothing is consequential in the story except that which appears in the mirror.

The focus on the mirror itself in "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" is comparable to the concentration on the mark on the wall in Virginia Woolf's sketch of that name: the mirror and mark become a jumping-off point for the play of the mind's speculations.

There is another reason for the importance of the mirror which stands at the center of this interesting looking-glass story: it serves as a distancing device. By peering only at the mirror, the narrator-viewer avoids direct confrontation with Isabella. Perhaps distancing is necessary because voyeuristic tendencies and sexual desires are involved. Surely the narrator's wish to "penetrate a little farther into her being" (218) suggests eroticism. This becomes depersonalized as it takes on larger meaning: an almost sexual union with the universe is suggested in the line already quoted which may be seen here in another light: "And the letters and the table and the grass walk and the sunflowers separated and opened out so that she might be received among them" (219). The descriptive language continues in a physically erotic manner: "Everything dropped from her--clouds, dress, basket, diamond ... Here was the woman herself. She stood naked in that pitiless light" (219). Yet, "the enthralling spectacle" reveals an empty woman. She turns out to look old and ugly. The aroused expectations have been quelled. The looking-glass has revealed the truth of nothingness and decay. The sexual excitement is turned off.

The narrator-viewer seems 'safe'--unrevealed--since Isabella does not know she has been observed. However, the reader gets a glimpse of the voyeuristic, sexual excitement as well as the quest for knowledge and meaning revealed in the spectator-narrator. Thus, the reader views the viewer in the act of viewing while reflections of the mind and the mirror reflect back to this outside secret-sharer.

The mirror also has an alienating power in this story as the narrator is cut off and estranged from all the activity going on within the looking-glass. The image in the mirror may also be a projection of the self or the other side of a character's being. The narrator may feel the emptiness herself which she thinks she sees in Isabella.

* * *

The prevalence of mirrors in Virginia Woolf's work may indicate a modernist absorption with self-reflection. The modern novelist writes about himself writing: for example, Bernard in The Waves, Malone in Beckett's Malone Dies.

In the later novels of Virginia Woolf, the wholeness of mirrors and windows gives way to fragmentation. The glass loses its shape and structure just as the world seems to have done. Broken glass becomes a metaphor for the disintegration of modern life. The individual depicted in Woolf, as in much of modern literature, feels alien, isolated, and seeks communion with others and with something

beyond the self. The self is in flux, mutable. Identity is questioned: at what point in time? from whose perception? at what place? in what circumstances?

The modern narrative is fragmented because there is no certainty of a unified meaning. The modern novel destroys the illusion of completeness by replacing the omniscient narrator with localized perspectives and by using unexpected and unexplained details. Discontinuities represent the fractured mode of human understanding, for we know ourselves, each other, and the world only in "scraps, orts and fragments" since there is no cohesive central body of knowledge which will reveal itself to us. Individual separateness and isolation--the breaking up of the group--is another aspect of disintegration. Fragmentation ultimately becomes a metaphor for a world torn apart by conflict and war--for minds and bodies blown asunder. And segmentation represents the pieces of art to be assembled by the artist in an attempt to create some unity of vision or, as in Virginia Woolf's last work, a final vision of fragmentation itself; a revelation of life as so disrupted that civilization itself is on the verge of coming apart.

Images of glass provide a backup for this departure from more traditional structures. The broken mirror which reflects an alien and fragmented universe is the necessary mirror for the modern writer.

* * *

A biographical look at Virginia Woolf's private world seems relevant here, especially as it will link her to Rhoda in The Waves. The author speaks of her own personal feelings about mirrors in Moments of Being: "The looking-glass shame has lasted all my life" (68); then, by way of explanation, "I must have been ashamed or afraid of my own body." (68). She associates these feelings with her memory of being fondled as a child in her "private parts" by her older step-brother, Gerald Duckworth, as she sat on the ledge of a long mirror. She was also frightened by a dream of a horrible face of an animal appearing to her in a looking-glass (69). The mirror seems to represent her fears about herself and her own sexuality (the "beast" within her?) as well as of molestation.

Windows appear to be associated with Virginia Woolf's fears about her mother's dying and then her actual death. She describes her anxiety as a little girl looking out the window waiting for her mother to come home:

> I wait in agony peeping surreptitiously behind the blind for her to come down the street, when she has been out late, the lamps are lit and I am sure that she has been run over. (Once my father found me peeping; questioned me; and said rather anxiously but reprovingly, "You shouldn't be so nervous, Jinny"). (Moments of Being 84)

The window is the place where she waits for her mother's return and fearfully imagines her death. In recollecting her mother's actual death, Virginia Woolf says:

> I leant out of the nursery window the morning she died. It was about six, I suppose. I saw Dr. Seton walk away up the street with his head bent and his hands clasped behind his back. I saw pigeons floating and settling. I got a feeling of calm, sadness, and finality. It was a beautiful blue spring morning, and very still. That brings back the feeling that everything had come to an end. (84)

A looking-glass also forms a part of the death-bed scene of her mother, which she describes as a distant memory:

> And George led me in to kiss my mother, who had just died. May 28th 1939. Led by George Duckworth with towels wrapped round us and given each a drop of brandy in warm milk to drink, we were taken into the bedroom. I think candles were burning; and I think the sun was coming in. At any rate I remember the long looking-glass ... (91)

Virginia Woolf deals only briefly with her mother's death in her fiction. In a novel which she acknowledges to be about her mother and father, To The Lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay (the fictional representative of her mother) dies in parenthesis. Although her death has far-reaching repercussions affecting the lives of all those with whom she has come in contact in the book, it is mentioned only as an understated parenthetical event. This seems to be all Virginia Woolf allows herself to feel and think about her own mother's death.

Virginia Woolf's reluctance to confront her feelings seems related to her indifference to the work of Sigmund Freud of which she was aware. In the New York Times Book

Review (December 29, 1985), Peter Stansky, in reviewing Bloomsbury/Freud: the Letters of James and Alix Strachey, makes the following interesting comments about Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury:

> There was no doubt that she had psychological difficulties. Her brother, Adrian Stephen, and his wife, Ray, were among the earliest British psychoanalysts. According to Perry Meisel and Walter Kendrick, the editors of this volume, in 1914 Leonard Woolf wrote the first nontechnical review of Freud to appear in England. Not only that, but the nine books published in 1922 by the Woolf's Hogarth Press included two by Freud: Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. The latter was translated by James Strachey, the youngest brother of the Woolfs' great friend, Lytton Strachey. James and his British-American wife, Alix, were analysts; they had been analyzed by Freud. They were also Freud's most important English translators; and the Hogarth Press was to be the major British publisher of Freud's work, a project that would culminate with the publication, under James Strachey's editorship, of the 24 volumes of The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.
>
> But the treatment Woolf received for her severe emotional problems and her breakdowns was extraordinarily traditional; it consisted mostly of rest and an attempt to have her eat more, after consultation with eminent and most conservative doctors. So here she was, an apostle of modernism, having nothing to do with one of its greatest intellectual achievements when it would appear natural for her to do so. But was it really? It would be inaccurate automatically to assume that Bloomsbury was one of the purist modernist essence.

> Its response to James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence, for example, was markedly reserved.
>
> Bloomsbury wished to be modern on its own terms. Its members were brilliant and fully forthright among themselves--even willing, in Lytton Strachey's case, to use Freudian insights--but almost suggested that frankness would be vulgarized if it was practiced among the multitude. Despite the connection of some of its minor members with the great Dr. Freud, it was Woolf herself who wished to have nothing to do with him and his doctrines. She gave little weight to the activities of the Adrian Stephens or the James Stracheys, although she apparently was perfectly happy to be Freud's British publisher. Not particularly to her credit, she thought Freud was rather silly.

These are most interesting and surprising revelations; yet they make sense if seen as an unwillingness to uncover disturbing traumas in her early life. Virginia Woolf, like Rhoda, may have been afraid of the "shock of recognition."

* * *

In The Waves the reflecting properties of glass are expanded into a whole sea of reflection (like one huge mirror--perhaps symbolizing a world consciousness) where the waves (the individual consciousnesses) overlap and separate in a dual motion. This novel depicts the individuals reflecting their feelings and thoughts as they try to express themselves and then relate to the others in their group. This represents the human condition of the

individual, private, isolated self striving for understanding, communion, and love (G. E. Moore's basic values). As Maxime Chastaing says, " ... nous regardons le miroir de l'eau ... nous attendons la révélation de l'existence ... " (164). We wait for revelation, but it does not come.

Rhoda is the "looking-glass" character of The Waves. She represents a modern terror: the loneliness of self-estrangement. She cannot face herself--both literally and figuratively. She will not look in a mirror and cannot come to terms with her identity. Rhoda is cut off: "The world is entire, and I am outside of it ... " she thinks (21-22). As a child, she feels alienated from the world and from herself. She thinks she is nobody: "I have no face" (33); "That is my face," says Rhoda, "in the looking-glass ... I have no face" (43). She feels separated from her own body. (Jinny, a sensualist, in contrast to Rhoda, always admires herself in the mirror). "I am broken into separate pieces; I am no longer one" (106), Rhoda reiterates when she is older.

Rhoda is fragile, terrified of ordinary life, anxious, withdrawn, extremely sensitive. She finds refuge in a fantasy world. At school, ordinary lessons frighten her. She is phobic about her "looking-glass" face. Since she cannot face herself, she cannot face others or life itself. She is separated from common reality.

In mentioning Rhoda's alienation, A. D. Moody

appropriately asks "where is Rhoda's Mrs. Ramsay?" (57). It is true that Lily Briscoe has Mrs. Ramsay, as do the Ramsay girls, and Rachel Vinrace has her Aunt Helen, but Rhoda has no mother-figure to guide her. (She doesn't even have a surname). Perhaps this lack of connection is at the bottom of Rhoda's empty life.[3]

Rhoda, like Flush, is terrified by the "shock of recognition"--the sight of self in the looking-glass. Rhoda cannot bear to see herself and therefore avoids mirrors. The mirror, as has been seen in the story, "The Lady in the Looking-Glass," possesses harsh powers of scrutiny and judgment. It can also do strange, disorienting, frightening things. Here is the shock-of-recognition scene for the dog, Flush:

> Nothing in the room was itself; everything was something else. Even the window-blind was not a simple muslin blind; it was a painted fabric with a design of castles ... Looking-glasses further distorted these already distorted objects so that there seemed to be ten busts of ten poets instead of five; four tables instead of two. And suddenly there was a more terrifying confusion still. Suddenly Flush saw staring back at him from a hole in the wall another dog with bright eyes flashing, and tongue lolling! (Flush 28)

Rhoda, like Flush, cannot confront what she doesn't understand. Solid objects become fluid for Rhoda and she fears falling into them. She "cannot make one moment merge in the next. To [her] they are all violent, all separate ... " (130). There is no wholeness or continuity for Rhoda.

Fragmented she must commit suicide.

Bernard, on the other hand, seeks "among phrases and fragments something unbroken ... " (266). As a writer, he tries to find order in life and the universe. Rhoda has no quest, only fear which separates her from herself, others, and the world. Yet, Bernard, too, finally sees them all severed: "we are cut, we are fallen" (280).

Bernard has a looking-glass scene in which he addresses his reflection in a restaurant mirror. The confrontation is quite different from Flush's or Rhoda's:

> Oh, but there is your face. I catch your eye. I, who had been thinking myself so vast, a temple, a church, a whole universe ... am now nothing but what you see ... (I see myself in the glass) ... holds in his left hand a glass of old brandy" (292)

There are two pronounced duplications here: the homophonic "eye" with "I" and the mirror image of himself in the glass while holding a glass--suggesting that he is only a hollow repetition of himself with no vast or reverberating significance. He sees only himself unconnected to anything or anyone else.

* * *

In The Years, characters are constantly going to windows where they contemplate questions of identity, time, and destiny. Looking out the window, they step out of themselves. They also use the window to withdraw from

others in the room. There is no feeling of security or stability, only fragmentation: "Directly something got together, it broke ... and then you have to pick up the pieces ... " (392).

The "glassy essence" of the book is the breaking of wine-glasses at the concluding party. One of the characters raises his glass:

> "I was going to drink to the human race. The human race," he continued, raising his glass to his lips, "which is now in its infancy. May it grow to maturity! Ladies and gentlemen!" he exclaimed ... "I drink to that!"
>
> He brought his glass down with a thump on the table. It broke.
>
> "That's the thirteenth glass broken tonight!" said Delia ... (426)

Not a very good omen for the future. Instead of communion with the wine, there is a reversal: a shattering of glass.

There is a brief moment, however, of contact. The relatives appear gathered together in the frame of the window:

> There were the smeared plates, and the empty wine-glasses; the petals and the bread crumbs ... And there against the window, gathered in a group, were the old brothers and sisters.
>
> The group in the window, the men in their black-and-white evening dress, the women in their crimsons, golds and silvers wore a statuesque look for a moment, as if they were carved in stone ... Then they moved.; they changed their attitudes ... (432-433)

The moment of unity--representing that of both life and

art--is over. It cannot last because there is motion ("they moved")--in other words, life cannot stand still; and there is a change in attitude (from past beliefs in coherence and communion to a modern emptiness).

The cocktail party with its broken glasses and disjointed conversations at the conclusion of The Years is totally opposite in spirit to the communion-like atmosphere of Mrs. Ramsay's dinner gathering or the social togetherness of Clarissa Dalloway's party. The world of the Pargiters is not whole by any means.

* * *

Among the disconnected fragments of thoughts and words in Between the Acts a strange sentence appears: "'The glass is falling,' said a voice" (152). The sentence is not explained, nor is it obviously related to anything. It takes its place in the general sense of perplexing "scraps, orts, and fragments" which texturize the novel. It becomes part of the general sense of doom which erupts at the end: "The young who can't make but only break; shiver into splinters the old vision; smash to atoms what was whole" (183). The scraps of mirrors appear: "that's the cheval glass from the Rectory! And the mirror ... my Mother's. Cracked. What's the notion? Anything that's bright enough to reflect, presumably ourselves?" (183). "The looking-glasses darted, flashed, exposed" (184).

The audience is revealed. "Ourselves? But that's cruel. To snap us as we are, before we've had time to assume ... And only too in parts ... That's what's so distorting and upsetting and utterly unfair" (184). (Ellipses are Virginia Woolf's).

The actors flash all kinds of glass at the spectators who, in a reversal, become the ones being viewed. The "hand glasses, tin cans, scraps of scullery glass, harness room glass, and heavily embossed silver mirrors" reflect a broken universe of fragmented human beings. The flashers of the glass are called "mirror bearers" (186)--a phrase which brings to mind pall bearers.

The audience feels embarrassed as it is "laughed at by looking-glasses" (190). Since the looking-glasses are doing the laughing this invests the mirrors with quasi-human powers (as it had in the short story "The Lady in the Looking-Glass"). Not only is a psychological dynamic operating in that the viewer, upon seeing himself in the mirror, reflects back upon himself shamefully; an evocation of a metaphysical force of the glass itself is also at work here, as it was in the short story. Here, again, the nature of reality--or various realities--is called into question. As one spectator of the play asks, "The looking glasses now--did they mean the reflection is the dream; and the tune ... is the truth? or was it t'other way about?'" (200).[4]

The character seeing into the mirror in "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" has been wrong, but her vision is

corrected; she sees a more realistic truth. In a similar way, the mirrors are turned onto the spectators of the play in Between the Acts in an attempt to have them see themselves perceptively. Miss La Trobe tries to create this spectacle of truth: "Hadn't she, for twenty-five minutes, made them see? A vision imparted was relief from agony" (98). But her attempt to have the audience exposed to present-time reality does not succeed: "something was wrong with the experiment. 'Reality too strong,' she muttered" (179). Perhaps the character in the story "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" succeeds because she is viewing only one individual, whereas Miss La Trobe takes on a group, thus, suggesting the impossibility of sustaining a vision of collective experience. Although there are brief moments of shared recognition and unity, the overall atmosphere of Between the Acts emerges as fragmented just as the pageant representing the collective mind of England is composed of bits and pieces of language. At the end of the pageant, the audience breaks up into a final fractured state, bereft of unity.

* * *

Mythic echoes and associations reverberate throughout Virginia Woolf's fiction. The basic underlying myth of Echo and Narcissus lies at the center of her work since the Ovidian story concerns language--Virginia Woolf's primary

interest. Ovid's story of the hopeless love of Echo for the autoleptic Narcissus establishes associations between light and sound, emptiness and fullness of self, absorption and reflection (Hollander, 8). These are the themes and motifs Virginia Woolf conveys through her own poetic language.

Another association of Echo is with Pan. John Hollander tells us (in The Figure of Echo) that any mythology of echoing must deal with such aspects of the acoustical phenomenon as the fragmentary repetition, the decrescendo, and the presence of disembodied voice (6). We first hear echoes in Homer as reverberations and amplifications of battle noise or of trees falling in forests. The pastoral echoing in Theocritus and Virgil comes to be associated with a response in nature. Homer associates the nymph Echo with Pan. Echo, a wood-nymph, is loved by Pan according to one tradition of fable. The myth of Pan and Echo is the story of fragmentation and the preservation of song which is central to the myth of musical echo. The affirmative role is the musical, pastoral echo as in Virgil's eclogues: "we sing not to the deaf; all the forests response" (Hollander 15). However, the negative readings of Echo come from associations of fragmentation.

Fragmentation is particularly vivid in Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts where the whole novel itself is made up of broken parts: sections of history presented in the pageant interlaced with vignettes concerning the people in the village. Time and chronology are broken up and the

narrative is continually disrupted. Furthermore, the communication between the characters and the love relationships is disjointed and broken. Significantly, one of the main characters is named Isa which echoes the name and function of the mythological Isis. They must both pick up the pieces, as it were, or gather together the fragments caused by destruction. For Isis in mythology it is the pieces of her torn-apart lover, Osiris. For Virginia Woolf's Isa it is the disintegrating marriage she is part of while living in a torn-apart, war-ravaged, mad, frenzied world.[5] Connections between violence of love and violence of war are also made in To The Lighthouse where, in parenthetical announcements, Prue Ramsay dies in childbirth, hemmorhaging to death while her brother, Andrew Ramsay, is shot to death in World War I. (Ernest Hemingway also parallels the war horrors with the condition-of-life horrors in his A Farewell To Arms).

In a mimetic echoing of the shattered world, the final section of Between the Acts breaks into intense apocalyptic imagery of glass and sound. Virginia Woolf has a "modern" sense of apocalypse which Frank Kermode, in The Sense of an Ending, describes in the following way: " ... when the end comes it is not only more appalling than anybody expected, but a mere image of that horror, not the thing itself. The end is now a matter of immanence; tragedy assumes the figurations of apocalypse, of death and judgment, heaven and hell; but the world goes forward in the hands of exhausted

survivors" (82). This is just how Between the Acts ends.

Kermode's views seem to apply to Virginia Woolf and find expression in her fiction. Kermode sees a powerful eschatological element in modern thought which is reflected in the arts. He is aware that other people have felt eschatological anxiety, that it was, for instance, a feature of Mesopotamian culture. Others have expressed their feelings in images different from the twentieth-century moderns: armies in the sky, for example, or a palpable Antichrist. Eschatological anxiety attaches itself to what is available and is associated with changing images. The uniqueness of the modern sense of apocalypse expressed in literature springs from imagery of past, present, and future. We make sense of the past, Kermode says, as of a book or a psalm we have read or recited and of the present as a book the seals of which we shall see opened; the only way to do this is to project fears and guesses and inferences from the past onto the future. St. Augustine described the condition in his Confessions. The moments we call crises are ends and beginnings. We are ready, therefore, to accept all manner of evidence that ours is a genuine end, a genuine beginning. We accept it, for instance, from the calendar. Our sense of epoch is gratified above all by the ends of centuries; the best-known outbreak of fin de siècle phenomena occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. It was in that century that the expression became current. There was a great deal of apocalyptic feeling at that time

(Kermode 94-96). The decadent writers, popular at the time, were characterized by morbidity and dissolution.

The most terrible element in apocalyptic thinking is its certainty that there must be universal bloodshed, says Kermode. Virginia Woolf shared in the fin de siècle anxiety and went on to know of the actual bloodshed in World War I and then again at the beginning of World War II, the time when she took her own life.

Dorothy Van Ghent (The English Novel: Form and Function) says the decade of World War I brought into full and terrible view the collapse of values that had prophetically haunted the minds of novelists as far back as Doestoevski, Flaubert, and Dickens, or even farther back to Balzac and Stendhal. With that decade and increasingly since, the problems of modern life have appeared intransigent indeed; and, in general, the growth of that intransigence has been reflected in an increasing concern with technique on the part of the artist (245).

Architectural images and metaphors (mirrors and windows) are natural symbols of civilized life. Through them man's relation with himself and the outer world can be suggested. Virginia Woolf shows the symbols of civilization coming apart in the splintering glass in the finale of Between the Acts. This implies the end of civilization, at a time when, indeed, the horrors of World War II were smashing civilization.

Virginia Woolf's diary is filled with notations about

and thoughts of war. (How she hated even the idea of war she makes passionately clear in Three Guineas). On Wednesday, August 17, 1938, she writes: " ... at supper we discussed our generation: and the prospects of war. Hitler has his million men now under arms ... it may be war. That is the complete ruin not only of civilization in Europe, but of our last lap" (A Writer's Diary 289).[6] On Sunday, June 9th, 1940, she writes: "As sample of my present mood, I reflect: capitulation will mean All Jews to be given up. Concentration camps. So to our garage" (323). She and her Jewish husband, Leonard Woolf, had planned to commit suicide in the garage should Hitler win the war (319). Then one of her nihilistic images: "It struck me that one curious feeling is, that the writing "I" has vanished. No audience. No echo. That's part of one's death ... it is a fact--this disparition of an echo" (323).

Regarding Between the Acts which she refers to originally as P.H. (Pointz Hall): "I feel oughtn't I to finish off P.H.: oughtn't I to finish something by way of an end?" (324). Then the bombs (August 16, 1940): "They came very close. We lay down under the tree. The sound was like someone sawing in the air just above us. We lay flat on our faces, hands behind head. Don't close your teeth, said L ... Bombs shook the windows of my lodge. Will it drop I asked? If so, we shall be broken together" (329). A bomb hits a house 30 yards from the Woolf's and a shop is entirely destroyed: " ... there were no windows left ...

Heaps of bluegreen glass in the road at Chancery Lane. Men breaking off fragments left in the frames. Glass falling" (333). These images of the real world will enter Virginia Woolf's fiction along with the tone of despair: "Yes, I was thinking: we live without a future" (Sunday, January 26, A Writer's Dairy 350).

Alex Zwerdling recognizes that the sense of crisis affected Virginia Woolf's fiction in deep if indirect ways (Virginia Woolf and the Real World 302). He says that the pervasive feeling of contained violence in the personal relationships in Between the Acts--the conflict between Isa and Giles, Giles's instinctive hatred of William Dodge, the perpetual disturbance generated by Mrs. Manresa, and so on--are meant to embody warlike forces in a microcosmic setting (304). The conflict between individuals mirrors war between nations. The title of the book Between the Acts refers, among other things, to the two world wars, as Zwerdling and others have pointed out. In the last section of The Years, Virginia Woolf makes it clear that history is about to repeat itself. Eleanor Pargiter after seeing a newspaper picture of a Fascist dictator exclaims: "You see ... it means the end of everything we cared for" (Years 332). Repetition does not imply renewal in the last books of Virginia Woolf; instead one war becomes a repetition of another. She says in Three Guineas: "It seems as if there were no progress in the human race, but only repetition" (120).

Recognizing the change of tone from an optimism in her earlier novels to the realistic despair in her final ones, Alex Zwerdling comments perceptively about the incongruity of the hopeful character Mrs. Swithin: "It is as if Mrs. Swithin were a character from To The Lighthouse or The Waves who is wandering about in the wrong book and cannot see that the world has changed profoundly" (314). (It is also hard to believe that many critics have not recognized that Virginia Woolf's last books have changed significantly from an earlier sense of unity and hope to apocalyptic apotheosis). Zwerdling rightly sees in Between the Acts an attempt by Miss La Trobe (and by her creator) to trace the pervasive sense of fragmentation and isolation in the modern world to its historical roots in the pageant (317). The vision of contemporary life as essentially discontinuous, a collection of "scraps, orts and fragments," has been prepared for by all the prior sections of the pageant. And the pageant itself fails to unite the spectators who leave uttering trivial comments. There is no unity of response, no coherence of interpretation, no sense of minds moving toward a common goal. The audience is unchanged (Zwerdling 321) and a sense of human isolation persists.

We see Isa at the book's close framed against the window, appearing as a larger-than-life, archetypal, prehistoric figure. "The window was all sky without colour ... It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks" (219). The window provides a

final view: looking back, not forward, to darkness.

--the end--

Notes to Chapter Five

[1]Frazer in The Golden Bough speaks of mirrors and souls:

> As some peoples believe a man's soul to be in his shadow, so other (or the same) peoples believe it to be in his reflection in water or a mirror. Thus "the Andamanese do not regard their shadows but their reflections (in any mirror) as their souls." When the Motumotu of New Guinea first saw their likenesses in a looking-glass, they thought that their reflections were their souls. In New Caledonia the old men are of opinion that a person's reflection in water or a mirror is his soul; but the younger men, taught by the Catholic priests, maintain that it is a reflection and nothing more, just like the reflection of palm-trees in the water. The reflection-soul, being external to the man, is exposed to much the same dangers as the shadow-soul. The Zulus will not look into a dark pool because they think there is a beast in it which will take away their reflections, so that they die. The Basutos say that crocodiles have the power of thus killing a man by dragging his reflection under water. When one of them dies suddenly and from no apparent cause, his relatives will allege that a crocodile must have taken his shadow some time when he crossed a stream. In Saddle Island, Melanesia, there is a pool "into which if anyone looks he dies; the malignant spirit takes hold upon his life by means of his reflection on the water."
>
> We can now understand why it was a maxim both in ancient India and ancient Greece not to look at one's reflection in water, and why the Greeks regarded it as an omen of death if a man dreamed of seeing himself so reflected. They feared that the water-spirits would drag the person's reflection or soul under water, leaving him soulless to perish. This was probably the origin of the classical story of the beautiful

> Narcissus, who languished and died through seeing his reflection in the water.
>
> Further, we can now explain the widespread custom of covering up mirrors or turning them to the wall after a death has taken place in the house. It is feared that the soul, projected out of the person in the shape of his reflections in the mirror, may be carried off by the ghost of the departed which is commonly supposed to linger about the house till the burial. (222-3)

[2]Another connection between Virginia Woolf's work and Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass is with the White Knight. Of all the characters in the Looking-Glass world, only the White Knight is kind to Alice and seems genuinely fond of her. The White Knight, comically, keeps falling off his horse. Is it far-fetched to say that Percival in The Waves is like the White Knight? Only there is a reversal here: Percival, who provides the only real connection as a focal point for all the characters in The Waves, he, who is their ideal knight in shining armor, falls off his horse in India. He doesn't get back on his horse as does the White Knight; instead, Percival dies in this later novel of Virginia Woolf's where things fall apart. (James Joyce uses Through the Looking-Glass's Humpty-Dumpty as a dominant character whose fall echoes the fall of Lucifer and the fall of man, along with the fall of Finnegan and others). There is rise and fall in Virginia Woolf's The Waves also, but unlike Joyce, Woolf ends The Waves with fall. "Alis, alas, she broke the glass! Liddell lokker through the leafery, ours is mistery of pain" (Finnegans Wake 270).

[3]The-search-for-the-mother theme is examined by Feminist critics. It parallels the search-for-the-father theme which is outstanding in literature from Homer's Odyssey to Joyce's Ulysses.

[4]Ambivalence about identity is revealed through mirrors in Virginia Woolf's work. There is a self, an opposite self, a double, and many selves displayed through mirror imagery. All pose questions about what is the real self. In Between the Acts another aspect of the self comes into play: the assumed self. The pageant and the novel in which it is embedded are mirror images of each other while the characters are mirrored by the parts they play in the pageant. The characters have a "real" life within the novel as opposed to their role playing; but, of course, they are not "real" as they are only characters in a book. They are

framed within a frame. All the world's a stage and we might say, also, that all the world's a mirror.

[5]Isa is fragmented herself; this is symbolically realized when she gazes into the "three-folded mirror, so that she could see three separate versions of her ... face" (13). Not only are her thoughts split up, but her physical presence as well; there is no wholeness to be had; no ultimate apprehendable reality.

[6]On November 14, 1938, Virginia Woolf mentions in her Diary the persecution of Jews across the Channel (Diary V, 186). This may be a reference to the infamous "Kristallnacht"--the night of broken glass--of November 9, 1938. This orgy of glass-smashing of Jewish stores and synagogue windows in Germany and Austria, along with the beatings and the murder of Jews, was ordered by Josef Goebbels and marked a decisive hour in the Nazi campaign--the beginning of The Holocaust.

Conclusion

Virginia Woolf leaves her final vision of a modern world torn to pieces as a last testament. It is a harrowing, haunting image projected through the sound and sight of crashing glass.

Nevertheless, she also leaves other memorable visions and characters: Mrs. Ramsay, and Mr. Ramsay, too, Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus Smith, Lily Briscoe, among others. The moments of unity and connection also survive: Mr. Ramsay and his son going to the lighthouse together, Lily completing her painting, Clarissa appearing at her party.

While she captures the spirit of modernism with its unanswered questions and echoes, its nervousness, its segmented spirit, its skepticism, Virginia Woolf also retains the best qualities of traditionalism: for example, the lyrical beauty of The Waves combines elements of the epic, romanticism, and modernism. The work not only speaks to us, it sings.

In addition to the moments of heightened intensity created by images of glass and sound, there are cumulative effects. These are not always pleasant, as exemplified in the disturbing, insistent, repetitiveness resounding throughout The Years. These impressions are significant in that they reflect not only the modern age but the human condition in general. If death plays a crucial, almost obsessive part in the work, it is because it is a part of

man's state of being.

What Virginia Woolf says of Aeschylus is true of her own work: "By the bold and running use of metaphor he will amplify and give us, not the thing itself, but the reverberations and reflection which, taken into his mind, the thing has made" ("On Not Knowing Greek," The Common Reader 31).

The images and rhythms of Virginia Woolf's writing will continue reverberating as readers reflect on their rich suggestiveness.

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